

Nato airstrike kills 9 more Afghan civilians

AFP, Kandahar

Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) targeted a Taliban position with a precision-guided air strike in southern Afghanistan, killing civilians, the force said yesterday.

One tribal elder claimed that nine people were killed but there was no immediate confirmation of the number of deaths.

Isaf said in a statement the air strike followed "extensive engagement" with insurgents fighting from a compound in Nad Ali district of troubled Helmand province late Wednesday.

"Isaf received reports of a number of persons killed in the compound, including women and children," it said, without giving a specific death toll.

Some civilians were also reported wounded, it said, adding they were taken to an Isaf hospital for treatment.

Isaf and village elders are investigating, the multinational force said.

Ehsanullah, an elder from Khoshal village where the strike took place, told AFP that Haji Kot Aka's house was hit late Wednesday.

"They had four guests at home when the bombing took place. The bomb killed Aka, his wife, four children and three of the guests. One of the guests was wounded," he said.

Provincial spokesman Daud Ahmadi confirmed only that the air strike killed civilians but had no details on how many or the number of militant casualties.

Civilian casualties are a sensitive issue in Afghanistan, creating a rift between President Hamid Karzai's government and international forces as well as resentment on the ground against foreign troops.

ACC to quiz

FROM PAGE 16 connection with the corruption might be changed, as the parliamentary sub-committee on shipping ministry has made it without visiting the spot for taking deposition of the witnesses.

The team also will collect documents from the shipping ministry and then issue notices to the then secretary of the ministry and other officials concerned for quizzing.

The two-member team, also investigating corruption regarding incensement of retirement age of shipping pilots, completed their three-day long quizzing of five more persons at the port yesterday.

The committee headed by ACC Deputy Director (DD) Sheikh Md Fanafillah also met with the teams from Ishak Brothers, which was awarded the job of container handling of the port, and Bandar Shramik Federation.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds: The committee yesterday talked to Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Member (Planning and Admin) Hadi Hossain Babul, Member (Marine and Harbour) Captain S Arif Mahmud, former additional general manager Ibrahim Khalilullah and former general manager (Audit) Giasuddin Ansari.

One member of the committee said the evaluation criteria were right but they would not be able to say if anything happened wrong inside the Chittagong Port Authority.

The committee was given primarily 15-day time that can be extended by another 15 days if necessary to complete the investigation, said Fanafillah.

Outlaw killed

FROM PAGE 16 (ML-Janajuddha).

Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of police and Rab conducted operation at Chulkhathi Palpara area when the outlaws were holding a secret meeting at about 5:00am.

Sensing their presence, the outlaws opened fire on them prompting the law enforcers to retaliate that triggered a gunfight.

Masud was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot while his accomplices managed to flee.

Police said Masud was wanted in 15 cases.

Police recovered three firearms, one sharp weapon, 29 rounds of bullet and five cartridges from the spot.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ekushey Padak

FROM PAGE 16 Sangskritik Jote's statement regarding the incident, they said the cultural minister is now abroad and the state minister does not know about the advertisement. But the cultural secretary has told the media that such advertisement has been published for over a decade.

They urged the prime minister and cultural minister to investigate who are involved with "the conspiracy to tarnish the image of the government".

They also demanded immediate removal of those loyal to the BNP-Jamaat alliance from the cultural ministry.

Jhuna Chowdhury, Mannan Hira, Salauddin Badal, Mahbubul Haider Mohon, Afroza Banu, Selim Shamsul Huda, Khandaker Ismail, Aslam Sunny are among the signatories to the statement.

Shoe thrown

FROM PAGE 1 end of his speech, remained calm throughout the incident.

As the shoethrower was being taken out of the conference hall at Bilgi University, another protester attempted to unfurl a banner, but was also quickly overpowered by security guards.

Both protesters were taken into police custody, the Anatolia news agency said. Several others stood up, applauding and shouting slogans denouncing the IMF and its "collusion" with Turkish government, which has been negotiating for a fresh loan since last year.

"IMF thief! IMF creates wars and makes people poor," chanted the 20-strong group. In remarks to reporters after the incident, IMF spokeswoman Caroline Atkinson gave an, ironic reaction to the protest.

"The managing director noted that the students were at least polite enough to wait until the end of the discussion," she said. "The IMF needs to speak to people and listen to people even if not everyone agrees with us."

Strauss-Kahn is in Istanbul ahead of the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Istanbul next week.

Several Turkish left-wing groups and anti-globalisation activists have called for protests in the run-up and during the meetings.

PM returns

FROM PAGE 1

to a halt as the party-men kept both sides of one of the busiest thoroughfares occupied for about half an hour from 8:30am. Office-goers had to face the gridlock. They were delayed for two to three hours to reach their workplaces.

The AL leaders and activists carrying banners and festoons welcomed their party chief as she came out of the VIP terminal. They thanked her for delivering speech in Bangla at the UNGA session.

The prime ministerial convoy had to stop amid welcoming slogans. In a brief speech, Hasina said she had returned home after a very successful trip.

"I am fine. The success we achieved through the trip is not mine only...it is for the whole nation," she told the cheering crowds.

Hasina asked the party men to pray for her so that she can build a "Sonar Bangladesh" by 2021. She also thanked them to greet her on arrival.

Deputy Leader in Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, cabinet members, advisers to the prime minister, the chiefs of three services, diplomats and civil and military high officials received Hasina as she arrived at the airport at about 8:20am on a Qatar Airways flight.

Victim 'refutes'

FROM PAGE 1 puja mandap on September 25.

They alleged that a local political clique has taken the entire family of the victim under its shelter and using them as safeguard against legal steps against the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, the victim also filed a defamation case with judicial magistrate court of Kalapara upazila yesterday accusing three--publisher, editor and reporter--of a daily. Judge Md Jamal Hossain ordered that Kalapara Upazila Social Welfare Officer will look into the matter and hearing on the case will be held on November 3.

Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner Md Reaz Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that the Prime Minister's Office had asked him to look into the incident

and subsequently, he asked local police to take lawful action.

Major Rajib Amin, commander of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) camp in Patuakhali, told this correspondent that Rab on Wednesday invited AL leader Rakibul Ahsan, who awarded the fines through a village arbitration, to provide Rab with his version of the incident but he did not appear till last evening.

Kamrul Huda Siddiqui alias Sumon, project coordinator for Anirban, a local rights body, said they are trying to liaise with Rab and local police so that they can rescue the victim and send her to a safe home in Dhaka.

"It will not be possible to take any step till the victim is rescued from the grips of political persons," he added.

Pintu, Taher

FROM PAGE 1 remand for Taher even though they were taken on different terms of remand for interrogation.

Defence lawyers Masud Ahmed Talukder and Sanaullah Miah filed petitions for cancelling the remand prayers saying the prosecution submitted fresh remand prayers to harass their clients and implicate several BNP leaders.

After hearing both sides, the court rejected the defence's prayer and placed the accused on fresh remand.

The remand prayers came following a further investigation into the case filed by the prosecution on June 25 this year to trace suppliers of Arges grenade that were used in the attack on August 21, 2004.

In the forwarding report, newly appointed investigation officer Additional Superintendent of Police Abdul Kahar Akond said they need to remand the accused to find out clues when and why they held a meeting at Pintu's government residence before committing the offences.

On August 3, a Dhaka court ordered further investigation into the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally, stating that the probe conducted earlier could not identify the collectors and suppliers of grenades.

The court also ordered the inspector general of police to conduct the investigation and submit the report to the court within two months.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina had narrowly escaped the attack but 23 of her party leaders and workers died and over 300 were injured.

The eight absconding accused are Pintu's brothers Tajuddin and Maulana Liton, Anisul Mursalin and his brother Mahibul Muttakin, Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Howlader, Jahangir Alam Badar and Khalilur Rahman.

The CID, which had misdirected the investigation during BNP-Jamaat-led four-party rule, finally pressed charges in June last year accusing Pintu and 21 Huji members including its top leader Mufti Abdul Hannan.

removed, he added. If Lt Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Limited is formed in the pattern of Dhaka Club, Gulshan Club and Uttara Club Limited it will be an exclusive club, he said.

If the club is turned into an exclusive zone it will become a den of various anti-social activities, said Hussein.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), an environmental group, and Institute of Architects Bangladesh jointly filed a writ petition against commercial uses of the playground by Dhanmondi Club during BNP-Jamaat coalition rule.

Following the petition the High Court (HC) on April 24, 2004 directed the Dhaka City Corporation not to use Dhanmondi playground for any purposes other than sports.

DCC, the official custodian of the playground, has long been playing a dubious role in maintaining the playground. It has done nothing so far to implement the HC order.

Moeen's power

FROM PAGE 1 filing of the case.

They raised the question how the defendant, who is still staying out of the country, could sign the vokalatnama. So, the signature of the vokalatnama should be rejected, the prosecution appealed to the court.

On the contrary, the defence told the court they would file written objection against the prosecution.

Judge SM Saiful Islam of the Court of Third Joint District Judge, Dhaka fixed October 20 for further hearing.

Tuku was present during yesterday's hearing and sought justice before the court.

On July 12, Tuku filed the Tk 100 crore defamation suit accusing the former general of making derogatory remarks that damaged his (Tuku's) reputation.

On a petition filed by Tuku, the court the same day asked Moeen to explain in three weeks why his property would not be attached.

On March 27, 2007 Gen Moeen said at a tea party at the National Parade Square that corrupt politicians had siphoned off at least Tk 20,000 crore from the energy sector during the four-party rule, reads the complaint.

The party was held in honour of the freedom fighters.

5 killed

FROM PAGE 16 granddaughter Happy, 4, of Narayanpur village in the upazila and auto-rickshaw driver Mizanur Rahman.

Police said the Feni-bound bus from Comilla knocked the three-wheeler at about 9:45am, leaving its three male passengers dead on the spot.

Happy died on the way to Comilla Medical College Hospital after the collision.

The injured were admitted to the same hospital where Mizanur succumbed to his fatal injuries after admission.

MP's men

FROM PAGE 16 However the municipal mayor rescued the officials and patched things up by distributing sweetmeats, the lawmaker added.

The victims told The Daily Star that Abu, a bodyguard of the lawmaker, entered the upazila land revenue office around 3:00pm Wednesday and demanded lease of government land in Marokkhola area of the town on the basis of recommendation of the lawmaker.

The bodyguard accompanied by party cadres forced the officials go on motorcycles to the residence of the lawmaker in Kaporpaty area of the district town at about 3:20 pm. They got angry after the officials told them that the decision regarding land was under the jurisdiction of the DC.

The lawmaker rebuked and physically assaulted them for ignoring his recommendations, the victims alleged, adding that the MP also ordered party cadres to detain them in a room.

The officials were then tied and detained in a room until the local municipal mayor and upazila AL president rescued them at about 4:15pm. The assaulted officials then filed the complaints with the UNO for necessary action.

Mayor Rafiuddin Ahmed Ferdous said, "We tried to resolve the misunderstanding between the land revenue officials and the lawmaker."

Water crisis

FROM PAGE 16 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Dhaka Wassa and M Nazrul Islam, director general of RDA yesterday in this regard.

The Wassa board chairman also said, draft of the project will be sent to the planning commission soon for approval.

"Dhaka Wassa can only produce about 85 percent safe drinking water against the current demand. Utilisation of the rain and floodwater will ease the tremendous pressure on groundwater," Mostofa said.

When there is no rain or floodwater the plant will also extract water from underground, Mostofa added.

Groundwater in Dhaka city is depleting alarmingly as the water supply is mostly dependent on groundwater. The current demand of water in Dhaka city is around 210 crore litres per day while Wassa has the capacity to produce up to 180 crore litres.

Of the total water demand, 85 percent is met by underground sources by using 491 deep tube-wells. Three surface water treatment plants in and around Dhaka supply the rest 17 percent by using water from the adjacent rivers.

US, Iran talk nuke

FROM PAGE 16

The US envoy at the talks, William Burns, also met separately with Iranian negotiator Saeed Jalili, in a rare official encounter between representatives of the arch-foes, a US spokesman said.

US State Department deputy spokesman Robert Wood refused to reveal details of the encounter, but it highlights the new US engagement policy favoured by US President Barack Obama since he succeeded George W Bush in January.

It is the first time that Iranian and US officials holds direct talks on a bilateral issue since the two sides broke relations 30 years ago, although meetings took place during the Bush years to discuss Iraq and Afghanistan, a US official said.

Amid widening Western concerns about whether Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb, the international powers have urged Iran to give the International Atomic Energy Agency access to the previously secret nuclear site near the holy city of Qom.

The talks with the UN Security Council's five permanent members and Germany provide Iran an opportunity to come clean about its nuclear ambitions, Wood said.

But he warned that US patience has its limits.

"This is the first time that we've agreed to sit down with Iran as a full member of the P5+1 discussions," he told journalists.

"We're willing to engage in this process but we're not going to do it forever. There's going to come a point when we're not going to engage," he said.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned Iran on the eve of the talks that it risks "greater isolation and international pressure" if it refuses to give access to nuclear facilities and freeze sensitive activities.

French Defence Minister Herve Morin said his country would press for new sanctions against Iran if it fails to clear up nuclear suspicions by December.

Nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili told representatives of world powers at Geneva talks on Thursday that Iran will never give up its "absolute" rights on its controversial atomic programme, ISNA news agency reported.

Iran denies that it is seeking a bomb. But the UN Security Council has already imposed three sets of sanctions on Iran for refusing to end its uranium enrichment.

"Iran is in total contradiction with its international commitments and every day shows that

it is pursuing its nuclear military programme," Morin told Le Figaro newspaper.

"The Islamic republic of Iran will never give up its absolute rights," Jalili told EU negotiator Javier Solana and representatives of six world powers during the first round of talks, ISNA said.

It said that during the talks Jalili comprehensively explained the framework of Iran's package of proposals, which takes into consideration economic, international security and political issues.

Jalili also stressed the need for complete global disarmament and called for strategies to achieve that aim to be put into place, ISNA said.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said he hoped a breakthrough could be reached in Geneva to avoid sanctions. "Sometimes they are useful but we are not talking about the sanctions in Geneva so far," he said.

Russia and China have been reluctant to impose more sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme.

Israel's vice prime minister Silvan Shalom dismissed the talks as a "waste of time," saying Iran would never give up its alleged bid to acquire nuclear weapons. He called for "real" sanctions.

The talks between Iran's top nuclear negotiator and the international envoys are the first since Obama took office.

The Iranians began the meeting by reiterating that the nuclear standoff was part of a wider range of issues that need to be addressed, "but at least they were talking nuclear towards the end of the morning," a Western diplomat said.

The United States wants Iran to respond to an international offer to suspend sanctions in exchange for Iran halting nuclear enrichment. The revelation of the new site has added a sense of urgency, a US official said.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said Iran was "on the wrong side of the law" by not declaring the new plant to its agency before last week. The IAEA asked Iran for access to the site "as soon as possible," Iranian state television said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad signalled for the first time Wednesday a willingness to discuss enrichment operations at the talks, saying Tehran could allow a third party to enrich uranium for a reactor.

He also proposed a framework for discussions with the six powers, including a "summit of leaders to talk about all proposals" of common interest, including nuclear proliferation.

Quake deaths

FROM PAGE 1 name, said they were treating hundreds of people for broken bones, head injuries and trauma, many of whom had accidents when the quake hit.

"We are running out of doctors and nurses because we are overwhelmed with patients," he said.

In front of a collapsed school, 49-year-old mother Andriani waited in tears as police picked through the rubble for her 14-year-old daughter and dozens of other children believed trapped inside.

"I've been waiting here since yesterday. I haven't been home yet and keep praying to God my daughter is alive," she said, her reddened eyes darting back and forth across the rubble for signs of life.

Police said the bodies of eight children had been hauled from the school, a college where they had been taking extra classes, while another nine youngsters had been pulled out alive.

Authorities said they were suffering from a desperate shortage of heavy machinery but the military said planes loaded with tents and blankets had been dispatched to help the thousands left homeless by the disaster.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who returned from the United States and flew to Padang, said emergency services should prepare for the worst.

"It's better to overestimate than to underestimate," he told reporters. "It is better to send more enforcement, especially in emergency aid... which can help those who are still buried in the rubble."

The government said it had approved 26 million dollars in cash to help victims and international aid groups dispatched relief teams.

The quake struck off Sumatra's west coast, 47 kilometres (29 miles) northwest of Padang on a major faultline that scientists have long warned was set to release pent-up energy.

A series of earthquakes in recent years, including one of magnitude 8.2 that struck Bengkulu province in September 2007 and another off

Aceh that triggered the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, have released energy along the faultline.

"West Sumatra is like a supermarket for geological disasters. There are active volcanoes, landslides, land quakes caused by faults," Geological Disaster Mitigation and Volcanology Centre head Suroto told AFP by phone.

Dozens of aftershocks followed Wednesday's quake, including a major one Thursday which the US Geological Survey measured at 6.8 and said struck on land 225 kilometres south-east of Padang.

The earthquakes followed a massive 8.0-magnitude tremor that spawned a deadly tsunami in the Samoan islands of the South Pacific.

Both disaster zones sit on the volatile "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic instability around the Pacific rim.

Intelligence

FROM PAGE 16 for foreign students that include 54 for students of Saar countries.

Dhaka Medical College will hold the admission test at Dhaka University while Khaleida Zia Medical College at Titumir College and Salimullah Medical College at Eden Girls' College. Other medical colleges will arrange the tests on their campuses, he said.

"We have asked the law enforcement agencies to assist the college authorities in holding the admission tests," said the director.

A unified admission test for private medical colleges will be held in mid-November after completion of admission process at public medical colleges, said Shefayet.

All private medical colleges have to hold admission tests simultaneously the same day with a unified question paper to ease sufferings of students and guardians, said Shah Monir Hossain, director general of DGHS and convener of the committee for conducting admission tests for private medical colleges.

A total of 3,070 seats are available at 39 private medical colleges across the country.

Huji first to use

FROM PAGE 1 Chittagong division as a cover for militant activities.

Huji operatives and Rohingya had similar looks and dialects and it helped them a lot.

Throughout the first half of the 90s, law enforcement agencies either ignored their activities or encouraged those thinking the militants might help them deal with the local insurgents, said the sources.

Apart from the hill areas, the militants set up camps in deep forests of Fatikchhari, Putia, Hathazari, Raozan, Rangunia and Satkania in Chittagong.

In 2004, police happened to bust two militant camps in Hathazari and Rangunia upazilas.

The Hathazari camp was set up just two months before the raid. By the time it was closed it was used to train over 60 youths in arms operation.

Apart from hill tracts in Chittagong, the Huji also set up some training camps in Sylhet region and remote rural areas in northern districts, said a source who had worked

as a trainer for the militant group.

After Huji had their camps dismantled in 2005, its trainers moved to places across the country to remain beyond the police dragnet.

They began working as teachers, imams and muazzins at madrasas and mosques.

The Huji had mainly used government lands to build training camps at that time.

The statements of the JMB operatives arrested during the Rapid Action Battalion's raid on Khagrachhari camp however point to a shift in that trend.

They said they had set up the camp at Khagrachhari on a four-acre land JMB purchased in the name of farming.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Rab's Additional Director General Col Mizanur Rahman Khan said, "We have long been keeping a close watch on the hill tracts. Now we are focusing on forest areas in Chittagong, Sylhet and Panchagarh too to find out if militants have any camps there."

New passport

FROM PAGE 1 after a four and a half hours long meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

He blamed the last caretaker government for not giving due importance to the MRP project and delaying it.

Salam said the present government promptly took steps to finalise the project for issuing MRP before expiry of the international deadline.

The committee chairman also accused the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government of delaying implementation of the project.

"The authorities concerned will evaluate the tender documents after the October 27 deadline for submitting tenders and choose a competent firm to implement the project," said Salam, also lawmaker of ruling Awami League.

Bangladesh must intro-

duce MRP by April next year to comply with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Failure to do it might jeopardise Bangladeshis citizens' access to international labour market.

Replying to a query, he said there is no scope for missing the deadline as it will put the country and its citizens in trouble.

"The countrymen will not be able to travel abroad unless we meet the deadline," he said.

On traffic congestion, Salam said the committee asked police personnel to prevent illegal parking and take action against violators of traffic rules to ease tailbacks.

In reply to another question, he said law and order across the country is satisfactory.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1 with full facilities on our earmarked premises.

"Our mission and vision is to improve and develop infrastructure of the club with modern facilities for sportsmen, club members and residents."

The club's vision is to cater sports and recreational facilities, develop infrastructure and provide