

US pounds Baghdad after Karbala carnage

70 Iraqis, 9 more GIs killed in bombings, attacks

AFP, Baghdad

American forces fired an artillery barrage at targets in southern Baghdad yesterday following deaths of nine more US troops while Iraqi rescuers scoured wreckage for the victims of another deadly car bomb that left more than 70 dead.

As the sun rose over Baghdad, a series of massive detonations could be heard from southwestern districts, where Iraqi security officials said a US operation was under way in support of the capital's joint security plan.

"Eighteen rounds of artillery were fired from Forward Operating Base Falcon," said US spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Chris Garver, without identifying the target of a

salvo that could be heard 10km away.

Meanwhile, the death toll from Saturday's suicide bombing near a revered shrine in the Shia pilgrimage city of Karbala rose to 71 overnight as scores of victims suffered in hospital wards crowded with 178 wounded.

City health spokesman Salim Khadhim told AFP at the city hospital that the dead included five women, five children and eight victims burned so entirely that their age or gender could not be determined.

"There was a two-year-old Iranian girl among those killed, and four Indian men. Two Iranian men were wounded," he added. Karbala is a site of pilgrimage for Shias from

around the world.

US command in Baghdad reported that fighting and roadside bombs had claimed the lives of seven more American soldiers and two marines over two days of intense violence, bringing the month's toll to 91.

"Three Task Force Marne soldiers were killed and one was wounded when their patrol was struck by a roadside bomb south-east of Baghdad today," the US command in Baghdad announced in a statement.

Another Task Force Marne soldier was killed in a similar incident on the same day. The US army unit patrols a violent belt of small

Hasina won't attempt to avenge move to keep her in exile

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she has no plan for seeking revenge against the military backed caretaker government which tried to block her return to Bangladesh.

"I don't think about taking revenge. Even my father's killers were brought to book," Hasina, a former prime minister told the India Tribune yesterday accusing the caretaker government of not fulfilling its promise for holding elections.

"There was a mass movement when the caretaker government assumed office. Their first job was to hold elections. But they haven't done that yet," said the AL chief who was scheduled to deliver a speech at a large rally in London around 9:30pm Bangladesh time.



Criminal Investigation Department officials collect fingerprints from the Baridhara residence of deputy high commissioner of India after burglars broke into the house and left with valuables yesterday.

BB sends finds to ACC for action against Ctg businessman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday sent the findings of its preliminary inquiry into the alleged defrauding of several banks by a businessman in Chittagong to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for in-depth probe and taking legal actions.

The central bank investigation found that Chittagong-based businessman Nurunnabi swindled Tk 628 crore out of 10 banks in the port city showing false documents of his "32 companies." The BB recommended that the ACC file criminal charges against him, sources said.

Producing false papers against pay orders and local letter of credit, Nurunnabi withdrew the amount on different dates from different

Hearing in Mamun's arms case May 16

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed May 16 for hearing on charge framing against controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun in the case filed for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition.

Meantime, the same court will frame charges today against Mamun in connection with the graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Accepting the charge sheet in the arms case, Judge Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set the date and directed the jail authorities to produce Mamun before the court on the scheduled date.

Earlier on April 26, Cantonment police submitted the charge sheet against Mamun to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Cantonment Police Station Shahrum Khan, also the investigation officer (IO) of an arms case filed against Mamun, pressed charges against him for possessing

Tigers bomb Colombo fuel facilities

AP, AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels bombed a fuel refinery and gasoline storage facility near the Sri Lankan capital early yesterday, and authorities cut power to the city, officials said. Hours later, the military pounded rebel positions in the north.

The rebel attack was the third assault by Tamil Tiger planes since they carried out their first-ever air strike last month when they bombed an air force base near Colombo, killing at least three airmen.

On Sunday, Tiger aircraft dropped four bombs near Colombo, said an official at the defence ministry's media centre, speaking on condition of anonymity due to policy.

A soldier who witnessed the rebel attack said he saw a low-flying plane drop two bombs on a gas storage facility in Kerawalapitiya, about 7 miles north of Colombo. The bombs started a fire, said the

official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to talk to the media.

The extent of damage was not immediately known.

As a security measure, officials knocked out power to the entire capital Sunday, as well as the country's only international airport and an adjoining air force base, as the rebel aircraft approached.

The rebels have launched all three air strikes at night, and fly without lights to avoid detection. Many people were awake watching Sri Lanka's cricket team play Australia in the World Cup final on television when the power was shut off.

All passengers aboard planes were called back into the terminals and air traffic was suspended for about an hour, an employee of the international airport said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Emirates Airlines and Hong

Burglary at Indian diplomat's Baridhara house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Burglars snuck into an Indian diplomat's residence at the highly secured Baridhara diplomatic zone in the capital in the early morning yesterday and made off with valuables worth around Tk 3 lakh.

The burglars used blowtorch to cut open the rear side grille of a ground floor room of the two-storied house on Park Road. Sarvajit Chakravarti, deputy high commissioner of India to Dhaka, resides in the house, said police.

Though there were two policemen on guard at the entrance to the residence, the criminals disappeared easily with a laptop computer, three cellphones, a video camera, a DVD player, a still camera and Tk 1,000 in cash.

The deputy high commissioner and a domestic help in the house were sound asleep during the

VOTER LIST, NATIONAL ID CARDS Project proposal to be ready in two months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The work of preparing a project proposal for a voter list with photographs and for national identity cards is likely to begin next week, a month after the 18-month timeframe for voter registration was announced by the chief election commissioner (CEC).

Two consultants however joined the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday and three others, including two from abroad, are expected to join in a couple of days.

After appointing the consultants, the EC will hold a meeting with them and discuss creating the voter list with photographs and the national identity cards, sources said.

"The consultants will start working on the first working day of the next month," Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain told reporters yesterday.

Sources in the EC Secretariat however said the consultants are expected to start working in full swing from May 6 as the first working day of the month on May 3 is bracketed by national and weekly holidays.

CEC ATM Shamsul Huda on April 5 in a news conference disclosed that no election will be held in the next 18 months, as that is the minimum required time for completing the job. He also said counting of 18 months will begin from the day the consultants will start their work.

EU proposes tripartite talks on Iraqi refugees

AFP, Damascus

The European Union's development and humanitarian aid commissioner said on Sunday that he has proposed joint talks with Damascus and Baghdad to discuss the plight of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

Louis Michel told reporters after meeting in Damascus with President Bashar al-Assad that they had discussed "humanitarian aid for Iraqi refugees" in Syria, whom he numbered at between 1.2 million and 1.5 million.

"We spoke about the economic,

Prayer Timing		
April 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Mayor Minu gets anticipatory bail in extortion case

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail for two months to Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu and two other BNP leaders in connection with an extortion case.

An HC division bench granted their prayer as they surrendered before the court and sought bail.

On April 21, Shamsul Islam Khan, chairman of Evergreen Model College governing body, lodged the case against Minu and 10 others.

The bench, comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice SM Emdadul Haque, upon a petition, passed the orders.

Advocate Khondaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Ruhul Quddus Kazzal appeared for the petitioners.



An overflowing drainage line floods the entrance of PID office and a part of Circuit House Road in the capital yesterday.

2 more PWs give depositions in graft case against Ershad

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two more prosecution witnesses of a graft case filed against former president HM Ershad gave statements before a Dhaka court yesterday.

Judge Malik Abdullah Al Amin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division recorded the statements and fixed May 30 for next hearing date.

Ershad along with party leaders and activists were present at the court during the hearing.

The two witnesses are Saiful Bari, former chairman of National Broadcasting Authority (NBA), and Nawser Ali, former chief engineer of the NBA.

Earlier on March 27, another prosecution witness, Iqbal Ahmed Bhuiyan, an ex-assistant engineer of Bangladesh Television, gave his deposition.

According to the case, filed with Tejgaon Police Station in 1992, Ershad, while in power, allegedly directed the authorities concerned to purchase ENG (electronic news-gathering) equipment worth about Tk 2.93 crore to be used by him and

511 juvenile accused still kept in jail flouting HC order

PORIMOL PALMA

Even four years into the High Court order for keeping the juvenile accused in correction centres, as many as 511 children are still languishing in 57 jails across the country and the number is growing.

During the period, the law enforcers also put many more children behind bars arbitrarily ignoring the Children's Act, 1974. In 2006 alone, a total of 1,810 children were held in prisons, while 1,890 were released, according to a recent statistics compiled by Save the Children UK, a non-government organisation (NGO) working for the welfare of the

children.

Meanwhile, setting up of a juvenile court as per the Act, is yet to be done, the NGO report noted.

"Juvenile accused are to be moved to correction centres and other approved homes with utmost expedition," the High Court bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice Md Nizamul Huq directed the government on April 9 in 2003.

In contrast with the court order, the number of children in jail is increasing with a significant rise this year, while three government-run juvenile correction centres

20 to die for murder

UNB, Chittagong

Twenty people were sentenced to death yesterday by a district court for murder of businessman Hasan Ahmed 15 years back.

Of the condemned convicts, 14 are now in jail while six others are absconding, sources said.

First additional district and Sessions Judge M Rezaul Karim delivered the verdict.

According to the prosecution, the convicts cut right hand, right leg and testicles of landlord and businessman Hasan Ahmed at Minjiratala under Banshkhali upazila while he was returning home by a car from his in-laws' house on June 4, 1992.

Hasan died on way to hospital.

Police gave charge sheet against 22 persons in 1993. The names of

US may hold talks with Iran at Iraq conference

AFP, Washington/ Tehran

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday she would not rule out a meeting with her Iranian counterpart on the sidelines of a multinational conference on Iraq security next week.

"I will not rule out that we may encounter each other," she said.

"This is not a meeting about the United States and Iran, this is a meeting about Iraq and about what Iraq's neighbors and interested parties can do to help stabilise the situation in Iraq," she said.

Earlier Iran announced that it will attend a key conference on Iraq's security in Egypt alongside arch-enemy the United States this week, ending weeks of uncertainty over its involvement.

Officials in Tehran and Baghdad said Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki spoke to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the telephone to ask Tehran to take part in the conference and Ahmadinejad agreed.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran confirmed that it would attend the two conferences in Sharm el-Sheikh to assist Iraq at the level of foreign ministers," Maliki's office said in a statement.

"Ahmadinejad, taking into account Iran's support of the popularly-elected government of Iraq, said that Iran will take part at the level of foreign minister," an official from Ahmadinejad's office told AFP.

The decision for Foreign