

## Nearly 150 people

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men and young children.

"They spared nobody. In fact, while some of the terrorists waited and set most of the corpses on fire, others proceeded to houses and shot indiscriminately at women who were preparing food," he said.

In two other villages near the town of Monguno, meanwhile, gunmen killed 48 people and injured 11 others, local lawmaker Mohammed Tahir and witnesses told AFP.

"They selected particular male residents from among the crowd of worshippers... and opened fire on them before setting the two villages on fire and razing them to the ground," Tahir said.

Another resident who managed to escape said the militants arrived in vans and on motorcycles.

"They killed 48 people and injured several others but many of us managed to escape amid volleys of bullets," said the resident who asked not to be named for safety reasons.

Kukawa is around 50 kilometres away from the two villages near Monguno.

All three are located near Lake Chad, which straddles Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon and has been a focal point of the unrest.

Boko Haram has intensified its campaign of violence since Buhari came to power on May 29 vowing to crush the jihadists' bloody uprising that has claimed at least 15,000 lives.

Since then, some 400 people have been killed in attacks blamed on the extremists, who have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State group, according to an AFP tally.

Boko Haram had captured scores of towns and villages in the north-east last year, but has since been pushed back by a four-nation military offensive that kicked off in February.

Despite their territorial losses, the insurgents have kept up their deadly raids, explosions and suicide attacks on "soft" targets such as markets and mosques.

A new regional fighting force comprising 8,700 troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin is due to deploy at the end of the month to try definitively end the insurgency.

But they will face huge challenges in countering the guerrilla tactics to which Boko Haram has increasingly resorted.

## Middle-income

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In this connection, she said the BNP-led 20-party alliance could not slow down the pace of the country's development despite carrying out arson attacks and vandalism.

For further development of an independent and sovereign country like Bangladesh, the PM said, all would have to work with utmost sincerity from their respective positions.

Mentioning that Bangladesh was moving ahead on all fronts, she renewed her vow to turn the country into a peaceful abode in South Asia.

On upgrading the Cox's Bazar Airport, she said her government wanted to improve it to international standards considering the security of the vast maritime areas that Bangladesh gained from Myanmar and India.

The airport could be a hub between the East and the West, she said, emphasising further stretching of its runway to 10,500 feet to facilitate much larger aircraft.

"Landing of international aircraft is not only important from tourism perspective, but also for refuelling purpose," she said, adding that her government had taken steps to rehabilitate those affected due to the work.

At the function, the PM said it was her initiative to establish road connectivity among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN).

With the signing of the Motor Vehicle Agreement among these countries, she hoped that this road connectivity would be materialised within the next six months.

"As a result, trade and commerce would be expanded in this region. We can invest in joint venture with Nepal and Bhutan for hydropower or we could also purchase power as scopes are there."

Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, said the people of Cox's Bazar would be benefited by the implementation of the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor.

The rail network would now reach Gundum and it would further stretch to Kunming of China through Myanmar, she added.



**Jordan TV's journalist Nepal Farsakh reacts after Israeli security forces sprayed her face with pepper gas, as she was covering a demonstration by Palestinians yesterday on a road leading to the Adam settlement, located near the West Bank village of Jabba, to mark the first anniversary of the killing of 16-year-old Palestinian Mohammed Abu Khder, who was snatched and burned alive by Jewish extremists after the murder of three Israeli teenagers. The murder by Palestinians of the three Israeli teenagers and the grisly revenge killing of Khder triggered events that led to war in the Gaza Strip in 2014.**

PHOTO: AFP

## APRIL CITY POLLS

## No assault on journos, claims EC

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

An Election Commission's (EC) probe committee has found that there had been no incident of assault on journalists during the April 28 city polls.

The probe body has recently submitted its report to the EC's Secretary Sirazul Islam, claiming that journalists could not provide sufficient information and documents to prove their allegation of assault, said EC sources.

"As journalists' allegation was not supported by sufficient witnesses and documents, it was not possible to prove the incidents had occurred and identify the perpetrators," said an EC official, who worked with the probe.

However, the EC's Secretary Sirazul Islam said, "I have received the report

this week. Details of the report cannot be disclosed now. We will place the report before the election commissioners for further course of action."

According to media reports, at least 10 journalists were assaulted by ruling Awami League men during the polling hours. Some reporters were robbed of cash, mobile phones and handbags.

Following that, the EC on May 5 formed two committees to probe the incidents in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Headed by additional divisional commissioners of Dhaka and Chittagong, each of the three-member committees included senior EC and police officials.

As part of its investigation, the probe body of Dhaka last month recorded depositions of presiding officers, policemen and journalists.

At these hearings, polling officials and policemen said they did not see any incident of assault. The journalists, however, said they were attacked.

Because of these contradictory statements, the probe body asked the three parties (polling officials, the police and journalists) to come face-to-face at a hearing on June 1. But no journalist attended the hearing that day.

Finally, the probe body submitted their report this week.

The probe committee also came up with recommendations that include formation of a guideline or policy on working jurisdiction of journalists on polling day.

It also recommended that journalists be made aware of electoral code and conduct.

## 'Huji plans Qaeda merger'

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law enforcers' arsenals and use them to create anarchy.

Rab claimed that a group of people in Saudi Arabia and Dubai had been providing financial support for their militant activities.

The elite force also claimed that the militants had sorted their operatives in three categories. The operatives they recruited fresh through personal contact or through social media were called the *Din Kayem Sathi* (the supporters of the struggle for Islamic Sharia).

From the *Din Kayem Sathi*, a selected bunch, who pledges to work for spreading their ideology and recruit people, would be promoted to *Bayate fi Sabilillah* stage.

The other sort is the *Shahidi Kafela*; the people endowed with "high religious spirit" and who would be "ready to sacrifice their lives for the struggle".

Rab officials, however, said they so far did not find any link between the arrestees and the murders and the AQIS claim. They said they would interrogate them further in remand before the murders and the claim.

Mufti Mahmud Khan told reporters that Maulana Mayeen Uddin alias Abul Jandal, a death-row inmate and a top Huji leader, had been communicating with the arrestees from jail.

The arrestees had been planning a Trishal-style ambush on a prison van to snatch away Mayeen from custody, he said.

In February last year, militants attacked a prison van in Trishal of Mymensingh and liberated three condemned JMB leaders from police custody. A policeman was killed in the attack. Two of the escapees are still at large while the other one was killed in a shootout.

Huji had wanted to free Mayeen by attacking and cutting the grills of Kashimpur Jail, Rab claimed, adding that realising it was very risky, they planned for an ambush.

On information that Huji men were gathering in the capital from across the country, several teams of Rab-4 detained them at Sadarghat, Airport Railway Station and Mirpur during the last two days.

The other arrestees were: Mohammad Saidul Islam alias Sayeed Tamim, Mosharrif Hossain, Abdur Rahman Bapary, Al Amin Ibrahim, Mozahidul Islam Nakib, Ashraful Islam alias Abul Hashem, Robiul Islam, Habib Ullah, Shohidul Islam, and Altaf Hossain.

Rab during its drive in a Mirpur house also seized bomb-making materials and manuals, and books on jihad.

Mufti Mahmud Khan further said the militants, including the arrestees, had also planned to rob arms from

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PROPOSED CURB ON PRESS  
Japan news editors lash out at govt

APP, Tokyo

Two Japanese newspaper editors on Thursday warned that democracy and press freedom were under threat after a conservative lawmaker said media opposed to Tokyo's hawkish military policy should be punished.

Hideo Onishi, a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was reprimanded last week by the party after he and other LDP lawmakers called for restrictions on press that oppose the government's defence policy.

It's the most serious crime they have committed against Palmyra's heritage," he said.

The limestone statue was discovered in 1977 by a Polish archeological mission at the temple of Al-Lat, a pre-

Islamic State group

statue had been covered with a metal plate and sandbags to protect it from fighting "but we never imagined that ISIS would come to the town to destroy it."

Abdelkarim said the statue was discovered in 1977 by a Polish archeological mission at the temple of Al-Lat, a pre-

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