

3 killed, 10 injured in Assam blast

AFP, Guwahati

Three people were killed and 10 injured in a powerful explosion yesterday in India's northeastern state of Assam, ahead of the country's Independence Day celebrations next week, police said.

The blast occurred in front of a police station in Jorhat, 310 kilometres (192 miles) east of Assam's main city of Guwahati.

"The bomb was concealed in a sack and kept on a bicycle parked near the police station," Jorhat police chief Deepak Choudhury told AFP by telephone.

The injured, four of them policemen, were moved to a local hospital.

"The area was crowded with people when the blast took place. It was a very powerful explosion that was heard from a distance of about two miles," another police official said.

It is the fourth explosion in two days

in the area. On Sunday, 10 people were wounded in three separate blasts in Assam, with police blaming all the attacks on the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA).

Such attacks are common each year in Assam in the run-up to India's Independence Day on August 15.

The ULFA, fighting for an independent homeland since 1979, usually target crude oil pipelines, trains and road and rail bridges, besides federal soldiers.

The rebels have for years been boycotting Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations to protest New Delhi's rule over the vast region rich in oil, tea and timber.

India's seven northeastern states are riven by a myriad of insurgencies with more than 30 rebel armies operating there with demands including secession, greater autonomy and the right to self-determination.



Syed Munir Khasru speaks at a press conference at IBA auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Syed Alamgir and on his left is Sudipta Mahmud.

PHOTO: STAR

Malaysian firm steps in

FROM PAGE 16

Agreements. We will require to review our Bid Proposal, specifically the EPC (Engineering Procurement Construction) solution and the tariff proposal to account for the time lapsed since our submission," the letter said.

The PDB late last month served Obaidul Karim's shell company BON Consortium with a notice to terminate the power purchase agreement (PPA) of the Meghnaghat 2 power project.

In a letter to BON Consortium's Orion House office at Tejgaon, the PDB said the BON failed to close the project's financial arrangement within its agreed deadline of May 27. The PDB then gave it an extra time up to July 15 to meet its contractual obligations, but the BON failed again.

Obaidul Karim, who bagged many large-scale contracts during the five-year BNP-led alliance government's rule, established BON Consortium, which initially stood for Belhasa of the United Arab Emirates, Orion Power of Bangladesh and Nisso Ewi of Japan. Nisso was the lead bidder in the pro-

ject's tender. Neither Belhasa nor Orion qualifies for this power project but Nisso's experience qualified BON's bid. After the bid selection, however, Nisso was replaced by German company Steag.

Officials and power industry players had been strongly doubtful whether the BON would ever be able to carry out this project as Obaidul and the consortium's "official" leader Steag are nowhere to be seen. They also said the global cost of setting up a power plant has significantly gone up which makes it even more difficult for the BON to set up this plant without incurring a huge loss under the contract that has already been signed. Apparently the Belhasa group is the only visible solvent partner of Orion in the deal.

Following the May 27 letter and legal homework, the PDB on July 4 concluded that as per the contract the deadline can be extended for some time as long as the Commercial Operation Date (COD) of the power plant remains unchanged, and that the BON submits Performance Security

Deposit.

Earlier, BON missed a deadline to pay up land rental and other fees on January 21 and faced a notice of "Project Company Event of Default" to pay up Tk 6.22 crore by February 22 or face cancellation of the contract. A representative of the Belhasa group saved the contract by submitting the money on the last minute.

During this phase, the Belhasa representative proposed that it would take over Orion's share—which is only 16 percent—and drive the project on. Belhasa guarantees implementation, said one of its executives to the power ministry in February.

Obaidul Karim is wanted by the police in different graft and criminal cases for swindling Tk 594 crore from the Oriental Bank. He is also accused of heavily bribing a large number of people close to former prime minister Khaleda Zia to unfairly bag various deals, including the Sayedabad-Jatrabari flyover project where the Belhasa group is partnering with the Orion.

Moscow's new conditions on N-fuel for Iran reactor

AFP, Vienna

Russia has put new conditions on supplying nuclear fuel for a reactor it is building in Iran, insisting Tehran must clear up questions over possible military atomic development, diplomats said yesterday.

"The message was delivered by the Russians three weeks ago in Tehran," a diplomat, who spoke on condition of confidentiality, told AFP.

The diplomat said the Russians had given a "broad reaction" to the Iranians, which included complaints over Iran's being in arrears of payments for the reactor in Bushehr.

Russian officials had said on July 25 that Bushehr might not be com-

pleted until late 2008, which would put off the completion date by a year.

Delivering fuel is the last stage in activating the power plant.

A second diplomat, from a Middle Eastern country, stressed however that the issue was "more than just money."

"The Russians don't want to be seen as the ones helping the Iranians get a nuclear weapon," the diplomat said.

Russia has been building a power reactor in Iran but the United States warns that Tehran could use fuel for the plant to work on atom bombs.

Construction stalled earlier this year over charges that Iran is not paying its bills for the Bushehr project.

Iran hangs murderer in public

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday hanged a murderer in public in the town of Gonbad-e Kavous in the northern province of Golestan, state-run television reported on its website.

The report identified the convicted killer as Nasser-Morad Qolipour and said he killed a police officer two months ago.

The hanging brought to at least 155 the number of executions carried out in the Islamic republic so far this year, most of them by hanging and often in public.

At least 177 people were executed in 2006, according to Amnesty International, making Iran the most prolific applier of the death penalty in the world after China.

Capital offences in Iran include murder, rape, armed robbery, apostasy, blasphemy, serious drug trafficking, pederasty, adultery or prostitution, treason and espionage.

Iran has stepped up executions of rapists, drug traffickers and others deemed a public menace in recent months as part of a campaign which it says is aimed at improving security in society.

Last week two murderers were hanged in Tehran in the first public hangings in the Iranian capital for five years, and seven people convicted of rape and kidnapping were hanged in public in the holy city of Mashhad.

BNP dissidents for council

FROM PAGE 16

meeting sources said. "Now the flood is our top priority and we want to stand beside the victims, making it necessary to hold the party council only after the flood situation is over," Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, a member of the BNP standing committee, told reporters after the meeting.

"The country is facing a natural disaster as a half of the country is now under water, we want to help the distressed humanity at the moment with assistance from our local leaders," he said.

He also said they do not want to use the flood situation for politicking, and that is why using the party banner to help the people in tackling the situation is not necessary.

Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, an adviser to the party chairperson, echoed the sentiment, saying that they want to help the people not as BNP persons but as concerned citizens.

Replying to a question, he said they want to prepare the party for the next election, for which the party needs to be accepted by the people to lead the country.

"We want to make the party acceptable and ready for the election," he said rejecting the allegation of Khaleda Zia that a few leaders led by Bhuiyan are hatching conspiracies to break up the party in the name of reforms.

"How can we go to the election if there is no democratic practice in the party?" he questioned.

When asked whether they will postpone their reform activities due to the flood situation, he said, "There is no question of postponing the reform activities as it is a continuous process."

Maj Gen (retd) ZA Khan, Mofazzal Karim, Rezaul Karim, Asadul Habib Dulu, Abdul Alim, Justice Mozammel Haque, Rustom Ali Forazi, Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul, Shah Abul Hossain, Nazir Hossain, Shahiduzzaman, Mosharraf Hossain Mangu, Ziaul Haque Mollah, Masud Arun, Gazi Shahjahan, Shamsul Alam Pramanik, and Tasnim Rana attended the meeting among others.

Earlier, the dissident leaders hoped that they would be able to hold the party council by August even amid the state of emergency as they had completed their round of contacting most of the party councilors across the country.

Meanwhile, party Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Monday, talking to reporters while attending the 23rd death anniversary of former naval chief Mahbub Ali Khan, also asked her party leaders and activists to stand beside the flood victims.

Obaidul Quader

FROM PAGE 16

In the case statement against Isratunnessa, the complainant said that she had evaded income tax upon her income of Tk 88,76,717 for the fiscal years from 2000-2001 to 2006-2007.

Moreover, she concealed her real income while submitted her income tax return to the NBR's tax department, Nigar added.

SALAUDDIN CASE

The same court fixed today for hearing on the graft case against Salauddin and his family members. The case was filed for giving false statements to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Other accused are Salahuddin's wife Shamsunnahar Ahmed, three sons Imran Ahmed, Shahriar Ahmed and Tanvir Ahmed. Of them, Imran is absconding.

The case was filed with Shyampur Police Station on April 11 for concealing Tk 6,45,28,312 in their wealth statements.

AMAN-ABBAS CASE

The same court transferred the tax cases against detained former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas and state minister for labour and employment Amaullah Aman to special courts for quick disposal.

The cases were filed by the NBR on July 30 and August 5 for evading huge amount of income tax for years.

Abbas and Aman were produced before the court during the hearing of the cases.

DULU CASE

The same court fixed August 14 for hearing on the graft case against former deputy minister for land Dulu and his wife Sabina Yasmin.

The court directed Rajshahi Central Jail authorities to produce Dulu before the court on the scheduled date.

ACC Assistant Director Nurjahan Ahmed yesterday submitted the charge sheet against Dulu and his wife to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court showing 65 people as prosecution witnesses.

Earlier, the High Court granted ad interim bail to Dulu's wife Sabina until submission of the police report. The case was filed on April 19 for concealing information about Tk 3, 06,55,246 in their wealth statements.

SARWAR CASE

Metropolitan Magistrate MA Salam placed Sarwar on a one-day remand after Tejgaon police produced him before the court with a prayer for a three-day remand in an extortion case.

In his forwarding report, Sub-Inspector Amirul Islam, also the investigation officer of the case, said Sarwar needs to be quizzed to find out the whereabouts of his fugitive accomplices and the extorted money.

Jakir Hossain Nannu, proprietor of M/S Bisharad Trading International, filed the case on July 18 against Sarwar and a BNP leader Azizul Haq Akkas.

IBA Nat'l Debate Championship Aug 10-12

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Communication Club of Institute of Business Administration (IBACC) of Dhaka University (DU) is going to organise a national English debate competition on August 10-12.

A total of 24 teams from 16 universities will take part in the parliamentary type IBA National Debate Championship 2007, said IBA Director Prof Muhammad Ziaul Haq Mamun at a press conference held at IBA auditorium yesterday.

The first round of the tournament will be held on the opening day while the second round, quarterfinals, semifinals and the final round will be held on August 11.

The prize giving ceremony will be held on the concluding day, he added.

ACI Limited is the official sponsor of the tournament, while The Daily Star, Channel i and Radio Foorti are media partners.

Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, American International University of Bangladesh, Brac University, Chittagong University, Dhaka Medical College, Independent University of Bangladesh, Islamic University of Technology, Jahangirnagar University, Khulna University, North South University, Rajshahi University, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College, Barisal, Stamford University, University of Asia Pacific, United International University and host Institute of Business Administration (IBA) will take part in the competition.

Syed Munir Khasru, moderator of IBACC, Syed Alamgir, executive director of ACI Limited and Sudipta Mahmud of Channel i were also present at the press conference.