

Sirajganj town

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Locals brought allegation against authorities of misappropriation in the repair of the bank built by a South Korean company in 1997 at a cost of Tk 400 crore with 100 years' guaranty.

On Monday, another 100m stretch of the bank near Old Jail area caved in, UNB reports.

Parts of the embankment were eroded into the river on July 19, 2010 and twice in 2009.

Meanwhile, an army team from 10 Engineering Battalion yesterday started supervising the repair of the embankment.

The authorities also declared red alert in the area around the collapse site.

Also, a new 70-meter breach has developed at the hard point in Old Jail area late Tuesday night.

Officials said, swirling water and strong current weakened the foundation at the Hard Point and blocment retention and bamboo piling were washed away, triggering fresh erosion.

Jamuna was flowing just nine centimetres below the danger level after its marker rose by 23cm in the last 48. Rains and onrush of water from the upstream swelled the river.

The town protection dam is in a very vulnerable position on different spots including the Hard Point.

Abdul Malek, executive engineer of Sirajganj WDB, said to protect further collapse they have thrown huge amount of concrete blocs and sand bags till yesterday morning.

A five-member inquiry committee, headed by the WDB chief engineer, has been formed to probe into the embankment collapse.

The high officials of water resources ministry and WDB have visited the spot and directed persons concerned to take immediate steps to control the river erosion in the area.

Biman

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Told The Daily Star that they have rearranged flights by cutting down their numbers on a few international routes. He did not tell how many flights they have dropped so far.

Biman operates flights to 19 destinations across the globe with a fleet of 11 aircraft, nine of which fly on international routes.

Of the nine aircraft, a DC-10 30 and an Airbus are now going through extensive overhaul.

Biman's flight control department has been struggling to maintain flight schedule since the two wide-body aircraft were grounded more than a month ago, said Biman officials.

It got worse, as three other DC-10 aircraft had to be grounded for nearly five hours for maintenance checks after long-haul flights several days back. Usually it takes two hours to complete such check.

Another Airbus had been grounded for five days for technical problems a few days ago, sources said.

Asking not to be named, another Biman official said a Biman flight to Muscat from Dhaka was supposed to take off at 11:00pm on July 8, but the flight left the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at noon the next day.

Another flight to Abu Dhabi from Chittagong, scheduled to leave in the evening on July 9, finally took off at 2:45pm the next day, said the official.

Biman authorities could not confirm when the situation will improve, as the two wide-body aircraft are still going through extensive overhaul.

The DC 10 aircraft that was supposed to be ready to fly by mid-May was taken to a hangar for extensive overhaul on April 16. But the repair is yet to be completed even after three months.

The Airbus, which was supposed to join the fleet on July 2, has been undergoing repair in Singapore since May 24, said another Biman official asking not to be named.

Safety rules defied

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June this year.

During a visit to an accident spot in Kakrail, where four workers died on Thursday when a makeshift lift plunged to the ground, workers said the four lives could have been saved if the site authorities paid heed to their demands.

They said a few days ago the cable of the lift snapped and repair was done with very little care.

Sekender Ali Mina, programme director of Safety and Rights Society, said according to BNBC, a material hoist cannot be used to transport workers.

Separate temporary lifts must be used for carrying workers, it adds.

The lift in Kakrail was carrying a heavy load of tiles and the four workers.

The lone official present at the Kakrail construction site left hurriedly when The Daily Star correspondent approached him for comments.

In Motijheel on Toyenbee Circular Road, The Daily Star reporter saw three workers working on the exterior at the 14-storey level of a 15-storey building, standing on a bamboo-made platform hanging by a few ropes. There was no safety railing or any other safety harness tethering them to the building. They were not using helmets and were in regular clothing.

According to BNBC, all scaffolding exceeding 20 metres or six-storey in height shall be made with non-combustible or fire retardant materials.

Regarding workers' safety, BNBC states, helmets must be worn by workmen and other personnel at all times during work.

The 15-storey under construction building did not even have any safety measure for pedestrians using the adjacent pavement. It had no fence or proper safety net to protect pedestrians from falling objects.

BNBC states -- all construction work from 1.5 metre from the road must be enclosed with a fence no less than 2.4 metre high from the grade.

It also says if the work is 1.5 metre away from the road, the fence or other barriers must be erected at least on the side of the site nearest to the footpath or road. The fence must extend over the entire length of the site.

Construction materials were seen left on the adjacent pavement as well as the Toyenbee Circular Road construction site.

A worker at the site preferring anonymity said they could not dare to demand safety measures even though they feel the need, as the authorities will just sack them.

The Daily Star correspondent could not reach any of the officials of the construction company Diganta Prokoushali Ltd, and there was none present at the site.

On October 13, 2010, the High Court asked the government to establish a National Building Code Enforcement Authority in accordance with the code. The HC also asked the government to implement the order within a year after receiving the copy of the judgement.

The authorities have yet to receive the copy of the judge-

ment, said Sekender Ali Mina of Safety and Rights Society.

Sheikh Abdul Mannan, joint secretary and member (planning) of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), said on an average they give approval to around 8,000 buildings every year, and in 2007 they gave permission to over 16,000 buildings.

But they have no wing to monitor safety measures at the construction sites, he added.

A construction worker at the Toyenbee Road site said, preferring anonymity, that their sub-contractor never makes full payments of their wages. He said if they had full wages they would be able to leave and work somewhere else.

He said his daily wage is Tk 320, but if he falls sick he gets Tk 150 a day. However, Tk 150 is deducted, for each day he was sick, from his wages when he recovers and joins work. In other words, when a worker is sick, he gets nothing.

When a worker gets injured and is unable to work, the company authorities usually give him a very small amount of money for treatment, and as he starts to recover he is sent home with some money for transport expenses, workers at the site said.

Hailing from Chandpur, Faruque Hossain, cousin and co-worker of Rubel who died in the Kakrail accident on Thursday, said, "I am scared. Owners pay no importance to our safety. I quit the job and I am going home to work with my father as an agricultural labourer."

**4 WORKERS' DEATH COMPENSATED**

The construction firm, four workers of which had died in the Kakrail accident, compensated the bereaved families with Tk 3 lakh each.

The firm, Builders for Future Ltd, also gave Tk 4,000 to each of the families for burial.

Following the fatal accident, another worker Mohammad Asgar Ali filed a murder case against four officials of the construction firm, and the firm's tiles contractor in connection with the deaths.

The accused are Managing Director Tanvirul Huq Probal, Site Manager Sheikh Tanvirul Hassan, Project Contractor Gazibur Rahman, General Manager Aslam, and tiles contractor Hannan.

The firm was building a 20-storey structure -- Iris Noor Jahan -- in the capital's Kakrail area.

In the case statement, Asgar Ali alleged that negligence of the accused caused the accident as the lift collapsed only a few days after the authorities had repaired its cable.

Police yesterday arrested the tiles contractor, Hannan, and sent him to jail through a Dhaka court.

Contacted, Asgar Ali told The Daily Star that the firm settled the matter by giving Tk 3 lakh to each dead worker's family.

"We are now preparing to withdraw the case," he said.

Construction workers Zahidul Islam, 26, Delwar Hossain, 28, and his two nephews Rubel, 20, and Abdur Rahman, 18 died in the accident.

Cambodian PM proposes troop pullout deal with Thailand

REUTERS, Phnom Penh

Cambodia's prime minister proposed yesterday a deal with Thailand to simultaneously withdraw troops from a newly defined demilitarised zone, in compliance with a United Nations court ruling aimed at defusing tensions in a disputed border area.

Hun Sen said Cambodia wanted to respond quickly to Monday's verdict by the International Court of Justice in the Hague, which ordered troops from both countries to pull out of the territory around an 11th century temple to prevent further flare-ups.

Thai and Cambodian forces traded gunfire and shelling at two stretches of the 800 km (500 mile) frontier in February and April, killing a total of 18 people and displacing tens of thousands of villagers.

"Troop withdrawal must be done simultaneously. The ruling requires both sides to withdraw troops, not just Cambodia," Hun Sen said at a rare news conference that lasted two-and-a-half hours.

Indonesia, chairing the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), agreed in February to send 15 unarmed observers to preserve a cease-fire, but that mission never materialised and Thailand, and in particular its military, has been accused of dragging its feet on the issue.

Sovereignty of large stretches of the Thai-Cambodia border has been disputed since the French withdrew from Cambodia in the 1950s, with the Preah Vihear temple the thorniest subject.

BSF beats

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was working at his paddy field near border pillar No 90 in the morning.

At that time, five to six BSF members from Rangiapota camp entered Bangladesh territory and forcibly tried to take Selim away to Indian side without any reason, they said.

BSF jawans hit Selim with rifle as he resisted their attempt. The Indian border guards later dragged him inside Indian territory.

One hour later, local people found the body of Selim hanging from an electrified barbed-wire fence on the Indian side of the border.

Receiving information from locals, BGB members went to the spot but BSF members removed the body from the fence before their arrival.

Victim's father alleged that BSF members tortured his son to death and hung his body with the barbed-wire fence.

Protesting the killing, BGB sent a letter to the BSF asking them to return the body.

UP results boost

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office, the party-backed candidates won in at least 1,535 unions in the elections held between May 31 and July 7. While ruling Awami League favourites prevailed in about 1,855 unions.

Of the 3,754 unions, polls results in 3,723 unions have so far been declared and been suspended in the rest.

Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain, a member of BNP standing committee, claimed that like the municipal polls, results of the union parishad elections proved that the government lost popularity.

"BNP supporters could have won in more unions if the elections were held in a free and fair manner across the country," he told The Daily Star. Ruling party leaders snatched victory in many unions using administrative influence with the help of local lawmakers.

BNP leaders are also happy as the party-backed candidates gained upperhand in most of the unions adjacent to the capital.

Bomb attack

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from the area, fearing another blast.

Stoltenberg, in a telephone call to Norwegian television, said all government ministers were safe.

He said he had been advised by police not to reveal his current location, but is not thought to have been in central Oslo yesterday.

"Even if one is well prepared, it is always rather dramatic when something like this happens," he said.

Egil Vreкке, Assistant Chief Constable of Oslo police told the BBC the rescue operation was ongoing.

"We are issuing warnings just [to] make sure people are not in the area in case there are further explosions," he told the BBC.

"We have cordoned off large areas. There are bomb experts at the scene investigating whether there are other devices in the area."

A spokesman for Oslo University hospital said 10 people had been taken there for treatment, some with serious injuries.

**THE SHOOTOUT**

The gunman turned up at the event saying he wanted to ensure security there following the deadly explosion in the Oslo city centre, TV2 television reported, citing witnesses.

"From what I saw, at least four people have been shot

and killed," Adrian Pracon, a participant at the event told the Varden newspaper.

NRK reported that police had arrested the gunman, but police have neither confirmed the arrest nor released any details on casualties.

Police did say that the prime minister had been scheduled to attend the gathering, a summer camp on Utoeya, an island just outside Oslo.

He was due to give a speech on Saturday morning to the 560 people attending the gathering, reports AFP.

**'FOCUS ON RESCUE'**

State Secretary Kristian Amundsen said yesterday was a public holiday in Norway so the government offices were not as busy as they might usually have been.

"But there are many hundreds of people in these buildings every day," he told the BBC.

"We have to focus on the rescue operation -- there are still people in the building, there are still people in the hospital."

Reuters said the oil ministry was among the other government buildings hit, while NRK journalist Ingunn Andersen said the headquarters of tabloid newspaper VG were also damaged.

"It's complete chaos here. The windows are blown out

in all the buildings close by," she told AP.

Oistein Mjarum, head of communications for the Norwegian Red Cross, which has offices nearby, said the blast could be heard across Oslo.

"This is a very busy area on Friday [yesterday] afternoon and there were a lot of people in the streets, and many people working in these buildings that are now burning," he said.

Local resident Silvio told the BBC the blast shook everything in his apartment and that he saw several unconscious people in the street.

"If they were dead or not I wouldn't be able to tell you but they were receiving assistance at the time."

Mjarum said people across Oslo and Norway were in shock.

"We have never had a terrorist attack like this in Norway - if that's what it is - but of course this has been a great fear for all Norwegians when they have seen what has been happening around the world."

The United States has condemned the "despicable acts of violence" in Oslo, while the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, said he was "deeply shocked" by "these acts of cowardice for which there is no justification".

Khaleda starts unity

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political situation of the country," Siddiqui, a former Awami Leaguer and freedom fighter, told The Daily Star last night.

It will be Khaleda's first meeting with a party chief outside her alliance in an attempt to build a larger anti-government platform since the 2008 election.

Party sources said the move aims to bring all the parties that want the next parliamentary election under a caretaker government, and not under the AL-led government, as is the case following the 15th amendment to the constitution passed on June 30.

BNP high command is also working to arrange a meeting between Khaleda Zia and Gono Forum President Dr

Kamal Hossain.

Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, acting secretary general of the main opposition party, is likely to approach him in this regard.

Kamal, one of the architects of the country's original charter, recently expressed resentment against the 15th amendment, saying the lawmakers committed a "despicable offence" by amending the constitution.

Asked about a possible meeting with BNP, Gono Forum acting general secretary Subrata Chowdhury said the matter will be decided after getting the invitation.

Mirza Fakhru already met KSJL President Kader Siddiqui, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmad and Bikalpa

Dhara President (BDB) Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury and sought their support for BNP's ongoing movement to "compel" the government to restore the caretaker system.

Oli Ahmad is a former top BNP leader while Badruddoza Chowdhury was the president of last BNP government. They both formed separate political parties during the time.

Fakhru will also meet with the leaders of several other parties including Jatiya Party (JP), which is a key ally of the AL-led government, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob) and Kalyan Party in a few days.

Khaleda Zia will later sit with their chiefs. BNP sources said she will complete these meetings before Eid-ul-Fitr, due in early September.

Border Haat opens today

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lungi, garments and melamine products, small agricultural tools like plough, axe, spade and chisel etc will be traded at the haat.

The list of items allowed for trade in the designated markets may be expanded or modified on mutual consent.

The haat will resume on Wednesdays from 10:00am to 4:00pm in the summer and 10:00am to 3:00pm in the winter, Md Abdul Kader, a member of the haat inauguration committee, told our Kurigram correspondent.

People living within 5-kilometre radius of the haat will be allowed to trade here with special identity cards, noted Kader, also the upazila nirbahi officer of Rajshahi.

The yearly volume of bilateral trade from the Border Haats has been estimated at around \$20 million. Illegal trafficking may stop now in the area after the

launch of the Border Haat, said Jahurul Islam, a resident of Rajshahi.

More than 2000 Bangladeshis and 69 Indians applied to their respective authorities for a place in the haat. But primarily around 300 of them will get the opportunity for marketing their products.

The Indian minister hoped the opening of the haat will herald a new chapter of cooperation in Indo-Bangla trade. "Border Haats will make the border villages on both sides more prosperous through improved market access for the locally produced goods," he added.

Chief Minister of Meghalaya Mukul M Sangma, lawmakers Md Jafor Ali (Kurigram-2), Md Jakir Hossen (Kurigram-4) and divisional commissioner of Rangpur, among others, are expected to grace the inaugural function.

Sangma urged to further bolster the Indo-Bangla trade ties for the betterment of the neighbours.

"Building up a sustainable relationship is very important for both of us.... There is a need for increasing inter-dependence between the two nations," observed the chief minister.

The two sides signed an agreement on October 23 last year to set up two border haats allowing each other's trucks into their territories and carry goods up to warehouses.

As per the memorandum of understanding, the two countries have identified 13 items -- locally grown agricultural and manufactured finished products -- for trading at the haats.

In addition to opening Border Haats, both the countries are working on several projects to improve trade infrastructure and connectivity.

Six Iran troops killed in clashes with Kurd rebels

AFP, Tehran

A senior officer of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards was among six soldiers killed in clashes with Kurdish rebels on the border with Iraq, Fars news agency reported yesterday.

"General Assemi of the Qom branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp was killed along with five of his comrades in clashes with terrorist rebels of the PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan) in the Sardasht area," the agency said, without giving any further details.

Tragic death

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night. "I saw her fall out of the train but couldn't get down immediately as the train was gaining speed," said Shahadat Hossain.

The train could not be stopped until it reached Kamalapur half an hour later. Shahadat Hossain and his seventy-year-old father rushed back to look for her. They along with relatives could not find her.

Sixty-year-old Saleha Begum's body was recovered by railway police around 3:45am yesterday at Kawla.

Apparently, her purse, hung around her neck, caught the attention of three snatchers and they began running with the train soon after it began moving. They pulled the bag so hard that she fell to her death.

This is a common technique widely used by snatchers at railway stations across the country.

They were ruthless and adamant to get the bag. The bag was never found.

Saleha and her husband Maulana Abdul Aziz travelled quite often to Dhaka from Chatkhil in Noakhali for her medical treatment. They were supposed to stay at their daughters' place at Banashree.

Kamalapur Railway Police said they sent the body to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy. The morgue sources said the victim died of head injuries.

Suranjit

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murder cases.

"Constitution gave the president right to forgive any convict. But, he (the president) does not exercise this power on his own. Rather, he finds no other way in the face of the government's recommendations.

"So, it is the government and the home ministry which face the criticism for granting mercy to a convict," said Suranjit.

He suggested revising proposals of issuing mercy to a convict several times before sending it to the president.

Mentioning that the president is a symbol of national consensus, Suranjit hoped that the blames on the president on this issue would stop.

He also demanded the government to name the planned Padma bridge after Tajuddin Ahmed to recognise his contribution to the War of Liberation in 1971 and for Bangladesh.

Nahid

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Policy-2010 in the capital. Nahid also referred to his Thursday's meeting with principals and headmasters of educational institutions of Dhaka city when they opined that the coaching of students outside classes should be stopped.

The minister mentioned the recent incident of molestation of a female student at Bashundhara branch of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College.

"Our heads bow down in shame that some people in the name of teachers could behave in such a beastly way with female students.

"We will not tolerate such misdeeds. Stern legal action will be taken against the culprits," he said.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, NAEM Director General Prof Shamsur Rahman, among others, spoke at the function held at the Residential Model College auditorium.