

Deadly attack stokes Iraq pilgrimage fears

AFP, Karbala

A deadly mortar attack near the Iraqi city of Karbala yesterday stoked security concerns as millions of Shiite pilgrims gathered for one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.

"There were one person killed and four wounded when mortar rounds hit an area on the western side of the city" shortly after midnight, a police colonel said.

"They crashed into an area called Souk al-Basra, around seven kilometres (four miles) from the city centre," he said, adding the victims were residents and not pilgrims.

A medical source in the holy city of Karbala confirmed the toll.

Record numbers of Shiite faithful have been converging on Karbala from across Iraq and other countries for Arbaeen, which on Saturday will mark the end of a 40-day period of mourning following the anniversary of Imam Hussein's death.

Hussein is one of the most revered figures for Shites, who are the largest community in Iraq and the overwhelming majority in neighbouring Iran.

Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi said on Thursday that more than 17 million pilgrims had come to Karbala for Arbaeen, which in a normal year is already considered one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.

The Karbala governor has said this year's was the biggest on record.

This year's pilgrimage has taken on a political dimension as it is the first since the devastating offensive the Islamic State group launched in Iraq in June.

The jihadist organisation -- led by Sunni extremists -- considers Shites to be heretics and has made targeting the community one of its main objectives.

War criminals'

FROM PAGE 3

"We are suspicious whether they at all believe in human rights," said journalist Serajuddin Hossain's son, adding that there was also an evil scheme working centring the number of martyrs and capital punishment.

"We question these ignorant people -- does statistics over mass killings in 1971 have any significance to us who lost their relatives. How many people need to be killed to prove mass killings are grievous? Does it demean our victory? Does it relieve us of our pain a bit?"

Time has come to fight such evil attempts and conduct an investigation immediately to find the reason behind the conspiracy, Touhid said.

Projonmo'71 urged the government to take all-out initiatives to bring back all the fugitive war criminals convicted by the international crimes tribunals and execute the judgments.

Academic Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta's daughter Meghna Guhathakurta, writer-novelist Shahidullah Kaiser's daughter drama personality Shomi Kaiser and Salimullah's son dancer Shibli Mohammad also addressed the press conference.

Trader shot dead

FROM PAGE 16

hospital and sent the body to the morgue for an autopsy.

Family members said some local terrorists demanded money from Milon a few days back as he built a house in the area. Milon might have been killed for refusing the thugs money, they suspected.

Shahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Polash Police Station, said they detained three people for interrogation.

Road crash

FROM PAGE 16

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports, a man was killed and five others were injured after a truck and a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on in Fatikchhari upazila headquarters yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was Sada Mia, 28, of Gaibandha.

Of the injured, two took primary treatment while the rest were taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, police said.

Our Jamalpur correspondent adds, Hashmat, 15, son of Mongol, died when a sugarcane-laden tractor ran him over in Dewanpara area of the town on Thursday night.

Our Sherpur correspondent reports, a woman died when her scarf got entangled with the wheel of an easy bike in the district town yesterday.

The dead is Ripa Akter, 22. She along with her husband Abdul Aziz was going to the district general hospital to see a doctor for her one-year-old son Rihan suffering from fever.

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Microsoft to unveil Windows 10 in Jan

MAIL ONLINE

Microsoft is set to show off the next major version of its Windows software at a January event at its Redmond HQ - but admits its release has already been delayed until fall 2015.

Chief Operating Officer Kevin Turner told Japanese news service Nikkei on Wednesday that the new system would be released 'early next fall'.

Microsoft has not publicly set a firm timetable for the release of Windows 10, but only last week suggested the possibility of an earlier release. The keynote from the day-long event on January 21 will be live streamed.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Windows execs Terry Myerson and Joe Belfiore, and Xbox chief Phil Spencer will be speaking.

The event will focus on the 'Windows 10 consumer experience,' a spokesperson confirmed.

Earlier this year Microsoft was derided for 'missing one' when it announced it has decided to jump straight to version 10 of its Windows software in a bid to convince con-

sumers the software is different from current versions.

The firm announced the latest version of its Windows operating system, called Windows 10, at an event in San Francisco. The firm admitted the software was 'at a threshold' after the poorly received Windows 8.

Terry Myerson, Microsoft's Windows chief said: "Our new Windows must be built from the ground up for a mobile first, cloud first world. It wouldn't be right to call it Windows 9."

Microsoft says the new operating system will run on the 'broadest types of devices ever' and sees the companies various app stores merged into one platform, called the One Store.

This will cover all of the company's smartphones, tablets and desktop computers.

Myerson said Windows 10 will be 'a whole new generation' and, as expected, will work across a variety of devices - from phones to gaming consoles. It also marks the return of the Start Menu, which had been removed from Windows 8.

Infighting grips AL

FROM PAGE 1

of another district unit was made president. Barisal city unit, which was being run by a convening committee, has a new committee.

And though the councils elected new general secretaries in eight district units, six units saw no change in the post.

The picture is grimmer in thana units -- at least seven AL lawmakers have been elected presidents or general secretaries in their thana units.

In addition, in many places, MPs have misused their powers to ensure that those loyal to them get the top posts, insiders said.

This has compelled party President Sheikh Hasina to warn party lawmakers and ministers against meddling in grassroots committees and asked them not to run for local office.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL policymakers said they were upset at how things have unfolded.

They added the party grassroots were losing strength because of infighting and internal clashes.

Sources said dozens of AL men have been injured in violence centring on the councils at Shreebordi thana of Sherpur, Paikgachha thana of Khulna, Nandail of Mymensingh and several places of Patuakhali and Noakhali districts.

AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah said he was frustrated to see some lawmakers trying to control the party grassroots. "Coming out of nowhere, many people are now lawmakers. Many MPs do not want to forgo anything."

Referring to Sirajganj's Ullapara thana council, Hasina told a party meeting on November 28 that some newly elected MPs wanted to control the party's thana committees because they wished to "keep everything in their grips".

Shafiqul Islam Shafi, former general secretary of the unit, said 36 prominent local leaders, including himself, were not invited to the council held on November 14.

UK woman jailed

FROM PAGE 16

In an interview with BBC Newsnight, she said: "I was posting up my belief."

She said the UK was "the last place I would want to live in... the majority of people with my mindset are actually behind bars because they don't want to stay in Britain".

Khan added when she talked about jihad she was not suggesting killing innocent people.

She told the programme: "I have always said I don't believe in going and blowing myself up in a shopping centre where there are going to be innocent children."

"And when I spoke about suicide missions, I only spoke about it because it's a much feared war tactic, which should only be used in a battlefield, not anywhere else."

In September 2013, Khan had reposted an article entitled "Raising Mujahid Children", intended for Islamist mothers, the court heard.

The judge said the article amounted to "a manual in encouraging women to carry out jihad".

Khan had also posted a message on an extremist website, saying she wished her son would one day become a jihadis.

"I pictured the future while I was zipping up his jacket, in sha Allah i'll be tying the shahada bandana round his forehead and hand him his rifle and send him out to play the big boys game," she wrote.

"Khan used it to spread extremism, radicalise others and justify children being used for terrorism," he said.

"We aim to make the internet a more hostile environment for terrorists; today's sentence supports that aim," she wrote.

Prosecutor Paul Jarvis said Khan held "extreme Islamist views".

Her actions were uncovered when she started speaking to an undercover police officer, with whom she had a private conversation on Facebook.

In that message, she sent him details of a route into Syria which had been passed to her by Mohammed Nahin Ahmed, a British man who was jailed for terrorism offences last Friday.

When police raided her home in October 2013, they found images on her phone of her two-year-old son wearing a turban and holding a toy assault rifle.

Other pictures showed small children in Syria holding guns, and in one case a hand grenade.

Khan's barrister, Jo Sidhu QC, described his client as "inflexible" in her religious beliefs.

He said she was "extremely insecure, unsophisticated, binary in her thought processes... devoid of any proper... reasonable Islamic teaching."

Commander Richard Walton, head of the Metropolitan Police's counter terrorism unit, said Khan had used social media as a "tool for terrorism".

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West Bengal

FROM PAGE 1

Trinamool leaders termed the arrest of Mitra "politically motivated" and said they had anticipated the "vindictive move" after BJP President Amit Shah's recent rally in Kolkata.

Reacting to this, Amit Shah said: "CBI is doing its work."

West Bengal Panchayat Minister Subrata Mukherjee alleged that CBI had become BJP's "tool" and BJP was "indulging in politics of vindictiveness".

BJP in West Bengal said the investigation into the chit fund scam was slowly leading to Mamata Banerjee's doorstep.

BJP National Secretary Siddharth Nath Singh alleged that Mitra's arrest showed Trinamool (TMC) leadership's involvement in the scam.

Communist Party of India's (Marxist) Mohammed Salim said: "Madan Mitra is not only a minister but is also a close aide to Mamata Banerjee."

"Now the people of Bengal are getting impatient. They want more culprits in Saradha scam to be arrested. Saradha owner and TMC top leadership was operating as a joint venture in Bengal," Salim added.

Congress leader Abdul Mannan demanded Mamata Banerjee give an explanation for Mitra's arrest and resign.

Mamata Banerjee has reacted angrily to the arrest of Madan Mitra and termed it a "political vendetta" and a "dirty conspiracy" by BJP and dared the federal Indian government to arrest her.

"What has happened is illegal and unconstitutional. It is a dangerous step towards the destruction of democratic institutions. My government condemns the arrest in the strictest of terms," she told reporters in Kolkata.

"It is a conspiracy, a very dirty conspiracy, I ask the Prime Minister to put me in jail first. He (Mitra) was called as a witness. Within a few hours he was arrested. Is it not a political vendetta?" asked an angry Mamata.

"I will visit Mitra in SSKM Hospital [when he will be taken there for medical examination]. Arrest me with whatever police Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have at their disposal," she said.