

Iraq's Ramadi hit by suicide car bomb

BBC ONLINE

A suicide car bomb in western Iraq has killed at least eight people, including six policemen, reports say.

The blast hit near the Anbar provincial government's offices in central Ramadi at 1000 (0700 GMT), officials say.

The blast comes as PM Nouri Maliki tries to form a government and end a long period of political uncertainty.

That process is part of a power-sharing agreement ending a record eight months of deadlock since Iraq held inconclusive elections in March.

More than 20 people were injured in Sunday's blast, and the latest reports suggest there may have been a second explosion shortly afterwards.

ATTACAK ON ROYAL FAMILY

Fee protester 'made contact with Duchess'

BBC ONLINE

Home Secretary Theresa May has confirmed there was "contact" between the Duchess of Cornwall and one of the protesters who attacked her car.

But she did not confirm reports the duchess was poked with a stick during student protests on Thursday.

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Paul Stephenson, has spoken to Prince Charles following the incident.

Overnight the police have issued images of 14 alleged rioters.

The BBC understands there have been positive responses to the release of the images.

The protesters launched an attack on a car carrying Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall as it passed along Regent Street.

Their Rolls Royce was kicked, splashed with paint and a window was cracked to chants of "off with their heads".

There were reports Camilla was poked with a stick, through one of the car windows as the royal

couple made their way to the London Palladium.

Mrs May said: "I'm not sure about the term 'poked with a stick'. I understand there was some contact made."

"Again this is an incident that needs to be looked at by the Metropolitan Police. That is what they are doing. So we will very soon have the details of that."

"And obviously it will be for them to look at what happened and decide whether there are any lessons that need to be learned."

A Clarence House spokesman confirmed that Prince Charles and Sir Paul spoke following Thursday's incident.

A Met spokesman declined to confirm reports that the commissioner apologised personally to the Prince.

Prime Minister David Cameron has said protesters who engaged in violence should face the "full force of the law".

Officers have reviewed hours of CCTV footage as part of their investigations into the disorder and have appealed for the public's help in identifying suspects.

Gunbattle kills 11 in Mexican town

AP, Mexico City

A gunbattle between rival gangs killed 11 people during a Virgin of Guadalupe celebration in a western Mexican town, authorities said Saturday.

Armed men arrived in three cars and opened fire on another group of gunmen in the main plaza of Tecalitlan just as a crowd was gathering Friday night, the Jalisco state attorney general's office said in a statement. One of the gunmen hurled a grenade.

Eight men were killed at the scene and two others died at a hospital, the office said.

Another man, the brother of one of those killed in the plaza, was found shot to death next to a car on the highway just outside the small town, the statement said.

Inside the car, which had been reported stolen, authorities found two banners. One read: "We haven't come to kill innocent people. We've come for El Zopilote." The other said: "We do not charge quotas."

Photographs of the aftermath showed overturned chairs in front of a stage where a mariachi band was set to play. A large image of the Virgin of Guadalupe loomed over the scene.

Police were investigating whether the death of two other men, whose torched remains were found inside a car in the nearby town of Zapotiltic, were tied to the Tecalitlan shootout.



A Mexican pilgrim carries an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint, upon arrival for the annual celebration held at the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City, early yesterday.

The decade's new species

BBC ONLINE

As 2010 draws to a close, scientists have been looking back over the array of new species that have been discovered since the beginning of the century.

Some of the weirdest and most scientifically wonderful are featured in a BBC Documentary, Decade of Discovery.

The film-makers collaborated with Conservation International to make the documentary, which has whittled down nature's top ten revelations.

Big red jellyfish (*Tiburonia granrojo*)
More than 3,000m under the Pacific ocean, researchers from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) used cameras on a remotely operated vehicle to capture the hidden life at that depth.

Chan's megastick (*Phobaeticus chani*)
It was found near Gunung Kinabalu Park, Sabah, in the Heart of Borneo and measures more than half a metre in length - the longest insect on the planet.

Grey-faced sengi (*Rhyncocyon udzungwensis*)
This sengi or elephant shrew was first discovered in 2006 in Uzungwa National Park, Tanzania. Italian scientist, Francesco Rovero, from the Trento Museum of Natural Sciences caught the tiny mammal on a camera trap.

Bamboo shark (*Hemiscyllium galei*)
The bamboo shark, also known as the walking shark, was found in 2006 in Cenderawasih Bay in West Papua, Indonesia.

Giant slipper orchid (*Phragmipedium Kovachii*)
This large flamboyant purple flower caused something of a sensation when it was discovered. It was found in 2001 being sold at the side of the road in the Peruvian Highlands by an hunter and dealer, who illegally imported it to the US.

Kipunji (*Rungwecebus kipunji*)
This is the first new genus (or group of monkey species) to be discovered since the 1920s. It was tracked down in 2003 by Tim Davenport, a biologist from the Wildlife Conservation Society, who was working in the Mount Rungwe region of Tanzania.

Pitcher plant (*Nepenthes palawanensis*)
This giant plant was discovered just this year by botanist Stewart Macpherson who has made it his mission to find and photograph every species of these carnivorous plants around the world.

Langkawi bent-toed gecko (*Cyrtodactylus macrotuberculatus*)
It was first discovered in 2008 on an island off North-western Malaysia by Dr Lee Grismer and his team. It uses its amazing eyesight and grip to catch its forest-dwelling prey at night.

Pygmy three-toed sloth (*Bradypus pygmaeus*)
This species, discovered on the island on Escudo de Veraguas off the Caribbean coast, shows how quickly the process of evolution can happen. The pygmy sloth has been isolated on its tiny island habitat for just 9,000 years - when rising sea levels cut the island off from the mainland.

Jailed Afghan drug lord was 'CIA man'

AFP, New York

A top Afghan drug lord jailed in the United States since 2008 was for years on the US payroll as an informant for the CIA and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), The New York Times said Saturday.

Hajji Juma Khan was paid lavishly to provide information on the Taliban, Afghan corruption and other drug traffickers in his country, and was even brought secretly to the United States at one point, federal prosecutors, current and former US officials told the daily.

The US secret relationship with Khan, said the daily, illustrates how the war on drugs and the war on terrorism sometimes collide in Afghanistan, where drug traffickers, the government and the insurgency often overlap.

A small time drug peddler when the US-led invasion of Afghanistan was launched in 2001, Khan -- described as in his mid-50s -- grew to a major drug trafficker in the opening years of the foreign military campaign, as US forces focused on anti-insurgent and anti-terrorist forces in the country.

Over the years, Khan grew in influence, buying off the Taliban and corrupt Afghan government officials to protect his expanding drug trade until he became one of the country's biggest drug lords, the daily said.

At the same time, Khan became an informant for the CIA and the DEA, who were interested in Taliban and drug trafficking operations in the country respectively.

In 2006, he was brought to the United States to see if his role as an informant could be taken to

a higher level, a former US official said.

He was not arrested because there were no charges pending against him in the United States, officials said, and during the visit Khan took a side trip to New York for some sightseeing and shopping.

Officials said it was unclear just how much intelligence Khan provided on other drug traffickers and the Taliban leadership, but his relationship continued for some time after that.

Everything changed in 2008, when anti-insurgency pressure eased somewhat and US forces shifted some of their attention to rampant drug trafficking in Afghanistan.

Some US officials said Khan had become too big a trafficker to be ignored, while others said he never provided breakthrough intelligence to his handlers.

Khan was lured to the United States in 2008 for another meeting with the DEA and even paid for his flight to Jakarta, where he was arrested instead and flown to the United States where he is now in plea negotiations with authorities.

He was arrested under a 2006 narco-terrorism law that makes it easier to go after foreign drug traffickers who are not smuggling into the United States, but who can be shown have ties to terrorist organizations, the Times said.

Khan's lawyer denied to the newspaper that his client ever supported the Taliban or worked for the CIA, while a CIA spokesman said the agency "does not, as a rule, comment on matters pending before US courts."

Six foreign soldiers killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

An insurgent attack killed six foreign soldiers in Afghanistan's Taliban-infested south on Sunday, days before the White House publishes a review of US military strategy in the increasingly deadly war.

Despite record numbers of coalition deaths and talk that the Taliban's reach is spreading, the US assessment is likely to endorse the current strategy amid claims of some battlefield success in the highly volatile south.

But critics say the mounting death toll is indicative of a strengthening insurgency and that it is time to negotiate with the militants to end nine years of violence that is only getting worse.

Nato would not give further details of the latest incident, one of the deadliest single attacks in recent months on foreign soldiers, and would not reveal the nationalities of the dead, in line with policy.

The attack took to 692 the number of foreign soldiers killed so far in 2010, the bloodiest year by far in the conflict, according to an AFP tally based one kept by casualties.org. In 2009, 521 coalition troops died

Outsiders behind

FROM PAGE 1
Officer (CEO) of South Korean Youngone Corporation, said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at Spectra Convention Centre in the capital, Sung described the simultaneous attacks on their seven factories in Chittagong Export Processing Zones as "very mysterious".

He regretted that the law enforcers did not respond immediately despite repeated calls for help.

The Youngone CEO said if their factories come under further attacks, their company, which employs around 40,000 workers in its various units, will have to withdraw its investment from Bangladesh.

"If such situation continues, we've no alternative but to shut the factories permanently here."

All the 11 factories of Youngone Corporation in the CEPZ were shut for an indefinite period on Saturday following workers' demonstrations over wage issues.

Sung, also chairman of the

100 percent export-oriented RMG group, said his workers are paid fully and regularly, and that he has good relations with them.

Youngone revised wages of the workers on December 6, and it was done strictly following the guidelines of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority, Sung said.

"Later on Saturday, some objections with regard to such re-fixing were resolved, and workers were assured of a revision of the pay increment from January 1."

The foreign entrepreneur alleged that outsiders had provoked the agitation by showing bloodstained papers and spreading rumours of workers' death.

"They assaulted most of our senior officials, including one executive director and a deputy director, who received serious injuries and got admitted to the intensive care unit of a local hospital."

Sung urged the workers not to resort to violence or destroy the workplace place.

"It is our fervent appeal to the authorities that they should identify the miscreants and their backers," he added.

On withdrawing the benefit of Tk 250 allowance, the CEO said it has been withdrawn for now because the workers were awarded this benefit at the time of rice price hike.

"But if you calculate the current Youngone wages for workers, it will be Tk 150 more than what they previously received."

He also said Youngone workers have long been getting wages much higher than the current pay structure.

Asked when the factories will be opened, Sung said, "It depends on an improvement in the situation."

He pointed out that such violence in the apparel sector sends a wrong signal to foreign investors.

Youngone Corporation, a Seoul-based multinational company, runs 17 large factories of apparel, shoe, toy and mountaineering materials in Dhaka and Chittagong EPZ.

Confusion

FROM PAGE 1
more than the senior workers' pay.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said he did not receive any complaint from any quarters that factory owners were not paying the workers as per the new salary structure.

With accusations that factory owners were not paying garment workers, especially senior workers, due minimum wage, massive labour unrest swept through the sector yesterday.

Agitated workers vandalised several garment factories in Chittagong, Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj to press home their demands for higher pay and restoration of the salary premiums of senior workers.

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