

Eco-park building on ignoring plights of indigenous people

PINAKI ROY and MIRZA SHAKIL

The forest department in Tangail recently restarted the controversial construction work of a boundary wall around the site of Madhupur Eco Park ignoring the outcry of local indigenous community against the move.

A sense of despair gripped the indigenous community in Madhupur since resumption of the wall construction.

Meanwhile, the community faxed a petition to the chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) demanding suspension of the wall construction in Madhupur forest since they are unable to hold a protest demonstration due to the state of emergency, sources said.

The forest department took up the Forest Conservation and Eco Tourism Project in 2000 to build an Eco Park on 3,000 acres of the forest in Madhupur.

The indigenous people of Madhupur started a movement against the Eco Park project when the forest department began constructing the boundary wall in 2004.

An indigenous youth, Piren Sian, 20, was shot dead and 25 others including women and children were injured with bullet

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Workers are seen constructing the Madhupur Eco Park yesterday as the forest department recently decided to restart making the controversial park, much to the grievances of the indigenous people.

130 killed in Iraq attacks, curfew slapped on Najaf

AP, AFP, Baghdad

A pair of suicide bombers detonated explosives Thursday among shoppers in a crowded outdoor market in a Shia city south of Baghdad, killing at least 73 people and wounding 163, police said. Bombs and a mortar attack killed at least 17 others in both Shia and Sunni areas of Baghdad.

Overall, about 130 people were killed or found dead across the country, reflecting the ongoing wave of sectarian and insurgency bloodletting as the US military gears up for a major security operation to stem the violence.

Iraqi authorities on Friday clamped a total curfew on Shia Islam's holiest city of Najaf to thwart attacks a day after 73 people died in twin suicide bombings in nearby Hillah.

In Baghdad, the US military was probing reports that another helicopter had gone down near Taji, north of the Iraqi capital.

It confirmed, it would be the third US military helicopter lost in two weeks. A private US security chopper also crashed in Baghdad on January 22.

In the central Iraqi city of Najaf, "the curfew imposed overnight has been extended and includes the entire region around Najaf including

Kufa, northeast of the holy city," police said.

The statement came after police and witnesses reported that at least one helicopter had been shot down Friday in the area surrounding Taji, an air base 12 miles north of the capital. Some witnesses described the two helicopters going down.

"I can confirm that we are looking into reports that a helicopter went down north of Baghdad," US military spokeswoman Lt Col Josslyn Aberle said.

Police and witnesses said the area had been sealed off by American forces and US planes were flying overhead.

The biggest attack Thursday took place in the centre of Hillah, a city about 60 miles south of Baghdad. Police and witnesses said the two bombers strolled into the Maktabat market about 6 p.m. when the area was packed with shoppers buying food for the evening meal.

One of the bombers detonated his explosives when he was approached by police and the other blew himself up moments later, according to police spokesman Capt. Muthanna Khaled, who gave the casualty figures. He said Friday that the toll had risen after several of the wounded died and more bodies were found in recovery efforts.

The blasts sent bodies hurling

through the air and set fire to wooden stalls where vendors sold fruits and vegetables, witnesses said. Shoppers fled screaming in panic, while others stopped to help rescuers carry away the wounded.

Dr Mohammed Diya of the Hillah General Hospital said some of the wounded were in critical condition, raising concern the death toll could rise.

Qassim Abed Sadah, 33, a bookseller, said the first explosion blew him out of his chair. He raced to the door of his shop just as the second blast occurred. "People were flying in the air," he said.

Mahdi Latif, 35, a fruit vendor, said he saw a policeman motion for the first bomber to stop for a search.

"Seconds later I saw a ball of fire and all I remember is me and many other people trying to flee the area," he said.

Pools of blood were scattered along the market streets, along with bits of fruits and vegetables. Paramedics wearing white gloves roamed through the area removing body parts.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack, the latest in a long series that have occurred in Hillah

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A dead tortoise stinks on the Cox's Bazar beach while environmental pollution leads to alarming increase in the death of sea animals.

Prayer Timing

February 3		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Magrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Banks must be a tool to fight poverty: Yunus

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, Mumbai

Visiting Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus yesterday hit out at banks for not making credit, an important tool to eradicate poverty, accessible to a large section of the people.

Terming credit 'a human right', the founder of micro-credit pioneer Grameen Bank in Bangladesh said, "Only one third of the population has access to credit while the rest are not credit worthy for the system. We have left two-thirds of the world poor, disadvantageous and without a starting point."

Supporting his views, RBI Governor YV Reddy said the apex bank would formulate a charter to make credit a human right.

Yunus said the seeds of poverty are not in the people but in the institutions, policies and concepts made by the people.

"Micro-credit is a little tool to help unleash the part of energy which is there in every human being," he said, adding, "Poor people are like bonsai. They have all the capabilities to rise up like big trees but the problem is they are planted in flower pots."

He said Grameen Bank disburses about half a billion dollars annually to 7 million people through 21,000 staff.

"Today 80 per cent of the poor in Bangladesh have access to micro-credit and we will cover 100 per cent poor before 2010," he said.

Indian HC in favour of early polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty yesterday said a free, fair and credible election with the participation of all political parties should be held as early as possible.

The Indian envoy made the remark while talking to reporters after an hour-long meeting with the Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan in the capital.

Pinak said he came for the response of the AL leadership on the recent developments that have taken place in the country. He also said they talked about the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

Briefing newsmen, the AL chief's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said the Indian envoy wanted to know the AL's thoughts about the present situation and the elections.

"It is our as well as the people's expectation that the Election Commission will be reconstituted very soon. And after preparing an accurate voter roll and other necessary things we will move forward quickly for an election," Saber said.

The AL leader said they hoped that the caretaker government would soon frame a deadline for holding the elections.

Asked when they think the elections should be held, Saber said, "Let the EC be reconstituted first, and then, we think, we will be in a better position to think about the time." He said they are more interested in the process of ensuring a credible election.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah were also present at the meeting.



The government-arranged 'holiday markets' of the recently evicted footpath hawkers fail to attract customers. The photo was taken near Shilpkala Academy in the capital yesterday.

UN CLIMATE PANEL WARNS Arrest 'man-made' global warming

REUTERS, Paris

The UN climate panel issued its strongest warning yet on Friday that human activities are heating the planet, adding pressure on governments to do more to combat accelerating global warming.

The IPCC, the most authoritative group on warming grouping 2,500 scientists from more than 130 nations, predicted more severe rains, melting glaciers, droughts, heatwaves and rising sea levels, especially if Antarctica or Greenland thaw.

The final text said it was "very likely" -- or a probability of more than 90 percent -- that human activities led by burning fossil fuels explained most of the warming in the past 50 years.

That is a toughening from the last report, in 2001, when the IPCC said the link was "likely," or 66 percent probable. Signs of change range from drought in Australia to record high January temperatures in Europe.

"February 2, 2007 may be remembered as the day the question mark was removed from whether (people) are to blame for climate change," Achim Steiner, the head of the UN Environment Programme, told a news conference.

He urged governments to inject more momentum into stalled talks on long-term cuts in emissions.

Greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere have not been higher in 650,000 years.

"We are in a sense doing things that have not happened in 650,000 years, based on the scientific evidence," Rajendra Pachauri, the head of the IPCC, told a news conference.

A 21-page summary of scientific

Bangladesh most ill-prepared

REUTERS, Dhaka

Every year, St. Martin's island in Bangladesh gets a little smaller. The storms that batter its fragile shores are becoming increasingly severe and more and more coral is lost to the waves.

Local council chairman Mouli Feroze Ahmed doesn't know much about global warming or scientists' dire predictions for the fate of low-lying Bangladesh. But he fears for the future and the livelihoods of thousands of people on Bangladesh's only coral island.

"No one has ever told my people what awaits them in 50 years or a century," Feroze said on Friday, hours before a U.N. climate panel released a report issuing the strongest warning yet that human activities are heating the planet.

"But I have seen the island gradually reduced to a size of 8 sq-km now from 12 sq-km 20 years ago," he told Reuters from Saint Martin's in the Bay of Bengal off the country's southernmost tip of Teknaf.

"The corals are being eroded, land is being squeezed. This is what we see ... and wonder why the Bay that gives us fish and a secure living is becoming cruel," Feroze, 55, said.

"Recently, various sea species including turtles and dolphins are

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