



160 dead as serial blasts rock Mumbai rail network

REUTERS, Mumbai

Bombs exploded on packed commuter trains and stations in India's financial hub, Mumbai, on Tuesday, killing over 160 people and wounding hundreds, officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the seven bomb explosions that took place within about 10 minutes during evening rush hour.

But suspicion was likely to centre on Muslim militants fighting New Delhi's rule in disputed Kashmir, who have been blamed

for several bomb attacks in India in the past.

"The death toll is 163 and around 460 people have been injured," police inspector Ashok Jadhav told Reuters.

"We are not sure if it is RDX or not," city Police Commissioner A.N. Roy said, referring to the possible use of high-powered plastic explosives.

Commuters fled suburban rail stations in panic after the explosions and mobile phone lines were jammed. Hundreds of dazed passengers walked along the railway tracks.

Television showed twisted rail carriages and people in torn, blood-stained clothes carrying the dead and wounded on stretchers as steady monsoon rain fell. A policeman was shown carrying two white, blood-stained bundles of what appeared to be body parts.

"The blasts happened when the trains were most crowded," D.K. Shankaran, chief secretary of the state of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital, told Reuters.

At peak hours, each nine-car passenger train in Mumbai carries over 4,500 people, about three times the rated capacity.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for calm and Sonia Gandhi, leader of the ruling Congress party, expressed her grief.

"I urge the people to remain calm, not to believe rumours and carry on their activity normally," Singh said in a statement, calling the explosions a "shameful act".

The United States called the bomb attacks "senseless acts of violence". Pakistan, the EU, France and Britain also condemned the explosions.

FEW SIGNS OF HELP
At the city's Sion hospital, relatives were frantically looking for friends

and relatives. Scores pored over a board displaying a list of injured.

"I spoke to him 10 minutes before he died," said Haji Mastan, sobbing uncontrollably after being told about the death of his cousin Mukti Darvesh, who was travelling on one of the trains.

"Why did it have to end like this? He was young and he has children." Some of the people who entered a makeshift morgue were unable to identify badly mutilated bodies.

The blasts occurred on five trains and at two stations in



The wrecked bus that was rammed by a train at a level crossing at Akkelpur in Joypurhat yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

28 killed as train hits bus in Joypurhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 28 passengers of a bus were killed and 30 others injured when a train rammed into the bus standing on a level crossing due to engine failure at Akkelpur in Joypurhat yesterday.

The death toll might increase as the conditions of many injured undergoing treatment at different hospitals in Joypurhat, Naogaon, Bogra and Rajshahi are critical, sources said.

Akkelpur police said they recorded 28 dead as of 4:00pm yesterday while locals put the figure at 32, saying that four dead bodies were taken away by their relatives before the police reached the scene.

Sources said 27 of the dead are residents of different villages in Akkelpur upazila while one was from Uday Bhadra village in Rajshahi.

Locals said the 40-seater bus was carrying around 70 passengers with many on the roof and bumper.

Witnesses said Khulna-bound Rupsha Express from Syedpur hit the Joypurhat-bound bus of Kheya Paribahan from Shantahar at the Akkelpur Women's College level crossing at 10:25am. The train dragged the bus for about 300 yards before throwing it into a roadside ditch. The bus was completely damaged and twisted.

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Police and onlookers stand around the mangled compartment of one of the blast affected local trains in Mumbai yesterday. Several blasts in local train compartments rocked the city which has so far claimed around 160 lives.

PHOTO: AFP

450MW SIRAJGANJ POWER PLANT

Rookie firms among pre-qualified bidders

False claims ignored in selection

SHARIEF KHAN

The Power Cell has pre-qualified around seven companies for the tender of the 450 megawatt Sirajganj power plant and included two novice companies that used false claims of serious nature to fit into the qualification criteria.

Bangladeshi Orion Power and an Irish joint venture Cadogan Manning, which are getting unusual favours from the alliance government because of their politi-

cal connections, made false claims that were very easy to verify but the Power Cell overlooked them.

The cell sent its list of pre-qualified companies to the power ministry for approval. If approved, Orion and Cadogan Manning will be able to participate in the bid for the Sirajganj project. The other pre-qualified companies include AES (US), Marubeni (Japan) and Globelag (UK).

The Sirajganj project is viewed as a symbol of failure of the alliance

government in power sector as it had cancelled a bid back in 2004 when it reached a final stage. If that bid was not cancelled, the project would have started generating power by now.

For the last two years, the Power Cell has failed to float a bid successfully.

Using influence of the 'alternative centre of power' of the ruling BNP Orion was awarded contract for the 450 MW Meghnaghat-2

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Conspiracy on to sack 60 army officers

Alleges Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina accused the alliance government yesterday of conspiring to fire around 60 army officers on political grounds ahead of the next parliamentary elections as part of its "conspiracy to retain power".

"We have learnt that the prime minister has made a list of 50-60 army officials for termination," Hasina told a meeting with Awami League (AL) grassroots level leaders of Lalmonirhat and Sirajganj districts at her Dhanmondi office in the capital.

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JMB KINGPINS

Govt seeks quick hearing of death reference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday moved a prayer before the High Court (HC) for priority to hearing on the death reference case of seven Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders including militant kingpin Abdur Rahman and Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

Deputy Attorney General Helaluddin Mollah placed the matter before the HC death reference bench of Justice Ali Asgar Khan and Emdadul Haque on completion of the paper book for

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Tata's proposal not rejected

Says Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday told the parliament that the government has not rejected the investment proposal of Tata Group, the leading industrial house of India.

Replying to an opposition lawmaker's query, Saifur said Tata's investment proposal is a good one and is still under consideration of the government.

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TIB refuses to withdraw graft reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday refused to withdraw its corruption index reports on two ministries that threatened to sue the organisation terming the reports "baseless" and "untrue".

TIB Honorary Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad in an interview with satellite television channel ATN Bangla said, "We have no

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AL walks out of JS twice amid chaos

Accuses Speaker of depriving its MPs of points of order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday walked out of the parliament twice protesting the speaker's refusal to allow them to talk during points of order on different issues.

Before staging the walkouts, the

AL lawmakers however blasted the government for allotting an official residence to former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Latifur Rahman and for its bid to amend the constitution.

Countering the AL lawmakers, the ruling BNP lawmakers blasted

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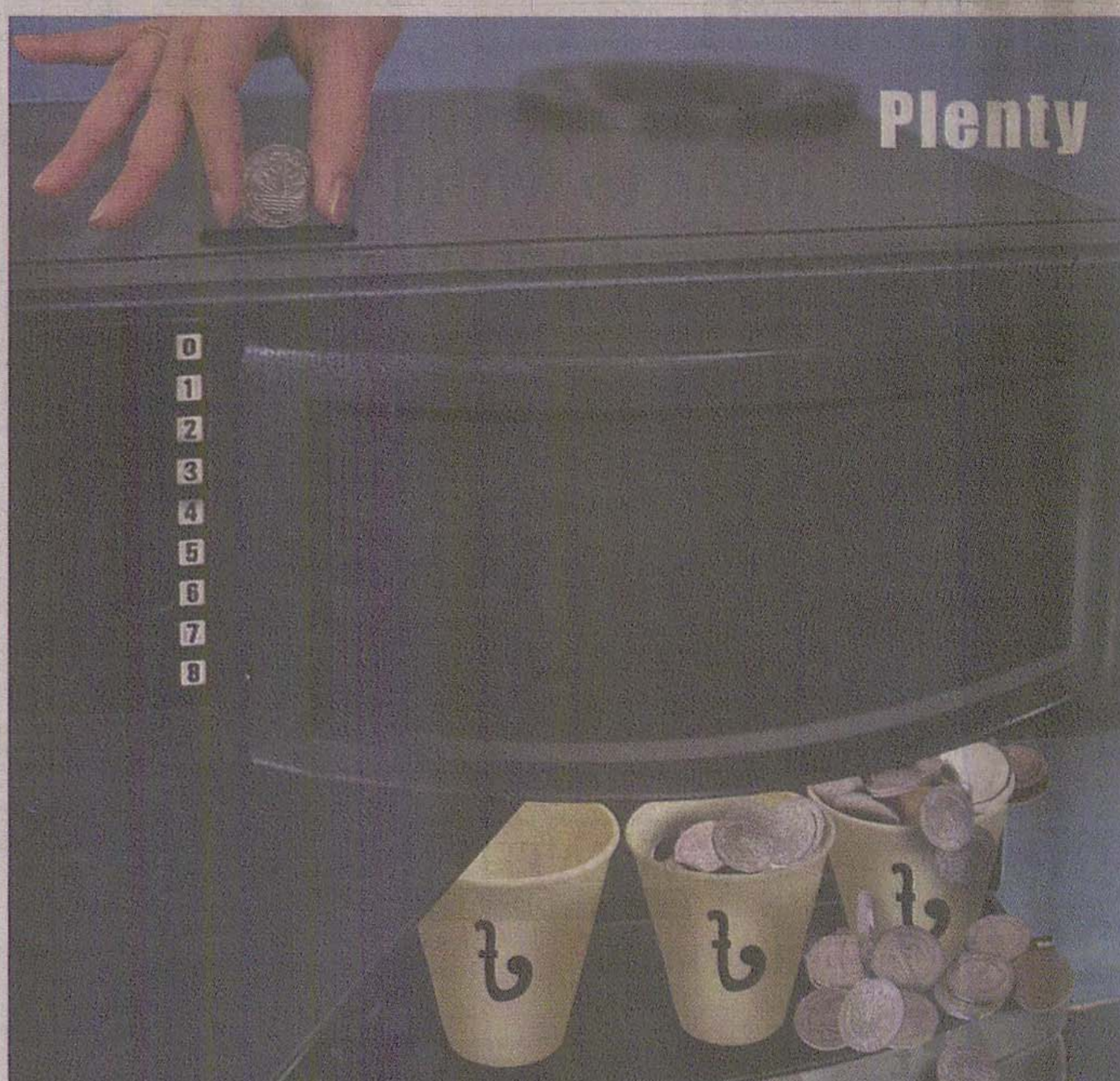
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