

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 Punjgur district of the insurgency-hit south-west 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 Muharraa.

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

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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 Ashiquezaman 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 under way 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.

the PSC goes against the country's interest. The contract has been signed for oil and gas exploration from two deep-sea blocks in the Bay of Bengal.

Mirza Fakhrul asked the government to disclose the details of the PSC.

Asked whether they will support the six-hour hartal called by the national committee to protect oil, gas, mineral resources, power and ports, he said they will decide on that later.

Referring to the Awami League general secretary's statement that the constitution will be amended in line with the Supreme Court verdict if BNP does not come for discussion, the BNP leader said Khaleda Zia already cleared her position and now it is the government's responsibility to ensure continuation of the caretaker government system.

6-hr hartal

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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 Andolon and columnist Syed Abul Moksud, 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.

Rab nabs job

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Rab also arrested a broker of the gang--Hosna Ara, 36, an employee of Kushtia General Hospital. A Rab-1 team arrested them in separate drives in and outside the capital Friday evening.

Lt Col Mohammad Rashidul Alam, commanding officer of Rab-1, said the arrestees used to collect money from youths of different districts through their broker. They even made fake appointment letters for the job seekers and arranged sham medical check-ups inside the BGB headquarters with the help of some corrupt BGB men.

The Rab official said the gang cheated 66 job seekers of different districts of about Tk 1.12 crore. Among the arrestees, Shafiq and Kuddus called themselves army majors while Akter and Karim posed as medical officers of BGB.

The gang had over 100 brokers like Hosne Ara in different districts, he added.

He said they had arrested Shafiq in 2009 for cheating those seeking jobs in the army. After being released on bail, he got involved in the gang again. The gang had been doing this for years, he said.

The Rab official said that they would investigate whether the retired air force men were also involved in fraudulent activities while in service.

A group of the defrauded youths had filed a case accusing the gang members with New Market Police Station on June 15.

A medical

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eight when his retina was detached after he was hit in the right eye with a stone.

There was swelling, bleeding and a high fluid pressure in his eye.

When the retina is detached for a long time it can be permanently damaged, so re-attaching it might not restore vision, according to the doctors.

After washing the eye out and treatment with a drug which stopped new blood vessels forming, the eye went from completely blind to being able to detect the source of a bright light.

Doctors thought this was encouraging enough to try re-attaching the retina.

After surgery he was able to see again.

Surgeons believe it was successful because of the low "height" of the retinal detachment. Dr Olusola Olawoye said, "To the best of our knowledge this is the first report of visual recovery in a patient with long-standing traumatic retinal detachment.

A wild wish for hippo

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Lake will have a devastating impact on local species.

It will threaten fish cultivation, and pose risk to fishermen and people around the lake, they observed.

"How can they think of introducing here such a wild species of Sub-Saharan Africa, when all successive governments have failed to protect the country's wildlife," asked veteran wildlife expert 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."

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

victims.

Experts say artificial Kaptai Lake is not suitable for the African species, as its regular diets -- grass and other aquatic plants -- do not grow there.

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, the head of the Dubai Zoo.

Any animal can be kept and bred in a zoo or a confined breeding place in line with the zoo's master plan or programme, he said.

Dr Tapan Dey, conservator of forest (wildlife division), said he was unaware about any plan to release hippos in the Kaptai Lake.

He, however, said hippos are very dangerous and will pose a threat to fishermen around the lake.

"If we release hippos in the lake, we have to fence them in a certain area. Otherwise, it will be very risky to fish in the lake," said Tapan.

Besides, hippos need huge quantity of diets, mainly grass and aquatic plants, he added.

The hippo, one of the largest mammals on land, can measure up to 11 feet long and 5 feet tall. A hippo consumes as much as 100 pounds of grass every day and lives up to 40 years.

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 are responsible for more human fatalities in Africa than any other large animal, said Dr Reza.

Male hippos are fiercely territorial. Females can also be extremely aggressive, if they feel threatened.

The Dhaka zoo now has six hippos in two enclosures.

Return 'em

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return their (businessmen) money. We have to be cautious so that the criminals cannot control businessmen," he told a dialogue on 'the state of Bangladesh economy and analysis of the recently placed budget for fiscal year 2011-12' at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

M Syeduzzaman, a member of the board of trustees of CPD, chaired the programme attended by lawmakers, economists and businessmen.

Alamgir who was in jail for 20 months during the military-backed caretaker rule on corruption charges, also criticised his party-led government for ambiguity in the allocation of agriculture budget.

"Food budget is unclear and mostly for the security forces," he said.

He also called on the government to form a revenue commission to remove complexities in tax payments.

JS body was not free

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"Our recommendations were changed thrice at the Prime Minister's Office. Many of our main and alternative recommendations were scrapped when the report was sent to the premier's office," another member added.

After holding 27 meetings in almost a year, the committee placed its final report in parliament on June 8. Before that, the committee sat with the former chief justice, constitution experts, eminent jurists, civil society leaders, intellectuals and media personalities to take their views on constitution amendment.

At the final stage of preparing their report, the committee members called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to update her on their activities and recommendations.

Asked about incorporating recommendations of the above dignitaries, a number of committee members said it is their failure that they could not entertain their suggestions.

A member said their activities were also badly affected due to absence of representatives from the main opposition BNP.

"Things might have been different if the main opposition had representation in the committee. In that case we could have tackled the government's interference,"

he said, adding, "We missed the presence of the main opposition a lot."

Asked about the impact of the government's interference, another member said all the 15 members of the committee decided that they would recommend freeing the MPs from the restrictions imposed by article 70 of the constitution and enabling them to play their due roles in the House.

"But our recommendations to that end did not get the premier's nod. As a result, we could not incorporate the recommendations in our final report," he added.

Article 70 bars lawmakers from going against their respective party decisions in parliament. They will lose House membership if they go.

Almost all members of the committee agreed that the Supreme Judicial Council would send its opinion/report to parliament regarding removing any SC judge on grounds of misconduct and incompetence and the House will take final decision about it.

"But our recommendations in this regard were rejected at the final stage and were not included in the report," said another member of the committee.

On keeping Islam as the state religion, the committee decided to incorporate several alternative proposals in the report.

"However, our alternative proposals were also dropped," informed the committee member.

Recommendation to end the pervasive House boycott culture by reducing the scope for an MP to remain absent from the proceedings faced the same fate.

5.9 quake strikes eastern Japan

AFP, Tokyo

A 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Japan yesterday, seismologists said, rattling one of the areas hardest hit by the March 11 quake and tsunami disasters.

The quake hit at 8:31pm about 110 kilometres east of Fukushima near the east coast of Honshu at a depth of 30 kilometres, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

No tsunami warnings were in effect and there were no immediate reports of damage.

The northeast coast of Japan's main Honshu island was ravaged by a 9.0 magnitude quake and monster tsunami on March 11 which left more 23,000 people dead or missing.

The disasters also crippled the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, triggering the world's worst atomic accident since Chernobyl in 1986 and forcing hundreds of thousands of residents to leave their homes.

Govt would do nothing wrong

FROM PAGE 1

The US oil company won the two deep-sea blocks after taking part in an international tender floated by Petrobangla in 2008.

The PSC allows ConocoPhillips to conduct exploration in the undisputed part of the two blocks that cover an area of 5,158 square kilometres. The two blocks are located at a distance of about 280 kilometres from the port city of Chittagong.

The premier said these groups often cry out loud in the name of protecting the interest of the country. "Where were they when there was no production of electricity and no gas exploration?"

Hasina categorically assured that the present government will do nothing against the interest of the country.

She said that her govern-

ment, soon after taking the office, has given priority to creating investment-friendly environment to attract foreign direct investment.

The premier said that despite resource constraints, the government is providing money for implementing massive development projects.

The government, she said, has formulated the National Industrial Policy identifying 32 sectors that include agricultural products, readymade garments, shipbuilding, tourism, ICT goods and services, jute and leather goods, plastic goods, and ceramics industry as the thrust sectors.

She said Bangladesh has become the most attractive investment destination in South Asia for the foreign investors and as a result foreign direct investment is increasing gradually.

Despite worldwide decline in investment flow in the recent years caused by global economic recession, Bangladesh got over \$ 910 million FDI in 2010 alone, she mentioned.

The PM said foreign investors are keen to invest in Bangladesh due to its geographical location, cheap and easily trainable labour, easy regional connectivity, increasing domestic market and attractive incentive package.

Hasina said the present government has provided two incentive packages to the export sector to cope with the negative impacts of world economic recession.

The Public Works Department is implementing the 14-storey BoI head office building project at an estimated cost of around Tk 100 crore from the government's own resources.

Three died drinking spirit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least three people, including a BNP leader, died while another fell ill after drinking rectified spirit in Kumarkhali upazila in the district yesterday.

Deceased Khokon Pramanik, 52, a local BNP leader, was also younger brother of Ansar Al Pramanik, BNP's faction president of the district. The other two deceased are Khalilur Rahman, 60 and Robiul Islam, 48, while Selim Uddin is still undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police said the victims bought the poisonous liquor from a vendor at Poshuhat area in Kumarkhali on Friday evening and felt a severe ache in the stomach soon after drinking it.

The victims were first rushed to local upazila health complex and later shifted to Kushtia General Hospital.

Khokon died around 3:00pm while Khalil and Robiul died earlier around 3:45am.

Later, police arrived at the hospital and sent the bodies to the morgue for autopsy.

Police are yet to arrest seller of the poisonous spirit.

With these deaths, a total of 13 people have died this year by ingesting toxic liquor, in the district.

In January this year, five people died in Daulatpur upazila, two died at Harinarayanpur village in sadar upazila in March while three died in April in Charkuthipara area.

Bank accounts

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probe committee on the share-market scam.

The NBR letter said withdrawal and transfer of money from the accounts of these three people will remain suspended until further notice. It asked commercial banks to send all information regarding their bank accounts to the NBR.

The Ibrahim Khaled-led share-market scam probe committee in its report mentioned names of several individuals and institutions who made suspicious transactions under their omnibus accounts.

The report also recommended detailed enquiry into those accounts and that the NBR should investigate whether these people and institutions pay tax properly. The three were mentioned in the report.

No ray of light

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views of Sankara doctors, the cousin told The Daily Star yesterday, preferring anonymity.

Rumana, a teacher of DU international relations department and a postgraduate student of University of British Columbia, was taken to India on June 14.

She received severe injuries as her husband Hasan Sayeed Sumon pushed his fingers into her eyes and gnawed her nose and throat at her father's Dhanmondi residence in the capital on June 5.

Earlier, ophthalmologists in India confirmed that Rumana's left eye had gone permanently sightless while retina of the other one was not responding to brain.

Meanwhile, Rumana's husband Hasan Sayeed Sumon on remand confessed that he had attacked her eyes as she insulted him for his poor eyesight, said Monirul Islam, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch (South).

Arrested on June 15, Sumon also confessed to police that he was jealous of his wife's success and he had made another attempt to kill her on May 21.

Police will place Sumon before a Dhaka court today seeking fresh remand.

Eye specialist Niaz Rahman, who provided treatment to Rumana immediately after her admission to Lab Aid Hospital in the capital, said "It seemed Rumana's left eye is incurable."

"There is little hope for the right eye as it also got severe injuries," the ophthalmologist told The Daily Star.

Bangladeshi communities in Vancouver and University of British Columbia in Canada in messages have expressed grave concern over the brutal attack on Rumana.