

Two Iraqi families slaughtered in pre-polls violence

Six children among 11 killed

AFP, Baghdad

Gunmen brutally murdered two Iraqi families, killing 11 people in total including six children yesterday as a spate of attacks hit the country less than two weeks before elections.

The family members were killed in their homes in and around Baghdad, while another 11 people died in violence across Iraq, including three in a suicide car bombing and a police commando who was shot dead by a sniper.

The worst incident occurred in Al-Wehdah, a predominantly Shia Muslim town in an ethnically mixed area about 20 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of Baghdad.

"The four gunmen arrived at 5:00 am, they knocked on his door," Baghdad security spokesman Major General Qassim Atta told a news conference, referring to Hussein Majid Marbus, the father of the family that was assassinated.

"He opened the door, they asked him for money. He tried to defend himself and they killed him. After that, they entered the house and they slit the throats of the mother, five daughters and one son."

"We cannot exclude that some insurgent groups were using criminals to create strife before the election."

Atta said the boy was seven years old, while the girls were eight to 15.

Four men, who were arrested at a checkpoint shortly after the murders, were presented to the media blindfolded and interrogated by Atta in front of reporters.

During the questioning, one of the killers, who was

named as Haleem, said the gunmen had demanded 150,000 Iraqi dinars (130 dollars) from Marbus, a businessman.

"But he refused, so we killed him," Haleem said.

One knife, two guns, blood-stained gloves, cash and jewellery were recovered from the men.

Atta's office had earlier said some of the family had been beheaded, but said instead at the news conference throats had been slit. The Arabic word for beheading, "dabbah," can also mean the slitting of the throat.

A second family, comprising a mother and her two daughters, was shot dead in their home in the mostly Shia north Baghdad district of al-Hurriyah, a police official said on condition of anonymity.

"Both my sisters arrived yesterday to visit my mother. They killed them all," said Salam al-Saadi, a 28-year-old hospital worker, at the scene of the murders, where blood from the victims was splattered on the floor and the walls.

Neighbours in the area said masked gunmen entered the house around 10:00 pm on Sunday evening, and a commotion broke out soon after.

The execution-style killings occurred ahead of parliamentary elections on March 7, the second legislative polls since dictator Saddam Hussein was ousted after the invasion.

Meanwhile, in the western Iraqi city of Ramadi, a suicide car bomb struck an interior ministry detention centre, killing a man, his six-year-old son and a policeman, said a police officer and a doctor at the city's hospital.

Land officer

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nirbahi officer.

Mostafizur said he obstructed building a shop illegally on a piece of government land near Sonali Bank at Kachua Municipal Market yesterday evening.

After the incident, about 20 to 25 people led by Emran, Mamun and Awlad entered his room and attacked him. They also threatened to kill his wife and children.

On information, Kachua UNO Nure Alam Siddiqui visited Mostafizur at the hospital.

BCL Kachua unit president Ahsan Habib Pranjali said he heard about the incident. He added Emran is the joint secretary of upazila unit BCL, but Mamun is an outsider.

He however said Mamun has been seen with the Jubo League leaders and is the son of Idu, former member of Kadla Union Parishad.

Pranjali also said they informed the matter to local lawmaker Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and district BCL president Zahidul Islam Roman.

He said if anyone of BCL is found involved in the incident, they will be expelled from the organization.

Officer-in-Charge of Kachua police station confirmed the incident. He said the officials at the UNO office are preparing to file a complaint.

Action will be taken against the attackers after the complaint is filed, he added.

DAHOGRAM ANGARPOTA Dhaka, Delhi agree to install power cable next month

BSS, Rangpur

India and Bangladesh yesterday agreed to install underground electric cables through the Tinbigha Corridor from March 1 for power supply to Dahogram and Angarpota under Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat district.

The agreement was reached at a District Magistrate level meeting between the two countries near Tinbigha Corridor inside India at the initiative of the Indian government.

A private business firm of Bangladesh will set up the cable network, engaging 30 workers for two days and 21 daily basis workers for the remaining days to complete the works by March 16.

"If required, the installation of the cables might be continued till March 20," an official told BSS after the meeting.

Earlier, as per directions of the two governments, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) coordinated the initiative for supplying electricity to Dahogram and Angarpota, he said.

District Magistrate (DM) and Deputy Commissioner of Lalmonirhat Md Alauddin Fakir led the five-member Bangladesh delegation while DM of Koochbehar Sreemoti Mohapatra led the five-member Indian delegation in the meeting.

The meeting lasted for three and a half hours in a cordial environment.

The Indian side assured of extending all possible cooperation for reaching electricity to the people of Dahogram and Angarpota.

The Bangladesh delegation also proposed keeping the Tinbigha Corridor open round the clock, resolving the long-standing enclave issues and construction of a flyover by the Indian side on the corridor.

The Indian delegation appreciated the proposals and assured that those would be raised before the concerned higher Indian authorities for further steps.

Alauddin and Mohapatra briefed the local journalists after the meeting.

Talking to BSS, chairman of Dahogram-Angarpota union Saiful Islam expressed satisfaction over the decisions and congratulated both the governments for resolving the power supply issue.

Rangpur Sector Commander of BDR Colonel Mohammad Khairuzzaman told BSS that the inhabitants of Dahogram and Angarpota will now get electricity that will usher in a new era of sustainable developments there.

Presently, there is a health complex, a union parishad office, a high school, four government primary schools and some other installations in Dahogram and Angarpota, and activities of all of these institutions will soon get momentum, he added.

A number of Dahogram and Angarpota dwellers including youths and students yesterday congratulated the gesture of Indian government and termed it as a huge step forward towards cementing friendly ties further between the neighbours.

Commanding Officer of Lalmonirhat 31 Rifles Battalion of BDR Lt Col Aslam Hossain, Chief Engineer of PDB, Rangpur Abdul Hamid, his Executive Engineer Golam Murtuza and Assistant Commissioner Alam Hossain assisted the DM of Lalmonirhat.

The Indian DM was assisted by Commandant of 17 BSF Battalion Amit Kumar Tyagi, Additional DM KC Mandal, Mehliganji Sub-Divisional Officer MN Das and Executive Engineer of Central Power and Works Department N Basu.

HC orders

FROM PAGE 1

why earth filling and constructing structures in the canal should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir came up with the order upon a public interest writ petition filed by three local businessmen of Keraniganj -- Hazi Md Asad Khan, Humayun Kabir and Delwar Hossain.

They filed the petition seeking a direction from the HC to stop earth filling, encroachment and constructing structures in the canal to protect the environment.

The petitioners' lawyer advocate Manzil Murshid told the court that earth filling and encroachment in any river or canal is restricted as per law.

But illegal structures are being erected on the Suvadda Khal, lifeline of Keraniganj, violating the provisions of law, he said.

The petition annexed some photographs and local media reports on encroachments in the canal.

LGRD and cooperatives secretary, deputy commissioner and chairman of district council of Dhaka, Upazila Nirbahi Officer and officer-in-charge of Keraniganj, businessmen Mizanur Rahman and Milan Khan were asked to reply the rule and comply with the order.

Govt moves to use

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global climate change.

"Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. The government has moved to make the act to protect people and their property from the adverse effects of climate change," said Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad after the meeting.

He said the government has already allocated Tk 700 crore for the fund. The Ministry of Environment and Forests would allocate the fund to relevant NGO projects.

Ainun Nishat, senior adviser on climate change for the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Asia, said Bangladesh should prepare for judicious utilisation of the fund.

"Huge local and foreign fund will be channelled to the trust. Therefore, a mechanism is needed for the fund management," he told The Daily Star.

Held at the Secretariat, the cabinet meeting approved in principle two other drafts--

Domestic Violence (Resistance and Protection) Act, 2010 and Slaughtering of Cattle and Controlling the Quality of Meat Act, 2010.

The PM's press secretary said domestic violence against women impacts adversely on children ultimately harming the future generations. "This should be stopped," he quoted the premier.

In the meeting Hasina said she came to know that slaughtering of animals does not take place at hygienic places. "This should be done at a clean and hygienic place to avert health risks," observed the premier.

Recently Bangladesh has started exporting halal (animals killed according to Muslim law) meat to Malaysia. "There is a worldwide demand of halal meat and an act is needed for the export of meat," added Azad.

Meanwhile, the cabinet sent back the draft Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2010 to information ministry for some corrections and asked it to place the revised draft in the next meeting.

Govt draws up

FROM PAGE 1

framework setting out key indicators and means to monitor progress in relation to national poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP).

The JCS will cover issues like how to improve aid management capacity, streamline the project approval and implementation processes and harmonise donor support.

According to the action plan, the government will have the new civil service act by 2010 and the development partners will provide necessary support in this regard.

The government gives high priority to management of water resources, including dredging of silted rivers and climate-change issues and climate-change adaptation. With the help of development partners it will implement water related development programmes comprehensively, involving all parties concerned, reads a draft joint statement of the government and the development partners.

A climate-change Multi-donor Trust Fund will be set up under the government's leadership and with the World Bank providing technical support. The administrative and fiduciary arrangements will be worked out shortly. Development partners will provide substantial grant funds.

The government will look for ways to connect Bangladesh

with neighbouring countries-- India and Myanmar--and allow Nepal and Bhutan use Bangladesh as transit country. Government expects development partners to back this.

The government will strive to deliver vital information and services regarding information and communication technology (ICT) to citizens even in remote areas, the draft statement reads.

ERD sources said the government would set up one IT centre under public-private partnership initiative at every union. If people at rural areas have any complaints, those would reach the high ups in the government through the centres.

Various programmes for improvements in energy and power sector have been planned. The plans include setting up of an energy development agency and energy and power fund, the statement reads.

The donors had urged the government to further strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Election Commission. They also recommended revision of "Domestic Violence Bill" and the government had declared its intention to review the bill.

The government and the development partners may review the Action Plan at Local Consultative Group meeting to monitor progress in its implementation.

BDR carnage

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Abdul Kahar Akand, a special superintendent of police.

The number of accused will be the highest in the history of the country's criminal cases. There is no instance of several hundred people being charged in one single case, they added.

An investigator said 700 to 800 BDR troops would be charged on several offences that include "murder, attempt to murder, wilfully causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means, holding officers and their families hostage, looting the armoury and using firearms without authority, theft, extortion, robbery, destroying evidence of murders by hiding bodies and staging explosions".

Moreover, intimidation, conspiracy and abetment in murder and other offences, terrorising people by indiscriminate shooting, and destruction of public properties had been considered in the investigation.

Some sources say the probe

could not piece together the conspiracy and motives behind the mutiny.

Around 8,000 BDR men were present at Pikhana on February 25-26. So far, 2,163 of them have been arrested in connection with the carnage.

The CID has also arrested 32 civilians including former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, ward Awami League leader Torab Ali and ward BNP leader Suraiya Begum.

Of those detained, 2,168 were placed on remand of various lengths, and 522 of them gave confessional statements under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Nine others gave deposition to magistrates as witnesses.

Later, 225 BDR soldiers appealed to courts for retraction of their confessional statements.

Besides Nasiruddin Pintu, Jamaat leader Abdur Razzak and ruling AL lawmaker Fazle Noor Taposh were interrogated during the course of the investigation.

Mugging spree

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After withdrawing the cash they were returning to their shop in a rickshaw.

When they reached Jhigatola three muggers riding on a motorcycle blocked the way of their rickshaw and wielded weapons at them, when all of a sudden two staff jumped off the rickshaw and ran for shelter to Hotel New Gausia. The snatchers chased them into the hotel.

The muggers opened three rounds of gunfire, which hit Giasuddin and hotel staff Bahar on their arms.

Giasuddin was admitted into Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Bahar was taken to Pangu Hospital but he was later shifted to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD).

Mustafa Ahmed, sub-inspector of Hazaribag thana, said that the muggers could not snatch the money as local people came to help the victims.

Police recovered the cartridges of three bullets from inside the hotel.

EC against redrawing

FROM PAGE 16

limit of population disparity among them.

The immediate past caretaker government repealed the old law under the state of emergency in 2008, and promulgated an ordinance introducing some new provisions for functioning of the union parishads. But the ordinance ceased to have effect on February 25 last year, and the incumbent government enacted a new law on October 15 the same year.

The EC and the caretaker government however had planned to complete holding all due local government elections before the last parliamentary poll held in December 2008. In July 2007, the chief election commissioner had even announced a tentative timeframe for the local government polls.

But the initiative could not move forward due to strong opposition from political parties, as they did not want the local government elections prior to the parliamentary poll.

Then the EC again planned to begin holding a series of elections to the union parishads, municipalities, and to Dhaka and Chittagong city corporations last year. But that effort also failed at the time due to the absence of relevant laws, which were made by the incumbent government between September and October last year.

numerous villages or mauzas will be divided if the wards are redemarcated based on the new guideline, which might cause unnecessary social disorder, and litigations against the move.

"The provision should be amended to avert any such situation," says the EC in the letter.

The commission officials said if the existing provision remains in the law then the wards of union parishads must be redemarcated all over the country, as a large number of those have huge population disparities.

"If the redemarcation begins now, it will not be possible to hold the elections this year," a senior EC official said.

The EC in the letter says it has almost completed all preparations for holding the polls to around 4,500 union parishads between May and July this year.

The last union parishad elections were held between January 25 and March 16 in 2003. The next elections were supposed to be held in early 2008, but that could not happen due to imposition of a state of emergency in the country, and later due to the absence of a union parishad act.

The previous union parishad law did not have any provision for redemarcation of wards maintaining specific

Jamaat leader

FROM PAGE 16

Rajshahi University. Police said they recovered those from below a staircase of the hall around 9.30am after the university authorities had informed them.

Our staff correspondent from Rajshahi added, the Rajshahi city Jamaat assistant general secretary Siddik Hossain, arrested over the February 9 Rajshahi University violence, was taken on another three days' police remand yesterday.

The additional chief metropolitan magistrate court granted the police three days when they prayed for five days' remand against Siddik.

Meanwhile, police arrested Faruk Hossain, 26, a Shibir cadre, on charge of killing of Hafizur Rahman Shahin, another Shibir cadre of Rajshahi University unit, from Chamar Bazar in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj Sunday evening.

A court sent him to jail after he was produced before it yesterday, police said.

Anti-cancer drugs

FROM PAGE 1

Unnayan Kartripakkha Chairman Nurul Huda filed the contempt of court petition with the court against MD of the company Shamim Islam on charges of misquoting a HC order in two separate appeals submitted to the Rajuk chairman.

The HC on February 3 in an order summarily rejected a writ petition challenging a Rajuk notice that asked Jamuna Builders Ltd to demolish the unauthorised top four floors of the 10-storey Jamuna Future Park Shopping Complex.

Shamim the same day submitted two appeals to the Rajuk chairman against the Rajuk notice, stating that he submitted the appeals as per the court's direction.

Earlier, on February 8, the HC bench issued a rule upon Shamim to explain within 10 days why proceedings should not be brought against him for misquoting the HC order.

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DU probing

FROM PAGE 16

and the girl and her guardians took place on February 21, the International Mother Language Day, when the students teased the girl in front of the residence of the vice chancellor of the university. At one stage, they beat up the girl and her guardians with hockey sticks and cricket stumps.

Noman and Morshed, second year students of Sergeant Zahurul Haque hall, Biplob and Shaker of Hazi Muhammad Mohsin Hall, Setu, a first year student of Jashim Uddin hall and Noor Shahin of Surjo Sen hall were among the attackers, said the witnesses.

BCL's DU unit president Sohela Rana Tipu termed the incident a shame and said, "We will take actions if the culprits were identified as BCL activists and they will be handed over to the law enforcement authority."

Meanwhile, in a statement, women parliamentarian members of BNP condemned the attack on the female student.

The signatories are Rumana Mahmud, Hasina Ahmed, Rehana Akter Rana, Rasheda Begum Hira, Syeda Ashifa Ashrafi Papiya, Nilufar Chowdhury Moni and Shammi Akter.

Down in dumps

FROM PAGE 16

Sumita, whose name was just included in the latest electoral roll, stepped forward to narrate the horrific incidents they experienced Saturday.

She alleged 40 to 50 Bangalee settlers equipped with weapons and sticks attacked their village around 10:00am. They beat up the indigenous villagers severely and stabbed some with sharp weapons, leaving 20 people injured.

The attackers also set their houses on fire in presence of army personnel, she alleged.

"The village turned into a battle field after an army sergeant was injured in a counter attack by the angry indigenous people. They hacked him with a sharp weapon during the fight," she continued.

In retaliation, hundreds of bullets were fired on the ethnic people and one hit her mother, she said.

"Everyone of the village including those from the Buddhist monastery fled leaving my bullet-hit mother behind," she added.

"We did not dare to go there and look for my mother as section 144 was imposed in the area by Baghaichhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer AHM Humayun Kabir.

"Later we shrugged off every shred of fear and returned to the spot with the help of some indigenous people and recovered my mother's body."

She said a chopper came to airlift the wounded sergeant, but no-one bothered about the injured ethnic people including her mother.

"I know my mother would not return but I want punishment to those who are responsible for her death," she said.

"We need food, clothe, medicine and food, but till now the government has not done anything for us. We are here passing sleepless nights," she said.

"Where we will go? Who can look after our family now?" she asked as she struggled to contain herself.

Ethnic people

FROM PAGE 1

Samo Odhakar Andolan and Parbatya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad (PBCP) brought procession and held protest rallies in the town blaming indigenous people for the arson attacks on Friday and Saturday.

They claimed that indigenous people first set the settlers' houses on fire.

In Khagrachhari, indigenous people under the banner of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) hoisted black flags at several places in eight upazilas protesting the Baghaichhari incidents.

The UPDF, which opposes the peace accord, called a daylong road and waterway blockade in Khagrachhari and Rangamati today. It will also hold a candle-lit vigil on February 24 and a protest rally on February 26.

The organisation urged indigenous students to boycott classes on Thursday in all educational institutions in CHT to protest the incident.

The UPDF held a rally at Swanirbhar Bazar with its district coordinator Ujjal Smrity Chakma in the chair. Organising secretary of central committee of Hill Women Federation Rina Dewan and Pahari Chhatra Parishad secretary Aprushi Marma also spoke.

The PCJSS leaders at the rally in Rangamati blamed Bangalee settlers for arson attacks and violence in nine

Baghaichhari villages and alleged that army abetted the settlers.

They said the incident would have never happened if the army had played a neutral role. Army men shot the indigenous people and instigated settlers to set fire to the houses of indigenous people.

The PCJSS leaders also demanded punishment of Lt Col Wasim, zone commander of Baghaichhat zone, saying army men opened fire on indigenous people in his presence.

They said the main reason of unrest in the hill region is the army and peace will prevail there if they are withdrawn.

The PCJSS leaders demanded suspension of "Operation Uttaran" by the army, immediate withdrawal of army men from Baghaichhat and deployment of additional police forces instead at Baghaichhat to restore peace and communal harmony between indigenous people and Bangalees.

The rally was presided over by PCJSS Vice President Laxmi Prasad Chakma.

General secretary of CHT Mohila Samity Suprova Chakma, PCJSS information and publicity secretary Sajeeb Chakma, its district unit secretary Bodhi Satta Chakma and Pahari Chhatra Parishad president Udayan Tripura also spoke.

MD relieved

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Road watch

FROM PAGE 1

introduced on major city roads and intersections.

However after a few weeks congestion resumed to normal levels.

Joint Commissioner for Traffic Shafiqur Rahman told The Daily Star that traffic conditions deteriorated because police officials were busy fighting crime and had not been fully involved in the campaign when it began.

Shafiqur Rahman said that rules regarding traffic signals and the lane system will be strictly enforced and that each traffic rule violator will face a penalty of Tk 1,000 and a suspended driving licence.

The fast lane is designated for private cars, microbuses, jeeps and similar vehicles, while the middle lane is for minibuses, buses, covered vans, trucks and such vehicles.

The slow lane is intended for CNG-run auto rickshaws, pickup vans, motorbikes and other vehicles.

4 secretaries

FROM PAGE 16

to the religious affairs ministry as secretary.

Earlier, the High Court declared illegal the appointment of Awal as law secretary.

Science and ICT Secretary Abdul Awal Mazumder has been made member of the Land Reforms Board while acting religious affairs secretary Abdur Rab Hawlader has been transferred to science and ICT ministry as an acting secretary.

Additional Secretary of Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry Md Shahidul Islam has been made acting secretary to the same division.

Earlier, he was serving as acting secretary to the division with current charge.