

Car bombs kill 6 soldiers in southeast Yemen: military

AFP, Aden

Twin suicide car bombs yesterday killed at least six soldiers in an attack on an army headquarters in southeast Yemen, the military said.

Yemeni security forces are often the target of deadly attacks, which are usually blamed on Al-Qaeda militants who are active in the violence-ravaged country.

The explosive-laden vehicles were detonated at the entrance of the base in the town of Seiyun in Hadramawt province, according to a military source.

"According to a preliminary toll, six soldiers were killed and eight others wounded," the source said.

The blasts came shortly after the arrival of a convoy carrying a military general who was unharmed, the source added.

A bomb also exploded in a square in Seiyun near a local government building, residents said.

Elsewhere in Hadramawt province, suspected Al-Qaeda militants late on Monday killed two soldiers and wounded a third in an ambush in the town of Shehr, a security source said.

Southeast Yemen is a stronghold of Al-Qaeda militants.

On Saturday an American and a South African hostage were killed during a failed attempt by US special forces to rescue them from Al-Qaeda in the region.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is considered by Washington as the most dangerous affiliate of the jihadist network.

Bomb threat closes part of Stockholm airport

AFP, Stockholm

Police closed part of Stockholm's main international airport yesterday amid media reports of a bomb threat.

"There has been a threat and we have taken measures," police spokesman Lars Bystroem told AFP, without giving further details.

"It's not the first time we've received this kind of threat but it is not very common," he said, adding that flights were still taking off with slight delays.

An airport spokesman told TT news agency that the threat involved a suspicious piece of luggage and that several gates had been closed.

A passenger told public broadcaster Sveriges Radio that police had evacuated a plane headed for Copenhagen following a bomb threat.

Six held

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Station, said they suspected that other staff of the agency might be involved in the mugging.

On Sunday, eight armed muggers carrying backpacks took away Tk 90 lakh from four employees of E-zone, a Bkash service providing agency, and also a dealer of a mobile phone operator in Rupnagar.

Meanwhile, Khilgaon police Sub-inspector Khairuzzaman said Riad, Hajrat and Jalal were arrested around 10:00pm on Monday in Goran area. On their information, police seized a motorbike suspected to be used in snatching Tk 20 lakh, said the SI. On Sunday, three to four muggers snatched the money from Abdus Salam, an employee of Ekota Store, after shooting him in the left leg.

Court orders

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couple's colleagues. Sagar Sarowar, news editor at Maasranga TV, and his wife Meherun Rumi, senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were killed at their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar on February 11, 2012.

Of the nine people arrested so far, Tanvir Rahman, got bail from the High Court on December 2.

DCC polls

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cabinet meeting that the elections would be held early next year, but she did not specify the time.

The decision came after an LGRD ministry proposal sought extension of the tenure of the two DCC administrators to one year from six months.

Asked about BNP's participation in the DCC elections, Fakhrul said the party would decide when the election time would come.

Referring to the charging of BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka with sedition, he said the "illegal" government had been suing his party colleagues in fear of movement.

Khoka, the last elected mayor of Dhaka city, was charged with sedition on Monday for "instigating violence" last year. Khoka is now in the USA for cancer treatment.

The five-yearly DCC election has been overdue since May 2007.

Petty graft eats up 2.2pc of GNI

Says TIB executive director

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh loses 2.2% of its gross national income due to petty corruptions at individual level, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said yesterday.

Speaking at a programme arranged by UNDP in Bangladesh, he hoped that the young people will take a stand against these practices.

UNDP organised the event to mark the International Anti-Corruption Day 2014. Around 200 young people participated in the interactive programme held at the Russian Cultural Centre.

The slogan for the Anti-Corruption Day this year was "Break the corruption chain".

Nick Beresford, deputy country director of UNDP in Bangladesh, was present at the event as the chief guest. Dr Nasiruddin Ahmed, commissioner of Anti-Corruption Commission and

Dr Iftekharuzzaman were special guests.

Speaking about the impact of corruption on society, Beresford said fighting corruption is a global concern because corruption is found in both rich and poor countries, and evidence shows that it hurts poor people disproportionately.

He added that corruption also leads to creating unemployment and the young people suffer badly as a consequence.

Commissioner Dr Ahmed said that although the Anti Corruption Commission in Bangladesh was only established 10 years ago, it has achieved significant success in establishing a systematic procedure of taking action against corruption at every level of governance.

After the speeches, the young volunteers participated in a lively question-answer session with the panel of guests.

Protesting Thai rubber farmers defy martial law

AFP, Bangkok

Thai rubber farmers yesterday defied a law banning political gatherings as the industry reels from record low prices, testing the junta's resolve to end the kingdom's subsidy culture.

Dozens of farmers gathered in the southern towns of Surat Thani and Krabi to urge Thailand's new military rulers to do more to arrest tumbling prices that have left many facing financial ruin.

The protests are a significant test for the generals now running the world's largest rubber producer. They vowed an end to the country's history of populist subsidies as part of their justification for seizing power in May.

Many rubber farmers live in the south, a region which is home to the ultra-royalists who backed the May coup. As their profits shrivel, the farmers now want payback.

Organisers have vowed to step up demonstrations if the government refuses to buy their product at significantly above market prices.

"If our demands are not met we will

intensify our demonstrations," protest leader Pairoed Rerkdee told AFP by telephone.

Pairoed said farmers were demanding 70 baht (\$2.12) for a kilogram of latex rubber and 80 baht per kilo for rubber sheet.

In Surat Thani yesterday, latex rubber was selling for 33 baht per kilo while the Rubber Research Center in Bangkok said processed sheet rubber Monday was at 51.65 baht a kilo, its lowest in five years.

Sheet rubber fetched as much as 120 baht in 2011 but prices have since tumbled, thanks partially to falling demand from China and the global tyre industry as well as stockpiling.

Pairoed said between 3-400 people turned up for yesterday's protest. Local police chief Major-General Apichart Boonsriroje told AFP the turnout was "less than 100".

The gathering nonetheless defies the junta's ban under martial law of demonstrations and political gatherings of more than five people.

Qaeda claims deadly car bombs at Yemen army base

AFP, Aden

Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for twin suicide car bomb attacks yesterday that killed seven soldiers in Yemen, as fresh violence shook the increasingly unstable country where rival militias are battling for control.

The attacks targeted an army headquarters in Yemen's southeast, a stronghold of Al-Qaeda where two hostages -- an American photojournalist and a South African teacher -- were killed by the militants during a failed rescue attempt on Saturday.

Yemen, an important US ally bordering oil-rich Saudi Arabia, has been wracked by months of growing violence after a powerful Shiite militia seized control of the capital.

Military sources said yesterday's attacks saw two explosive-laden vehicles detonated at the base in the town

of Seiyun in Hadramawt province.

"Seven soldiers were killed and eight others wounded," one source said, adding that the blasts came shortly after the arrival of a convoy carrying a general, who was unharmed.

Another source said one of the vehicles exploded at the entrance to the headquarters complex while the other managed to make it about 30 metres (yards) inside before exploding after hitting an army vehicle.

Ansar al-Sharia, the main arm of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, said in a statement on Twitter that two of its "martyrs" had carried out the attacks, which it claimed left "dozens of dead and wounded".

A bomb also exploded in a square in Seiyun near a local government building, residents said, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

Every day human rights day

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activists holding black flags would form a human chain in front of the press club.

The move is aimed to protest the deteriorating state of human rights in the country, said Nur Khan, director (investigation) of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a rights body.

On the other hand, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is scheduled to bring out a procession from Dhaka University's TSC around 11:30am.

The procession would end near the Central Shaheed Minar. The rights body's Barisal, Rangpur and Sylhet units would bring out similar rallies in the respective districts in observance of the day, according to the website of NHRC.

According to an ASK report, as many as 250 people were abducted reportedly by law enforcers between 2007 and 2013. At least 68 people were picked up last year alone.

Eighty-two people were abducted in the first nine months of this year. Of them, 23 were found dead, while 10 others were released later, says the report.

Another ASK report shows that the number of extra-judicial killings came down to 91 in 2012 from 229 in 2009.

The number, however, rose to 208 last year.

In the first 10 months this year, as many as 118 people were killed in "shootouts" between their "cohorts" and law enforcers.

Nur Khan claimed that even though there were numerous allegations against the law enforcers to this end, the "state" was not taking any actions against them.

"People are feeling insecure," he said.

"The state may think that forced disappearance and crossfire would be effective in curbing criminal activities. But such shortcuts can never be the real solution to the problem," added the ASK director.

Meanwhile, in a message yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government had "strengthened" rights-related institutions, including the NHRC, for promoting and protecting people's human rights in the country.

The UNGA proclaimed 10 December as Human Rights Day to bring to the attention "of the peoples of the world" the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard of its achievement for all peoples and all nations, according to UN website.

Mandela's ex-wife takes swipe at widow over his will

AFP, Johannesburg

Nelson Mandela's former wife has taken a swipe at his widow Graca Machel, as she continues her fight to acquire the late statesman's rural house in Qunu.

In an interview published yesterday, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela questioned why the property was left to Mozambican-born Machel, whom she said already owns "the world in Mozambique".

Winnie in October launched a legal challenge against Mandela's will claiming that the house, built on an expansive estate where the revered South African leader is buried, was acquired by her in 1989.

Mandela was still in prison at the time.

"I let him live on my property," the 78-year-old Madikizela-Mandela told the Daily Dispatch newspaper.

She said she was not going to evict the anti-apartheid icon "simply because he was married to a third wife".

"It is such a pity he is no longer there for me to ask just what on earth would have brought him to elect that he would take my land and give it away to someone who actually has a whole world in Mozambique, because she's got her four houses in Mozambique."

Madikizela-Mandela went a court to nullify the registration of the property in Mandela's name. The case is yet to be heard.

The couple divorced in 1996 and she was not named in his \$4.4 million (3.4 million euro) estate in Mandela's will which was released in February after his death in December 2013.

Mandela bequeathed the home to his family trust on behalf of Machel, her children and the Mandela family.

Madikizela-Mandela however told the paper that she bore no grudges against Machel, and that her divorce from Mandela was a "blessing in disguise".

Jubo Dal

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He demanded fair investigation into the incident.

Humayun Kabir, officer in-charge of Chandraganj Police Station, said a police team launched a drive in Latifpur around 10:00pm to nab Jisan.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the gang opened fire on them, prompting retaliatory shots from police. At one stage, Rony was caught in the line of fire and hit by bullets.

He was taken to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital where he died of his wounds the same night. Police seized a revolver and 12 bullets from the spot.

Rony was accused in several cases filed with the police station, the OC said.

Laxmipur District Unit of Jubo Dal President Rezaul Karim Liton said Rony was an activist of Jubo Dal.

Devastating year

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child soldiers this year, according to Unicef.

The world's worst outbreak of Ebola has left thousands of children orphaned while some 5 million are out of school in the three hardest-hit countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"The sheer number of crises in 2014 meant that many were quickly forgotten or captured little attention," Unicef said citing ongoing violence in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

Another Hindu

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Arun quoted his father as saying, "I played ball with you at Saira [Collegiate] School playground many times. Don't kill me."

The witness said he and his mother fell to their knees and pleaded with Sirajul to spare his father's life but the Razakars forced them out of the place.

"When Siraj Master started to hack my father, he raised his hands and the fingers fell one after another," Arun said. "At one stage, Siraj Master shot my father in the chest and he dropped to the ground."

The Razakars then left the place. "Father cried for water and mother soaked her sari in a nearby water body and squeezed it into his mouth. Later he died," Arun said.

"Villagers came to the scene and asked us not to cry, fearing Sirajul may attack again."

Arun later left Bangladesh.

Sirajul, facing six charges of crimes against humanity and genocide, was produced at the dock.

The state-appointed defence counsel Mohammad Abul Hasan cross-examined the witness before the proceeding was adjourned until today.

Pistorius appeal ruling delayed

AFP, Pretoria

A South African judge yesterday delayed a ruling on whether to allow the prosecution to appeal against Oscar Pistorius's five-year prison sentence for killing his girlfriend, saying she needed more time.

After listening to arguments from the prosecution and the defence, judge Thokozile Masipa adjourned the hearing until today, saying: "I want to think about it."

Prosecutors described the five-term for manslaughter imposed on the Paralympic star in October as "shockingly inappropriate," as they sought to open the door to a tougher sentence.

The double-amputee athlete, who is serving his sentence in a Pretoria prison over the killing of Reeve Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013, was not in court yesterday.

Prosecutor Gerrie Nel argued that Masipa had misinterpreted the law when she ruled at the end of a sensational trial watched around the world that Pistorius did not intentionally shoot his 29-year-old model girlfriend.

"The precedent set by this court is

shockingly low," said Nel.

Legal experts and sources involved in the case say they expect Masipa to allow the appeal to go ahead, opening the way for Pistorius to possibly face a tougher murder charge.

Pistorius admitted shooting Steenkamp four times with hollow point bullets through a locked toilet door at his upmarket Pretoria home but told his trial he thought she was an intruder.

Masipa found him guilty in September of culpable homicide, also known as manslaughter, and later sentenced him to five years in jail.

Under South African law he could end up serving just 10 months of his jail term at Pretoria's central prison.

Defence lawyer Barry Roux argued that the sentence against the 28-year-old Pistorius was just.

"It's incorrect to say it's a light sentence, it's not," said Roux. "What we're actually dealing with is an academic debate."

Experts said they expect Masipa to give the state a "lashing" about their handling of the case, before sending the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein, the country's judicial capital.

CIA brutality well

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"This document examines the CIA's secret overseas detention of at least 119 individuals and the use of coercive interrogation techniques - in some cases amounting to torture," committee chair Dianne Feinstein said.

The CIA dismissed the findings, saying the interrogations did result in valuable information. Many Republicans condemned the report, which was put together by the committee's Democratic majority, saying it would put Americans at risk.

Specific examples of brutality cited include the November 2002 death from hypothermia of a detainee held partially nude and chained to a concrete floor at a CIA prison.

The report said the CIA had tried to justify its use of the program by giving examples of what it called "thwarted" terrorist plots and suspect captures, but the "representations were inaccurate and contradicted by the CIA's own records."

Some captives were deprived of sleep for up to 180 hours, at times with their hands shackled above their heads, and the report recorded cases of "rectal feeding" or "rectal hydration" without any documented medical need.

It described one secret CIA prison, whose location was not identified, as a "dungeon" where detainees were kept in total darkness and shackled in isolated cells, bombarded with loud noise and given only a bucket in which to relieve themselves.

It says that during one of the 83 occasions on which he was subjected to a simulated drowning technique the CIA called "waterboarding," an al-Qaeda detainee known as Abu Zubaydah became "completely unresponsive with bubbles rising through his open full mouth," though he later was revived.

The report said CIA records showed that seven of 39 CIA detainees subjected to harsh interrogations produced no intelligence at all while in CIA custody. Others made up stories, "resulting in faulty intelligence."

It said: "The methods in question, which were based on discredited coercive interrogation techniques such as those used by torturous regimes during the Cold War to elicit false confessions, regularly resulted in fabricated information."

The report also said the CIA had failed to use adequately trained and vetted personnel. Two psychologists

were contracted to set up the program and run it, but neither had any experience in interrogation or specialized knowledge of al-Qaeda.

One detainee subjected to some of the harshest treatment, al-Qaeda commander Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused of being the mastermind of the Sept. 11 hijacked plane attacks, was among the militants who gave interrogators false information, the report said.

In his case, such information included a bogus claim that he had assigned Dhiren Barot, a British al-Qaeda operative, to recruit African-Americans in Montana to the Qaeda cause.

The report said internal CIA records described the waterboarding of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed as evolving into a "series of near drownings."

President Barack Obama said in a statement the techniques damaged American interests abroad without serving broad counter terrorism efforts. "Rather than another reason to refight old arguments, I hope that today's report can help us leave these techniques where they belong, in the past," he said.

CIA Director John Brennan acknowledged that the CIA detention and interrogation program "had shortcomings and that the agency made mistakes."

But he denied the agency misled anyone about it and said the agency's own review indicated that detainees who were subjected to harsh interrogations "did produce intelligence that helped thwart attack plans, capture terrorists and save lives."

A law enforcement official said that the Justice Department had no plans to conduct any investigation of the CIA's actions in light of the release of the report.

Intelligence officials said that at one point, the Justice Department, through a specially-designated prosecutor conducted a criminal investigation into around 20 cases of allegations that CIA abused detainees. However, that investigation was closed without charges being filed.

The report charts the history of the CIA's "Rendition, Detention and Interrogation" program, which President George W. Bush authorized after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Bush ended many aspects of the program before leaving office, and Obama swiftly banned "enhanced interrogation techniques" after his 2009 inauguration.

Shahabuddin, shhh!

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rose in Bangladesh as it slid two notches to rank the 14th most corrupt country in the world.

Bangladesh scored 25 points out of 100, two points less than last year's, shows the index released on December 3 by the Berlin-based graft watchdog.

The attack on TIB by Shahabuddin is nothing new. On May 28, he questioned the transparency of the TI's Bangladesh chapter.

The following day, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, "If the ACC wants to unmask any of our activities, it can start probing today. Even it can file cases."

The ACC is yet to take up the challenge.

Speaking at the function as the chief guest, former chief justice and Chairman of Bangladesh Law Commission Justice ABM Khairul Haque slammed the ACC for poor investigations into graft allegations. "Charge sheets submitted to courts by ACC officials are very weak."

Saying that people's perception of the anti-graft body is not good, he asked it not to misbehave with people.

"The president, prime minister, chief justice and ACC officials are all servants of the people. All should work keeping it in mind."

ACC Commissioner Nasiruddin Ahmed and its top officials were present, among others.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Iftekharuzzaman said the graft watchdog at a meeting said Shahabuddin's comments on TIB were not proper. "The ACC chairman along with two commissioners requested me to forget the matter."

"I believe they [ACC officials] will realise it again and will refrain from making such embarrassing comments," he added.

In January last year, Shahabuddin reportedly sponsored publication of a newspaper advertisement welcoming Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Pabna.

He had promised paying the Pabna Press Club, of which he is a life member, for the advertisement which was published on the front page of a Bangla daily on January 29 last year, claimed Ahmed Ul Huq Rana, then secretary of Pabna Press Club.