

Afghan men weep for their relative following a suicide attack targeting a school in Kabul yesterday.

Violence kills 92 in Afghanistan

FROM PAGE 16

One witness, another student named Ali Ahmad, said as many as 100 students may have been inside when the bomber struck, but officials have not yet confirmed the figure.

The attacks, which came as the central city of Ghazni struggles to recover from five days of intense fighting, underlined how hard the insurgents have been pressuring badly stretched local security forces.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Kabul blast but the attack bore the hallmark of Islamic State, which has conducted many previous attacks on Shia targets. The Taliban issued a statement denying it was involved.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan called for the fighting to stop, saying up to 150 civilians are estimated to have been killed in Ghazni, where the public hospital was overwhelmed and water and electricity supplies cut.

"The extreme human suffering caused by the fighting in Ghazni highlights the urgent need for the war in Afghanistan to end," the top UN offi-

tin-roofed house in Sirajpur village

a carpenter by profession, was away

around 8:30pm. The children's father,

Hearing the wailing mother, locals

rushed to the spot. But the criminals

The schoolgirl's bloodstained and

unconscious body was rescued from

Talking to The Daily Star, victim's

covered by cloth entered my brother's

house and sexually tortured my niece.

An aunt of the schoolgirl said the

criminals taped the baby boys' mouths.

Arifur Rahman, medical officer at

Kuakata Hospital, said the girl had

passed away before she was taken to

Her body bore several marks of tor-

ture. The cause of her death would be

confirmed by forensic tests, he added.

Abdus Salam, headmaster of

Mohipur Cooperative High School,

demanded exemplary punishment for

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge

He said the schoolgirl's father filed a

yesterday accusing unidentified people.

Police said the victim's body was

after an autopsy was carried out on it at

Patuakhali General Hospital morgue.

handed over to her family members

of Mohipur Police Station, said they

detained the victim's mother for

murder case with the police station

The criminals also sexually abused

uncle said, "Four people with their faces

the first floor. She was rushed to

Kuakata Hospital where doctors

had left the house by then.

6th-grader

from home.

declared her dead.

her mother, he alleged

the hospital.

the killers.

interrogation.

cial in Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, said in a statement.

The Taliban, who launched their Ghazni assault last Friday and battled Afghan forces backed by US air strikes in the middle of the city for days, said their fighters were pulled out to prevent further harm to the city's popula-

of food and drinking water as the power supply was also suspended two days ago," a Taliban commander, who declined to be identified, said by telephone. The International Committee of

"They were facing severe shortages

the Red Cross said it was providing dressing packages and oral and intravenous medicine to treat the wounded, along with electricity generators and fresh water for about 18,000 people.

Taliban's most devastating in years, has clouded hopes for peace talks that had been prompted by an unprecedented ceasefire during the Eid celebration in June and a meeting last month between Taliban officials and a senior US diplomat.

Two senior Taliban leaders told Reuters this week the group was considering announcing a ceasefire for the feast of Eid-al Adha, which begins next week, but the future of any peace process remained uncertain.

With parliamentary elections due on October 20, the government had been bracing for more attacks in Kabul and other cities, but even so, the scale of the violence has come as a shock to a government facing bitter criticism over its handling of the war.

In the southern province of Zabul, Taliban insurgents clashed with soldiers on Tuesday, forcing the government to send reinforcements from neighbouring provinces to retain control of two checkposts.

The clashes killed 11 soldiers and one policeman, with three soldiers wounded, said Haji Atta Jan The Ghazni attack, one of the Haqbayan, a Zabul provincial council member.

Separately, six girls younger than 10 were killed when an unexploded mortar they picked up to play with suddenly exploded yesterday, officials in the eastern province of Laghman said.

Pennsylvania report lists more than 300 predator' priests

AFP, New York

More than 300 "predator" priests in Pennsylvania are accused of abusing over 1,000 children across seven decades, a grand jury said Tuesday in a devastating report that decried a systematic cover-up by the Catholic Church.

It is thought to be the single most comprehensive report to date into abuse in the US church, since The Boston Globe first exposed pedophile priests in Massachusetts in 2002.

But while Tuesday's report led to charges against two priests, one of whom has pleaded guilty, the majority of those responsible are dead and the vast majority of crimes happened too long ago to prosecute, officials said.

The two-year investigation by a grand jury into all but two Pennsylvania dioceses turned up dozens of witnesses and half a million pages of church records containing "credible allegations against over three

hundred predator priests." More than 1,000 child victims were identifiable, but the "real number" was "in the thousands," the grand jury estimated, given those children whose records were lost or who were afraid to

Victims were often traumatized for life, driven to drugs, alcohol and suicide, the grand jury said. The only recourse was to recommend changes to the law and expose what had happened to make sure such widespread abuse was never repeated.

ever come forward.

One cleric raped a seven-year-old girl in hospital after she had her tonsils out, the report said. Another child drank juice, only to wake up the next morning bleeding from his rectum and unable to remember what had happened.

A priest forced a nine-year-old boy to give him oral sex, then rinsed out his mouth with holy water to "purify him." Another priest abused five sisters from the same family, including one from the age of 18 months to 12 years.

When the youngest victim of the family told her parents in 1992, a police

search of the priest's home found panties, plastic containers of pubic hairs, vials of urine and sexually suggestive photographs of young girls. The church ignored credible allegations

against him for years, and the priest died awaiting trial, Pennsylvania's Attorney General Josh Shapiro said.

"The pattern was abuse, deny and cover up," Shapiro said. "As a direct consequence of the systematic cover-up by senior church officials almost every

instance of child sexual abuse we found is

too old to be prosecuted." So far only two new priests are being charged with crimes that fall within the statute of limitations. One, accused of ejaculating in the mouth of a seven-yearold, pleaded guilty earlier this month, prosecutors said.

The other allegedly assaulted two boys, one of them for eight years starting from the age of eight. His alleged crimes continued until 2010.

The grand jury called for changes in the law that would scrap the statute of limitations for child sex abuse, give victims more time to file civil lawsuits and tighten legislation compelling people to report abuse they

find out about "Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability," the report said.

'HID IT ALL' "Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsi-

ble for them not only did nothing; they hid it all. For decades. Church elders were instead promoted and predator priests allowed to remain in ministries for 10, 20 even 40 years after

leaders learned of their crimes as the list

of victims got longer and longer, Shapiro Between 5,700 and 10,000 Catholic priests have been accused of sexual abuse in the United States, but only a few hundred have been tried, convicted, and sentenced

for their crimes, according to the watchdog Bishop Accountability. Since the abuse crisis became public in the 2000s, the US church has spent more than \$3 billion in settlements, according

to Bishop Accountability. The group has documented settlements for 5,679 alleged victims of Catholic clergy -- only a third of 15,235 allegations that bishops say they have received through 2009. One estimate room temperature, making it

suggests up there were 100,000 US vic-The Boston Globe won a Pulitzer

Prize in 2003 for work by its investigative team exposing sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. That story was turned into Oscar-winning Hollywood movie, "Spotlight," starring Michael Keaton.

Faced with a growing number of cases worldwide and repeated criticism over the Church's response, Pope Francis in 2013 brought in new legislation covering child sex abuse and pornography and sentences

of up to 12 years for priests. The church in Chile has most recently been rocked by accusations of a widescale cover-up of child abuse during the

1980s and 1990s.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Indian bank

FROM PAGE 16 hackers stole information of the bank's VISA and Rupay card customers through malware attack on it's ATM (switch) server and siphoned Rs 80 crore through 14,849 transactions "Of these, 12,000 transactions

were made through VISA cards and

Rs 78 crore were transferred out of the country while Rs 2 crore were transferred through Rupay card within the country with 2,849 transactions," said an officer from Chatushrungi police. The officer said, "On August 13,

the hackers transferred Rs 13.94 crore to an account in a Hong Kong-based bank by initiating swift transaction system of the Cosmos Bank. The bank has lost Rs 94 crore within two days. We have registered the offence under the Information and Technology Act and are investigating."

Hackers cloned several thousand cards of different account holders of the Cosmos Bank and shaved off the reported amount.

According to a bank official, preliminary probe shows that the hacking activity seems to have originated from Canada.

"We have filed a complaint and are also taking help from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the RBI to see what can be done," said Krishnakumar Goyal, a director of the co-operative bank.

He added that no customers were affected and the bank has been put to a loss because the money was withdrawn from a pool account.

He said the hackers designed a "parallel system," to the NPCI system and self-approved those transactions. According to him, the bank has shut down the servers and put a block on its internet banking transactions.

Goyal added that most of these customer accounts did not even have the requisite balance that was withdrawn from each account.

New effort

FROM PAGE 16

greenhouse gas emissions, experts broadly agree that technologies that suck CO2 from the air will be an essential tool to curtail global warming.

Magnesite is a naturally occurring rock used in jewellery and for various industrial processes, and its carbonstoring capacity was already known to scientists.

Every tonne of magnesite is capable of removing around half a tonne of CO2 from the atmosphere.

However, while previous studies have explored the potential of storing polluting gases in underground rock formations, the potential of these activities is hampered by the time it takes for new minerals to form.

"This is a process which takes hundreds to thousands of years in nature at Earth's surface," explained Professor Ian Power, who led the new research at Trent University.

To overcome this issue, Professor Power and his team identified the processes that form magnesite naturally at low temperatures, and then used this knowledge to dramatically accelerate its crystallisation.

Using polystyrene microspheres as a catalyst to speed up the reactions that form this rock, they reduced its creation time to 72 days.

The whole process takes place at

extremely energy efficient. "For now, we recognise that this is

an experimental process, and will need to be scaled up before we can be sure that magnesite can be used in carbon sequestration (taking CO2 from the atmosphere and permanently storing it as magnesite)," said Professor Power.

"This depends on several variables, including the price of carbon and the refinement of the sequestration technology, but we now know that the science makes it doable".

These results were presented by the scientists at the Goldschmidt geochemistry conference in Boston.

SC rules against earth filling

FROM PAGE 16 compliance with a 2014 High Court order and a letter from the deputy commissioner himself.

The apex court also ordered the DC to submit a compliance report to it by October 8.

The DC, Rabbi Miah, in an October 2016 letter asked the local Upazila Nirbahi Officer to halt the work and remove whatever was dumped. He also asked to take legal action against the offender in keeping with the HC's ban order.

The Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order after hearing a petition seeking necessary orders to the authorities concerned to stop the filling of land, said a Bela press release. According to documents of various

government authorities, Unique Group, of which Sonargaon Economic Zone is a concern, repeatedly filled with earth and soil high-yield agricultural lands, wetlands and a portion of the Meghna river, despite the HC ban. The business conglomerate has

filled-up agricultural lands and wetlands in Pirojpur, Jainpur, Chhoyhissa, Charbhobonathpur, Batibandha and Ratanpur moujas in Sonargaon upazila --- first in the name of a resort city and later a private economic zone, according to government documents.

The last time it embarked on dumping sand on agricultural land was on July 16, said local villagers.

On March 2, 2014, following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), the HC ordered a real estate developer Unique Property Development Ltd, a concern of Unique Group, to stop the filling up of land and remove soil that had already been dumped in the areas mentioned.

On October 25 in 2016, following a petition by Unique Properties Development Ltd, the HC modified its March 2, 2014 order and allowed the company to go ahead with the job. On November 3, 2016, the Appellate

Division stayed the HC order of October 25, upheld its (HC) March 2, 2014 order and asked the HC to hear

and dispose of its March 2, 2014 rule. Bela filed a contempt of court petition with the HC on January 16, 2017 as Unique Property Development Ltd started doing the work in the areas for

establishing an Economic Zone in violation of the HC directives. During a hearing of the contempt of court petition, the deputy commissioner of Narayanganj appeared before the HC and promised that he would

take steps to stop it in the said areas, the Bela press release said. On July 31 this year, Bela filed a petition with the HC seeking necessary order to stop the earth and sand filling.

The HC kept the petition in the record without passing any order. Bela recently filed the petition with the SC for necessary order.

After hearing of the petition, the SC issued the order.

Barrister Fida M Kamal, Advocate AM Aminuddin, Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Advocate Sayeed Ahmed Kabir appeared for Bela.

Vajpayee

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tract infections and low urine output, doctors, attending him at the hospital, said in a statement.

The AIIMS statement was issued hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Vajpayee yesterday evening to enquire about his condition. Modi spent there around 50 minutes.

The statement said, "Vajpayee has

been admitted to the AIIMS for the last nine weeks. His condition is critical and he is on life support." Vajpayee was elected the prime minis-

ter of India thrice between 1996 and 1999 and is the only non-Congress PM to have completed full term of five years in office from 1999 to 2004.

As his health failed, he became a total recluse and was seldom seen outside his residence for years.

arrests made in Bangladesh, and his

family members are terrified about what

of human rights and denial of the

country's constitutional right to free-

dom of expression, she wrote in the

friends, fellow protesters in

Bangladesh and abroad, and myself, is

the state in which he appeared in the

courtroom. Alam had evidently been

beaten severely and could hardly walk.

He is currently in jail and in all proba-

to urge the authorities in Bangladesh to

drop the case against him," she further

wrote, adding, "please also push for

him to be allowed access to medical

treatment and legal representation,

which he has thus far not had at a

magistrate's court but needs as he

"Please exercise the power you wield

bility being treated no better.

"Of most concern, to his family,

letter posted on her Twitter account.

Alam's treatment is clearly a breach

will happen to him next," she said.

Protect right FROM PAGE 16

statement yesterday.

She said it was deeply concerning that following student protests seeking better road safety in Dhaka after the deaths of two teenagers on a street in the capital on July 29, there have been violent clashes leading to many fatalities.

Police arrested over 50 people, including students, on charges of vandalism and spreading rumours. However, many others, including alleged ruling party men, who attacked students or journalists have not been brought to book.

The two MPs also expressed concern over the safety and wellbeing of globally-acclaimed photojournalist Shahidul Alam, urging fair treatment and his immediate release.

Shahidul was picked up by plainclothes men on August 5 hours after he gave an interview to a foreign news agency supporting the protests. After a seven-day remand in a case filed against him under Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, he was sent to jail on August 12.

While Rushanara said she welcomes Bangladesh government's recognition of the need to improve road safety, she, however, was worried over the arrest of Shahidul, who is well-known in the wider British Bangladeshi community for his photography, having held numerous exhibitions in the UK.

"We are very concerned about his safety and wellbeing, and we urge the government of Bangladesh to recognise his right to free speech and fair treatment," she said.

Rupa Huq, another British Labour Party MP, has written to the Bangladesh High Commission and UK Foreign Office, urging Bangladesh authorities to drop the case against Shahidul.

"Shahidul Alam is the latest victim in a long series of extreme dubious

Reckless driving FROM PAGE 2

drivers' drowsiness". Nuruzzaman Prodhan, president

of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal Palashbari upazila unit, whose house is near the highway, said except drivers' drowsiness, trend of overtaking and reckless driving are the reasons for road crashes on the route. Moreover, some dangerous turns on the highway also contribute to accidents. Mokbul Hossain Mukul, president

of Gaibandha Bus Malik Samity, said drivers often become fatigued as they have to drive long distances. The Samity claimed to have

ensured a single trip within 24 hours for a driver driving between Gaibandha and Dhaka. The initiative has been taken so that drivers do not get exhausted, he said. He also suggested providing ade-

quate training to drivers and supervisors of long-haul coaches on how to keep themselves alert.

at night so that drivers can have a

break and a cup of tea, he added.

Police Station.

SP Mannan said an initiative is being taken to set up a corner for drivers' rest at Gobindaganj Highway

address the issues," he said.

between the home ministry and the Mahathir.

approaches the high court hearing."

KL may move FROM PAGE 16

caused a "monopolistic situation" with some of its members charging as high as RM 20,000 (Tk 4 lakh) from each job seeker, Malaysian newspaper The Star reported on Tuesday.

The agents were "merely fly-bynight companies" created solely to rake in money by playing middleman between the workers and their prospective employers in Malaysia.

"So, we want to open up to all agents there to allow competition," Mahathir told journalists at a press conference after chairing a meeting on

foreign workers at the parliament. Currently, the number of Bangladeshi recruitment agents authorised by Malaysia is about 1,200.

The new plan comes amid a crackdown on undocumented foreign workers in Malaysia, home to some one million Bangladeshis, half of whom are undocumented. Several thousand Bangladeshis and other foreign workers have been arrested.

Mahathir said the government was facing problems with undocumented foreign workers and had decided to set up a "common system".

"Bangladesh, Nepal and others, they will use the same system," he told journalists.

The government would establish a single system to hire foreign workers without differentiating between source countries, he said. Mahathir noted that the government

would form an independent committee chaired by either a top government official, a former judge or a secretarygeneral, to be handled under the Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis. "This is to have an overview on the

policies and management of foreign workers. "We need to address these prob-

lems. We need the committee to

A ministerial joint committee

Highway police will halt all coaches human resource ministry would be set up in this regard, added

curbing free speech. Instead, Bangladesh authorities have done just that."

Halt

FROM PAGE 2

students on July 29. The protesters called for safer roads, accountable governance, and the upholding of the rule of law but were met with teargas and rubber bullets from security

forces and violent attacks by supporters of the ruling Awami League, read the HRW statement. After police stood by while government supporters beat up the student protesters, the authorities moved quickly to stifle any condemnation of

the violence. Dhaka police have been conducting block raids in the city's residential areas where many university students live, it added. Students told HRW that police have been going door-to-door, raiding houses, and checking phones for com-

munications related to the protests.

Thousands of students took to the streets after a speeding bus killed two