

# Bomb explodes during UN visit in Syria

AP, Damascus

A roadside bomb exploded in a restive suburb of the Syrian capital as senior UN officials toured the area yesterday, the latest incident in which the unarmed observer mission has nearly been caught up in the country's bloodshed.

No casualties were reported in the blast, which detonated about 150 meters away from visiting UN peace-keeping chief Herve Ladsous and Maj Gen. Robert Mood, the chief of UN observers in Syria. Journalists accompanying the team also were nearby. The explosion blew off the front of a parked vehicle.

A UN observer team with more than 250 members now on the ground has failed to quell the bloodshed in Syria, although it says it has had a "calming effect" in certain areas. Meanwhile, on several occasions, the team has come close to being caught in an attack, although there is no conclusive proof

that it has been targeted.

Earlier this month, a bomb targeting an army truck exploded seconds after a convoy carrying Mood went past in the country's south. Last week, a roadside bomb damaged the mission's cars in a northern town just minutes after witnesses said regime forces gunned down mourners at a funeral procession nearby.

It was not immediately clear what the target of yesterday's explosion was, but the damaged car was parked near a security checkpoint in the suburb of Douma. A security official at the checkpoint told the UN observers that gunmen had targeted two military buses in Douma earlier in the day, wounding more than 30 security agents.

"We obviously don't have the specifics about what happened here this morning," Mood said yesterday.

Ladsous gave a grim assessment of conditions for civilians in Douma, the scene of repeated clashes between security forces and rebels in recent

months.

"The city (Douma) is completely paralyzed," Ladsous said. "There is still some fighting taking place. ... It's absolutely imperative that all parties exercise restraint and don't engage into any more fighting. It serves nothing."

Activists reported heavy shelling yesterday in the town of Soran in the central Hama province. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights called on the international observers to visit Soran and investigate reports of more than a dozen killed.

In Damascus, opposition groups reported fighting overnight between government forces and army defectors in the district of Kfar Souseh, a hotbed of dissent against President Bashar Assad's regime. The district is a high security area, housing the Foreign Ministry and several security and intelligence agencies. It has also been the scene of frequent anti-Assad demonstrations since the uprising began.

## Twitter banned in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday blocked Twitter over a competition to make caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed on the social networking site, officials told AFP.

"The website has been banned by Ministry of Information Technology and the decision was conveyed to us. There was blasphemous material on Twitter," said Mohammad Younis Khan, spokesman for Pakistan Telecommunication Authority.

An official from the ministry said it had requested several times that no such competition be put on Twitter but the website had failed to respond.

Islam strictly prohibits the depiction of any prophet as blasphemous.

## Libyan convicted over Lockerbie bombing dies

AFP, Tripoli

Abdelbaset Ali Mohmet al-Megrahi, the only person convicted over the 1988 Lockerbie bombing over Scotland in which 270 people were killed, died yesterday, his brother told AFP.

"He died an hour ago," Abdelhakim al-Megrahi said, putting the time of death at shortly after 1.00pm.

Doctors had yet to determine the cause of death, he added.

Megrahi, 60, suffered from prostate cancer and was hospitalised for a few days in April before being sent back home to be with his family.

A Scottish court in 2001 convicted the Libyan of the 1988 attack on Pan Am flight 103 over the town of Lockerbie, but he was released on compassionate grounds in 2009 after doctors said he had only three months to live.

Megrahi had been greeted as a hero on his return to Muammar Gaddafi's Libya, after having served eight years of a minimum 27-year sentence for his role in the bombing.



Ali Mohmet al-Megrahi

The fact that he had survived much longer than the doctors had estimated had provoked indignation in Britain and the United States.

On the second anniversary of the release of the former Libyan intelligence agent on August 20, 2009, the Scottish government insisted its decision to free him had been vindicated.

Most of those killed in the bombing of the Boeing 747 jet headed from London to New York were Americans. All 259 passengers and crew were killed, along with 11 people on the ground.

Megrahi had always maintained his innocence and his brother Abdelhakim has in the past defended him, saying he was "exploited" by Gaddafi's regime which let him take the blame for a crime he did not commit.

In December, Megrahi told several British newspapers in what was billed as a "final interview" that a book being written by investigative journalist John Ashton would clear his name.

## Rajapakse to set free ex-army chief

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's president has ordered the release of his jailed electoral rival, ex-army chief Sarath Fonseka, bowing to a US demand three years after the end of the island's long Tamil civil war.

The former four-star general will be able to leave prison today after formalities are completed, an official said yesterday, after President Mahinda Rajapakse marked the third anniversary of the Tamil Tigers' crushing defeat.

Fonseka was arrested two weeks after he unsuccessfully challenged Rajapakse's re-election in January 2010.

Fonseka, 61, is credited with leading the military campaign that crushed the Tamil Tiger rebels in May 2009.

Washington had repeatedly called for Fonseka's release.

## G8 pledges to keep Greece in euro

### Pledges to lift 50m Africans out of poverty

AFP, Camp David

G8 leaders expressed their wish to see Greece stay in the eurozone at a Camp David summit Saturday, as the group papered over deep-seated divisions about how best to tackle the eurozone crisis.

With the future of Europe's currency union in doubt, leaders of the world's largest economies called on Greece to stick fast to the terms of a massive cash-for-reforms bailout, which is hanging by a thread.

"We agree on the importance of a strong and cohesive eurozone for global stability and recovery," a final G8 joint communique stated. "We affirm our interest in Greece remaining in the eurozone while respecting its commitments."

The summit took place after an electoral romp for Greek anti-austerity parties, that called into question the country's commitment to reforms and could leave G8 creditors

facing a choice between loosening austerity demands or turning off the bailout spigot.

G8 leaders also pledged to lift millions of Africans out of poverty by promoting investments in sustainable agriculture.

"Today we commit to launch a New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition to accelerate the flow of private capital to African agriculture, take to scale new technologies and other innovations that can increase sustainable agricultural productivity, and reduce the risk borne by vulnerable economies and communities," the Group of Eight major industrial nations said.

"This New Alliance will lift 50 million people out of poverty over the next decade."

The ambitious announcement, contained in a final communique released after a high-profile gathering on a range of topics, came a day after President Barack Obama reached out to the private sector for financial support for the cause.

## Unrest across Nepal as deadline looms

AEP, Kathmandu

Strikes brought widespread violence to Nepal's largest two cities yesterday, just a week ahead of a deadline for the impoverished Himalayan nation to complete its first peace-time constitution.

Police said they arrested more than 70 people in the capital, Kathmandu, and second city, Pokhara, where shops were forced to close, drivers warned off roads and journalists covering the protests attacked.

Protest groups have been making various claims for their rights ahead of a May 27 deadline for parliament to complete its new constitution following the end of a bloody 10-year Maoist insurgency in 2006.

Yesterday's protest marked the first day of a planned three-day shutdown by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), which is calling for the formation of federal states in the new constitution along ethnic lines.

Residents of the country's remote far west have endured weeks of strikes by demonstrators demanding their region is not split up, while indigenous Tharus from the southern plains have also staged shutdowns.

Nepal's parliament was elected in 2008 with a mandate to write a new constitution but lawmakers have missed several deadlines to agree a federal structure and decide which system of governance the country should adopt.



Pakistani truck drivers watch as traffic queues at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan at Torkham yesterday. US-Pakistani talks on reopening vital supply routes for Nato forces in Afghanistan have faltered over Islamabad's "unacceptable" demand to charge steep fees for trucks crossing the border, a senior US official told AFP yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Kazi Faruque returns

FROM PAGE 1

Eight of the nine-member governing body, the highest policymaking council of Proshika, had replaced him with Abdul Wadud and appointed Mahbul-ul-Karim as chief executive officer.

Mahbulul said Faruque illegally took control of Proshika with the help of outsiders and a section of employees, although a case is pending with the court in this regard.

He very cunningly intruded into the building along with his men before any staff came to the office and took possession, he added.

The management after Faruque's removal has been running the NGO efficiently for the last three years and has salvaged the organisation, which was on the verge of collapse because of his massive politicisation, irreg-

ularities and nepotism, Mahbulul continued.

Md Alauddin, senior accounts coordinator of Proshika, told The Daily Star that Qazi Faruque along with his men entered Proshika Bhaban in the city's Mirpur around 8:00am.

A colleague called him over phone at 8:20am and informed him that Qazi Faruque had taken possession of the office, Alauddin added.

Faruque drove out many of the employees, particularly those who had waged a movement against him in 2009, Alauddin said, adding that he also barred the general staff from entering the office.

Earlier, Faruque had sought a temporary injunction from the High Court (HC) on his removal as chairman.

enter the Proshika office alone as a former chairman to meet the incumbent chairman and the CEO.

He was barred from taking out any procession or rally to damage the peaceful atmosphere of Proshika.

Faruque called a press briefing in the afternoon. Asked upon what legal basis he had taken over the office, he said, "I came back with government support, employees' call and a judgment of the Appellate Division."

"The government and the law enforcement agencies fully helped me re-enter the office," he said.

Asked why he had taken two years to come back if the Appellate Division had cleared the way for his return, he said, "The government took the time to interpret and understand the implications of the judg-

ment."

In August 2010, he sought the Appellate Division's intervention for deletion of an HC observation that said he was a former chairman.

The Appellate Division, however, only clarified that the trial court of an assistant judge could try the case independently without taking into consideration the fact that Faruque was a former chairman of Proshika, as observed by the HC.

But the Appellate Division did not delete the word "former" in its judgment.

Nargis Jahan Banu, an ousted director of Proshika and loyal to Faruque, said, "We returned with the consent and full support of the government's highest level and they could not wait for the trial of the pending case, as it would linger."

Proshika received no foreign and local funds for

six years from funding agencies like DFID, Canadian CIDA and European Union and local organisation PKSE, apparently because of Faruque's non-transparent activities and political involvement, top officials had said.

He formed a political party, Oikyabaddha Nagorik Andolan, and contested in three parliamentary seats at the ninth parliamentary polls but lost deposits in all three.

He not only involved Proshika employees in the elections but also spent an unspecified amount of its money and other resources, alleged Mahbulul. It harmed the organisation and hindered its microcredit programme.

The NGO affairs bureau in an investigation in 2001 identified 55 irregularities against Proshika.

Around 5,000 employees are dependent on the organisation that has around 16 lakh beneficiaries in the country.

Faruque and his men on January 11, 2010 drove out the anti-Faruque group from the head office and took control of the building.

Police later took control of Proshika Bhaban on January 12, after driving out around 25 supporters of Faruque who had taken over the building by force despite the HC order allowing only Faruque to enter the building.

Being directed by the HC, Mirpur police handed over the keys of Proshika Bhaban to Mahbulul Karim on January 22, 2010.

Faruque yesterday brought allegations of wealth misappropriation against the three-year management led by Mahbulul.

## Prof Anisuzzaman

FROM PAGE 20

a false case to please the government and reap benefits from it, as Salauddin Quader Chowdhury is a member of the opposition party."

Prof Anisuzzaman, who had testified against the BNP lawmaker on Monday last week, said it was not true.

The defence in another case against Delwar Hossain Sayedee also made similar suggestions while cross-examining many of the 28 prosecution witnesses who had testified against the Jamaat-e-Islami leader regarding charges against him of crimes against humanity at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Tribunal-1 is the first of the two courts set up to deal with crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War of 1971. Tribunal-1 consists of its Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq, Justice Md Anwarul Haque and AKM Zaheer Ahmed.

Prof Anisuzzaman is the first prosecution witness against Salauddin Quader, who is facing 23 specific charges of crimes against humanity at the tribunal.

The 75-year-old professor on Monday narrated before the court Salauddin Quader's involvement in the murder of Nutan Chandra Singh, founder of the herbal medicine factory K u n d e s h w a r i O u s h a d h a l a y a , and the murder of Saleh Uddin, a student of Chittagong University, in 1971.

His deposition was based on what he had heard from a victim's family member and from the victim of another atrocity.

Salauddin Quader's defence yesterday suggested that everything Prof Anisuzzaman had said in his testimony was hearsay. The

Professor Emeritus of Dhaka University's Bengali Department agreed with the suggestion.

Yesterday was the fourth day for Prof Anisuzzaman in the witness dock.

The tribunal had to expressly remind defence counsel Ahsanul Haq Hena to wrap up the cross-examination as the court had stipulated one hour's time for this purpose during its last proceedings.

Prosecutor Zead A Malum was on his feet on several occasions to protest the lengthy questioning of his witness.

Prof Anisuzzaman's Monday's testimony on Monday lasted an hour, which was followed by around ten hours of cross-examination by the defence.

The second prosecution witness against the BNP lawmaker is scheduled to give his statement today [Monday].

After recording Prof Anisuzzaman's cross-examination yesterday, Tribunal-1 proceeded to record the cross-examination of a witness in the case against Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

Investigation Officer Mohammad Helal Uddin, who is the 28th and last prosecution witness against the Jamaat leader, yesterday faced cross-examination for the 10th day.

Mizanul Islam, a defence counsel of Sayedee, yesterday asked the witness about details regarding evidence he had exhibited to the court among other things.

The cross-examination will resume today [Monday].

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Delwar Hossain Sayedee are among three Jamaat-e-Islami and one BNP leaders currently facing charges of crimes against humanity at Tribunal-1.



Cars are damaged after a tower collapsed following an earthquake yesterday in Italy. A powerful earthquake shook Italy's industrial and densely populated northeast early Sunday, killing 6 people and felling homes and church steeples around the historic city of Ferrara.

PHOTO: AFP