

Govt goes for witness safety

Formulating an act to protect witnesses, ensure fair trials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to formulate laws to protect witnesses who will give deposition in all courts including the newly formed International Crimes Tribunal to prove the offences committed by the accused.

"The government will make necessary arrangements to formulate witnesses' protection act to ensure their safety. Such laws exist in different countries around the globe," said Law Minister Shafique Ahmed.

The law minister said this at a programme titled "'71's Mass killing, offences against humanity and trial of war crimes: Questions raised by different quarters".

The minister added the home ministry has already been asked to take necessary arrangements to ensure safety of the chairman and other members of the tribunal and the would-be witnesses.

It has been a longstanding problem in the country that a large number of witnesses do not turn up in the courts, resulting in a setback in the trial process.

Instances are numerous that many cases could not be resolved even in 20 years and many offences could not be proved due to absence of witnesses in the face of threats and intimidation.

"In many cases witnesses don't appear before the court to give their deposition. As a result, many cases get dismissed and many victims don't get justice," Shafique told The Daily Star last night.

Currently, the witnesses do not get any protection during the time of giving deposition. Instead, they are rather arrested and hauled before courts as per warrants issued by

SEE PAGE 7 COL 8

Country gets new land

Study reveals 1,790sq km landmass emerges out of Bay for incredible rate of sedimentation

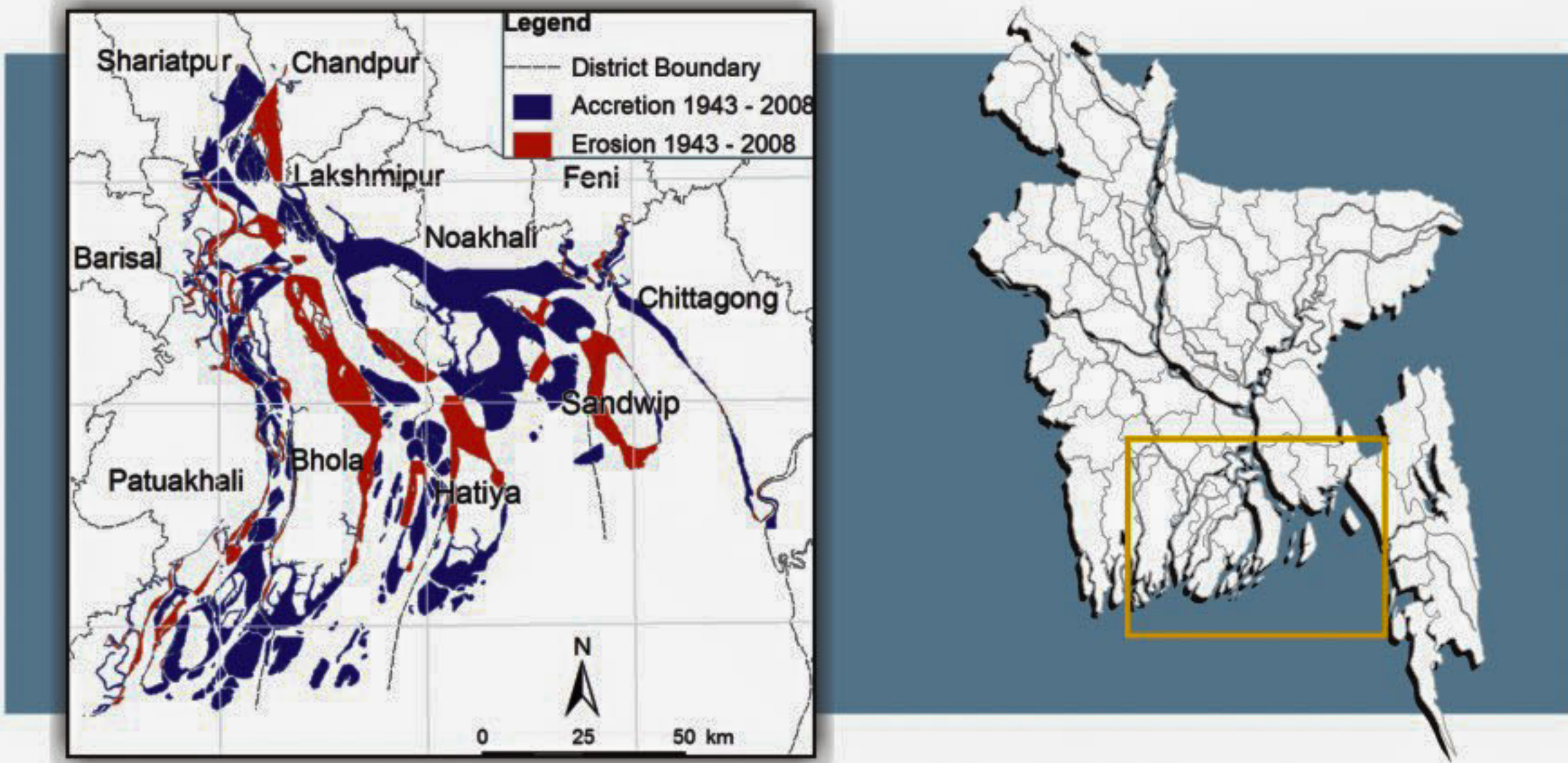
PINAKI ROY

Even as many worry Bangladesh will shrink in size because of global warming, a new study shows that the country has actually grown in landmass equal to five times the size of Dhaka city.

The new land has emerged in the Meghna estuary, where sediments flow down from the Himalayas and collect into charlands. The study found that the 8.5-magnitude 1950 Assam Earthquake increased the sediment flow and has added a net increase of 1,790 square kilometers to the country's land mass.

"More charlands have emerged than we have lost due to river erosion over the years," said Dr. Maminul Haq Sarker, a geo-morphologist who conducted the study at the Center for Environment and Geographical Information System (CEGIS).

The new land, which emerged mostly in Noakhali, was discovered when Sarker and his research team analyzed satellite pictures and other



data from 1943 to 2008 tracking sediments coming from the Himalayas and flowing down the Padma (Ganges in India) and Jamuna (Brahmaputra) rivers. The rivers deliver about one billion tons of silt a year from India, Nepal, China, and Bhutan to the Meghna estuary within the Bay of Bengal.

The study found that the 1950 earthquake accelerated the sediment flow by causing huge landslides in the Himalayas, dumping an estimate 45 billion cubic meters of earth into the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

GULSHAN HOUSE JS body for realising dues from Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the housing and public works ministry to send a letter to BNP chief Khaleda Zia asking her to pay the money so far due as principal

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Notice

A supplement on The Daily Star-DHL Bangladesh Business Awards 2009 hits the stands tomorrow. Watch out for your copy.

Tension in Bhola as polls set for tomorrow

BNP alleges 'attack, threat' by ruling party men; AL denies; more than half polling centres 'risky'

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN from Lalmoan

BNP leaders, activists and supporters in Bhola-3 constituency are panic-gripped ahead of the by-election as they are allegedly being frequently attacked by their political opponents and threatened not to go to polling centres on election day.

But leaders of Awami League denied the allegations. They rather said the BNP wants to foil the election by appointing outsiders as

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Stop 'pre-emptive' arrests

EC asks Bhola admin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday ordered the district police administration to immediately stop 'pre-emptive' arrests of political activists and voters ahead of the by-polls in Bhola-3 constituency, terming such arrests unlawful.

In a letter faxed to the superintendent of police of Bhola, the EC said it has to

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

ARMY DEPLOYMENT AT POLLING CENTRES Ruling BNP rejected EC decision in 2004

SHAKHAWAT LITON

BNP is demanding deployment of army in Bhola-3 by-election, but while in power it opposed Election Commission's decision about troop deployment in the controversial Dhaka-10 by-poll in 2004.

The then EC decided to deploy five army personnel at each polling station to hold Dhaka-10 by-poll and asked the government to take necessary measures to this effect.

But the then BNP-Jamaat coalition government rejected EC's request and ordered

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



James B Steinberg

US minister for fairness in war crimes trial

Questions have to be resolved thru' internal political process, he says

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Deputy Secretary of State James B Steinberg yesterday said some questions like the trial of war criminals have to be resolved through the internal political process of Bangladesh.

"It is important to have accountability and fairness in any proceeding or process, but how it would be carried out in a specific circumstance is to be decided by the people of the country," he said while addressing a media briefing in Sonargaon Hotel.

Steinberg, who is a deputy of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, arrived early yesterday on a brief visit to Bangladesh and is due to depart Dhaka early this morning.

During his daylong hectic programmes, he had discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Commerce Minister Faruq Khan, and members of the civil society.

Speaking about the democratic process in Bangladesh, Steinberg said the last general election was a positive step towards strengthening democracy.

Encouraging cooperation between the government and the opposition for finding a common ground for welfare of the people, he said it is important that all political parties work together, and create an atmosphere for open and tolerant debates.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4
SEE MORE STORY ON PAGE 2



Dug up JN Saha Road in the capital's Lalbagh area for laying sewer pipes. Locals fear the sewer will be dysfunctional soon after the work completes, as they allege the contractor has been using low quality materials. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SAARC SUMMIT Sideline talks to seize spotlight

Hasina, Manmohan to catch up on Delhi agreements

REZAUL KARIM

Bangladesh and Indian premiers may have important talks on the sidelines of the 16th Saarc Summit in Bhutan next week, when they will review the progress regarding the agreements made in January.

Diplomatic sources said the talks between Sheikh Hasina and Manmohan Singh would be vital. Both the prime ministers are expected to discuss the implementation of five agreements as well as consensus reached on a number of contentious issues during Hasina's visit to India January 10-13.

Both the PMs agreed on a vision in pursuit of the common good -- bilaterally, regionally and globally. They also reiterated their commitment to work together to solve all issues through cooperation and mutual understanding.

At the sideline talks during the April 28-29 South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Summit, Hasina is likely to request her Indian counterpart to expedite resolving Teesta Water Sharing and border issues, supply of electricity to Bangladesh, opening of border haats, duty free access of Bangladeshi products to India etc.

Foreign ministry sources said though there are improvements in many sectors, but no tangible development has been achieved in the last three months and in some cases Indian side failed to proceed with, despite Bangladesh's readiness, like opening of three border haats on Pahela Baishakh.

However, there are improvements and both the countries are cooperating each other in curbing terrorism but there has been no progress in resolving land and maritime boundary issues, officials said.

At the summit, Hasina will also hold bilateral discussion with Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. The issues like war crime trial in Bangladesh and regional security might come up for discussion. Both Hasina and Gilani are expected to invite each other to their countries.

Sources said there was speculation that Hasina would

SEE PAGE 7 COL 8

BDR MUTINY Fresh case filed against 35 jawans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A new mutiny case was filed yesterday with the BDR Special Court-4 in Chittagong against 35 jawans of Bolipara Camp of 10 Rifle Battalion of Bangladesh Rifles.

Subedar Sultan Ahmed placed charges before the court and prosecutor of the case Lt Col Rabiul Alam gave his submission.

The prosecutor told the court that the accused BDR members had shown solidarity with the mutineers of BDR

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Meghnaghat graft case against Hasina quashed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in a verdict yesterday quashed the proceedings against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Meghnaghat Power Plant corruption case filed during the last BNP-Jamaat regime.

An HC bench of Justice Md Shamsul Huda and Justice Abu Bakar Siddiquee pronounced the verdict following a petition by Hasina for quashing the proceedings against her.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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