

British jet crashes in Afghanistan

Bomb blast kills 11 civilians

AFP, Kandahar Kabul

A British fighter jet crashed in Afghanistan yesterday, injuring two pilots and becoming the fourth Western aircraft to come down in the war-torn country in a week.

The crash and the unrelated killing of another British soldier in a bomb attack bringing to 17 the number killed so far this month, was likely to spark renewed political debate in London over Britain's role in the conflict.

Western military casualties have hit record levels in Afghanistan as foreign governments scramble extra troops to the war-torn nation hoping to ease an increasingly virulent Taliban insurgency ahead of elections on August 20.

Local government officials said Monday that separate attacks killed 12 civilians, while Kandahar airbase in southern Afghanistan reported its second aviation accident in two days.

Eleven civilians were killed and two others wounded Sunday when their vehicle struck a

roadside bomb planted by insurgents in southwestern Farah province, deputy provincial governor Mohammad Yunus Rasouli told AFP.

In northern Kunduz province, one civilian was killed and two others wounded Sunday when German and local forces opened fire on a car that failed to slow down at a checkpoint, provincial governor Mohammad Omar told AFP.

Mohammad Aslam Yar, a spokesman for the base, said a fighter jet of the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) crashed early Monday at the airfield, on the biggest military base in the south.

There were two pilots who ejected and were taken to a military hospital inside the base for treatment. Apart from that there are no other casualties. No enemy fire was involved," Yar told AFP.

A defence ministry spokeswoman in London told AFP that the jet was a Royal Air Force Tornado GR4, but ruled out insurgent activity as the cause of the crash.

Mayawati defiant, rewards man behind Joshi house arson

PTI, Lucknow

BSP leader Intezar Ahmad Abdi, allegedly involved in the arson at UP Congress chief Rita Bahuguna Joshi's house in Lucknow, has been appointed the chairman of state sugar corporation by the Mayawati government, a move that has invited the ire of the Congress.

Abdi's appointment as the chairman of Ganna Sansthan, a post equivalent to the rank of Minister of State, had been cleared and an order to this effect was issued last evening, official sources said on Monday.

BSP sources, however, said Abdi's appointment to the post was cleared by the party leadership a week back.



PHOTO: AFP

Solana pledges EU support for displaced Pakistan people

AFP, Islamabad

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana pledged Monday full support for Pakistan as it deals with the resettlement of nearly two million people displaced by battles against the Taliban.

Solana visited a refugee camp in northwest Pakistan and praised the country's efforts in dealing with the displacement of 1.9 million people, the vast majority of whom have been made homeless by fighting since late April.

"I was very, very impressed by the manner in which this complicated operation has been handled," Solana told a joint news conference with

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, describing it as "work well done".

"I have seen already today families returning and I think that it is very very important good news," Solana said.

The European Union had contributed more than 150 million euros and would continue to support Pakistan as it deals with one of its largest migrations in history, Solana added.

"We will continue to be engaged in this battle which is very, very important for your country and not only important for your country but important for everyone."

5 Pak policemen killed in northwest ambush

AP, Peshawar

Gunmen ambushed a police patrol in Pakistan's volatile northwest yesterday, killing four officers, while a roadside bomb killed a member of another security unit elsewhere in the region, officials said.

The police were patrolling on a road that leads to the Khyber tribal region, an area that has witnessed numerous militant attacks due to its status as a supply route for US and Nato forces in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is in the midst of a major offensive against Taliban fighters in the northwestern Swat Valley and is in the early stages of an operation in the South Waziristan tribal region targeting the Pakistani Taliban chief, Baitullah Mehsud.

NEWS IN BRIEF

1st funeral held for Jakarta bomb victims

AP, Jakarta

The first of the Jakarta hotel bombings' seven victims was buried Monday just days after he again became a father.

The wife of 38-year-old Evert Mocompis could not attend his funeral because she gave birth to their second child the day before he was killed, local media reported.

3 men shot dead in Thai unrest

AFP, Yala

Suspected separatist militants in Thailand's restive south have shot dead three men in separate fresh attacks, police said yesterday.

They said a 31-year-old man was killed in drive-by shooting in Pattani province Monday morning.

A day earlier in neighbouring Yala province, a 48-year-old rubber plantation owner was shot dead in an ambush as he returned home by motorbike on Sunday evening.

Iraq car bombing kills three

AFP, Ramadi

Three people were killed, including two policemen, in a car bomb blast in western Iraqi city of Ramadi on Monday, the second attack there in a week, security and medical officials said.

Four other people were wounded, including two policemen, in the bombing near the provincial government headquarters in the centre of the city.

Little hope for 18 missing after Kiribati capsizes

AFP, Wellington

Eighteen people who were lost overboard when a canoe capsized in the Pacific nation of Kiribati are unlikely to be found alive, a rescuer said on Monday.

The double-hulled canoe was carrying 45 passengers from the capital Tarawa to the outlying atoll of Maiana for Independence Day celebrations when it capsized on July 13.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (R) watches as European Union Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana addresses a joint press conference at the foreign ministry in Islamabad yesterday. The European Union pledged aid for the hundreds of thousands of families displaced by the government offensive on the Taliban and vowed to help Islamabad tackle the root causes of extremism.

US military mulls overhaul of Afghan prisons

AP, New York

The US military is looking to revamp its beleaguered American-run prison system in Afghanistan, according to a published report.

The development is in response to concerns over detainee abuse and the military's belief that the Taliban is recruiting militants in the prisons, the New York Times reported Monday.

Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a confidential message last week to all of the military service chiefs and senior field commanders asking them to redouble their efforts to alert troops to the importance of treating detainees properly.

Maj Gen Douglas M Stone of the Marines was credited with a successful overhaul of the American detention practices in Iraq and is entrusted with reviewing detention details in Afghanistan.

General Stone's report has not been made public. It's being read by senior American officials, and recommends separating extremist militants from more moderate detainees, two American officials who have read or been briefed on his report told The Times.

Plans call for the United States to finance and construct a new Afghan-run prison for the extremists. These prisoners are using the Afghan corrections system as a camp to train other

inmates to become deadly militants, the American officials said.

The remaining inmates are to be taught vocational skills and offered other classes. They would also be taught about moderate Islam with the intent of releasing them into society, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the review's findings had not been released publicly.

The recommendations coincide with American officials' fears that overcrowded Afghan-run prisons will be overwhelmed by groups of new prisoners captured in the American-led offensive in southern Afghanistan, a place where thousands of Marines are battling Taliban fighters.

"This is a very important milestone. None of us will live long enough to see another one like it," said Federico Borgmeyer, the German-based manager of the special travel agency Eclipse City.

'Monster' solar eclipse takes on Asian giants

AFP, New Delhi

The world's most populous nations will gaze skywards Wednesday as the longest total solar eclipse of the 21st century lays a carpet of darkness across India and China, from Mumbai to Shanghai.

The event is being hyped in the obscure world of eclipse-chasers as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity which, due to its trajectory over some of the most densely inhabited areas on Earth, could end up being the most watched eclipse in history.

"This is a very important milestone. None of us will live long enough to see another one like it," said Federico Borgmeyer, the German-based manager of the special travel agency Eclipse City.

The American astrophysi-

cist and acclaimed eclipse expert Fred Espenak has simply labelled the July 22 event "a monster."

Total solar eclipses occur when the moon comes between the Earth and the sun, completely obscuring the sun.

The excitement this time around is largely due to the unusually long duration of the instant of greatest eclipse, or "totality" -- when the sun is wholly covered.

At its maximum, this will last six minutes and 39 seconds -- a duration that will not be matched until the year 2132.

The up to 258-kilometre (161-mile) wide shadow cast along the "path of totality" will first make landfall on the western Indian state of Gujarat shortly before 6:30am (0100 GMT).

Unidentified guests carry their luggage from the Yan Xiang Hotel where a group of tourists are being quarantined by Chinese authorities over swine flu in Beijing yesterday.

China quarantines 85 UK students

AFP, Beijing

study tour.

The number of British students and teachers quarantined in Beijing over swine flu has leapt to at least 85, while four more have been hospitalised with the virus, Britain's embassy here said yesterday.

"We have had reports that two more groups of British schoolchildren with approximately 25 children are now being taken to quarantine in hotel after they arrived for a

US, allies preparing package offer to N Korea: Envoy

AFP, Seoul

The United States and its negotiating partners are preparing a "comprehensive package" of incentives to encourage North Korea to scrap its nuclear weapons, a senior US envoy said yesterday.

Kurt Campbell, assistant

secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific affairs, did not elaborate on the package, which is still being finalised.

But he said it would require Pyongyang to take "irreversible" steps towards denuclearisation in return.

Yonhap news agency said he made his comments at a

breakfast meeting with senior South Korean journalists. A US embassy spokesman confirmed the main points of the Yonhap report.

Six-nation nuclear disarmament talks grouping the two Koreas, China, Japan, the US and Russia began almost six years ago but bogged down last December.

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Fish shrinking due to global warming

AFP, Chicago

Fish have lost half their average body mass and smaller species are making up a larger proportion of European fish stocks as a result of global warming, a study published Monday has found.

"It's huge," said study author Martin Daufresne of the Cemagref Public Agricultural and Environmental Research Institute in Lyon, France.

"Size is a fundamental characteristic that is linked to a number of biological functions, such as fecundity - the capacity to reproduce."

Smaller fish tend to produce fewer eggs. They also provide less sustenance for predators - including humans - which could have significant implications for the food chain and ecosystem.

A similar shrinking effect was recently documented in Scottish sheep and Daufresne said it is possible that global warming could have "a significant impact on organisms in general."

Earlier research has already established that fish have shifted their geographic ranges and their migratory and breeding patterns in response to rising water temperatures. It has also been established that warmer regions tend to be inhabited by smaller fish.

Daufresne and his colleagues examined long-term

surveys of fish populations in rivers, streams and the Baltic and North Seas and also performed experiments on bacteria and plankton.

They found the individual species lost an average of 50 percent of their body mass over the past 20 to 30 years while the average size of the overall fishing stock had shrunk by 60 percent.

This was a result of a decrease in the average size-at-age and an increase in the proportion of juveniles and small-sized species, Daufresne said.

"It was an effect that we observed in a number of organisms and in a number of very different environments - on fish, on plankton, on bacteria, in fresh water, in salt water - and we observed a global shrinking of size for all the organisms in all the environments," Daufresne said in a telephone interview.

While commercial and recreational fishing did impact some of the fisheries studied, it "cannot be considered as the unique trigger" for the changes in size, the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found.

"Although not negating the role of other factors, our study provides strong evidence that temperature actually plays a major role in driving changes in the size structure of populations and communities," the study concluded.

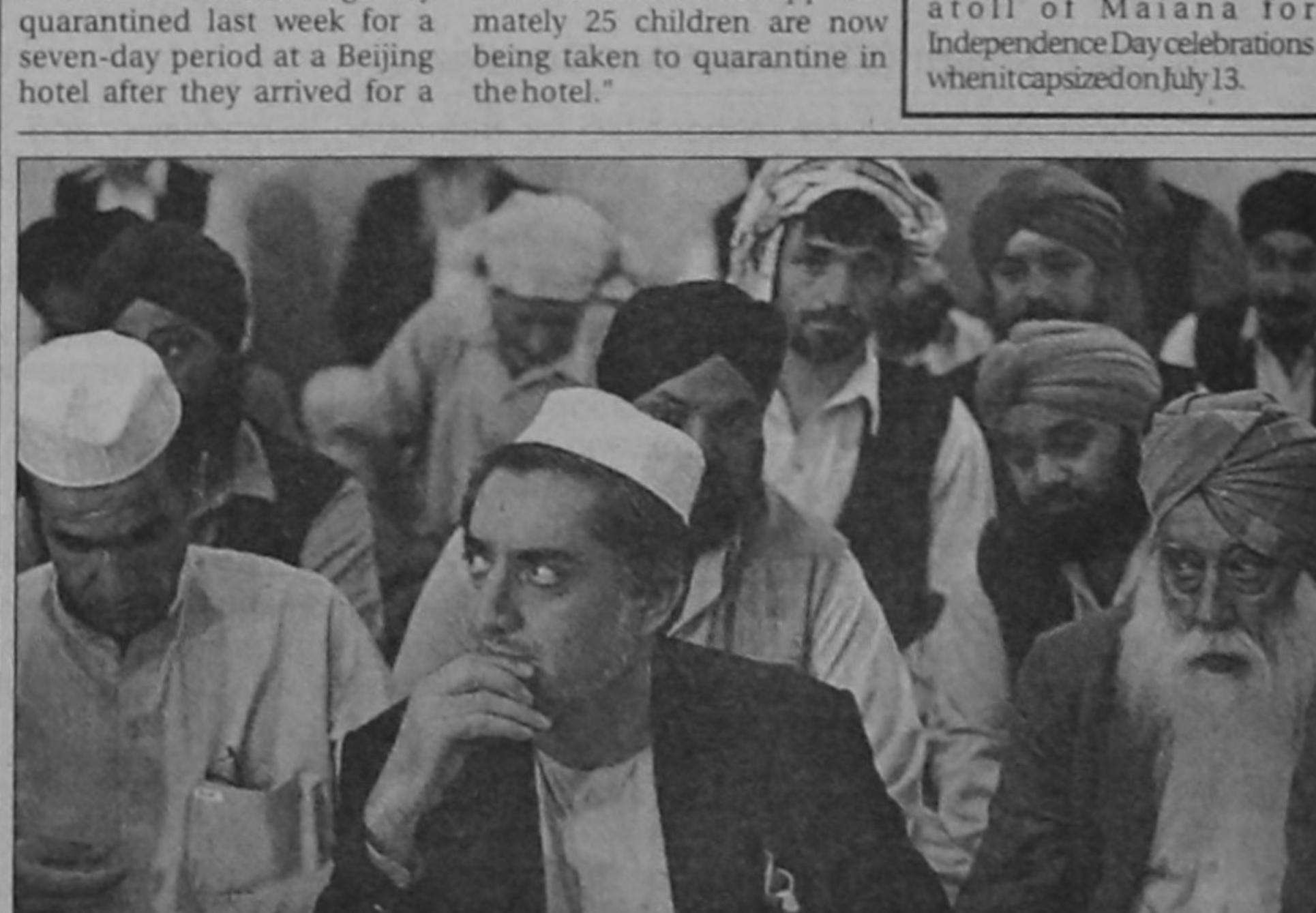


PHOTO: AFP

A Graduation ceremony for the passing out students of B.Sc. (Hons.) batch 001, 011, 021 & 031 will be held at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Center (BCFCC). The students of the above four batches are requested to register their names at BIFT office. Registration fee for participation has been revised and fixed tk. 3000/- per student with spouse or one guest.

So, the students are advised to contact BIFT office immediately and to register their names within the scheduled period.

Deadline of Registration : 2nd August, 2009

Principal, BIFT

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Mamata flags off special train for women in West Bengal

ANI, Kolkata

Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee kept up her promise of a 'ladies special' for harried commuters in Kolkata on Sunday.

Banerjee had made the announcement in her railway budget speech for this fiscal year.

"What I had promised in the railway budget, we will implement those projects properly every where. People think the declarations in the budget are not implemented properly which is our duty to implement," Banerjee said.