Syria military base blasts kill dozens

Nato threatens Syria after Turkey row

AFP, *Damascus*

Twin blasts at a military base near Damascus by suicide bombers, one driving a bomb-laden ambulance, killed dozens of people while the fate of prisoners held there is unknown, a watchdog said yesterday.

The attack, the latest in a spate of assaults on Syrian military and government installations, was claimed by the al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra Front, which said it was to avenge Muslims "oppressed or killed" by the regime.

News of the blasts came as UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged President Bashar al-Assad's regime to declare a unilateral truce in the almost 19-month conflict which activists say has killed more than 32,000 people.

It said Syrian forces on Tuesday also rained shells down on rebel belts in the second city of Aleppo and Homs.

A shell from the Syrian side hit the Altinozu district of Turkey's Hatay province on Monday, causing no casualties but sparking a retaliatory bombardment of Syrian army positions, a Turkish official said.

Fogh Rasmussen

On Monday, Turkish President Abdullah Gul said the "worst-case scenarios" were now playing out in Syria and that Turkey would do everything necessary to protect itself.

Nato head Anders Fogh Rasmussen warned in Brussels against the dangers of the conflict in Syria escalating, saying alliance member Turkey had shown commendable restraint in response to shelling of its border area.

"Obviously Turkey has a right to defend herself within international law," Rasmussen said, noting that the alliance too has "all necessary plans in place to protect and to defend Turkey if necessary.

"We hope it won't be necessary, we hope that both countries will show restraint and avoid an escalation of the crisis," he added.

'Saudi arms' seen at rebel base

BBC ONLINE

BBC News has uncovered evidence that weapons intended for the Saudi military have been diverted to Syrian rebels.

Three crates from an arms manufacturer - addressed to Saudi Arabia - have been seen in a base being used by rebel fighters in the city of Aleppo.

How the small crates reached Aleppo is unknown, and the BBC was not allowed to film their contents. Saudi Arabia has refused to comment on the matter.

But their presence clearly suggests that someone in the Gulf is actively helping the rebels.

Privately, opposition sources have confirmed to the BBC that they are receiving assistance from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Attack on Vadra is attack on party

Congress gets tough on the issue

THE HINDU ONLINE

The India's ruling Congress party on Monday stood firm behind Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra saying any attack on him is an attack on the party itself.

"The attack is part of a well-planned conspiracy not against an individual but against the Congress and its leadership," party spokesperson Rashid Alvi said in answer to a question.

Simultaneously, Finance Minister P Chidambaram ruled out any investigation into Vadra's business dealings: unless there was a specific allegation of quid pro quo or corruption.

Two of Congress' allies also came to its rescue. Union Agriculture Minister and NCP boss Sharad Pawar dared India Against Corruption activist Arvind Kejriwal to go to court if he could substantiate his allegations; Rashtriya Janata Dal supremo Lalu Prasad accused the latter of targeting Vadra "to get cheap publicity."

Even BJP seemed unwilling to capitalise on the Vadra saga. On Saturday, its president Nitin Gadkari had told CNN-IBN in an interview: "I have no paperwork. I kept hearing about it but I had no evidence. I can't accuse anyone of anything without evidence, can I?" Leader of the Opposition Sushma Swaraj, too, refrained from comment on her Twitter account.

NEWS IN *brief*

Egypt pardons 'revolutionaries'

BBC ONLINE

Egypt's President Mohammed Morsi on Monday pardoned all those arrested during last year's popular uprising that ousted the country's former leader Hosni Mubarak.

A post on the president's official Facebook page announced an amnesty for deeds "committed with the aim of supporting the revolution".

The decree could lead to the release of several thousand people.

Mubarak stood down in February last year following an 18-day uprising in which hundreds of protesters died.

One in eight in world still hungry: UN

AFP, *Rome*

One in eight people worldwide still suffers from chronic hunger, the UN's food agency said yesterday, describing the figure as "unacceptable" and warning that the fight against hunger was slowing down.

"With almost 870 million people chronically undernourished in 2010-2012, the number of hungry people in the world remains unacceptably high," the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) said in

4 held over Ramu attacks

FROM PAGE 20

involvement in the violence," Gazi Md Shakhwat Hossain, acting officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, told The Daily Star.

With the four -- Rezaul Karim, 25, Mostaq Ahmed, 35, Mansur Ali, 47, and Mobin, 26, -- arrested yesterday, the number of arrestees in connection with the violence now stands at 100 in total.

During the September 29 attacks, 12 monasteries and about 50 houses were torched or vandalised following the Facebook post of an anti-Islam photograph tagged to a Buddhist youth's account.

Meanwhile, Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Sultana Kamal, after visiting the burnt temples yesterday, quoted locals as saying the local memer of parliament and the upazila chairman took part in a rally ahead of the violence.

Contacted by phone, she said locals questioned the role of the lawmaker and the chairman, who, however, are claiming they were there to quell the riot beforehand.

Lawmaker from Cox's Bazar-3 Luthfor Rahman Kajol is a BNP leader while upazila Chairman Sarwar Kajol is an Awami League leader.

Sultana Kamal demanded a speedy trial of the cases that have been filed in connection with the violence to curb such incidents in future. Division between political parties has been slowing down the process of the trial, she commented.

Coast Trust, a local non-governmental agency, organised a rally in Ramu, demanding exemplary punishment for the culprits.

The fine arts faculty of Dhaka University and Charu Shilpi Samaj organised a human chain in front of the faculty building, demanding a speedy trial of the accused.

Sammilito Nagarik Samaj, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Bishwa Kabitakantha Parisad held demonstrations, protesting against the attacks.

More trouble for UPA as BSP threatens to pull out support

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *New Delhi*

Accusing India's Congress-led UPA government of pursuing "anti-people" decisions, key regional politician Mayawati yesterday said her Bahujan Samaj Party will decide today on whether to continue its outside support to the government.

Mayawati

In her first major public after BSP's debacle in the state legislature polls in Uttar Pradesh, India's biggest state, seven months back, Mayawati, like her arch rival and Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, did not expect the Manmohan Singh government to last its term till 2014 and asked her cadres to be ready for parliamentary polls earlier than scheduled in the year 2014.

"We will hold a meeting of BSP's national executive tomorrow (October 10) to reconsider whether to continue support to UPA government or not," she said addressing BSP workers at a rally in Lucknow city.

"Going by the present circumstances, it appears that Lok Sabha polls would be held early," she said.

After the withdrawal of support by its ally Trinamool Congress (19 lawmakers), a minority UPA government has been surviving on the outside support of BSP, which has 21 MPs in Lok Sabha, and Samajwadi Party with 22 MPs.

Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress withdrew support to UPA government last month protesting some major economic reforms of the government.

Mayawati attacked the UPA government's foreign and economic policies, saying its "anti-people" decisions have added to the "woes" of the people including the deprived, Dalits, minorities and farmers who are facing the brunt of rising prices, growing unemployment and corruption.

Tk 140cr scam

FROM PAGE 20

year upon fake IBP (inland bill purchase).

Gautam, chief executive officer of Green Printers, took the amount as loan showing his employee Abul Hossain as the owner of one of his business concerns.

Benjir said although all the eight officers of the branch had denied their involvement claiming that their signatures had been forged, the ACC found their involvement.

On October 16, five to six persons from Green Printers and its other business entities, including Gautam and Abul Hossain, might be interrogated in this connection, he added.

According to the news report, Gautam opened inland letter of credit (ILC) to procure yarn and other accessories from local market and got these bills accepted by the Sonali Bank's Agargaon branch. He then sold the bills to other banks and pocketed the money, which Sonali Bank is liable for.

The eight officers of the branch are, Chowdhury Ali Ashraf, officer, Mohammad Moslem, executive officer, Abu Kalam Matobbor, executive officer, Shahidur Rahman, senior executive officer, Khairul Alam, former manager, Shahidul Islam, former manager, Arif, senior officer and Hasan Alvi, senior officer.

Hall-Mark and five other companies had misappropriated Tk 3,606 crore in loan from Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch of the same bank through fake IBP.

Experts, Obama camp pan Romney

AGENCIES

Mitt Romney's foreign policy speech Monday was filled with tough talk and slams of President Barack Obama's leadership but little of the clarity Romney has vowed to bring to the Oval Office, experts say.

Analysts reviewing what the Republican nominee said in what his campaign billed as a major foreign policy address weren't impressed.

Team Obama blasted Mitt Romney's foreign policy speech, saying it was full of "heated rhetoric"and "chest-thumping" but few specifics.

"This is Mitt Romney's seventh attempt, by our count, to reboot his foreign policy," campaign spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters aboard Air Force One. "When you're commander in chief, you don't get to bring an Etch a Sketch into the Oval Office. You don't get second chances, never mind seven chances.

She also said it's "striking" that Romney didn't speak a lot about about China, and she said Romney needs to be more clear about what the differences are between his approach and the president's in places like Syria.

"What exactly are they suggesting we do? What exactly is their plan and their proposal? So if they're going further, they should say that," she said.

ROMNEY'S FOREIGN POLICY

- Opposes military budget cut
- Supports a democratic Palestine
- Offers no specific Afghan troops pull out plan
- Supports arming Syria rebels
- Pledges tougher action on Iran
- Tougher stance on Russia on missile defence

Some foreign policy experts say the speech was vague at best, and reflected some confusion of ideas.

"If Romney has a foreign policy strategy, he still has not told us what it is. The governor is very fond of saying hope is not a strategy, but that cuts both ways. He didn't answer two key questions: what he would do differently and why we should expect what he would to work," said James Lindsay of the Council on Foreign Relations.

"There's an awful lot of rhetoric and things but when you get to the specifics, you just get the sense he doesn't know exactly what tools to use," former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on a conference call organized by the Obama campaign.

Referring to the op-ed on foreign policy that Romney published last week in the Wall Street Journal, Albright added, "I am a professor. If one of my students turned that in, he'd get a 'C' because he gave absolutely no specifics."

Experts say, Romney's speech also seemed to reflect a divide in Republican circles between foreign policy experts who have aggressively promoted democracy as a way to advance American goals in the Middle East and others who believe the Arab Spring movement threatens to unleash forces that could be more hostile to the United States and to Israel than the authoritarian regimes.

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Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Dhaka
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Other Requirements:

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Romney catches up Obama

AFP, *Washington*

Mitt Romney got a poll boost from his strong debate performance against President Barack Obama but it is too early to know how significant or lasting the bounce for the Republican challenger will be.

Three days after the debate, the two candidates were tied at 47 percent. Obama had 5 points points lead before the debate.

Obama still had a three-point edge, 49 to 46 percent, in Gallup's seven-day rolling average ending Saturday, which included polls before and after the debate.

A separate national poll by the Pew Research Center conducted in the days after the debate showed Romney backed by 49 percent of likely voters and Obama with the support of 45 percent.

Obama currently leads in key 9 of the 10 swing states.

Two more presidential debates await on October 16 and October 22.