

Building collapse kills two in city

Owner goes into hiding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed and seven others injured when a two-storey residential building collapsed in West Nondipara Bazar in Sabujbagh yesterday.

The building started subsiding from morning and the inmates started taking furniture out. At around 12:30pm, the already tilted

building suddenly collapsed with a big bang.

"The building collapsed just as the inmates almost cleaned out the house," said Fazlur Rahman Nipu, a witness.

Trapped inside, the two were crushed to death. Later, locals pulled the bodies out.

The dead are Baby, 25, a tenant of the building, and Shahed Ali, 50,

a trader. Ali was helping the families shift furniture.

Three of the injured have been admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Locals said the owner of the house, Monjur Morshed, constructed the building on a water body about six months back. From the beginning, it was a risky struc-

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PHOTO: STAR

Rescue workers search the debris of a two-storey residential building that collapsed, killing two persons at West Nondipara Bazar in Sabujbagh yesterday.

Port of dread

Fewer ships moor at Mongla as criminals, corrupts reign supreme

RAFIQ HASAN, back from Mongla

Once a busy port, Mongla is now getting quieter with fewer ships calling because of widespread corruption and bad reputation it has earned internationally.

A decade ago, over 600 ships used to load and unload at this port a year. Now the figure has come down to around 300. Worse still, in the first seven months of the current fiscal only 152 ships anchored at the port, documents show.

"Yet, in the first 10 months of 1990, the number of ships arriving was 525," said a leading shipping agent.

Interviews with port officials, stevedores, port users, workers, shipping agents and exporters and importers revealed that a section of port officials, dock workers, some

unscrupulous importers, and the customs department have established a corrupt system obstructing normal activities.

On the other hand, the policy makers in the government and political leaders remained indifferent to the declining performance of the port, and did not take up any scheme to improve its infrastructure or to maintain navigability of the river Pashur on which the port is situated.

International ship owners now term it a 'criminal-infested port' and hardly want to send their ships to Mongla. The foreign ship owners charge extra two dollars per ton if any importer wants to bring goods to Mongla, according to sources.

A Thai ship that had a bitter experience at Mongla complained

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DB forced me to sign confessional statement at gunpoint: Enamul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reuters journalist Enamul Haque Chowdhury yesterday said that the Detective Branch of police forced him to give a confessional statement at gunpoint on December 17.

"They threatened to kill me and other members of my family," Enamul alleged. He also said he had been severely tortured in police custody.

Chowdhury, who was released from jail recently, yesterday submitted a retract petition for withdrawal of his court statement given on December 17.

"The police forced me to sign a written statement by pointing a gun at me," he said in the petition filed with metropolitan magistrate Jahangir Alam's court. The magistrate took it on record.

The December 17 confessional
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Explosives scare Iraq embassy staff stopped at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immigration authorities detained an official of the Iraq embassy at Zia International Airport yesterday on suspicion of carrying explosives.

The Iraqi official, who came here at 9:15am on his new assignment at the Iraq embassy, had 53 bags on him, sources said.

The immigration officials scanned all the bags, excepting the hand luggage of the Iraqi official.

When officials of different agencies noticed that the handbag had not been checked, they asked the official to hand in the bag for a scan.

But the Iraqi official refused and an argument followed. The agency men then forcibly took away the bag and he was taken to the VIP room, sources said.

Till filing of this report at 10:15pm last night, it could not be known what was in the bag, as the airport authorities did not open it.

The agency men were afraid to open or scan it, as they fear it might

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Law has failed to ensure public security, says CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law as a mechanism of social control has by and large failed to ensure public security, said Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury yesterday.

"The potentials of the law as an equaliser of opportunities and as a guarantor of human rights are yet to be fully realised," he said while addressing the fourth Women Lawyers Congress as chief guest in the city yesterday.

He said the sanctity of laws and the legal system have eroded in the face of aggression.

The chief justice said women have been the worse victims of legal violation of the law. Due to social and economic discriminations, they are not able to take recourse to law or access the legal system.

He said women lawyers have the enormous task of making law accessible to women and striving through awareness raising and advocacy to ensure that laws do not discriminate against the women.

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Bush, allies talk war as Saddam prepares Iraq

REUTERS, Washington

US President George W Bush left the United States yesterday for an emergency summit with his staunchest allies that could start the final countdown to war with Iraq.

The White House billed the summit -- on Portugal's wind-swept Azores islands -- as a last-ditch effort by Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar to revive a UN Security Council resolution demanding that Iraq disarm or face attack.

In preparation, Bush telephoned Blair and told Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi he was going the extra mile on the diplo-

matic front, a White House spokeswoman said.

Soon after the summit Bush could address the nation, issuing what amounts to a final ultimatum to Saddam and giving aid workers time to leave Iraq before military action starts.

Just hours before the summit Iraqi President Saddam Hussein put his country on a war footing against any US-led attack, dividing Iraq into four military districts under his command.

Washington and London earlier said Bush's summit with the two leaders was not designed as a council of war.

"The prime minister continues to believe that conflict can be

averted if Saddam shows the change of heart we have asked for or goes into exile," a spokesman for Blair's office said.

But Bush, taking to Blair and Aznar amid floundering efforts to win a new UN resolution authorizing war against Iraq, said there was little hope Saddam would come clean on suspected weapons of mass destruction -- weapons Baghdad denies it has.

"Crucial days lie ahead for the free nations of the world," Bush said in his weekly radio address on Saturday as US and British military commanders waited in the Gulf region for any order to put a force of some 250,000 troops into battle.

"There is no doubt: We will con-

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Bangabandhu's anniversary of birth today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 84th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, architect of the nation's independence, will be observed today.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in 1920 at Tungipara in Gopalganj.

The Awami League, its front organisations and different socio-cultural organisations have taken up

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Launch salvaged 4 bodies recovered, 30 still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Four bodies were recovered yesterday from the Tetulia river where a launch with 100 passengers had sank during a nor'wester Saturday.

Some thirty people are still missing. Hundreds of people are searching for the missing people.

Three bodies were found on the deck of the sunken launch ML Cyprus after it was salvaged.

One of them was identified as Shimul Haq, 22, a student of the BM College.

Earlier, the body of another victim, Mosharaf Hossain, 65, a retired sanitary inspector of the public health department in Barisal, was recovered.

A three-member probe committee has been formed to probe the cause of the accident.

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