

Militants claim responsibility of Russian dam blast

AFP, Moscow

An Islamist group claimed yesterday it caused the disaster at Russia's largest hydroelectric plant, as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited the site and acknowledged 75 people were killed in the tragedy.

Russian investigators denied the claim by Riyadus Salikhin, a militant group with roots in Chechnya, that it had hit the power station on Monday as part of a new campaign of "economic war" in Russia.

The claim, posted on rebel website Kavkazcenter.com, also said the group had carried out a suicide bombing at a police headquarters in Russia's Ingushetia region that killed two dozen people the same day as the dam disaster.

There was no way to check the veracity of the claims, which the website said it received by email. Officials insisted the dam tragedy was caused by a technical fault and there was no evidence of an attack.

"Russian security service explosives experts have found no trace of explosive material at the site of the accident," said Vladimir Markin, spokesman for the investigative committee of state prosecutors.

"Various theories for the cause of the accident are under investigation. However there has been no confirmation of the theory of a terrorist act," Markin said, according to news agencies.

The rebel statement said militants had carried out an attack at the power plant in southern Siberia by placing an anti-tank grenade in the turbine hall on a timer and later detonating it.

"Praise to Allah, on August 17 an act of sabotage was carried out at the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric plant that had been carefully thought out and prepared for a long time," the statement said.

Putin, on a visit to the plant Friday, indicated that 75 people had been killed in the accident, which officials say took place when a massive flood engulfed the main turbine hall.

"We see what has happened, we know what has happened. There's no need to pretend that there's something unclear about this to someone," Putin said, after officials announced 47 people were killed and 28 missing.

"Steel can be restored but people will not be brought back. This is the biggest tragedy," Putin said.

Essentials' prices

FROM PAGE 1

Despite holiday people thronged city kitchen markets throughout the day yesterday ahead of Ramadan, the month of fasting for the Muslims.

Karwan Bazar, the largest wholesale kitchen market in the capital, along with other kitchen markets was buzzing with shoppers. Heated exchanges between shoppers and traders over prices of essentials were seen in different places.

Especially the essentials that are consumed more during Ramadan are getting pricier, said both customers and sellers.

Price of green chilli c'ned up to Tk 140-200 a kg yesterday although it was selling for Tk 100-150 just a day ago.

A trader in Karwan Bazar was selling green chilli for Tk 140 a kg yesterday while another trader in a nearby shop in the same market was selling the same quality chilli for Tk 170.

The chilli was selling for Tk 200 a kg in Ibraimpur kitchen market, Tk 180 a kg in the Hatirpur kitchen market and Tk 160 a kg in Nimtoli Bazar.

Prices of aubergine of different varieties whose fried slices are a popular iftar item ranged between Tk 35 and 65 yesterday compared to Tk 30 and 50 per kg a day before. Price of potato went up to Tk 28-30 per kg, which was sold for Tk 26-28 a day ago.

Prices of both local and imported varieties of onion jumped in both the markets

yesterday.

The imported variety was selling for Tk 22-25 a kg yesterday, the local variety for Tk 37-40 a kg while a day before local onion was sold at Tk 36-38 a kg and imported one at Tk 20-22 a kg.

Price of tomato leaped up to Tk 100-120 per kg yesterday from Tk 80-90. The price of cucumber rose to Tk 25-35 from Tk 20-25 a kg yesterday.

Prices of brand soya bean oil of most of the companies were up by Tk 2 per litre yesterday.

Prices of all sorts of vegetables increased by Tk 5-15 per kg while prices of most of the fish witnessed a sharp rise.

Customers and retailers were seen haggling over the prices of essentials that are higher than the fixed prices of essentials scribbled on the board of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Many customers and even shopkeepers said there was no similarity between the prices in the markets and those hung in the DCC's price list.

Sales of essentials by the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) are yet to create any impact on the prices of those items in the kitchen markets, said consumers.

The extent of loss caused by the fire could not be known immediately.

The rebel statement said that also on Monday an "operation was carried out to destroy the occupying police forces" in Nazran, the main city of the increasingly violent Caucasus region of Ingushetia.

It said a suicide bomber broke through the gates of the police headquarters in a car "and then set off his explosives".

According to the latest official toll, 25 people were killed in the Nazran attack. Investigators did not immediately comment on the veracity of the Islamist group's claim of responsibility.

The dam disaster and the Ingushetia attack came amid mounting violence in Russia's overwhelmingly Muslim northern Caucasus region, where Islamists are waging an insurgency against the pro-Kremlin local authorities.

In the latest Caucasus violence on Friday, four policemen were killed in the capital of Chechnya in a double suicide bombing carried out by Frenchman David Alerte and played up to the cameras in his usual way.

Once the starter's pistol went off, the Jamaican bolted from the blocks and within 20 metres he had grabbed the lead he would never relinquish.

He raced down the straight well ahead of everyone else, with only the clock to beat. He caught a glimpse of his time just at the finish line and saw that 11 hundredths had been knocked off yet again.

Bolt had also demolished his own 100m world record on Sunday, taking off 11 hundredths to clock the stunning time of 9.58.

Riyadus Salikhin is on a blacklist of groups, maintained by the US State Department, which are not allowed entry into the United States because of their links to terrorist activities.

In June, the group claimed responsibility for a bomb attack that badly injured the president of Ingushetia, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov.

Riyadus Salikhin calls itself a "martyrs' brigade" and was previously led by Shamil Basayev, the notorious Chechen warlord who masterminded the Beslan school hostage-taking of 2004 and was killed in 2006.

More recently the group has said that its commander is Chechen guerrilla leader Dokum Umarov, head of the self-proclaimed "Caucasus Emirate" which wants to establish an Islamic state across Russia's North Caucasus.

In its statement Friday, the group said it had decided earlier this year at a meeting of its leadership to "activate an economic war against Russia on its territory.

"To carry out this task, sabotage groups were set up and sent to numerous regions of Russia with the aim of carrying out acts of industrial sabotage."

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Bolt has become the only man ever to hold the 100 and 200 Olympic and world titles as well as the world records at the same time.

Panama's Alonso Edward was second with a time of 19.81 and American Wallace Spearmon third.

The top five sprinters all clocked under 20 seconds.

"I had nothing to lose," Bolt said. "I went out there and just did my best."

"I was kind of tired for yesterday, but in the warm-ups I was feeling good so I decided what the heck -- let's come out here and try for the world record."

"I ran hard and I got it, and I'm proud of myself. You could see the look on my face, I was really trying hard, I was digging, I was giving everything I got."

"It was all for the fans -- I knew they were coming out to see something special."

Bolt, a day short of his 23rd birthday, was unfazed by a false start triggered by Frenchman David Alerte and played up to the cameras in his usual way.

"Developing countries like us, we have to fight this war without vaccines," said Mya Oo, deputy health minister of Myanmar. He urged pharmaceutical companies to consider selling the vaccines to developing countries at just above cost.

WHO's flu chief, Keiji Fukuda, said the agency was working hard on the issue, and noted that two drug makers had pledged to donate 150 million doses of vaccine to poorer countries by the end of October. He said more research was needed to determine how vaccines will be priced.

"Among the many pandemic response issues, this is probably the most critical issue: how we mobilize the vaccines, how we get them to developing countries," Fukuda said.

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