

SIRAJGANJ TOWN EXPOSED TO FRESH DANGER

Another 200 metres of embankment collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Another 200 metres of the Sirajganj town protection embankment collapsed in the Jamuna yesterday afternoon, for the second time in a week, near the previously damaged portion, forcing locals to shift to safer places.

Thousands of locals and workers of Water Development Board started piling up sand bags, bricks, concrete blocks and other materials in the part immediately after the collapse, but their attempts went in vain because of strong current.

Panic gripped the locals following the incident and they now believe that the area of the embankment has become

vulnerable to erosion, exposing Sirajganj town to severe flooding.

They said some parts of the road beside the embankment have already eroded into the river. They feared water from the river will enter the localities if effective measures to protect the embankment are not taken immediately.

Officials of Water Development Board and locals said the portion of the embankment at Goyla shashan ghat (crematorium), some 100m near the previously damaged area, started collapsing around 2:00pm.

About 500 WDB workers, who had been working in the already damaged portion, rushed to the place and started

placing sand bags and concrete blocks to prevent flooding.

Thousands of people from across the town gathered and joined the protection endeavour. Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), police and the army who had also been working on the damaged embankment also joined them.

They continued the effort at 8:00pm while erosion was also continuing.

Deputy Commissioner Humayun Kabir and Superintendent of Police Alamgir Rahman visited the spot.

Locals alleged that the WDB officials could not say anything about the reasons behind the sudden collapse.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



The Sirajganj town protection embankment that breached and was fixed only a few days ago starts eroding again into the Jamuna yesterday. Locals fear the whole embankment has now become vulnerable to total collapse. PHOTO: GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON

Malaysia to continue its freeze on Bangladesh workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia decided to continue the freeze on hiring workers from Bangladesh although it allowed electronics and textile sectors again to recruit foreign workers, reported Malaysian newspaper The Star Online yesterday.

Earlier, a temporary ban was imposed on these two sectors in recruiting foreign workers.

The decision taken at a meeting of the Malaysian cabinet committee on foreign and illegal workers yesterday comes as a blow to the 55,000 Bangladeshi workers whose

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

PM returns home

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home last night after attending the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt.

A special flight of Bangladesh Biman carrying the PM and her entourage landed at Zia International Airport at 11:20pm.

She reached her official residence at Jamuna at around 12:00 midnight, PM's Deputy Press Secretary Mahbubul Hoque Shakil, one of her entourage told The Daily Star.

Earlier on the day, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's representative, Minister for Environment Maged George Elias Ghallas, saw off the prime minister at Sharm El Sheikh International Airport at about 3:30pm, reports UNB.

On Tuesday a 36-member official delegation led by the prime minister, and a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: AFP

Indonesian policemen examining the site of a blast inside the Ritz Carlton hotel in Jakarta. Bombs tore through two luxury hotels yesterday, killing at least nine people and injuring 41.

Blasts at Jakarta Ritz, Marriott kill 9

Yudhoyono terms the attack an 'act of terrorism'

AFP, Jakarta

Suspected Islamic militants including a suicide bomber detonated high-explosive devices in two luxury Jakarta hotels popular with foreigners yesterday, killing at least nine people, officials said.

Witnesses described grim scenes with bloodied survivors fleeing in panic from the Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott hotels, as terrorism returned the world's most populous Muslim nation after four years without a major attack.

The broad streets of financial district were littered with glass, debris and smears of blood after the breakfast-time bombings, which sent a huge plume of smoke over the city.

A grim-looking President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, whose crackdown on the extremist Jemaah Islamiyah

(JI) appeared to have quelled the extremist threat, said the bombings undermined the security of the entire nation.

He said the attackers "have no humanity and they don't care about the damage done to our country with this act of

Holcim CEO, Indonesia Tim MacKay was among the blast victims, said an official

terrorism, which will have wide effects on our economy, trade, tourism and image in the eyes of the world".

Officials said more than 40 other people were injured when two blasts shook the upscale hotels, and pinned suspicion on a JI splinter group led by Malaysian-born

bomb maker Noordin Mohammed Top. Grainy security camera

footage at the Ritz-Carlton showed a man wearing a backpack on his chest and carrying a suitcase entering the hotel restaurant moments before a bomb exploded.

The flickering footage aired on the TV One station showed the large open doorway to the restaurant erupting with glass, debris and smoke as the bomb was detonated inside.

People in the doorway were engulfed by the blast, while others dived for cover behind furniture and walls. Witnesses described a scene of carnage.

"I was walking outside and I saw three injured people taken to the ambulance," shop assistant Syarif, 32, said.

"They were all foreigners, their faces and bodies all covered in blood. The skin near the eye of one of them was peeling off," he said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

EXPERTS ON TIPAIMUKH PROJECT

Dhaka should press for joint impact assessment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As a few reports on the impact of Tipaimukh project on Indian territories were published in India, Bangladesh should negotiate for a joint impact-assessment on both countries with experts of Bangladesh and India, environment experts told The Daily Star yesterday.

Making an impact assessment of Tipaimukh Hydro Electric (multipurpose) Project only for the Indian side will never do when it is on a joint river system, they said.

North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd of India recently published three reports on the project in its website. The reports are Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Management Plan and Dam Break Analysis and Disaster Management Plan.

Even though the Surma-Kushiyara-Meghna is 947km long, the assessment was done only on 277km of river inside India. The report showed only Mizoram and Manipur of India as probable areas that may be affected by the project.

The information on the structures, designs, nature of management of the project, however, was not in the report. A report said the project would generate 1,500 megawatt of electricity and huge areas of agriculture land will be brought under the project.

The Environmental Impact Assessment report mentioned a proposal for constructing a barrage at Fulertal, 95km downstream of Tipaimukh. It said the low-lying areas around the dam would increase, if the dam is constructed on the river Barak at Tipaimukh.

One of the Indian reports said there are risks of landslides in the project area, which is also earthquake-prone. The area suffered 16 earthquakes that registered seven on the Richter scale. Two earthquakes registered 8.5.

The Environmental Impact Assessment report suggested that a taskforce be formed involving representatives of policymakers, government, research institutes, NGOs and locals to protect the biodiversity of the Indian territories concerned.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Bikash held again, sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top listed criminal Bikash Kumar Biswas, who was arrested by Rab members on Thursday soon after he was freed from jail serving a 13-year term, was sent to jail again yesterday.

Joydevpur police in Gazipur district told The Daily Star that they produced Bikash before the court that sent him to jail denying his bail prayer.

Police also said they arrested Bikash again on information that he was making preparation to commit crimes.

Sources said Rab-1 members picked him up soon after he came out from Kashimpur-2 jail around 8:00pm on Thursday.

Bikash was arrested soon after Awami League came to power in 1996. His fugitive

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Laskar-e-Taiyeba active in Bangladesh for 14 years

Arrested top Indian militant also tells police that he is linked to Huji, Daud Ibrahim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan based Islamist terrorist organisation Laskar-e-Taiyeba has been active in Bangladesh for the last 14 years, intelligence sources said quoting one of the most wanted Indian terrorists recently captured here.

Local leaders of the organisation have links to the network of absconding Indian mafia don Daud Ibrahim, and also to leaders of other Islamist militant organisations like Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (Huji), the sources added.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday disclosed that they recently arrested an Indian national who is very much close to Laskar-e-Taiyeba, and also one of the most wanted by the Indian law enforcing and intelligence agencies.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque said



Mufti Obaidullah

the arrestee is identified as Mufti Obaidullah, who has been staying in the country since 1995.

"He was arrested from the capital, and was taking preparations for a jihad by

organising Bangladeshi mujahids with directives from Ameer Reza, a leader of Kashmir based Laskar-e-Taiyeba, who is an Indian national now staying in Pakistan," the DMP commissioner said.

Obaidullah took part in Afghan conflicts four times. Besides, he was active in militancy in India, in collaboration with militants from Pakistan and Afghanistan. He also collaborated with Islamist militants of Kashmir, Benaras, Punjab, and Hyderabad in India, said the DMP commissioner adding that Obaidullah came to Bangladesh to evade Indian intelligence after the government of that country in 1994 had declared him one of the most wanted.

DB sources said a team led by Deputy Police Commissioner Monirul Islam of DB-North identified the Indian terrorist on the basis of confessions made by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



A Dhaka Wasa bulldozer, left, demolishes illegal structures on the Rupnagar canal at Mirpur in the capital yesterday while land grabbing across the street reduces the width of the canal, right, to just three feet.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

5 killed as train rams microbus in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Five people of a groom's motorcade, heading for the wedding ceremony, were killed when a train rammed their microbus on a level crossing in Mandertala in Jhenidah yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were Real, 8, Joya, 3, son and daughter of Mintu of Muradgar in Jessore Sadar upazila, Sejuti, 11, daughter of Shafiu Alam of Muradgar, Shaheen, 35, son of Altam Uddin of the same village and driver Bashir, son of Nasir Mondal, of Galachipai Patuakhali.

The critically injured are Madhu, 30, wife of deceased Shaheen, Nasrin, 25, mother of Real and Joya, Dristi, 18, daughter of Hakikur Rahman of Dhaka.

Real was a student of class-II at Satmile KG school while his sister was a student of class-IV in Jessore Daud Public School. Shaheen was a lecturer of a college in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2