

## 12 bodies unearthed in Iraq mass grave

AP, Baghdad

A mass grave with the remains of 12 people, including a paramedic who disappeared more than a year ago, was unearthed in an area long controlled by al-Qaeda in Iraq, officials said.

In the capital, an Interior Ministry aide was gunned down in his car, police said.

Two of the decomposed bodies were beheaded, according to an official at Fallujah General Hospital, where the bodies were taken after their discovery on Sunday.

Hospital officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to release details of the discovery, said some appeared to have been killed as recently as four months ago, and some of the deaths dated to 18 months ago.

Along with the bodies was a Health Ministry card that belonged to the missing paramedic, according to footage from AP Television News.

Iraqi troops unearthed the bodies Sunday afternoon near Lake Tharthar, an area about 60 miles northwest of Baghdad where several mass graves were found in recent months. Since ousting extremists in some of the country's most violent areas, Iraqis from both Islamic sects have stepped up their patrols for the missing, leading to more discoveries.

Two other mass graves were found near the lake last month, one containing 40 bodies and another with 29 bodies. Elsewhere last month, a grave containing 17 corpses was unearthed near Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad. Officials said at the time the bodies were likely those of people seized at fake checkpoints and killed because of their sectarian affiliation.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte on Sunday pressed leaders of Iraq's religious and ethnic factions to take advantage of recent security gains to push through legislation aimed at cementing national reconciliation or risk a return to greater violence.

"If progress is not made on these fronts we risk falling back to the more violent patterns of the past," Negroponte said at a news conference in Baghdad.

The U.S. military has said violence in Iraq has fallen to lows not seen since January 2006, but top American commanders have warned that Sunni and Shiite extremists still pose a serious threat.

In Baghdad, gunmen in two cars fired on a Sunni Interior Ministry aide, Maj. Gen. Fauzi Hussein Muhammed, as he returned home, killing him and wounding his driver, police said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release details of the attack. The Interior Ministry could not immediately be reached for comment.

The mutilated bodies of four guards at an oil facility who were kidnapped at a checkpoint on their way back from vacation were found north of Baghdad on Monday, said Col. Khali al-Zubaidi, an army spokesman who disappeared with them remained missing, he said.

Political progress has been elusive, with lawmakers clashing over Kurdish oil deals with foreign companies and a draft bill that would allow thousands of former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party to return to their government jobs. Both measures are among the 18 benchmarks set by the Bush administration to encourage reconciliation.

## Rehabilitation

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In rehabilitation, he said, priority has been given primarily to crop, agriculture, fishing and livestock to ensure the livelihoods of the affected people.

Terming the people of the affected areas very courageous and resilient, he said they have started earning their livelihoods with a fresh zeal.

He hoped that the cyclone victims would succeed in their struggle as they did in the past in facing such natural calamities if supports of the government and all others continue for them.

Yesterday's donors include former adviser to the caretaker government SM

Shahjahan, ICCDRB Executive Director Charles Larson, Regional Head and CEO of the State Bank of India, Dhaka, Debabrata Dutta, Country manager of Habib Bank Ltd, Dhaka, Abdul Hye, Chairman of Bangladesh General Insurance Co Ltd Touhid Samad, Additional Secretary of the Finance Division and Chairman of Rupali Bank Ltd Fazlul Karim, Deputy Secretary of the Commerce

Ministry and Administrator of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies Abu Bakker Siddiq Mollah, Secretary General of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry MA Matin, Head of Corporate Affairs of Standard Chattered Bank Osman Morad and Chairman of South East Bank Ltd Alamgir Kabir.

encourage reconciliation.

Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahrastani, using unusually strong language, told Iraqi state television late Sunday that the contracts signed by the self-rule Kurdistan region were illegal.

"No region has the right to go it alone and sign a deal," he said. "This will lead to the breakup of Iraq ... oil is the business of the federal government and any attempt at extracting oil without the approval of the federal government is tantamount to smuggling."

Jamal Abdullah, a spokesman for the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan, said al-Shahrastani's comments were unwarranted: "No one has the right to slander the legitimacy of contracts signed by the government of Kurdistan and the foreign companies."

A Sunni Arab lawmaker on Monday denounced laws barring former Saddam supporters from government jobs, saying they amount to "racism" and are aimed at punishing members of the minority Islamic sect.

Mutlaq al-Jubouri, a former deputy prime minister, said the committee to purge government institutions of high-level members of Saddam's ruling Baath Party was established only to punish the Sunni sect.

"This committee was founded not to uproot the Baath Party but rather to uproot a section of the Iraqi people," al-Jubouri said.

In a hopeful sign for political progress, lawmakers from Iraq's largest Sunni Arab bloc on Monday ended their boycott of parliament over the "house arrest" of their leader, Adnan al-Dulaimi, who also attended the session.

## Sheikh Selim

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from the government met Selim and asked him to give confessional statement before a court. They also told him that he would be acquitted if he made deposition as approver in the case, the petition said.

The AL leader was produced before a court on June 18 with a two-day remand prayer, and he was remanded. Blindfolded, he was once again taken to an unknown place where some persons interrogated him on different issues, misbehaved with him and tortured him physically and mentally.

During interrogation, he was again asked to make a confessional statement. As he refused, the interrogators threatened him saying that if he did not agree to their proposal, they would go for recovering firearms from his possession, Selim alleged in his petition.

"We have received a list of three persons to get them caught in crossfire but I do not know as yet whether the list contains your name," Selim said quoting one of the interrogators.

Anyone would be forced to give a confessional statement in the circumstances he had made the statement, the former minister said.

The retraction petition mentioned that even the BNP-led four-party alliance while in power could not bring any charges against Selim. Now, a baseless and coked up charge was brought against him as part of a conspiracy, it said.

"I am withdrawing the confessional statement I have given in the case," Selim said in the petition.

Advocate Syed Rezaul Rahman read out the petition on behalf of Selim as the court did not permit the accused to read it out.

## India hands over

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Abdullah Aref, additional superintendent of CID, said they have placed the two under arrest under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code. "We will produce them before a court with a prayer for remand to interrogate them intensively," he said.

Our Benapole correspondent adds: Naru Ghosh, assistant superintendent of CID in Kolkata and Rabi Kumar, commanding officer of Border Security Force (BSF), India, handed over Rafiq and Jewel in the afternoon to Ataur Rahman, assistant superintendent of Bangladesh CID, Jessore Zone.

Rafiq is the son of Ibrahim Malik from Sutrapur, Dhaka; while Jewel is son of Abdus Satter from Tangail.

Both Rafiq and Jewel were involved in criminal activities during their stay in Kolkata, added the sources. Indian authorities decided to deport them as their jail term ended recently.

On October 7, infamous criminal Habibur Rahman Taj and his accomplices Sohel alias Ibrahim and Biplob Rahman alias Lambu Selim had also been deported by India.

Sources in the CID said efforts are on to bring back six more criminals who are currently under detention of Kolkata police.

Around 350 criminals are believed to be in hiding in different locations in West Bengal, India, the sources also said.

## Army suggests

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2007 promulgated on August 9 empowered the EC to formulate rules on electoral roll. Earlier, the power to formulate such rules lay with the government.

The EC started the field level task for making voter list with photographs in August, and moved to formulate the draft rules in October.

The draft rules provide that the EC will register prisoners and detainees, including former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, and other political bigwigs, as voters on completion of registering general people of the area where the prisoners and detainees are kept.

This is for the first time the EC is not considering detained BNP chief Khaleda and Awami League chief Hasina as very important persons (VIPs) to be registered as voters. In the past, the EC usually began the task listing Khaleda and Hasina as voters.

The army headquarters also echoed the EC's views on listing prisoners and detainees as voters.

In the draft rules, the EC said that in consultation with the authorities, mobile teams will have to be sent to jails, or where detainees are kept, to take photographs and fingerprints of the prisoners and detained people for listing them as voters.

The army headquarters suggested that the prisoners and detained individuals should be considered as residents of the areas where they would live if not imprisoned or detained. And they must not be registered as voters in the areas where they are being kept.

The EC at a meeting on Saturday discussed the draft rules and suggestions given by the army.

## Sacked staffs

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investigation conducted by the Sylhet divisional commissioner.

Police men have been deployed at the SCC to avert any untoward incident.

## DU teachers

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Department Chairman Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik on September 9 for instigating violence on the university campus and at Shahbagh in the capital on August 22 and 23.

DU student Moniruzzaman, who was arrested earlier, is now in jail custody. Other accused university students are on the run.

They are DU unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Hasan Mamun and its General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz, JCD leader Kamrul Hasan Kochi, acting JCD President of Shamsunnahar Hall unit Tanjeen Chowdhury Lili, JCD President of Rokeya Hall unit Shahinoor Nargis, central Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Vice-President Aparna Rani Pal, Rifat Hossain Jiki, Nazrul Islam Russell, Shamsul Kabir Rahat, Mitul, Aziz Hasan, Rokonzaman, Kamruzzaman and Anwar Hossain.

Earlier, the court issued arrest warrant against them and ordered to attach their properties as they have been absconding since the case was filed.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz will meet Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed today to discuss different issues including release of the detained university teachers and students.

"We shall meet the chief adviser and the army chief at their respective offices tomorrow to discuss the release of our detained teachers and students, and other university related issues," Prof Faiz said.

## Bringing back

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in association with Transparency International, Bangladesh, would run the campaign for a year.

From mid-January, the ACC would start forming citizens' anti-corruption committees in district levels, he added.

Speaking on the submission of charge sheet in the Gato case against former prime minister Khaleda Zia, he said the investigation report had been submitted to the ACC and it was being re-examined. Besides, "names of a few other people are also coming up in the case. The matter is under close consideration."

Asked if the government has discussed the proposed Truth Commission issue with the ACC, Mashud replied in the negative. The ACC is not overenthusiastic about it because first there has to be a legal framework for it and it has to be acceptable to the people also, he said.

Commenting on some of the ACC cases being stayed by higher courts, Mashud, also former adviser to a caretaker government, said the commission is carefully monitoring the situation and looking into the reasons why the cases had been stayed. "We are re-examining the special cases so that there are no flaws in those," he said.

Responding to a query whether the ACC is able to operate independently, the corruption watchdog boss said, "I wouldn't be here otherwise."

## Hasina appears

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before the hearing yesterday.

Hasina will also file a writ petition with the HC on Sunday challenging the legality of convening a court under special arrangement to try her, which her lawyers said is not necessary considering the allegations against her client.

AL leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim also submitted a retraction petition to the court yesterday to withdraw the confessional statement he had given to the joint forces during an interrogation earlier. Selim in a written statement said he was forced to give the statement under physical and mental torture in phases.

Hasina in a white and green jamdani sari listened to the arguments with calm attention. The former prime minister looked confident during the one and a half hour court proceedings with occasional smiles on her face whenever she had eye contacts with her lawyers and journalists, who thronged the courtroom.

Selim was also beside his cousin in the same dock during the hearing. He, however, looked a bit pale. Hasina and Selim also talked to each other in the dock as the court allowed them to sit there.

Earlier in the morning, Sheikh Hasina was brought to the court from a sub-jail in a Pajero while Selim in a prison van amid tight security. Hasina entered the courtroom at 9:35am waving her hands to her supporters. The trial began at 9:43am with the tiny courtroom filled with lawyers and journalists.

As the court proceedings began, the defence lawyers challenged the legality of a recent government notice ordering a trial of the case under a special arrangement. They argued that the government cannot issue such an order to a court when the judiciary is separated from the executive branch of the government.

The defence lawyers said as the judiciary is independent now, only the court has the right to decide how the case will be tried. They said the government cannot issue such an order, if necessary only the SC can direct what to be done with the case.

The prosecution however argued that the law has a provision enabling the government to issue the order.

The defence lawyers told the court of Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque that the government is unwelcome of the fundamental rights of the accused, and they should have the right to a public trial in an independent and impartial tribunal.

Expressing deep concern over the fairness of the trial, the defence lawyers told the court that sending of the case from court to court by the government proves that the independence of the judiciary still remains only in books while the entire world is waiting to see a truly separated and independent judiciary, especially in connection with a case against a former premier.

The defence lawyers also petitioned the court for a limited stay on the case proceedings until a writ is filed with the HC and the matter is settled.

At that point Public Prosecutor ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul told the court that the jail killing case was also tried in different places and the venue for Hasina's trial was fixed keeping in mind her and her lawyers' security concerns.

The defence lawyers mentioned that the matter of trying the case under the special arrangement is currently being disputed in the HC.

They also argued that a judge cannot operate from two offices simultaneously nor can a court be convened at more than one places during a period of time making the special court convened on the premises of the parliament building illegal.

At that point the court issued an order saying it has the jurisdiction to proceed with the current arrangement.

As the court prepared to pass an order, the defence lawyers prayed for time to scrutinise the supplementary charge sheet submitted by police on Sunday.

The court finally fixed December 9 for the hearing on charge framing and permitted 20 defence lawyers to talk to Hasina for an hour yesterday.

Hasina was taken back to the sub-jail at 1:05pm, after the hearing had been adjourned.

A large number of police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel, and special branch detectives were deployed at several points surrounding the Sangsad Bhaban area.

The defence lawyers also appealed the court for granting them of them permission to meet Hasina once a week from now on, but the court did not pass any order, instead it said the matter should be resolved in accordance with the jail code.

"Her health is not well and she talked about her solitary confinement in the sub-jail, where she is not even allowed to come out on the veranda," said Advocate Syed Rezaul Rahman after coming out of the meeting with Hasina.

"Don't worry about me. During my solitary confinement I only think about the people of my country and their well being," Zillur Rahman, acting president of AL,

quoted Hasina as saying.

Zillur appeared before the court as a lawyer for the first time yesterday in the last 35 years since he had first contested in a general election.

"She also claimed her innocence," Zillur said after the defence lawyers' meeting with the detained former prime minister.

THE CASE

Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana is also accused in the case, who has been residing abroad since before being implicated.

On November 28, the court directed the jail authorities to produce Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim before it yesterday.

The trial of Sheikh Rehana will be held in absentia, as she has not surrendered to the court yet.

The government on November 25 decided to try the case under the special arrangement.

The law ministry issued a gazette notification under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) on November 26 regarding the special arrangement fixing the premises of the parliament building in the capital as the venue for the trial.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case against Hasina and Selim with Gulshan police station on June 13 this year, accusing them of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case later included Sheikh Rehana's name in the charge sheet submitted on July 24 following an investigation.

The court accepted the charge sheet issuing an arrest warrant for Rehana and ordering confiscation of her properties.

Law enforcement agencies arrested Hasina on July 16 and produced her before a magistrate court, which sent her to the sub-jail.

Advocate ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul was appointed the chief public prosecutor (PP) while Borhan Uddin, Golam Kibria, Syed Ahsan Habib, and Shahidul Islam Sardar were appointed to assist Mukul during the trial.

SUPREME COURT ORDER A six-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin stayed the HC order which had declared illegal the ACC notice to Hasina.

The Appellate Division asked both the parties to get the matter heard in its court.

The HC declared the ACC notice illegal on November 21, following a writ petition filed by Hasina.

UNB adds: Law Adviser Mainul Hosen yesterday said the caretaker government is not interfering into Awami League president Sheikh Hasina's case.

"No one is above law and everyone is equal in the eyes of law," he told reporters after a meeting at the housing and public works ministry. Mainul said the court will decide whether or not Sheikh Hasina is guilty. "If the court finds her guilty, she will be punished. Otherwise, she will be acquitted."

About Hasina's claim of her innocence, Mainul said everybody claims it before trial.

Asked about her apprehension of not getting proper justice, the adviser said the trial is going on in an open court and in front of her lawyers.

## Banks refuse

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higher authorities".

One bank agreed to allow the faction to open an account and even gave an account number but later cancelled the decision without giving any reason, the leaders alleged.

The leaders said as the case with other political parties like Awami League and a few private organisations they were planning to open a relief fund with any bank, so that well-wishers of the party can contribute to the fund intended for the cyclone-affected people.

Rizvi said, "This is nothing but a conspiracy against BNP as well as the nationalistic force, so that the party cannot stand beside the people in distress."

"Despite the conspiracy... we will try our best to stand beside the cyclone-affected people, as we did in the past and I hope people will overcome the difficulties," he said.

Earlier, the pro-Khaleda faction leaders formed a national relief committee led by its Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Ray and Rizvi Ahmed. The committee already sent several delegations to the cyclone-affected area to distribute relief materials. The delegations have started helping the Sidi-hit people.

Secretary General Khondaker Delwar Hossain yesterday sent two other teams led by Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan and former lawmaker Mohammad Shahjahan to Barguna for distributing relief materials on behalf of the faction.

Meanwhile, pro-Saifur faction of BNP also formed a relief committee headed by standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman. Several teams led by Mahbubur Rahman, Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, acting secretary general of the faction, and former state minister Sha Abul Hossain conducted relief operation in the cyclone-affected areas.

## CA seeks \$1b

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Development Goals will become a "mirage" if money and attention are not devoted to reducing the country's environmental vulnerability, made worse by climate change.

"Strong international support is necessary to help us meet our environmental challenges," he said, adding rehabilitating Sidi victims is not enough, "We need to pre-empt and prevent disasters, not just react to them."

Donors stressed the need to ensure best practices learned from post-disaster rehabilitation efforts, especially from the previous cyclones and floods, according to a Western diplomat who was at the meeting.

The diplomat said the donors discussed the funding and logistics of building more cyclone centres, extending embankments and improving early-warning systems.

The estimate of \$1 billion includes the cost of building road networks at \$300 million, building 2,000 new cyclone shelters at \$200 million, repairing and making new embankments at \$250 million, afforestation at \$150 million, and rebuilding schools at the cost of \$100 million.

## No scope

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Gen (ret'd) M Shakhawat Hossain, 69 Infantry Brigade Commander Brig General ATM Ziaul Hasan, Bandharan Hill District Council Chairman Prof Tanzama Lusa, Sadar Zone Commander Lt Col Mohammad Ali Sohel and the police superintendent were present as special guests. Deputy Commissioner M Abdul Majid Shah Akhand presided over the meeting.

The army officers apprised the meeting of the progress of preparing the voter list with photographs.

They said 98 percent work of preparing the voter list with photographs has already been completed in the district and the rest will be finished by December 9.

In the second phase of the work, voter registration will start in Thanchhi upazila on December 13 while photo taking on December 26.

Earlier, the CEC and the EC separately exchanged views with the officials engaged in preparing the voter list at the cantonment and the Circuit House.

The CEC, after reviewing the photograph taking and data entry work, will leave for Rangamati today.

## BB predicts

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the review predicts.

However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted that the GDP growth rate in the current fiscal year would be posted at 5.5 percent, while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said it would be below 6.0 percent during this period.

"The recently initiated policy strategies and reform programmes would create brighter prospects of growth enabling the country to achieve the targeted growth in FY 08," the review observes.

It further says, "The economy's growth momentum would generally be sustained during FY 08 although there is likely to be some moderation in growth in agriculture, industry, and services sectors."

"Based on the assessment of the current situation and analysis of sub-sectoral growth rates, this review projects the growth for the agriculture sector to lie in the 2.6 percent and 3.0 percent range whereas the likely growth in the industry sector would be in the range of 8.5 percent to 9.0 percent in FY08."

"The services sector would sustain its earlier growth performance and would yield a growth rate of 6.3 percent to 6.5 percent in FY08."

## Murali reclaims

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list above Australian Shane Warne.

Muralidaran bowled England's Paul Collingwood for 45 shortly before lunch on the third day of the first Test, his 709th wicket sparking wild celebrations in Kandy.

Tied with Warne on 708 Test victims overnight, Muralidaran was kept at bay by the England batsmen during his first spell of the morning but struck immediately in his second, bowling Collingwood from around the wicket.

Greeted with fireworks from Sri Lankan supporters, the wicket-completed Muralidaran's 61st five-wicket haul in Tests and he added another to the tally in his next over, removing Matthew Hoggard for 15.

Warne retired from Test cricket this year with 708 wickets from 145 matches while Muralidaran reached the milestone in his 116th game. Muralidaran had previously held the world record after surpassing West Indian fast bowler Courtney Walsh (519 wickets) in 2004, but he was subsequently overtaken by Warne after suffering a shoulder injury that year.

Muralidaran holds other bowling records in Test cricket, including the most five-wicket (61) and ten-wicket hauls (20).

The 35-year-old is renowned for extracting prodigious turn from his unique rubber-wristed bowling action.

## UN kicks off

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a deadline. The UN says such an agreement should be concluded by 2009 in order to have a system in place in time.

A main thrust will be to draw the United States, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases blamed for global warming, into the process. Washington did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, arguing that mandatory cuts in emissions would harm the economy and calling into question the veracity of global warming science.

Speakers at the opening session Monday said the world had more to lose by inaction than by taking some of the costly steps needed to cut emissions.

"One of the stumbling blocks so far has been the fear of economic hardship," said Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar, the host of the Bali meeting. "Though the cost will be significant... it's insignificant compared to the damage that uncontrolled climate change will wreak."

Among the most contentious issues ahead will be whether emission cuts should be mandatory or voluntary, as the US favours. Also to be tackled will be what extent up-and-coming economies like China and India will have to rein in their skyrocketing emissions, and how to help the world's poorest countries adapt to a worsening climate.

Confronted with the scientific reports of the past year, the Bush administration has signaled a willingness to play a larger role in the negotiations, and UN officials agree that they must craft a post-Kyoto framework that Washington will go along with. The US could find itself isolated at the conference, after new Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Monday he had signed the paperwork to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.