

Attacks on pilgrims kill 12 in Iraq

AFP, Karbala

Three car bombs ripped through crowds near Iraq's shrine city of Karbala yesterday, killing 12 people and wounding dozens in fresh attacks on pilgrims arriving for religious rituals.

"There were three car bomb explosions, two at 8:30 AM (05:30 GMT) and another 30 minutes later," said Nusayef Jassem, the provincial vice chief.

"Twelve people were killed and 150 wounded in the attacks," he said.

Dr Laith Sharifi, an official of the provincial health department, said earlier that 10 people were killed and 50 wounded, with women and children among the victims.



Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat listens along side Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas (C) during a meeting in Cairo for talks with President Hosni Mubarak (R) on the stalled Middle East peace process yesterday, a day after leaks in the media revealed secret documents on a decade of peace talks with Israel.

PHOTO: AFP

'Palestine Papers' stir fury over bowing to Israel

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian offers of major concessions to Israel on Jerusalem and refugees laid out in documents leaked to the press, yesterday provoked an angry and defensive reaction from the Ramallah leadership.

Details of the proposals, laid out during peace talks in 2008, emerged late on Sunday when Al-Jazeera began publishing the first of 1,600 confidential documents known as the "Palestine Papers."

The Arab satellite news channel said the leaks cover more than 10 years of secret talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

The documents, which were shared with British daily the Guardian, stirred surprise and anger among Palestinian officials, with chief negotiator Saeb Erekat dismissing them as "full of distortions."

"We don't have anything to hide," Erekat told AFP by telephone from Cairo yesterday,

insisting the revelations had been "taken out of context and contain lies."

"Al-Jazeera's information is full of distortions and fraud," he said.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, who is currently in the Egyptian capital for talks with senior officials, insisted that the Palestinian Authority (PA) had shared even development in the peace process with the Arab world's leadership.

"With everything we have done -- in terms of activities with the Israelis or the Americans -- we have given the Arabs details," Abbas said in remarks published by Palestinian news agency Wafa.

"I don't know where Al-Jazeera got these secret things from, and there is nothing hidden from the Arab brothers," he added, adding that Arab nations were kept up to date through the 22-member Arab League based in Cairo.

Sarkozy lays out G20 agenda

Targets commodities

REUTERS, Paris

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said in a speech laying out his G20 agenda yesterday that the world's top economies must agree new measures to curb volatility in commodity markets or risk destabilising food riots.

Speaking to some 300 diplomats and journalists in the Elysee presidential palace, Sarkozy also voiced support for a tax on financial transactions, calling such a move a "moral question" but admitting the idea had many enemies.

"We want regulation of primary commodity financial markets," said Sarkozy, who holds the rotating 2011 presidency of the Group of 20, a grouping of the world's leading rich and developing economies.

"How can you explain that we regulate



money markets and not commodities?"

"If we don't do anything we run the risk of food riots in the poorest countries and a very unfavorable effect on global economic growth," he said. "The day there are food riots, what country at the G20 table will say this does not concern them? I don't see a single one."

Sarkozy has a three-pronged agenda for France's G20 presidency, including tackling volatility in commodity prices, exploring changes to the world monetary system and reforming global economic governance.

He has been meeting with fellow G20 leaders, including US President Barack Obama and China's Hu Jintao, in recent weeks to win support for his plans and assess what France can realistically achieve during its presidency.

Lanka denies killing Indian fishermen

IANS, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday strongly rejected allegations that its navy had killed an Indian fisherman and warned of "elements" trying to tarnish relations between the neighbouring countries.

Navy spokesman Captain Athula Senarath said its personnel had no involvement in Saturday's reported shooting off the Kodikarai coast in Nagapattinam district, where one fisherman was killed and two were injured.

"Our patrol crafts operating off the northern coast have nothing to do with this reported incident," he said. "There may be some elements involved in trying to tarnish the good relations we have."

UN, EU's human rights 'cowardice'

Says HRW annual report

AFP, Brussels

The UN and EU were accused of "cowardice" for claiming to tackle human rights abuses in places like China or Uzbekistan through quiet dialogue and cooperation, Human Rights Watch said in its annual report yesterday.

Highlighting its claim, the HRW report on global human rights violations was issued in Brussels the same day the European Union hosted controversial Uzbek President Islam Karimov amid a flurry of protests from campaigners.

The New York-based non-governmental organisation's executive director Kenneth Roth lambasted "the failure of the expected champions of human rights to respond" to violations in an introduction to the 600-page report covering 100-plus regimes.

In his eyes, the fundamental error made by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and other leading voices is to place the accent on quiet diplomacy, which he says is often a euphemism for "other interests at stake."

Roth cites a "tepid" response from Asian partners to repression in Myanmar, with the report saying the Burmese junta's release of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi on November 23 was preceded by no significant steps on 2,100 other political prisoners.

Urgent action needed to avert global hunger

Says a UK govt study

BBC ONLINE

A UK government-commissioned study into food security has called for urgent action to avert global hunger.

The Foresight Report on Food and Farming Futures says the current system is unsustainable and will fail to end hunger unless radically redesigned.

It is the first study across a range of disciplines deemed to have put such fears on a firm analytical footing.

The report is the culmination of a two-year study, involving 400 experts from 35 countries.

According to the government's chief scientific adviser, Professor Sir John Beddington, the study provides compelling evidence for governments to act now.

The report emphasises changes to farming, to ensure that increasing yields

does not come at the expense of sustainability and to provide incentives to the agricultural sector that address malnutrition.

It also recommends that the most resource-intensive types of food are curbed and that waste is minimised in food production.

"We know in the next 20 years the world population will increase to something like 8.3 billion people," he told BBC News.

"We know that urbanisation is going to be a driver and that something of the order of 65-70% of the world's population will be living in cities at that time.

"We know that the world is getting more prosperous and that the demand for basic commodities - food, water and energy - will be rising as that prosperity increases, increasing at the same time as the population."

HC orders Bhawal

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The bench came up with the order and rule as the petition sought directives from this court on the government to take appropriate steps to protect public property.

The organisation filed the petition yesterday after The Daily Star ran a series of reports published on January 22-23 on the grabbing of Bhawal estate land.

According to the reports, over 83 percent of the Bhawal estate's 2,516 acres of land has disappeared in the last 60 years from the hands of its custodian, the Court of Wards under the Ministry of Land.

Currently, only 443 acres of the total Bhawal land is registered with the name of its custodian. Surprisingly, 442 civil cases are now pending with the courts of justice regarding the fate of the 443 acres of land, the remnant of the Bhawal estate.

The Court of Wards is also erratically trying to settle an additional 6,977 land settlement petitions to "save" the remaining 443 acres from influential land grabbers.

The third part of the report said "deliberate" neglect by the Ministry of Land during the four-party alliance rule paved the way for a developer to take over 202.76 acres of Bhawal estate land.

The East West Property Development Ltd (EWPD) has developed its housing project near Baridhara on that particular piece of land, according to the report.

During hearing yesterday, Advocate Mahbulul Islam, a counsel for the petitioner, told the court different dishonest land grabbers are occupying hundreds of acres of land of Bhawal estate through illegal means.

The secretary to the land ministry, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police of Gazipur, custodian of Bhawal estate, and officers-in-charge of Gulshan, Cantonment, Biman Bandar and Khilkhet police stations have been made respondents to the rule.

HC rebukes SEC chief

FROM PAGE 1

from those letters by today, it would direct the inspector general of police to prosecute him under criminal law.

The bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain told Ziaul Haque, who appeared before the court following an order, that he has committed a criminal offence by using the government logo.

This is conspiracy against the government and the country, the bench said, adding, serious situation has been prevailing in the share market for around a month, but he [SEC chairman] is at large.

He cannot escape the liability, Justice Shamsuddin, senior judge of the bench, said, adding that if such incidents would take place in other countries, their SEC chairmen would have resigned.

The judge said using the logo in the official letters is a matter of common sense.

However, nothing can be expected from him [SEC chairman] more than this, as he does not understand the difference between the government department and a statutory body, Justice Shamsuddin said.

At one stage, Attorney General Mahbub Alam told the court the big thieves of the stock market might escape if the SEC chairman is captured.

chief's] failure that the thieves cannot be captured.

Earlier in the day, during hearing of the petitions the bench summoned the SEC chief and asked him to appear before it to explain his stance.

As he appeared before the court around 3:00pm, the bench asked him whether his office is a government department or a statutory body.

He said the SEC is a commission under the government.

As the court asked him why his office has used the logo, he said the office has been using the logo since the tenure of the previous chairmen.

The court said he should have been ashamed of this act, as he does not understand the difference between the government department and a statutory body.

After concluding the hearing, the bench fixed today for passing orders on the petitions filed by six stockbrokers challenging the SEC decision to suspend their trading activities.

The petitioners are Al Arafah Islami Bank's brokerage unit, Dhaka Bank Securities, NCC Bank Brokerage, PFI Securities, Alliance Securities, and Management and IIDFC Securities.

Dr M Zahir and Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud appeared for the petitioners.

4 suspects arrested

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said Fazlul Huq, AL general secretary of ward-41, was shot dead on directives of Noor Mohammad. His son Mintu, who remains fugitive, oversaw the killing.

Jasim at the press briefing confessed to their involvement in the murder.

"Selim and hired criminals Dulal, Shamim, Manjur-e-Elahi, Kalu and I took part in the killing," said Jasim.

"The plan was finalised five days before the killing and we sought the final approval from my grandfather [Noor] immediately before the murder," he told reporters.

Dulal was arrested on January 21 by the Detective Branch of police. Law enforcers are trying to catch Mintu.

Commander M Sohail, director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing, said Noor planned the killing to avenge the shooting at him on January 8 in Agargaon area.

The AL leader is under treatment at Chest Diseases Hospital at Mohakhali with bullets in his chest.

Sohail said Noor is a listed illegal drug peddler, and is involved in extortion and tender manipulation. He will be arrested soon, added the Rab commander.

Narrating the killing, Jasim said six persons took part in the killing -- four equipped with firearms and one with cock-tails.

They went to the spot by two motorbikes and Dulal, Selim and he himself fired five gunshots in Fazlul's head, abdomen and hand.

The deceased was on his way to a local mosque for Juma prayers.

Jasim said they exploded two cocktails to create panic in the area so they could flee easily.

Rab officials said Selim came out of jail recently after serving two and a half years imprisonment in a case for possessing illegal firearms. The other arrestees are also involved in illegal business, he added.

Cox's Bazar Beach

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A mobile court headed by Executive Magistrate Rafiqul Islam also fined the authority of Neleema Resort at Sea Inn point Tk 30,000 and sentenced two persons to three months in prison each for selling food in unhygienic condition and polluting environment.

The two are lessee of the resort Ashrafal Karim and his employee Nurul Absar.

Shops selling commodities made of oyster and conch shells and other settlements were knocked down till 2:00pm, said the ADC.

Unauthorised structures on the sea beach at Kolatoli, Laboni, Shaibal and Diabetic Hospital points will also be evicted, he mentioned.

"We received the copy of the HC order on January 21," said Md Sukur Ali adding, notices have been sent to all concerned to remove all structures built on the sea beach by January 27.

Besides, a public notice has been circulated asking the occupants to remove all the structures erected at different points of the beach, noted the ADC.

A High Court bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain on January 10 directed the Cox's Bazar deputy commissioner, district police superintendent and officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station to demolish all the permanent and temporary structures built on the sea beach within seven days.

The HC also asked them to submit a report to it in this regard.

In the same judgement the HC ordered the DC to form a special committee to demarcate the boundary of the sea beach area within next three months.

The HC passed the order in response to a writ filed by human rights and environmentalist organisation Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

NEWS IN brief

Pope says young must use Internet responsibly

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI called on Catholics yesterday to use the Internet responsibly, warning the young not to trivialise religion online or replace human interaction with virtual communication.

"It is important to always remember that virtual contact cannot and should not be a substitute for direct human contact with people at all levels of our society," the pope said in a message to mark the Catholic Church's 45th World Communications Day.

The pope asked the younger generations to "make good use of their presence on the net" and stressed the importance of communicating in ways that are

Muslim radical denies Christian attack in Indonesia

AFP, Bekasi

The leader of a violent Islamic vigilante group yesterday denied instigating an attack on Christian elders, in a case which has raised fears over growing religious intolerance in Indonesia.

With a hand raised as he took an oath in court, Murhali Barda, head of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in the Jakarta suburb of Bekasi, said that he "never provoked anyone to do anything unpleasant".

"I swear to God I never incited the defendants to stab anyone...I never sent text messages urging

Ireland in crisis talks as coalition crumbles

AFP, Dublin

Ireland's parties held crisis talks yesterday after the ruling coalition collapsed, with the opposition demanding that the government quickly pass a crucial finance bill and bring forward elections.

Opposition parties gave embattled Prime Minister Brian Cowen a deadline of Friday to comply or to face a no-confidence vote, following the dramatic withdrawal of the Green party from the coalition on Sunday.

Finance Minister Brian Lenihan was leading the talks over calls for Cowen to push through the finance bill needed to secure a European Union and International Monetary Fund bailout that Ireland

Pakistan governor's assassin in court hearing

AEP, Rawalpindi

A man who admitted assassinating a Pakistani provincial governor to defend the country's controversial blasphemy laws appeared in a prison court for a preliminary trial hearing yesterday.

Bodyguard Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri has confessed that he gunned down his boss, Punjab governor Salman Taseer, on January 4 because he objected to the politician's wish to amend the blasphemy law, which carries the death penalty.

Taseer's killing has met with mixed reactions in Pakistan, with many from the country's increasingly powerful conservative religious quarter praising the gunman for acting to silence the outspoken moder-

Amnesty slams 'harsh' action for WikiLeaks 'source'

AFP, London

Amnesty International yesterday urged the US authorities to alleviate the "severe" pre-trial detention conditions of Bradley Manning, the US soldier suspected of leaking information to WikiLeaks.

The rights group said the 23-year-old army private has been held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day in a sparsely furnished cell at the Quantico Marine base in Virginia since July.

Amnesty claimed Manning "had been deprived of a pillow, sheets, and personal possessions" while in prison, following his arrest in May on suspicion of downloading classified US military documents.