

## Air strikes in Iraq effective: US

AFP, Sydney

Air strikes aimed at halting the advance of Sunni Islamic State militants in Iraq have been effective and the US is open to further requests for help, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said yesterday.

The United States has conducted three days of attacks by jets and drones on jihadists in northern Iraq whose onslaught has displaced 200,000 people since August 3, including all the residents of Iraq's largest Christian town, Qaraqosh.

Hagel said Washington was constantly assessing the situation after President Barack Obama authorised the action to help break the siege of Mount Sinjar, where thousands of civilian refugees from the Yazidi religious minority had been trapped.

"They have been very effective from all the reports we have received on the ground," he said of the air strikes when asked in Sydney, where he is attending annual Australia-US defence talks.

"We are constantly assessing where we can continue to assist Iraqi security forces and where, as we build partnerships, we will work with the Iraqi government.

## N'ganj mob

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On April 27, seven people -- NCC panel major Nazrul Islam and his four associates and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and his driver -- were kidnapped separately in Narayanganj. Their bodies were found on April 30 and May 1 in the Shitalakkhya.

Ivy said, "I believe those godfathers are involved in the incident, directly or indirectly."

She said, "There is nothing to suspect at this stage; confessions have already been made."

Ivy said the government should immediately bring back Nur Hossain, the prime accused in the seven-murder case, from India where he was detained in mid-June.

"The clues about who were involved in the murders and why they did it will come out if Nur is interrogated," she said.

Shahjahan Ali, additional secretary to the public administration ministry who led the probe body, told reporters that they asked Ivy if she had any knowledge about the murders, as two of her counselors were involved, one murdered and the other accused of the killing.

The probe body has so far talked with over 300 people.

## Retired Dhaka

FROM PAGE 16 any financial benefit in the process, ACC Commissioner Md Shahabudin told The Daily Star.

The manner in which Faruk Ahmed acquitted the accused was unusual, and the ACC feels he had scope to get financial benefits and he might have taken that advantage, Shahabudin added.

Justice SK Sinha, who had been discharging the functions of Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain in the latter's absence, on Sunday asked the law ministry to take action against Faruk.

Faruk, who retired as judge of the Public Safety Disturbance Crime Prevention Tribunal in Dhaka on June 26, acquitted dozens of accused in the last few months of his service.

Many of these accused were acquitted in violation of rules, a Supreme Court source said.

Faruk's court had reportedly finished recording statements from all witnesses, cross examinations of accused and arguments of 10 cases in a single day.

He disposed of 20 cases in four to 10 days after finishing the arguments and he concluded the cross examination of the accused even before recording witnesses' statements, which is contrary to the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Faruk granted bail to 45 accused, including drug peddlers, in June and acquitted the accused of 77 cases in six months. Besides, he granted bail to 101 accused between January and May this year.

Last year, he disposed of 79 cases and acquitted the accused of 60 cases and sentenced the accused of 19 cases, according to the report, according to a newspaper report.

Meanwhile, the ministry last week sent three lower court judges into forced retirement in line with a decision of the chief justice, ministry sources said.

The CJ decided to send them into forced retirement for misconduct and corruption while discharging their duties.

They are Chairman of First Labour Court of Chittagong and former District and Sessions Judge of Dhaka AKM Ishtiaque Hossain, Additional District Judge of Jessore Mizanur Rahman, and Joint District Judge of Lalmonirhat Salauddin Mohammad Akram.

At present, the ACC is investigating former Dhaka court judge Motahar Hossain, who acquitted BNP Senior vice-chairperson Tarique Rahman in a money laundering case in November last year. Motahar is reportedly in Malaysia.

## RMG export fell in July

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confidence of international retailers, said Atiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Garment exports were badly hampered in October, November, December and January.

The garment sector experienced two massive disasters -- the Tazreen Fashions fire and Rana Plaza building collapse -- which hogged headlines all over the world.

"But at the same time the production cost increased by nearly 15 percent with appreciation of local currency against the dollar," he said.

"We need to address the issues of inadequate supply of gas and power in the industrial units, poor condition of Dhaka-Chittagong highway and the overall political crisis to overcome the situation."

He observed that workers' efficiency had remained unchanged for decades, while it was much higher in competing countries like China, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Another cause of concern for the Bangladeshi garment sector is the higher bank interest rate which has been eating up the marginal profit of the garment makers, Islam said.

"But the buyers are not increasing the prices per unit of garment item.

some cases the buyers bargain for squeezing the prices further," the BGMEA chief said.

Mohammad Hatem, acting president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said political crises had a major impact on the sector in the last quarter of 2013.

He, however, said the situation would improve in the coming months.

Inspections by European brands' Accord on Fire and Building Safety and North American retailers' Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety boosted buyer confidence as less than 2 percent factories were found vulnerable, he said.

On the other hand, the export of knitwear products rose by 4.32 percent only to \$1.30 billion in July.

In July last year, woven exports grew by 27.02 percent and knitwear products by 25.24 percent from the previous year.

But this July, overall export earnings went down by 1.37 percent and stood at \$2.99 billion -- 2.03 percent less than the targeted \$3.04 billion.

The fiscal year 2013-14 ended with export earnings of \$24.50 billion, maintaining 13.86 percent growth.

For FY 2014-15 beginning last month, the government set a target at \$26.90 billion.

## Pinak-6 search abandoned

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severely decomposed. "Those would not be identifiable and it would be very painful," he said.

At Pachchar school playground on the other side of the river where bodies of the victims were brought in, there was anger and sadness as the search operation was called off.

Jharna Begum, mother of missing eighth grader Lipi Begum, was in denial, "This cannot be ... they cannot call off the search before finding all the bodies."

Kazi Humayun Kabir, who lost his mother, sister-in-law and a nephew in the disaster, said it was utterly disappointing that the government abandoned the search.

Both demanded that the bodies of their loved ones are returned to them.

DC Saiful said the river was rough and there was a 5.6 knot (10.4kmph) current. The Met office asked maritime ports to hoist signal-3 due to bad weather, which was one of the reasons to call off the operation, he said.

The survey vessels Kandari-2 and Jarip-10, which concentrated their operation only on one spot where they claimed to have found a "metallic object" could not ascertain anything.

Asked about it, the DC said Chittagong port authorities that carried

out the operation there could not say for sure whether the object was Pinak-6.

Commander Monjurul Karim Chowdhury, in charge of Kandari-2, was also unsure, Saiful said.

Locals who started searching for the vessel themselves since Sunday could not find anything. They too claimed to have detected an object around a kilometre away from where the vessel was videotaped going down on August 4.

"Earlier, a ship of fire service could not find anything there despite an intensive search," Saiful said.

Contacted, Mohammad Hasan, chief of the operation carried out under "Meghna Chain Koppa and Cycle Mart", said water was about 100 feet deep at the spot.

"Our divers went down but they could not go more than 30 feet as their oxygen masks came loose in the fierce current," he told The Daily Star.

He, however, said given an opportunity, he and his men would search for the vessel one more time.

Local traders and shop owners at Mawa were disappointed with the government efforts. They said they had seen on TV how ships were salvaged from deep seas in other countries but the government could not even locate a launch in a river.

"They [the government] claimed that they used ultramodern technology to look for the vessel and claimed that they found something. So then why abandon the operation," said a restaurant owner at Mawa.

The double-decker vessel, which was on its way to Mawa from Kawrakandi, was carrying more than 200 passengers against a capacity of 85. It sank in choppy waters and strong winds in the mighty river around 11:00am on August 4.

According to the official calculations, bodies of 45, including 15 children and 15 women, have been found so far.

Of the recovered bodies, 27 were identified and handed over to the family members. The rest 18 still remain unidentified and buried at Shibchar Municipal graveyard in Madaripur.

Meanwhile, the decomposed body of a woman assumed to be in her mid 20's was discovered in the Meghna at Ramgati of Laxmipur around 8:00pm. The corps is believed to be of a victim of the Pinak-6 disaster.

Our staff correspondent Pankaj Karmakar, Munshiganj correspondent Farhana Mirza and Madaripur correspondent Nityananda Halder contributed to this report.

## Temporary fitness

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formed to probe the launch capsized that killed over 100 people.

The officials, whom the committee had found responsible for the deaths, had lobbied for the dismantling of the committee with a powerful quarter backing them, according to official sources in the department.

The committee had nearly wrapped up its investigation and it only had two days to go before it was to submit its findings, the sources said.

The overcrowded Pinak-6 capsized in the choppy waters of the Padma on August 4. The sunken vessel remained untraced and its salvage operation has been called off.

"The 45-day temporary fitness certificate [token] issued the last time for Pinak-6 was absolutely illegal," said a high official of the country's lone Marine Court, requesting anonymity.

"The fitness certificate given in token form more than once was illegal and we will bring the surveyor concerned to book," a member of the enquiry committee had said before the committee got dissolved.

According to Inland Shipping Ordinance, validity of a temporary fitness token shall not exceed 45 days during which the original fitness certificate must be renewed, said Jahangir Hossain, a lawyer at the Marine Court.

The Marine Court has served show-cause notices on all four vessel surveyors of the shipping department for issuing unlawful "temporary fitness" certificates and "temporary registration" to many questionable vessels, he said.

According to the department officials, fitness permit for Pinak-6 expired on April 30. It issued a 45-day fitness token on May 1, implying the original certificate would be renewed within that period.

But the department then gave a second temporary fitness token for period between June 14 and July 15.

Shipping department surveyor Mirza Saifur Rahman issued another temporary fitness token on July 23, claiming he had physically surveyed the vessel at Mawa on July 18.

Department of Shipping Chief Inspector Shafiqur Rahman said upon physical survey of a vessel, the surveyor has to submit a declaration to the department for fitness renewal as per rules.

"But we have not received any survey declaration for Pinak-6 since its fitness expired," he said.

Mirza Saifur said he did not submit the declaration even though he had surveyed the vessel because "it had some faults" and that he was busy due to the Eid rush.

About issuing the temporary certificate again and again to Pinak-6 without submitting the survey declaration, he said, "I did it as per the law."

The Department of Shipping has also issued "temporary registration" and fitness certificates for seven years to a large vessel, Kalam Khan, plying on Dhaka-Barisal route despite its fourth (top) deck having a faulty design.

Chief Inspector Shafiqur said a month ago he had sued the vessel's construction supervisor, owner, builder and the dockyard owner for deviating from the design.

As to why he had spared the surveyor, Mirza Saifur, Shafiqur said, "I cannot sue an official of my own department."

Saifur, however, said his predecessor had issued the registration and that he could not say why it got fitness certificate without looking at the file.

Chief Engineer AKM Fakhrul Islam of the department said they had issued "temporary registration" to Kalam Khan for seven years as a "customary practice" though there was no legal

provision.

Director General Commodore M Zakiur Rahman Bhuiyan of the Department of Shipping said his department had dissolved its committee to avoid "overlapping" of investigation, as the shipping ministry had a seven-member committee to probe the incident.

"The shipping minister's instruction was to dissolve the committee, as having two committees would create problems," he said, adding that it would be difficult to deal with varied findings of two committees while filing a case with the Marine Court.

It was also aimed at avoiding any possible favouritism, as the department officials, in some way or the other, were involved in the vessel's registration, survey and inspection, he said.

According to the Inland Shipping Ordinance, he continued, there should be one committee to probe a river accident and that they had given priority to the committee of the ministry.

When asked if the committee was dissolved to protect those responsible for the tragedy, the DG said, "It is not correct."

As to why they took eight days to dissolve an "unnecessary" committee, he said they had to look into its legal implications.

Regarding why they had formed it in the first place, he said it was the norm that they form a probe committee immediately after an accident.

The seven-member committee of the ministry includes two department of shipping representatives, he added.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, who lost three nieces in the accident, said, "We dissolved one committee to make the probe transparent."

Rejecting the allegation of trying to protect those responsible, the minister said the Department of Shipping probe body might not always be fair since they were involved in regulating vessels.

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