

Bombs targeting pilgrims in Iraq kill 4, wound 21

Reuters | Jul 3, 2012,

BAGHDAD: Two roadside bombs targeting Shia pilgrims killed four people and wounded 21 on Tuesday near the central Iraqi city of Kerbala, hospital and police sources said.

The attack, 80 km (50 miles) southwest of Baghdad, is the latest in a series of bombings in Iraq aimed at Shia worshippers. Shia pilgrims in Kerbala will be celebrating the birthday of an important imam in the coming days.

Increased attacks in Iraq in recent weeks have raised fears that the country could slip back into widespread sectarian violence.

Last month at least 237 people were killed and 603 wounded mainly in bomb attacks, according to a Reuters tally, making June one of the bloodiest months in Iraq since U.S. troops withdrew at the end of last year.

The worst attack occurred on June 13 when bombers targeting Shi'ite pilgrims killed more than 70 people.

Sunni insurgents often attack Shi'ite targets to try to reignite the sectarian violence that killed tens of thousands of people in 2006-2007. Iraq's al Qaeda wing has claimed some of the recent bombings against Shi'ites.

The government's Sunni, Shi'ite and ethnic Kurdish parties have also been locked in political battles that threaten to shatter their delicate power-sharing agreement.