

## ASIA-EUROPE MEET

## PM to highlight Dhaka's anti-terror commitment

Leaves for Mongolia tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to highlight Bangladesh's "strong commitment" to fighting terrorism during the July 15-16 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit in Mongolia. Hasina is scheduled to leave for Mongolia tomorrow to attend the 11th ASEM Summit, which would issue a clear message to the international community that terrorism could never be tolerated.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the premier is scheduled to meet about a dozen global leaders, including Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, President of the Council of Ministers of Italy Matteo Renzi, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj and Myanmar President Htin Kyaw.

During her bilateral meetings with the Asian and European leaders, Hasina would raise the July 1 and 7 terror attacks in Bangladesh and brief her counterparts and global leaders about Bangladesh's security situation

both in local and global contexts, diplomatic sources said.

She would also inform them how her government has successfully quelled the attacks and her government's initiatives to prevent any such attacks in future as well as initiatives to battle terrorism and violent extremism.

The PM would try to address the concerns of her Japanese and Italian counterparts as citizens of the two countries fell victim to the July 1 attack. Coincidentally, a Japanese and an Italian were also killed in Dhaka and Rangpur last year.

Dhaka has repeatedly said citizens of the two countries are not target in Bangladesh, but they fell victim to terror attacks in Bangladesh.

Hasina in her meetings with the global leaders would apprise them of Dhaka's comprehensive security measures taken for the safety and security of foreign diplomats, foreigners living in Bangladesh and diplomatic facilities.

Following the July 1 attack at a Gulshan café in which nine Italian and seven Japanese nationals were killed, summit leaders of Japan and Italy confirmed that counterterrorism

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## S'pore jails 4 Bangladeshis

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The other two -- Zaman Daulat, 34, and Mamun Leakot Ali, 29, -- have denied the charges and are claiming trial.

The six are among the eight Bangladeshi workers arrested on April 26 in Singapore.

Along with the six, two Bangladeshis -- Shariful Islam, 27, and Sohag Ibrahim, 27, -- are now in jail, said Ayesha Siddiqua Shelley, labour counsellor at the Bangladesh High Commission in Singapore.

The High Commission was not yet officially informed of the conviction of the four, she told The Daily Star over the phone.

"We came to know about it through newspapers. We were not informed by the Singapore authorities..." added the counsellor.

According to The Straits Times reports, court documents showed that the four convicts had clearly defined roles. They were led by Mizanur, with Mamun as the group's deputy leader.

Rubel was in the group's financial council, while Jabath handled its media.

And Zaman and Sohail were in the group's security and fighter councils. Rubel and Jabath were also accused of possessing money for terrorist purposes.

Court documents showed that Jabath was in possession of \$1,360 -- this includes a sum of \$1,060 that he was handed by Rubel. In all, the six had contributed \$60 to \$500 to the cause.

Working in the marine and construction industries, they called themselves the Islamic State in



Mizanur

Miah Rubel

Jabath Kysar

Sohail Hawlader

Bangladesh (ISB). They were planning attacks back home in hopes of toppling the present government.

Their goal was to set up an Islamic state in Bangladesh and bring it under the self-declared caliphate of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Earlier on April 29, Singapore had deported five Bangladeshis for their suspected militancy links.

Back then, the Singapore authorities had said the five were investigated as part of a crackdown on the so-called ISB, and it was found that they possessed and/or proliferated jihadi-related materials, or supported the use of armed violence in pursuit of a religious cause.

However, their involvement in the ISB was not found, according to Singapore's home affairs ministry.

The five are Mizanur Rahman alias Ghali Hasan, 38, from Brahmanbaria, Md Rana Mia Pilot, 29, from Bogra, Md Alamgir Hossain, 31, from Meherpur, Md Tanjumul Islam, 24, from Chandpur, and Masud Rana alias Sontu Khan, 31 from Pabna.

On May 3, law enforcers arrested them from the capital's Banasree area over their suspected militancy links, and filed a case against them

under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Between November 16 and December 1 last year, the Singapore authorities arrested 27 Bangladeshi construction workers for "supporting armed jihad ideology of terrorist groups such as Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda".

Of them, 26 were deported to Bangladesh. On December 21, police arrested 14 of them finding their links with militancy and kept the rest under surveillance.

DB officials then said the deportees had no links to the IS or al-Qaeda, but 14 of them had ties with banned local outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and its detained spiritual leader Jasim Uddin Rahmani.

Later, a case was filed against the 14 under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The Detective Branch of Police, which has been investigating the two cases, is still to submit charge sheet.

"We are yet to submit charge sheet in any of the cases," said Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Asked about the reason behind the delay in completing the probe, he said it takes time to verify information and evidence against the accused in such cases.

## ABT planned

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interrogating them.

Law enforcers were also scrutinising the documents and materials seized from the four, added the SP.

Police said a large number of jihadi multimedia discs and documents containing instructions on attacks on cops along with four swords, as many machetes, a laptop, a tablet computer and six mobile phone sets were seized from their possession.

Police on Monday filed two cases with Sitakunda Police Station against seven named accused, including the four, and six to seven unnamed under Anti Terrorism Act 2009 and Arms Act.

The other named accused are Mohammed Selim, 30, Ariful Mostafa, 25, and Mozaher Uddin Rajib alias Abdullah alias Amin, 32, said Sub-Inspector Shariful Islam Khan of the police station.

The four were picked up from Rajib's rented house where they had been living, said the SI.

Wishing anonymity, an SI who was present during the arrests said the four had been in contact with other members of the group over the phone.

Locals said Rajib had been in Dhaka for several years, but he came back home a year ago and set up a poultry farm near Chittagong Chemical Complex in Barabkunda.

Some locals suspected that he might have developed militant links while staying in the capital.

Nazmul Islam Bhuiyan, upazila nirbahi officer of Sitakunda, said following the arrests of the four, they asked the industries and factories in the upazila to provide details of their workers to law enforcers on security grounds.

## Security beefed up

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cooperate so that strict security measures can be implemented at all airports in the interest of the country," Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon told reporters after a meeting on security issues with high officials of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab).

The minister and Caab officials refused to give details of the steps taken by the government at the three international and 12 domestic airports that are operating 38 airlines within and outside the country.

However, officials at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka said that from now on passengers would have to go through multiple layers of security checks before entering the airport premises and boarding a plane.

In the media briefing, Menon said the deadly terror attacks, which claimed 24 lives, including 17 foreign nationals at Holey Artisan cafe, brought a great disaster to the country.

Without mentioning the names, he added that those, who had been trying to "internationalise" terrorism in Bangladesh, could do so after the attacks.

"Those who were trying to portray Bangladesh as a militant state before the world have become successful to an extent. That's why the whole nation has to be united in resisting such evil plans."

The leftist leader also said that after the

terror incidents, some countries began saying that their concern over Bangladesh being a high risk country proved to be real.

"Those who want to indentify Bangladesh as a country of militancy will be successful if proper security measures are not taken," Menon added.

Conceding that pressure from other countries will be intensified on Bangladesh to enhance security, Menon said the civil aviation ministry has taken "zero tolerance" policy to security threats at the international and domestic airports.

In this regard, the president of the Workers Party also said 176 officials of Caab and 25 officials of Biman Bangladesh Airlines were trained in security-related issues by a British company-- Redline.

The aviation ministry will ask all Bangladesh high-commissioners and ambassadors abroad to assure foreign dignitaries of safety at the airports in Bangladesh, he said.

"We have an image that Bangladesh's airports are safe and we will not let it down in any way."

Lambasting Australia, the UK and Germany for banning direct cargo flights from Dhaka, Menon said those countries made the decision out of political reason, not on security grounds.

"We will resolve the issue through discussions at the diplomatic level," he added.

## Joypurhat

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tigers, buffaloes and wild boars in good number. But nowadays these mammals are gone; jackals and foxes can still be found, and of course the squirrels, though their numbers are also dwindling.

According to Dinajpur local Shahiduzzaman a drop in the number of squirrels over the last two decades is apparent. "Squirrels avoid fruit trees where pesticide is sprayed. Many trees have been felled over the years. The squirrels face food shortage," he says, suggesting reasons for the population decline.

"Due to fewer trees in general, squirrels often inhabit roadside trees," says Joypurhat journalist Momen Moony. "Many of these trees do not produce fruit, so the squirrels need to come to the ground in search of food, and many die under the wheels of vehicles."

In addition, the planting of eucalyptus has further reduced squirrel habitat, since squirrels avoid the non-native tree species.

Meanwhile, according to Shafiq Alam from Joypurhat's Akkelpur upazila some locals mix poison with favoured squirrel food like nuts, concerned that the rodents will devour their winter vegetable crops. "Squirrels can still be found," he says, "but initiatives must be taken to protect them."

## Nahid

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The decision was taken after the involvement of some students of a private university in two deadly terror attacks on a Gulshan café and at Sholakia in Kishoreganj surfaced.

Talking to journalists, Nahid said after the meetings, they would take a decision on what steps the universities would take to address the issue.

He urged all to keep an eye on the people through whom the students get involved in militancy.

"The family members will have to take the major responsibility," Nahid said.

The minister, however, expressed displeasure at the decision of North South University (NSU) to cancel studentship of anybody found absent for a semester without valid reason.

The decision is not satisfactory as it is not adequate to address such a grave issue, he said.

"Why action should be taken after a semester. Necessary measures should be taken if any student remains absent for 10 days in a row," Nahid said.

There were many allegations against NSU in the past, but issues of militancy were not "so much discussed" as compared to the recent times, he said.

"We are more alert about the present situation," he added.

On July 10, the recommendation for cancelling studentship of anybody found absent for a semester without valid reason was made in an emergency meeting of the NSU authorities as some of its students have been found involved in terrorist activities.

Currently, there are 37 public and 95 private universities in the country where over six lakh students are studying.

## Dhaka at risk of mega quake

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Syed Humayun Akhter, a professor of department of geology at Dhaka University and one of the researchers of the team, said, "The Indian plate is actually thrusting the Burma plate at a rate of 13 to 17 millimetres a year. A huge quantity of energy has accumulated there which has not been released in hundreds of years."

Geologists have long been warning that Bangladesh is at the risk of a huge earthquake. They have been saying this by analysing historical earthquake records, recent seismic activity and geologic and tectonic set up of the country.

Prof Humayun said this is for the first time the joint research team came up with its long research findings based on velocity model using GPS data that the subduction zone of an area of 62,500 sq km between Chittagong and Sylhet is very active. The overriding Burma plate has been loading up with stress for at least 400 years without any release.

"This is for the first time we analysed scientific data and found actually how much energy is accumulated there," he said.

"Overpopulated Bangladesh sits at the juncture of three tectonic plates -- Indian plate to the west and southwest, Tibet sub-plate to the north, and the Burma plate to the east. Moreover, the plate boundary between India and Burma passes through Bangladesh -- the eastern half belongs to Burma plate while the western half belongs to Indian plate," he told The Daily Star.

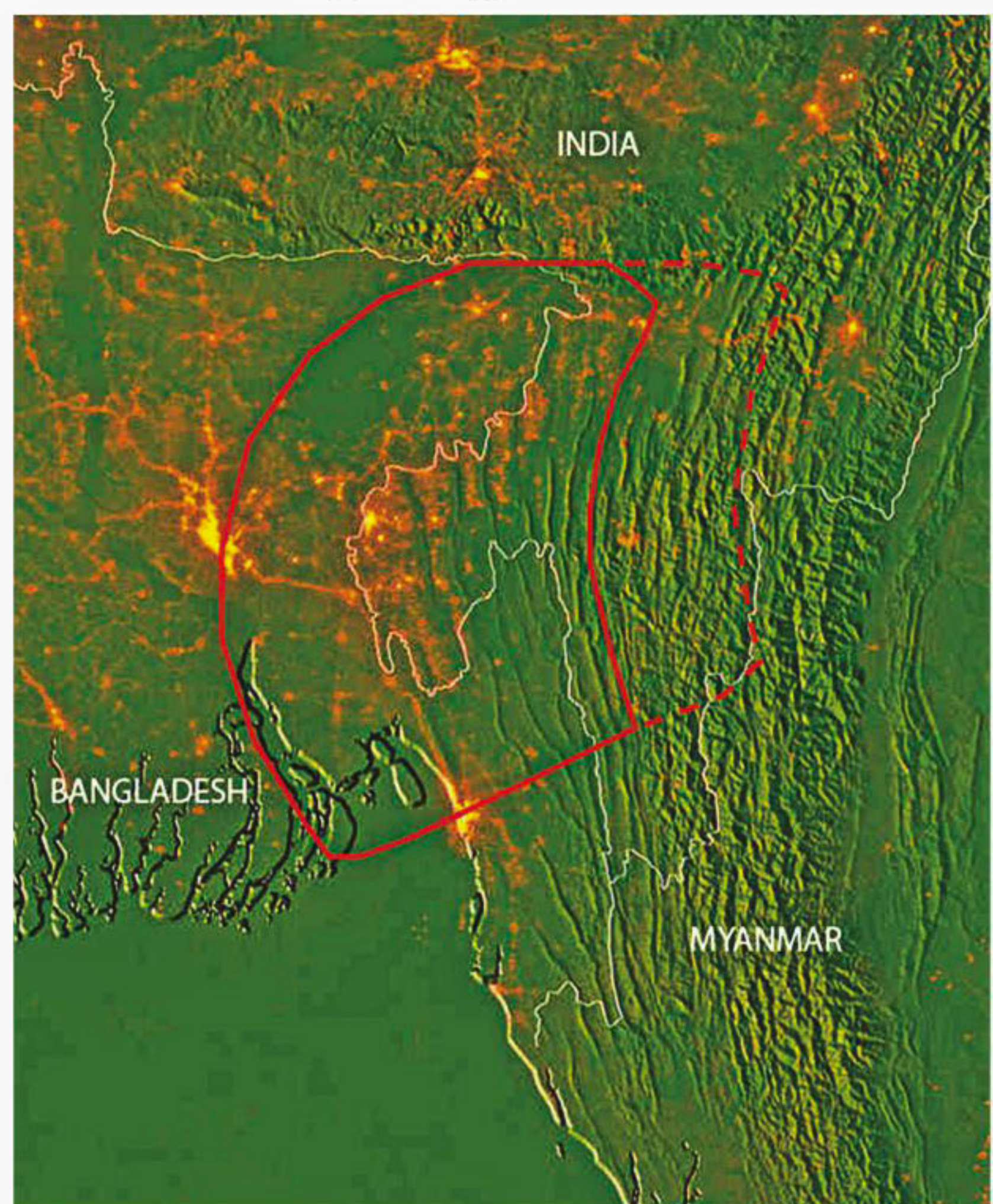
Prof Humayun said Dhaka city would be the worst affected zone if adequate preparations are not taken immediately.

"The government is taking preparations. But we all know the pace of the preparation. Even if the earthquake hits after 20 years, it wouldn't be enough time for Dhaka to take proper preparation," he said.

It is quite difficult to take such a huge preparation overnight. Apart from the government initiatives, the people should be made aware of it, he suggested.

"So the only key to survival and minimise the damage is to make people aware," Prof Humayun added.

**HIDDEN FAULT LINES**  
Live Science reports that in the low-lying, waterlogged country of Bangladesh, the mighty Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers meet and form the world's largest delta, eventually draining into the Bay of Bengal. The flow of these two massive rivers deposits a gigaton of sediment every year, the researchers said. This constant overlay of sediment obscured the geology below the Ganges Delta. But in recent years, scientists have



SOURCE: LIVE SCIENCE

learned that tectonic plates are colliding beneath the eons worth of sediment.

To get a better picture of how the plates buried deep below the surface were moving, Steckler and his colleagues worked with researchers at Dhaka University to install ultrasensitive GPS devices throughout Bangladesh between 2003 and 2014. They combined this data with plate-motion data collected from India and Myanmar, creating a map of the entire fault region.

The GPS network revealed that one plate is diving under the other deep beneath the surface in an area encompassing Bangladesh and parts of Myanmar and eastern India.

At the upper layers of the fault, the two plates are stuck together, building up strain that could produce a megathrust earthquake if it ruptures, the researchers said. Based on the strain data, the team estimates that the fault could unleash a maximum of a magnitude 8.2 to 9.0 earthquake, they reported in Nature Geoscience.

**HUGE HAZARD ZONE**  
While an earthquake with a magnitude of 8 or greater has the potential to cause

damage anywhere in the world, this particular region may be especially vulnerable. The researchers estimate that about 140 million people live within 60 miles (100 km) of the fault, including the 17 million people who live in the crammed megalopolis of the greater Dhaka area in Bangladesh.

The country also already faces problems with poor construction, Steckler said.

"I've seen them pumping sand to build up the ground level to build a 20-storey building," Steckler told Live Science. "If there's an earthquake [that ground is] going to liquefy and the building is just going to fall over."

Not only would the region be incredibly vulnerable to widespread building collapse, but overcrowding could make it difficult to rescue people who survive the initial quake, Steckler said.

"Right now, the streets are clogged with traffic such that it's impossible to drive around Dhaka on a normal day," Steckler said. "If you fill the streets with debris, it's really going to be impossible to get supplies and rescue equipment and things like that around."



PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

An official of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division releases an endangered Slow Loris at Lawachhara National Park in Kamalganj of Moulvibazar yesterday. Children captured the animal on July 7 from a bamboo grove at Dibir Haor village of Jaintapur in Sylhet. Later, it was handed over to forest officials.

## Keep watch on your children

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Reiterating her resolve not to allow emergence of militancy in the country, the PM said the government does not want any recurrence of the recent terror attacks.

"We won't allow emergence of militancy in the country. We don't want Bangladesh to be the land of militancy...we'll have to take some measures keeping this view in mind," she asserted.

She said some unwarranted incidents occurred in Bangladesh and those have to be dealt with strongly.

"Bangladesh has been marching

ahead fast under the current government. And this might have stirred jealousy among some quarters. Many don't like to see such a huge development of the country. They want to stop the development. I think this pace of development has prompted a conspiracy against our country."

Pointing to the two recent militant attacks in the city's Gulshan and Sholakia of Kishoreganj, Hasina said Islam does support barbaric acts like those. It's the militants' attempt to malign Islam which always speaks for peace and fraternity, she added.

"Basically, those who are doing this are

putting our holy religion Islam in question."

The PM said if such militant activities continued it would cause losses to the country and its economy, trade and businesses.

Hasina called for forming committees to trace militants and missing boys, and foil any organised threat by militants. She also urged people to remain careful about the safety and security of foreigners working in various development projects.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan were present, among others.