

5 US troops killed in Afghan violence

AP, Kabul

Roadside bombs and insurgent fire killed five more US troops in southern and eastern Afghanistan yesterday...

Meanwhile, on the southern outskirts of the capital, Kabul, a gunman opened fire on a busload of Afghan Supreme Court clerks, killing three and wounding 12...

Assaults on two motorcycles halted the bus Tuesday morning in the Musayi district, an area where insurgents are active, court spokesman Abdul Malik Kamawi said...

“We’re trying to find out who they were. For now, we can only say they are the enemies of the Afghan people,” Kamawi said.

Suspicion immediately fell on Taliban insurgents who have waged a continuous campaign against Afghan government officials and institutions...

Nato said four troops were killed by a roadside bomb in eastern Afghanistan, while a fifth died in an insurgent attack in the country’s south. No other details were given...

The deaths bring this month’s total to 55, including a Marine killed in fighting in the volatile southern province of Helmand on Friday whose death was not announced until Monday night...

A 20-year-old Estonian soldier was also killed by an explosion in the southern province of Helmand when a roadside bomb struck the armoured personnel carrier he was driving.

The death brought the total of Estonian soldiers killed in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion.

WikiLeaks founder questioned by Swedish cops

AP, Stockholm

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been questioned by Swedish police about an allegation that he mistreated a woman, his lawyer said yesterday.

Leif Silbersky said Assange, an Australian citizen, was questioned by police in Stockholm for about an hour late Monday and was formally informed of the suspicions against him.

Silbersky said his client denies the allegation and is hopeful prosecutors will drop the case.

Police began investigating Assange earlier this month after two Swedish women accused him of rape and molestation, but prosecutors later closed the rape investigation. Molestation is not a sex crime under Swedish law.

Assange, who was in Sweden partly to seek legal protection for WikiLeaks, has suggested that the accusations are part of a smear campaign.

The whistle-blower’s Internet site has angered Washington by publishing thousands of leaked documents about US military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The group has said it has computer servers in Sweden and other countries and according to the Swedish migration board Assange has applied for a work and residency permit in Sweden.

Investigators have not released details about the accusations against Assange, though a police report obtained by The Associated Press shows both women had befriended him in connection with a seminar he gave in Stockholm on Aug. 14.

The report shows they filed their complaints together six days later.

The chief prosecutor in the case, Eva Finne, declined to comment Tuesday.

The women’s lawyer, Claes Borgstrom, has demanded a revision of the prosecutor’s decision to close the rape investigation, saying both complaints should be investigated as sex crimes.

A separate prosecutor’s office in Goteborg, Sweden, is investigating Borgstrom’s complaint.

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Russian pilots kidnapped in Darfur freed

AP, Khartoum

Three Russian pilots snatched by gunmen in Sudan’s restive Darfur region were freed by security forces after a clash with their kidnappers...

Abdel-Hameed Moussa Kasha told the official Sudan Media Center that security forces fought with the kidnappers late Monday night before freeing the men, who worked for a company transporting food for the UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur.

The men were grabbed on Sunday after leaving the airfield in Nyala, the provincial capital of South Darfur province, and soon afterward the military said they had identified where they were being held.

Military spokesman Sawarny Khaled originally said there were only two pilots. The abduction came a month after another Russian pilot was kidnapped by Janjaweed militiamen in the western Sudanese province after he had to make an emergency landing of his helicopter.

That pilot was also eventually recovered. It is estimated that there are more than 7,000 industries of red, orange and green categories in and around Dhaka metropolis discharging more than 61 percent directly into the Turag, Balu, Buriganga, Shitalakha and Bangshai rivers.

The pollution level is so severe that no aquatic species can survive in these rivers during the lean period, found a joint study conducted by the Institute of Water Modeling (IWM) with the help of the World Bank.

The DoE has recently made a list of 18 large knitting and dyeing industries operating in Gazipur, Savar, Narayanganj and Narsingdi, that never installed any ETP or took any environment clearance certificate from it.

These industries, established in between 1974 and 2008, are discharging liquid waste directly into the nearby rivers, canals or other wetland polluting them severely.

All these 18 industries are classified as “red category” according to the definition of the Environment Preservation Act. Building ETP and taking environment clearance certificates is mandatory for them.

Asked what measures the DoE took following the HC order, officials said they have sent notices to 3,544 owners of polluting industries to build ETP.

“Some of them never responded to the notices. But many others seem they do not care about the Department of Environment,” said Moinur Chowdhury.

“Some of the industries have installed the ETPs after getting the notices. Unfortunately, they do not use it,” said Munir Chowdhury as he fined Joya Knitting Ltd in Rugganj in Narayanganj for not using it.

Talking on the matter, Fazlul Haque defended his fellow businessman saying, “They do it to reduce operational costs. Many other industrialists have not spent money to build ETP and are making more profit,” he added.

“If he operates ETP now his production cost will naturally go up,” he pointed out. He however said, “Pollution must be stopped; otherwise the city would not remain liveable anymore. I think a master plan is required in this regard.”

The immediate past caretaker government had earlier directed industrialists to install ETPs at their respective industries by October 31, 2007. But most of the industrialists defied that directive.

The Environmental Conservation Act, 1995 was passed in parliament in February 1995 and came into force in June that year making it mandatory for the knitting and dyeing industries to set up ETPs.

However, the government has recently amended the Environment Conservation Act and established the Monitoring and Enforcement unit at the DoE. The unit conducted several drives against the polluters and realised fine of over Tk 2 crore.

The evaluation and monitoring unit of the department is currently conducting drives against some of those industries. “We will continue our drives until all the polluter industries build ETPs and stop polluting the environment. None of those committing crimes against environment will be spared,” said Munir Chowdhury.

The unit has already realised fine of around Tk 2.55 crore from 18 industries and filed 153 cases against mainly fabrics, dyeing and knitwear industries.

Pollution warnings

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Following a writ petition, the High Court ordered the DoE on June 23, 2009 to make sure that all the polluter industries install ETPs by June 2010.

But most of the polluters ignored the order only to increase their profit, comments a DoE official. Asked why most of the industrialists have not installed ETPs despite the court order and instruction of the DoE...

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BCL men

FROM PAGE 1

and sharp weapons severely beat and stabbed Mashiur Rahman near the university’s transport market around 8:30pm, sources said.

The cadres, at one stage, inserted nails in his left leg below the knee. They also swooped on the market’s shopkeepers who came to rescue Mashiur.

Later, on information, some friends of Mashiur came to the spot and rushed him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in unconscious condition.

Mashiur told this correspondent he was yet to find any reason behind the incident. “The cadres mounted a sudden attack on me, as I went to the transport market for shopping.”

Some of his friends said the BCL cadres branded him as a Shibir activist because he was a roommate of a Shibir man about two years back.

Mashiur is a resident student of the university’s Sayeed Amir Ali Hall. He denied the allegation of his involvement with Shibir activities and said he was preparing to file a case with Motihar Police Station in this connection.

Abul Khair, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they were unaware of the matter. “We’ll take legal action if any complaint is filed.”

Contracted, Firoz Hossain, who is a first semester student of MBA (Management), claimed to know nothing about the attack.

RU unit BCL Joint Secretary Abu Hossain Bipu told this correspondent they would take stern action against those involved in the incident.

The university proctor, Prof Chowdhury Zakaria, said he would take steps after investigating the matter. RU unit BCL president and secretary were unavailable for their comments.

They were recently suspended from the organisation on the allegation of their involvement in at least 30 factional clashes.

The unit earned a bad name following the growing unrest on the campus in recent months, particularly after a faction beat up a rival and shove him off the first floor of a dormitory.

Railway

FROM PAGE 16

advance tickets and option to book tickets through mobile phones. Crowds of ticket seekers queuing up before the counters, however, seemed indifferent to the availability of train tickets through mobile phones.

But a railway source said lots of tickets have already been booked through mobile phones. A total of 16 intercity trains will operate on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Two additional trains will run on Dhaka-Dewanganj and Parbatipur-Dhaka routes from September 7 to 10 to cope with the demand.

The railway will be able to accommodate a total of 13 thousand passengers everyday. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway east zone also started selling advance tickets of intercity trains from yesterday amid tight security to facilitate the journey of homebound people ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The authorities will introduce three special trains including two on Chittagong-Chandpur route and one on Chittagong-Comilla route from Tuesday next. The advance tickets for September 5 trains were sold yesterday.

Thus train tickets for September 6, 7, 8 and 9 will be available on September 1, 2, 3 and 4, said sources of Bangladesh Railway in Chittagong. Tickets for everyday trains are also available during the sale of advance tickets. One passenger is allowed to buy a maximum of four tickets, said the sources.

Station Manager Shamsul Alam said they would monitor the situation through 16 CCTVs to prevent ticket sale on the black market. “We have put on display the total number of 4587 seats that the six intercity and one Chandpur bound express trains have at the station to help the passengers,” Shamsul said.

The railway authorities will add two to four compartments to these trains to accommodate more passengers, said Station Master Md Abul Kalam Azad.

PM again warns

FROM PAGE 1

“Refrain from any sort of criminal activities, otherwise you [BCL activists] will be arrested and brought to book,” Hasina said, adding, “There are some people who claim to belong to the ruling party and do wrong things. You must be careful about them.”

She also asked BCL leadership to immediately expel the troublemakers. The AL chief directed BCL activists to work with devotion and patriotism to revive the lost glory of student politics and build a prosperous digital Bangladesh.

She urged Chhatra League activists to concentrate in studies. “You must be educated and qualified, as an illiterate leader cannot contribute much in developing a nation.”

Reminiscing the glorious days of student politics and people’s respect for student leaders, she said it is unfortunate for the government that military dictators have destroyed student politics.

She said, “General Ayub Khan, Ziaur Rahman and Ershad destroyed the student politics giving arms and money to students. Among them, Ziaur Rahman spoiled the overall ethics of politics for which many politicians now get involved in politics to earn money.”

The defeated forces of the 1971 Liberation War killed the Father of the Nation and destroyed the constitution and democracy, she continued.

Hasina also thanked the Dhaka University vice chancellor for cancelling Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s expulsion in 1950 from the university.

Addressing the discussion, AL presidium member Obaidul

Quader said a conspiracy is still on to repeat the tragedy of August 15, 1975. The government should bring qualitative changes in its activities to reply to opposition threats of anti-government movements.

He urged BCL leaders to prepare themselves to implement the charter for changes, which the AL chief promised in the election manifesto.

He also urged the premier to set up a research university named after Bangabandhu to ensure quality education.

DU Vice Chancellor AAMM Arefin Siddique said every BCL activist should be self-reflexive if they want to build a “Golden Bengal” as dreamt by the Father of the Nation. They should be careful so that no one can tarnish their image.

He said, “Every Chhatra League activist will have to be responsible and use every moment of their time properly.” Bangabandhu made a nation independent, as he had valued his time, said the DU VC, adding, “So you [BCL activists] need to take an oath to serve the nation as Bangabandhu did.”

During his speech, Prof Siddique demanded that the government bring the convicted fugitive killers of Bangabandhu back to the country. He also urged the government to expedite the trial of war criminals.

Chittagong University professor Hamida Banu, renowned journalist Manjura Ahsan Bulbul, BCL General Secretary Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Raton also spoke at the discussion chaired by BCL president Mahmud Hasan Ripon.

Pay hike agitation

FROM PAGE 1

suspension all through the day. The demonstrators cleared the premises after 5:00pm, agreeing to wait until tomorrow’s board meeting following day-long negotiations between the employees’ and workers’ unions, and the management.

Leaders of the demonstrators however threatened to stop activities of the airline unless their demands are met. They demanded continuation of pension schemes, and pay hikes equivalent to what government employees got through a new pay scale announced in November last year.

“It came to me as a shock that our pension scheme is going to vanish,” said a senior official of Biman, preferring not to be named. “We have made our future plans based on the pensions,” the official added.

On August 28, the Biman board gave its nod to the new pay scale. The workers and employees had been demanding pay hikes since the announcement of the new pay scale for public servants.

The demonstrators said the new pay scale, that was scheduled to be announced yesterday, already came too late, and on top of that it does not meet their expectations. They claimed their salaries have been increased 25 to 30 percent on an average, which is lower than the increase the public servants got.

“We expected our salaries to be increased by 65 percent,” said a female employee, who works for the ticket reservation department. The new Salary Structure 2010 of Biman however offers gratuity equal to 2 months’ basic pay for each service year.

But the woman, who reserves tickets for passengers, is not ready to accept the offer, and said, “Earlier we got increments annually. But under the new pay scale we will get increments every three years.”

Another demonstrator said, “Until today, we never thought that we would lose our pensions.” The authorities have no right to snatch away my right to pension,” said Mushiur Rahman, president of Biman Workers League.

“Employees of state-owned Sonali and Janata banks still enjoy pension benefits despite the fact that those banks were turned into public limited companies. Is Biman different from them?” he questioned.

Zakiul Islam however said “Generally we know that pension schemes don’t exist in public limited companies.” Biman was turned into a public limited company in July 2007. Zakiul admitted, the employees were not told earlier that their pension schemes would be scrapped following the transformation of Biman Corporation.

He however said it was not clear to him why the employees and workers started demonstrating, and added, “We have taken notes of their demands, and will place those before the board meeting. I am the MD, and I am answerable to the board. Whatever the board decides, that will be implemented. I hope the board will take a right decision to protect the interest of all.”

Meanwhile, ABM Akhtaruzzaman, president of the Society of Aircraft Engineers of Biman, at a gathering of the demonstrators, said, “The activities of Biman will be stopped and our movement will continue unless our demands are met.”

ADB okays

FROM PAGE 16

South Asia and is likely to herald further power trading agreements, resulting in the more effective use of existing energy resources in the region, said Sultan Hafeez Rahman, director general of ADB’s South Asia Department.

“Connecting the two grids will demonstrate the substantial economic benefits that come from enhanced regional cooperation and help to address energy gaps across the region,” Rahman said. Staff from the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) will be trained to manage the new facilities, while officials of the state-owned Bangladesh Power Development Board will learn cross border power trading skills.

ADB’s assistance from its concessional Asian Development Fund makes up 63% of the total investment cost for Bangladesh of \$156.8 million. The loan has a 32-year term including a grace period of eight years, with interest charged at 1% per annum during the grace period and 1.5% per year for the rest of the term.

Rubber dam

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Twelve projects proposed by different non-government organisations to cope with the adverse effects of climate change were placed before the board, of which four were approved costing Tk 87.95 crore.

The fate of the remaining projects will be decided in the next meeting. The other projects which obtained approval are, a botanical garden in the city of Chittagong worth Tk 22.80 crore, digital mapping of forests of Bangladesh at Tk 25 crore and repair of Kumira ferry terminal at Tk 2.75 crore.

The board also approved 75,000 dollars for covering expenses such as rent, and event management in line with the United Nations conference for climate change to be held in December in Cancun, Mexico.

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Duke lands

FROM PAGE 1

after CID officials produced him before it. The court also rejected Duke’s bail petition. Earlier on August 26, the CID arrested Duke for his alleged involvement in the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004.

Twenty-four leaders and workers were killed and 200 others injured in the grenade attack at the Bangabandhu Avenue. Former naval officer Duke is accused of helping militant leader Moulana Mohammad Tajuddin, who supplied the grenades.

Duke had fled the country at the directives of the high command of then Prime Minister’s Office. The law enforcement agency showed Duke arrested after he was summoned to CID’s Malibagh office for the second time on August 25.

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