

Four killed, 28 wounded in Pakistan attacks

AFP, Quetta

Four people, including two children, were killed and 28 wounded yesterday in a bomb blast and a militant attack on Pakistani troops, security officials said.

The children and one civilian were killed by a remote-control motorcycle bomb targeting security forces in Pungur district of the insurgency-hit southwest province of Baluchistan.

Five soldiers were among the wounded, officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

The second incident occurred in the lawless northwest tribal district of South Waziristan, where a group of militants attacked a security checkpoint in Ladha town, triggering a gunfight which killed one soldier and wounded two others.

Bahrain to lift ban on opposition party

REUTERS, Manama

The government will lift a ban on Bahrain's second largest opposition party, the group said yesterday, ahead of a national dialogue to ease the Gulf island kingdom's political crisis.

Authorities shut down Waad, a leftist party aligned with the largest Shi'ite opposition group Wefaq, in April amid a crackdown by security forces on pro-democracy protests.

Waad spokesman Radhi al-Mousawi said the government would lift the ban on its headquarters in Manama yesterday and later on its office Muharraq.

The state news agency BNA quoted the Justice Ministry as saying steps were being taken to lift the ban.

Mousawi said the group had sent a statement to the government welcoming the political dialogue, set by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to begin on July 1, and also asked for the king to look into the case of Waad's detained leader.

Ibrahim Sharif is in prison along with several other opposition leaders including the president of hardline Shi'ite Islamist party al-Haq, Hassan Mushaimaa.

Both are among 21 people facing trial on charges of plotting a coup with backing from "foreign terrorist groups."

Rain

FROM PAGE 1

Over 50 chars in Patuakhali went under 4-5 feet deep water making around 20,000 people homeless.

Mahfuzur Rahman, executive engineer of Water Development Board of Bhola, said around 40km of flood-control dams at different places in the district were damaged.

Barisal port authorities closed 29 routes for motorised water vessels until further notice.

Meanwhile, over 50,000 people and 1,300 vehicles, 600 of them buses, have been stranded on both sides of the Padma at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry terminals as of 7:30pm yesterday evening. Bad weather and strong currents led to a 43-hour suspension of ferry services.

Amid passenger agitation and sufferings, a handful of ferries resumed operations around 8:00am yesterday.

One passenger got trampled and died while disembarking a ferry yesterday. Details of deceased Sultan could not be known.

Deputy Managing Director of BIWTC, Mawa Ferry Terminal, Md Ashiquzzaman said ferries move slowly in strong currents which create long queues of vehicles.

He said the Daulatdia ferry terminal was damaged due to strong current.

Our Khulna, Chittagong, Barisal, Patuakhali, Munshiganj and Madaripur correspondents contributed to the report.

No indigenous people in country Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the minority groups living in hilly areas and the plains in the country are not indigenous people and they will be recognised in the charter as tribes or ethnic minorities.

In the light of ILO Convention-169 it seems they are not indigenous people, he said. Rather they bear the characteristics of tribal communities.

Members of civil society and indigenous communities widely differ on the issue. Recognition of Adivasi people in the constitution as indigenous people has been their demand for long.

The Daily Star has checked www.ilo.org, website of International Labour Organisation.

On the website, the ILO Convention-169 says elements of indigenous peoples include: traditional life styles, culture and way of life different from the other segments of the national population, own social organisation and political institutions, and living in historical continuity in a certain area or before others "invaded" or came to the area.

Also last month, the government representatives at a special session of United Nations denied existence of indigenous people in Bangladesh.

The minister made the statement at the opening of a seminar on Expansion of Dhaka and Environment organised by Bangladesh Geographical Society and its 53rd annual general meeting at the Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University, said a news release.

He urged the experts to cooperate with the government in preventing unplanned urbanisation and destruction of farmlands.

BGS President AQM Mahbub chaired the meeting while DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Harun-or-Rashid, among others, spoke.

Syrian forces

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event of a further deterioration.

The latest assault followed another Friday of protests, which have grown in size and scope over the last three months, despite Assad's violent clampdown on public dissent. Activists said security forces shot dead 19 protesters on Friday.

"They came at 7 am to Bdama. I counted nine tanks, 10 armoured carriers, 20 jeeps and 10 buses. I saw shabbiha (pro-Assad gunmen) setting fire to two houses," said Saria Hammouda, a lawyer living in the border town, in the Jisr al-Shughour region.

Bdama is one of the nerve centres providing food and supplies to several thousand other Syrians who have escaped the violence from frontier villages but chose to take shelter temporarily in fields on the Syrian side of the boundary.

Another witness said government troops were also burning crops near hillsides in an apparent scorched earth policy.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton yesterday urged a transition to democracy in Syria, saying in a commentary in the Arabic-language Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper that the government's crackdown would not quell the momentum for change.

Under the headline "There Is No Going Back in Syria," she wrote the regime's "continued brutality may allow (Assad) to delay the change that is underway in Syria, it will not reverse it."

Syrian rights groups say at least 1,300 civilians have been killed and 10,000

people detained since March.

The Syrian government has barred most international journalists from the country, making it difficult to verify accounts from activists and officials.

Syrian authorities blame the violence on "armed terrorist groups" and Islamists, backed by foreign powers.

The International Federation for Human Rights and the US based Damascus Centre for Human Rights Studies said in a statement that, according to local sources, Syrian forces had killed more than 130 people and arrested over 2,000 in Jisr al-Shughour and surrounding villages over the last few days.

The number of refugees who have crossed over from Syria has reached 10,114, and another 10,000 were sheltering by the border just inside Syria, according to Turkish officials.

20 hurt

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demonstration demanding increase in their wage in front of the main gate of the factory from 7:00am to 11:00am.

Demonstrators also damaged properties and five-six passing vehicles.

On information, police rushed in and used sticks to drive the demonstrators out of the road, triggering chases and counter chase.

Angry protesters brick batted at police who fired tear gas canisters to control the situation.

Later, they withdraw road blockade following promise made by the authority to consider their demand.

BNP, Jamaat

FROM PAGE 1
On June 23, protest programmes will be held in the capital and the port city of Chittagong, for the government's "failure" to stabilise the share market.

For the third day on June 28, demonstrations will be held across the country in protest at recent spikes in fuel price and transport fare.

Mirza Fakhrul said the road marches towards North Bengal, which were scheduled for June 26 and 27, have been postponed due to inclement weather. The date will be fixed afresh in consultation with party leaders.

The BNP leader said 12 like-minded parties have expressed their support for the agitation programme.

Replies to a query, he said BNP will also protest against the production sharing contract (PSC) with American oil company ConocoPhillips if

6-hr hartal

FROM PAGE 1

Mukti Bhaban in the capital.

He said they along with general people will stage protests at union level across the country on the same day and demonstrate in front of deputy commissioners' offices.

The leaders and activists of the organisation will conduct mass contacts with people of all strata in the society from June 20 to July 2 as part of their protest programme.

The programme also includes going on marches to every police station in the Dhaka city from June 21 to July 1.

Engineer Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah, convenor of the organisation, Junayed Saki, coordinator of Gono Sanghati Andolok and columnist Syed Abul Moksu, among others, were present at the conference.

The government on Thursday inked the deal with ConocoPhillips for exploring oil and gas from two deep-sea blocks in the Bay of Bengal.

The US oil company won two deep-sea blocks at an offshore block bidding floated by Petrobangla in 2008. The PSC allows exploration of the undisputed part of the blocks and that covers an area of 5,158 square kilometres.

The blocks are located about 280 kilometres from the port city of Chittagong.

The minister also asked the Wildlife Division in Chittagong to assess the possible impacts of its introduction, said Enayetur.

"While inspecting the construction of a road by the lake, Hasan said the ministry has enough money in the climate change fund to buy hippos," he said.

"A pair of hippos will cost around Tk 40 lakh," Enayetur said.

Bangladesh has two climate funds - Tk 700 crore Climate Change Trust Fund, financed by the government, and Climate Resilience Fund, financed by its development partners.

Both the funds are meant for taking measures to adapt to climate change, mitigate its impact, and help climate

The Kaptai Lake, created

by damming the Karnaphuli river in 1961 mainly for hydroelectric power generation, now serves as one of the major sources of freshwater fish in the country.

Hippos, mostly herbivorous mammals, are known to be extremely hostile towards human and can run as fast as 48 kilometres an hour.

The guidelines of the International Union for Conservation of Nature don't permit releasing an animal of Sub-Saharan region in the open in Bangladesh's environment, said Dr Reza Khan.

He suggested that the government should be more attentive to saving local species rather than introducing new ones.

Enayetur Rahim, personal assistant to the state minister for environment and forest, told The Daily Star, "During a visit to Rangamati in April, the minister expressed his desire to release hippos in the lake."

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