

80% Iraqi Qaeda leaders removed: US

BBC ONLINE

About 80% of al-Qaeda's leaders in Iraq have been captured or killed during the past three months, says the country's top US commander.

Only eight of the group's 42 chiefs in Iraq remained at large, Gen Ray Odierno told a Pentagon news conference.

But he cautioned against complacency, saying that, even with the setbacks, al-Qaeda was trying to regroup and would remain a problem for years.

"I will never take my eyes off of al-Qaeda," said the general.

He added that the number of attacks and casualty figures suffered by US troops had fallen to their lowest level since the US-led invasion of the country in 2003.

"All of those statistics for the first five months of 2010 are the lowest we've had on record."

Gen Odierno, who is leaving his post in the autumn, said the successes were rooted in the infiltration of a network in Mosul by US and Iraqi forces earlier this year.

"We made some significant inroads in Mosul, where their headquarters basically was," he said.

"And we got inside of AQL."

Good gesture

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rehabilitation, said a press release of the bank yesterday.

Along with the nation, the DBBL mourns the tragic death of 117 people in the fire, the release added.

Meanwhile, AB Bank Limited yesterday gave the prime minister Tk 50 lakh to distribute among the fire victims.

Condolence

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Dipu Moni said, "I am profoundly shocked to learn that a serious fire broke out in Dhaka, and claimed so many lives and injured so many people."

He expressed deepest condolence for the victims and most sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and injured persons.

Acting British High Commissioner in Dhaka in a message said, "we are very saddened by this tragic incident, my thoughts and prayers are all with those who have been affected."

Meanwhile, acting Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba yesterday joined a prayer at the Bangladesh embassy in Thimphu for the Thursday's fire victims in old Dhaka as Bangladesh observed a nationwide mourning.

The premier visited the embassy along with Education Minister of the Himalayan Kingdom Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdye and several other senior officials to join a special prayer seeking eternal blessings for the departed souls.

The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan has also expressed his deep sorrow over the grievous fire accident that took a heavy toll of lives in Dhaka on June 3, said a foreign ministry press release.

Dr Zalmay Rassoul, minister for foreign affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, made a phone call to the Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, yesterday and conveyed his deep grief and sorrow and condolence the loss of lives in the deadly fire related accident.

2 more city buildings

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A five-storey building at Nakhalpara Samitybazar and a four-storey one at Gandaria KB Road tilted and also developed cracks yesterday. But the high-rise at Shantinagar was proved not to be risky at all.

On Friday, a seven-storey building at Begunbari tilted, and a five-storey one in the same area collapsed on Tuesday night killing 25 people.

The incidents triggered rumours of building collapse or tilting at several places in the capital yesterday.

Contacted, Md Mamunur Rashid, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said a team from Tejgaon fire station rushed to Nakhalpara and started evacuation over 100 residents of the tilted building in the evening.

Major Shahjalal, director (operations) of Fire Service, said the building has tilted by two feet.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan and Rajuk Chairman

We picked up several of their leaders that did the financing, that did planning, that did recruiting."

This prompted a crack-down, which culminated in the deaths of Iraqi al-Qaeda leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who led an affiliate group, in an April air strike.

"They are clearly now attempting to reorganise themselves," said the general. "They're struggling a little bit."

"They've lost connection with [the al-Qaeda senior leadership] in Pakistan and Afghanistan."

Gen Odierno said he was confident he could safely reduce the number of US combat troops in Iraq to 50,000 within three months, as US President Barack Obama has promised.

He said there were currently 88,000 American troops in Iraq, supported by 90,000 contractors.

While Obama has pledged to withdraw all combat troops from Iraq by the end of August, up to 50,000 are expected to remain there until the end of 2011 to help train and equip Iraqi forces.

Drogba

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Sven-Goran Eriksson, said: "He may have an operation, but he is not out. He got a bad injury, a bone close to the elbow is broken, but he is going to a specialist and we will take it from there. We will wait until tomorrow evening. The doctors they can't say any more than that."

A wave of dismay swept across Ivorian football when the forward was helped off the pitch in distress in the 19th minute of Friday's match following a clash with the opposing defender Tulio, off whom a Drogba freekick had earlier deflected to give Ivory Coast the lead. Drogba was taken to hospital in Sion, Switzerland, where the Ivorians have been undergoing altitude training.

Drogba earlier informed French journalists that the injury would prevent him from playing in the World Cup but later retracted that and said an operation could salvage his hopes. That was backed up by spokesman of the Ivorian Football Federation, who said categorically: "He's not at all out of the World Cup. He can still play."

If Drogba does recover in time it would spare him a devastating blow -- the player has often spoken of his hope to crown what he reckons has been the finest season of his career by leading his country to glory at the first World Cup to be staged in Africa.

If he does miss the tournament, his country will be captained by the Manchester City defender Kolo Toure, who recognised that the loss of Drogba would be "a huge blow". Toure did try to find some silver lining, suggesting that if the striker were ruled out, it would at least provide the team with even more motivation to perform well.

"It's a huge blow because Didier is our captain, our friend and a very important player," said Toure. "But we need to keep our heads up and try to bounce back. There are quality players in this squad who will try to use this moment as an opportunity to shine. We will work hard to play well for Didier and if he really can't play we want him to get to South Africa with us. We need to be able to go on without him."

Md Nurul Huda visited the Nakhalpara building.

Meanwhile, Tejgaon Industrial Zone police yesterday arrested Md Siraj Mian, owner of the seven-storey tilted building at Begunbari. Residents were evacuated.

Siraj was produced in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

Several hundred residents of the Shantinagar high-rise were seen leaving the building throughout the day. Gas and electric connections to the building were cut off to avert accidents.

However, an expert team from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) which visited the building found no fault with it.

"We found no fault with the main structure," said Prof Syed Fakrul Amin, who headed the three-member Buet team that was called to examine the nature of cracks.

"We also suggested allowing the residents to return to the building, and restoring gas and electricity connections," he said.

BNP unlikely to return to JS today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament resumes sitting this afternoon where Finance Minister AMA Muhith is expected to place a report outlining trends in government income and expenditure with an analysis of the current economic status.

The BNP-led opposition, which stormed out of the parliament Wednesday night protesting the shutdown of the daily Amar Desh and arrest of its acting editor Mahmudur Rahman, is unlikely to return to the House today.

"The possibility of us returning to the parliament is very slim," BNP lawmaker MK Anwar, also a member of the BNP national standing committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia would present the party's proposals and stance on the next year's budget on June 7, said a BNP press release issued yesterday.

Amid probable absence of the main opposition lawmakers, the finance minister is scheduled to place the report informing the parliament about the progress in current year's budget implementation.

It will be the second report from the finance minister although he was supposed to place four such reports in the current fiscal year according to Public Money and Budget Management Act 2009.

Outlaw killed in Jhenidah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An operative of outlawed Gono Mukti Fouz was killed in a 'shootout' between their cohorts and the police in Shaikupa upazila of Jhenidah early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nasirul Islam alias Shuknal, 45, son of Nurul Islam alias Nuru Dakat of Bogra village in Shaikupa. He was accused in 10 cases, including four for murder, police said.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shaikupa Police Station said his team cordoned off a field at Komol Nagar village at about 3:00am when the gang was holding a clandestine meeting there.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the outlaws fired shots, prompting the police to retaliate which triggered a gunfight.

Shuknal got killed while his accomplices managed to flee. The law enforcers found his body near a bridge in the village.

The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Police recovered one shutter gun, one shotgun and four rounds of bullets from the spot.

Shuknal was leading the group which was involved in various anti-social activities including robbery and murder, all over Jhenidah and Magura districts for a long time, said Hossain.

A case has been filed in this connection.

Dhaka

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Abdur Rahman, an official of Meteorological Department, said they recorded 37mm rainfall between 6:00am and 3:00pm in the capital yesterday.

He said the monsoon has brought moderate to heavy rain across the country and it is likely to continue for three to four more days.

According to Met Office, from 6:00am to 6:00pm yesterday 43mm rainfall was recorded in Tangail, 36mm in Chandpur, 28mm in Faridpur, 24mm in Comilla, 19mm in Feni and the lowest in Rangpur was 1mm only.

Day of mourning

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Speaker M Abdul Hamid yesterday expressed deep shock at the loss of lives in the fire.

In a message, the speaker described the loss of lives as irreparable. He conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

He prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls and wished early recovery of the injured victims.

In another message, Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abdus Shahid condoled the death of the many people and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

Nimtoli reels

FROM PAGE 1

Not only in the capital, there was an outpouring of grief all over the country.

The nation observed a day of mourning yesterday. Houses raised black flags and businesses remained closed in remembrance of those killed in the fire.

In Nimtoli, life was far from normal despite efforts by the utility service providers and Dhaka City Corporation.

The residents passed the day in mourning and narrating the horrors they have been through.

Along with the service providers, police and military personnel were working to restore normalcy. But they were having difficulty for huge crowds.

Gas supply resumed in the morning. Desa supplied electricity through alternative power lines while Wasa distributed water from its tanks.

Fire-fighters and city corporation staff were busy removing rubble from the burnt-up buildings and shops.

Locals wore black badges and kept their businesses shut. They have decided to do so today and tomorrow as well.

Meanwhile, families yesterday identified seven more bodies at Dhaka Medical College Morgue. Eight bodies were yet to be identified as of filing this report at 1:15am.

Earlier in the afternoon, the three-member enquiry committee of the home ministry and CID explosives experts visited the spot.

The committee members talked to survivors, witnesses and on-duty law-enforcers and fire-fighters.

Iqbal Khan Chowdhury, chief of the probe body and additional home secretary,

told reporters they could not yet find out who owns the chemical go-down on the ground floor of the five-storey building, where the fire is believed to have started.

"Some say it's the house owner, while others say it's one of the tenants," he added.

The CID personnel collected various substances from the scene and sealed off the five-storey building.

As many as 41 bodies were retrieved from that building.

Mohibul Haque, deputy commissioner of Dhaka, yesterday told The Daily Star, "The buildings will take some time to be ready for use."

He said they were giving the affected families Tk 20,000 each to get by the crisis period.

"So far, we have listed only 54 names. We could not yet trace all victim families."

Asked, he said, "The government will not give any compensation for the shops and factories, as they are the ones to be blamed for the disaster. They should rather be fined."

Replying to another query, the DC said they were yet to decide whether to file any case in connection with the blaze.

Mohammad Khurshid Hossain, DMP deputy commissioner for Lalbagh, said, "As it was an accident, we have filed a general diary. And there is no possibility of bringing charges against anybody."

He also said, "The fire originated from an oil stove and later spread to the chemical go-down."

Bangladesh Society of Medicine, a forum of medical practitioners, in a press release yesterday said they have called off their strike in view of the Nimtoli and Begunbari tragedies.

Survived to suffer

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treatment at the 50-bed burn unit, which means it is struggling to provide services to patients five times higher than its capacity.

Some 60 doctors and nurses have been deployed to manage the excessive pressure, said Dr Sen.

Sunny, a teenage lying on a bed at the Burn and Plastic Surgery unit, was groaning in pain. Major portion of his legs, hands and face were burned in the fire.

Asked about another victim Mamun's condition, the doctor said, "He [Mamun] is out of danger, but it would take at least six months for him to get back to normal life."

Shabana, 35, was undergoing treatment at the burn unit and was groaning in pain. She lost her mother, grandmother and elder daughter in the fire. Her father is admitted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) as his condition is stated to be grave.

Relatives have not told Shabana about the tragedy of the family, as she might not be able to bear it.

"It was so dreadful that I thought the dooms day has come," said Kohinur Begum, attendant of a patient from Narsingdi while describing the condition of the hospital on Thursday night.

Mahmudur

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different views and democratic values. At the same time it will be considered as an impediment to democratic norms and culture."

According to the statement, the move would make some 700 journalists of the daily jobless putting their families into miseries.

The signatories of the statement were the editors Mahbulul Alam of The Independent, Reazuddin Ahmed of News Today, Matiuur Rahman of Prothom Alo, Mahfuz Anam of The Daily Star, Golam Sarwar of Shamokal, Abed Khan of daily Kaler Kantha, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury of the Daily Observer, Serajul Islam Choudhury of Notun Diganta, AMM Bahauddin of Inqilab, Alamgir Mohiuddin of daily Naya Diganta, Abul Asad of the Daily Sangram, Moazzem Hossain of The Financial Express, Shawkat Mahmud of Akhon, Nurul Kabir of New Age, Naeemul Islam Khan of Amader Shomoy, Salma Islam of Jugantor, Mostafa Kamal Mojmuder of the New Nation, Shyamol Dutta of Bhorer Kagoj, Toufique Imrose Khalidi of BDNews24.com, Shahjahan Sardar of Bangladesh Protidin, Rashidun-Nabi of Shokaler Khorob, Ekramul Haque of

She said the corridor was crammed with burn patients. Their hands, heads and faces were all burned. The children looked as if their skin had been removed from their bodies.

The authorities however managed the situation quickly as no patients of Nimtoli tragedy were found lying on the floor yesterday. They deployed more doctors and nurses to attend the excessive pressure.

Meanwhile, President Zillur Rahman visited the victims at the burn unit yesterday afternoon. He talked to the victims and enquired about treatment given to them.

Talking to the reporters, the president called upon well-off people to extend their hands for better treatment of the victims.

State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku, State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Qamrul Islam, lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury, President of Bangladesh Medical Association Prof Chowdhury Mahmud Hasan and Secretary General Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, Awami League Health Affairs Secretary Bodiuzzaman Bhuiyan Dablu and other leaders visited the Nimtoli survivors yesterday.

Scientists identify cancer stem cells

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong scientists say they have identified the cancer stem cells responsible for the spread of colorectal cancer to other organs and believe the find will revolutionise treatment.

Current treatments regard all cancer cells as alike, but the Hong Kong University researchers discovered that cancers contain a small number of stem cells responsible for starting and maintaining tumours.

"It will revolutionise the approach to cancer treatment in future," one researcher, Ronnie Poon, told the South China Morning Post.

"If you just target mature cancer cells, you are not targeting the roots of the disease. What the industry needs to work on now is drugs that will target cancer stem cells," the professor of surgery said.

The spread of colorectal cancer to other organs is usually fatal. The cancer is one of the most common in both men and women and kills around 50,000 people a year in the United States, according to the National Cancer Institute.

The ground-breaking research will help doctors to predict patients whose cancers are liable to spread and help development of treatments to specifically target the cancer stem cells, called CD26+, which are more resistant to conventional treatments than more mature cancer cells.

"Identification and characterisation of this subpopulation of cancer stem cells will enable us to evaluate for different molecular targeting drugs that can specifically target these cells," researcher Roberta Pang said in a press release on their findings.

"In the long term, it should facilitate the development of more useful, safe and specific drugs that can be used in combination with chemotherapy to completely eradicate the tumour."

Colorectal cancer is the second-most common cause of cancer-related death worldwide. Even with surgical removal of the primary tumour, cancer develops in other organs in more than 50 percent of patients, usually proving fatal despite further aggressive treatment and surgery.

Facebook

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Services, one of the Internet gateways handlers, said, "We opened Facebook to the users at 11:40pm following a BTRC directive."

The website's homepage was available around 11:42pm.

Around 11:25pm, BTRC Chairman Zia Ahmed told The Daily Star, "We received signal from government high-ups to resume Facebook access."

"It will open within few minutes," Ahmed had added.

Bangladesh 'temporarily' blocked access to the social networking website on Saturday last.

The ban came after the arrest of a youth for uploading satiric images of some leading politicians including the prime minister and leader of the opposition.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) said the popular website was blocked also for hosting of some anti-religious and pornographic links by users across the globe.

The decision triggered a barrage of criticism, especially from the youth.

Later, the BTRC contacted with the Facebook team to remove the offensive contents. And the site authorities sent feedback.

"I look forward to learning more about your local standards and working together to promote safe use of Facebook in Bangladesh," said Joe Sullivan, chief security officer of Facebook, said in a letter to BTRC.

"My team is responsible for managing law enforcement relations on Facebook and promoting a safe experience on the site for our users. I can be your main point of contact as we work through and establish detailed processes for removing troubling content in the future," Sullivan said in the letter.

"We are satisfied with the removal of offensive items by Facebook team. And now it's again open for all," said BTRC chairman.

He added, "We will strongly monitor the postings on the site."

Qatar agrees to supply LNG

UNB, Dhaka

Qatar has agreed to supply 500 million cubic feet (MMCF) of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Bangladesh.

This assurance came from the Gulf country during a meeting with a Bangladesh delegation led by Energy Secretary Mohammad Masbahuddin that returned home yesterday after a four-day visit to Qatar.

"We had a successful discussion with top officials of the Qatar's state-owned petroleum agency. They showed a positive indication to supply about 500mmcf liquefied gas to meet our deficit," said a member of the delegation.

Bangladesh has been experiencing nagging gas crisis that hit hard the country's industry and other business and also power generation. The present production is now estimated at 1,900mmcf against the demand of more than 2,400mmcf. To meet the daily deficit of 500mmcf, the government moved to import LNG on suitable terms of price and transportation.

As part of the move, the seven-member delegation of the energy ministry left for Doha, the capital of Qatar, last week to explore import of LNG.

Annual import requirement of LNG is estimated at 182.500 billion cubic feet to meet the deficit of 500mmcf per day, said a Petrobangla official.

To facilitate the import of LNG in bulk, Bangladesh also needs to build up huge infra-

BNP, Jamaat

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behind the move for trials.

Khaleda told the Jamaat leaders that BNP is talking about the issue from its viewpoint and Jamaat should go ahead with its own strategies.

During the meeting, Khaleda asked for all-out support from Jamaat for June 27 hartal.

Jamaat leaders said they would finalise their stance on the issue today.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Nizami said, "There is no alternative to waging a movement. BNP has already announced programmes to that end and we have taken those positively."

He also said that after discussing overall political situation they have agreed with BNP to forge a movement, as "the government has failed miserably and been persecuting the opponents".

This is the first meeting since the two parties sat before the general election in 2008.

Yesterday's was in a series of view-exchange meetings that the opposition chief has been holding with like-minded parties to drum up support for the programmes she announced last month.

Khaleda has already met leaders of Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Khelafat Majlish, Jatiya Gonotantrik Party, National Peoples Party, National Awami Party, National Democratic Party and other pro-BNP organisations.

Bus takes

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down on the ground."

Her body was kept in DMCH mortuary, as her father was yet to reach Dhaka.

Juthi's mother Shamsunnahar fainted at her Motijheel TNT Colony resident hearing the news of the accident. She was not informed of the death as of 8:00pm.

"Where is my daughter? I want to go to hospital to see what happened to my darling," Juthi's middle-aged mother could utter these words before she fainted for the second time.

Juthi's father Mohiuddin Ahmed Babul, who was visiting his village home in Mymensingh, was also not informed of the death.

"We just asked him to come sharp and told that his daughter was injured," said Shimu, a relative of Juthi.

"The reckless driver brought an end of her dream of becoming a professor," Ripa, her classmate, said as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Juthi, who was the eldest of two siblings, secured GPA 5 in SSC but closely missed the score in HSC.

structure including LNG terminal in the Bay with a floating storage and regasification unit as well.

The government wants the infrastructure either to be developed in private sector or under the public private partnership. It was estimated that an investment of \$600 million to \$1 billion will be required to build a floating LNG terminal where a CNG-carrying vessel with the carrying capacity of 3 billion cubic feet LNG can unload.

To transport the gas from the terminal to the onshore, the project will require setting up a 100km 30-inch gas pipeline at a cost of \$100 million. The state-owned Gas Transmission Company of Bangladesh has already initiated a move to build the gas pipeline.

Under the plan, a private firm could set up the terminal on build-own-operate basis and the government would be charged a fee against the use of the terminal. After meeting all expenses, per unit (1,000 cubic feet) gas will cost \$8-12 while the country's present gas production cost is below \$3.