

US used cluster bombs, killed civilians in Yemen: AI

AFP, London

A US cruise missile carrying cluster bombs was behind a December attack in Yemen that killed 55 people, most of them civilians, Amnesty International (AI) said yesterday.

The London-based rights group released photographs that it said showed the remains of a US-made Tomahawk missile and unexploded cluster bombs that were apparently used in the December 17, 2009 attack on the rural community of Al-Maajala in Yemen's southern Abyan province.

"Amnesty International is gravely concerned by evidence that cluster munitions appear to have been used in Yemen," said Mike Lewis, the group's arms control researcher.

"Cluster munitions have indiscriminate effects and unexploded bomblets threaten lives and livelihoods for years afterwards," he said.

"A military strike of this kind against alleged militants without an attempt to detain them is at the very least unlawful," said Philip Luther, deputy director of AI's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

Yemen's defence ministry had claimed responsibility for the attack without mentioning a US role, saying between 24 and 30 militants had been killed at an alleged Al-Qaeda training camp.

But a local official said 49 civilians, among them 23 children and 17 women, were killed "indiscriminately."

AI said that a Yemeni parliamentary committee reported in February that in addition to 14 alleged Al-Qaeda militants, 41 local residents, including 14 women and 21 children, were killed in the attack.

"The fact that so many of

Jamaat supports

Referring to the reason for backing the hartal, Mojaheed said it was called to bring an end to people's sufferings.

He claimed it's a way to protest in a democratic system and mount pressure on the government to resolve people's problems.

"It will be a people's hartal," he said.

Jamaat leaders Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, Delwar Hossain Saidee, ATM Azharul Islam, and Rafiqul Islam Khan, among others, were present at the press briefing.

On Saturday night, Jamaat leaders led by party chief Matiur Rahman Nizami met the BNP chairperson and agreed to forge a movement jointly against the government.

One more dies

25 patients suffered 20 to 30 percent burns.

Meanwhile, another victim was identified as Habiba Begum alias Mitu, 44, who went to Nimtoli to attend a function for the engagement of her nephew Jamil with Runa.

Habiba and 11 others from Hossaini Dalan attended the function. Two of them escaped the blaze as they were on the road waiting for other guests.

Firoze Reza identified his cousin Habiba by a necklace after the body remained unidentified at the DMCH morgue for three days. Her relatives earlier failed to identify the severely burnt body.

Besides, seven bodies remained unidentified at the DMCH and Sir Salimullah Medical College morgues as they were burnt beyond recognition.

Those searching for their missing relatives, have demanded that DNA tests must be conducted on the dead.

Md Mohibul Haque, deputy commissioner of Dhaka, told The Daily Star that they were yet to decide on the matter.

He said they were yet to receive any report of missing persons.

Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Bongshal Police Station, last night said they had identified 94 bodies including 40 women and 22 children.

DC Mohibul Haque earlier

Mahmudur shown held in criminal case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained Mahmudur Rahman, acting editor of the recently closed daily Amar Desh, was shown arrested yesterday in a criminal case.

The case was filed against him on charge of obstructing policemen from discharging their duties and attempting to snatch the accused from the law enforcers on June 2.

Metropolitan Magistrate SK Tofael Hasan granted the petition filed by Sub-Inspector Mohammad Mokhlesur Rahman for showing Mahmudur Rahman arrested in the case.

The case was filed with Kotwali Police Station against 100 to 150 unknown supporters of Mahmudur Rahman, including JCD leader Hafizur Rahman Kabir of Tejgaon unit and several vested quarter lawyers on June 2.

Mokhlesur, the investigation officer of the case, also prayed for a seven-day remand to interrogate Mahmudur Rahman for holding a meeting with government officials at Uttara.

The court will hear the petition today in his presence.

The hearing on a five-day remand prayer in another case filed against Mahmudur Rahman and five others for obstructing policemen to discharge their jobs will also be held today in his presence.

Shajahan Miah, assistant sub-inspector of Tejgaon Police Station, filed the case against the leaders and the activists on charges of their attempts to snatch Mahmudur Rahman from the police while he was being produced before a court the same day.

Police arrested Mahmudur Rahman on June 2 from his Amar Desh office at Karwan Bazar after its former publisher Hasmat Ali Hasu filed a cheating case against him with Tejgaon Shilpanchal Police Station.

Later, police forwarded him before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka with a five-day remand prayer.

But the court, rejecting the remand prayer, directed police to interrogate the accused at jail gate within three days. The court also granted bail to the accused in connection with the cheating case.

Transformers

FROM PAGE 16 result from the transformer blast, but also witnesses told the same.

He also said HRPB is also planning whether it will go for any legal move to shift the chemical shops from the Old Dhaka to another place.

WC uniting

FROM PAGE 16 Africa, while soccer is followed fervently by the black majority.

Zuma said the enthusiasm for the June 11-July 11 tournament reminded him of that day.

"Building up to the tournament we have seen something that we have never seen before," he said, referring to thousands of people wearing shirts of the national side Bafana Bafana and flying flags from their cars and at homes.

A survey of 1,000 South Africans, conducted for soccer governing body FIFA and released on Saturday, showed that 92 percent are proud of the country hosting the tournament, and 86 percent believe it will be a success.

FIFA President Sepp Blatter said the World Cup would leave a legacy for the whole continent, which was still being sidelined by richer nations, through football development and education projects.

Both Blatter and Zuma said they hoped Mandela would attend the opening ceremony and first match on Friday. Mandela turns 92 next month and is increasingly frail.

His office will not confirm he will attend and some observers say he is not well enough to be at Johannesburg's Soccer City stadium for the match between South Africa and Mexico.

"Firstly, I think we all know former president Mandela has aged and for any aged person the manner in which you carry yourself has changed," Zuma said, when asked if the Nobel Peace Prize winner would be there.

"That is a decision for President Mandela to make... if he is there it will be a bonus for this tournament. Indeed, we wish he will be there."

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday gave separate messages on the eve of the day.

President Zillur Rahman, in his message, said the historic six-point demand is a milestone in country's long struggle for independence.

The six-point contained reasons and inevitability of the independence of Bangladesh, he added.

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Israel rejects int'l probe into flotilla raid

AFP, Washington

Israel will not participate in any international investigation of its raid on a ship seeking to break a blockade on the Gaza Strip, Israel's ambassador to Washington said.

"We are rejecting the idea of an international commission," Michael Oren told "Fox News Sunday."

"Israel is a democracy. Israel has the ability and the right to investigate itself, not to be investigated by any international board," he added.

The Israeli diplomat said his government was talking to President Barack Obama's administration about "the way in which our inquiry will take place," but had no intention of acceding to demands by a number of governments for an independent inquiry into the May 31 raid, which left nine people dead.

The operation, in which Israeli naval commandos boarded a ship seeking to deliver aid to the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, provoked global outrage, straining Israel's relationship with Turkey.

Eight of those killed in the raid were Turkish citizens and the ninth was a joint US-Turkish citizen, prompting a furious response from Turkey's government, which recalled its ambassador to Ankara.

The United States offered its condolences to the families of those killed, and has said it is looking into the

PMO

FROM PAGE 1 Old Dhaka on Thursday night.

At least 118 people including Runa's mother, two aunts, four cousins and a nephew died in the blaze. Jamil also lost his mother, brother, a nephew, two aunts and five other relatives.

Runa's father had died several years back.

Runa and her elder sister Ratna escaped the fire as they had gone to a beauty parlour about half-an-hour before the incident. Their brother Faisal also escaped unharmed as he was on the road waiting for guests.

Never-ending

FROM PAGE 1 About the conditions of the survivors, psychologist Prof Shaheen Islam said these were normal reaction patterns as the victims had undergone horrible experiences that night.

"They [victims] need social and other support to recover from the situation," Prof Shaheen said, adding, the victims will overcome the condition through the process.

She said it would be claimed as disorder if the victims continuously see nightmares over three months.

Head of the Burn Unit Dr Shahidul Bari said the victims will have to tolerate pain and see such nightmare for a few more days.

"We are giving them painkillers in low dose as we fear that complication may arise from a stronger dose," he added.

Nat'l budget

FROM PAGE 16 The rate of implementation of ADP increased slightly compared to the same period in the previous year. But there is considerable scope for performing better, the minister said.

Muhith said the performance of two ministries or divisions with a higher allocation is reviewed in every meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council. Besides, a taskforce has been formed to monitor the implementation of the budget by 10 major ministries.

He hoped that the measures would help increase the ability of ministries and divisions to implement the ADP.

Historic 7th June

FROM PAGE 16 and Narayanjanj during a hartal called for the release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other leaders detained for launching the six-point movement against the then barbaric ruling clique.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman launched his historic six-point political and economic programme in Lahore in 1966, aiming to attain greater autonomy of the then East Pakistan.

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The president paid rich tributes to the memories of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bengali of all times and an exponent of the historic six-point demand.

"The six-point demand was for ensuring people's voting rights, introducing separate currency system, overseas trade and regional taxation system later transformed into public demand," he said.

After announcement of six-point demand, Zillur Rahman said the Pakistani rulers arrested Bangabandhu and tortured him inhumanly, despite that he did not retreat.

Govt to buy vessel with water purifying equipment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken steps to procure a vessel with equipment to purify water of Buriganga River, the shipping minister told parliament yesterday.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan blamed industries for polluting river by dumping liquid waste.

He said the task of extracting waste from the riverbed is going on.

The shipping minister also said the government would consider setting up a central dredging department.

He said six new ships will be purchased for Bangladesh Shipping Corporation.

Meanwhile, replying to lawmakers' queries, Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque said a process is underway to appoint 13,500 community health care providers to community clinics across the country.

He also informed parliament, as many as 1,745 people have been found HIV positive as of December 2009. Of them, 619 turned into AIDS patients and 204 died.

BNP-led opposition lawmakers did not showed up yesterday.

They joined the inaugural sitting of the current budget session on Wednesday, but walked out on the same day in protest against shutdown of the daily Amar Desh and arrest of its acting editor Mahmudur Rahman.

The speaker at 7:44pm yesterday adjourned the sitting of parliament till 7:00pm today.

Another JMB

FROM PAGE 16 Rakib Hossain Russell alias Hafiz Mahmood of Jamalpur, Alamgir Hossain Rana, Salahuddin alias Salehin of Mymensingh and Khaled Saifulah.

Shahed got introduced with two other executed JMB leaders Ataur Rahman Sunny and Khaled Saifulah while he was studying at Mohammadia Arabia Madrasa at Jatrabari in the city.

The two introduced him with Abdur Rahman and in no time Shahed became a trusted member of JMB.

Son of Hafizur Rahman of Pakulla village of Sonatola upazila in Bogra, 40-year-old Shahed has a cloth shop, Classic Fashion, at New Market in the town.

DB officials said they also collected Shahed's several photographs that show that he is an expert in martial art.

Shahed's arrest came after a couple of weeks into the arrest of JMB supremo Moulana Saidur Rahman with his wife and three other JMB leaders from Dhaka and Narayanjanj.

JS adopts

FROM PAGE 1 Nimtoli fire and Begunbari building collapse in the city.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzak in a statement told the House that the government would take measures to rehabilitate the victims of the blaze.

The minister said a preliminary list shows that about 73 families were affected by the deadly conflagration, and the approximate losses amounted to around Tk 2.09 crore.

He also said efforts are still on to assess the actual loss.

The minister informed the House about the tragic incident in details and the government's various measures taken already to mitigate the victim's sufferings.

He said a coordination cell comprised of officials of the departments concerned is working to reinstate water, power and gas supply to the area.

The minister said an inter-ministerial meeting was held yesterday at the food and disaster management ministry to discuss the aftermath of the tragic incident in Nimtoli area in Old Dhaka.

Contacted yesterday, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said the government is now following the convention and SC guidelines in respect of appointment of judges of this court.

The government selects persons after consulting the chief justice, and the president then appointments them as judges, he said.

The law minister also said the government will act as per the HC directives.

Barrister Hassan MS Azim and advocates Mirza Al Mahmood and Kamal Hossain appeared for the petitioner.

MPs to get offices

FROM PAGE 16 Earlier last year, offices for the MPs on the parliament building premises had been allocated.

Referring to a letter sent by the cabinet division, the secretary to the parliament secretariat yesterday informed the parliament secretariat commission's meeting of the matter, said meeting sources.

At the meeting, Hasina, however, rejected a proposal for purchasing six additional vehicles--one for the speaker, two for the deputy speaker's office, one each for deputy leader of the House and chief whip, and one for carrying VIPs.

Hasina outright rejected the proposal saying the above persons are already enjoying their due privileges. So, new vehicles are unnecessary for them, a source quoted the premier as saying.

She also rejected the proposal for allocation of offices to the PM's advisers in the parliament building saying the advisers have offices outside the parliament.

The cabinet earlier asked the parliament secretariat to move for allocation of the new offices for MPs but it could not go for the move due to lack of administrative network in field level. Then

concern, say geologists.

Khurshid Alam said it is unfortunate that even reputed developers are building large structures on shaky land formation like Holocene.

"People should not build any high-rise in those areas. They can at best go for bamboo and wood-made duplexes," he continued.

Asked how long the multi-storey buildings in areas on Holocene might take to tilt or topple, he said it maybe tomorrow or after 10 years. But there's no doubt that those buildings are prone to cave-ins.

Queried what then the solution is, he said there's no alternative to decentralisation. The capital must not have a population beyond its capacity.

Professor Nazrul Islam, a noted urban expert said, every year Dhaka city is expanding by four percent and its population is increasing at the same rate.

Decentralisation will not be enough; the government should discourage local migration as well, he added.

Risky, illegal

FROM PAGE 16 Disaster Management Coordination Committee chaired by Razzaque at his ministry following the recent building tumbles in Begunbari and the inferno in Nimtoli.

The minister told The Daily Star two taskforces--one led by the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and the other by the Ministry of Industries--have been formed to monitor and investigate the issues.

"The taskforce led by public works ministry will monitor the high-rise buildings. If those are found to have been built without proper approval of the authorities concerned, legal action will be taken and illegal parts of the buildings will be demolished," Razzaque said.

The taskforce led by industries ministry will identify the chemicals factories in Old Dhaka. Legal action will be taken against the factories if they are found to be illegal or dealing the business with potential risk to the public, he added.

SC Judge

FROM PAGE 16 The petitioner stated that the existing process of selection lacks transparency and competitiveness since there is no specific guideline in this regard.

In such a situation, judges are being appointed through a very weak system, and a culture of nepotism has developed due to suggestions made by the executive, undoubtedly favouring persons with similar political ideologies and political connection with the ruling party, the petitioner said.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) has been opposing political selection of persons for appointment as SC judges, it said.

The petitioner mentioned that the President on April 11 appointed 17 additional judges in the HC Division of the SC as per Article 98 of the Constitution after consultation with the chief justice. But in the face of protest from the SCBA, the chief justice administered oath to 15 of the appointees.

The petition quoted an HC observation in a verdict on August 7, 2008, as saying, "Appointment of judges of the Supreme Court is alleged to have been politicised in recent past, which has been severely questioned and criticised".

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Action will be taken on the basis of recommendations made by the taskforces.

The meeting also decided to set up water reservoirs in some open space in old parts of the city to ensure availability of water if fire breaks out.

Besides, more small vehicles will also be imported for the Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence so that firefighters can move fast in the areas through narrow lanes, especially in the old town, he noted.

The meeting decided to make it mandatory for the owners of community centres to have fire extinguishers, he said.

Fire Service and Civil Defence Director General Abu Nayeem Md Shahidullah said mobile courts would also launch drives against illegal chemicals stockpiling and risky buildings.