

Amid risk students attend classes at erosion-hit school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Over 200 students are attending classes at the erosion-damaged Dighulia Poshchimpara Government Primary School in Faridpur upazila, which could be devoured by the Boral river anytime.

River erosion has been damaging the school, which was established on the bank of Boral in 1989 in Faridpur upazila, for the last three months.

As the authorities concerned do not get any other suitable place to relocate the school, the students have to take lessons at the damaged building.

Nayan Moni, acting headmaster of the school, said, "Entire verandah of the school was devoured by the river, and soil beneath the building is being eroded, exposing the building to collapse. A portion of a classroom has already gone into the river, while cracks have developed everywhere on the building."

Risking their lives, the students are attending classes at three classrooms, but they cannot shift the school to any other place in the village due to unavailability of appropriate place, he said.

"Although the building is being

damaged, we have to take lessons there. We are worried that the building may collapse anytime," said Suborna Khatun, a class-V student of the school.

She said they asked their teachers to repair the school or shift the school for the sake of their safety.

Sultan Mahamud, Faridpur upazila assistant primary education officer, said there is nothing to do for the school immediately due to lack of funds.

"We have submitted a report on the damaged schools to the higher authorities. The repair work will start after getting funds," he said.

The risky school should be relocated to another place in the village for a temporary period, Sultan added.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, Humayun Kabir, president of the school managing committee, said they are looking for a suitable place for the school, but they have not yet found such a place.

"We are trying to shift the school, but we are unable to do it for not getting any suitable place in the village," he said, adding that the students are compelled to attend classes at the affected building as there is no other primary school within one kilometre.

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Soil under the Dighulia Poshchimpara Government Primary School in Pabna's Faridpur upazila has been eroded by the Boral river, causing huge cracks on the school building wall. Even though the school has become dangerous as it can be devoured by the river anytime, children still have classes there, inset. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR



'PATRONISING MILITANCY' BNP-Jamaat leaders must face trial: PM

UNB, Washington

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated that BNP-Jamaat and its leaders must face trial for patronising militancy by providing money and giving orders, protecting war criminals and burning innocent people to death with petrol bombs.

"These are not political cases... these are cases of burning people," she told a meeting of the Washington chapter of Awami League at Ritz Carlton hotel in Virginia on Wednesday.

The PM said cases were filed against BNP-Jamaat leaders and they must be put on trial.

"The guilty, whoever they are, must be punished. Those who patronised offenders and made war criminals ministers should face trial," she said, adding that the BNP chairperson will have to face trial for her "misdeeds".

About her birthday, the PM said: "I don't like cutting cakes to celebrate birthday.... My only aim is to complete the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu to bring smile to the faces of the downtrodden people."

The premier, who turned 70 on Wednesday, observed her birthday in a low-profile manner.

Hasina said she learned from her late parents of sacrificing for the

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Rampal plant won't harm Sundarbans Claims environment minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment and Forest Minister Anwar Hossain Manju yesterday claimed the proposed Rampal power plant would cause no harm to the Sundarbans.

"The campaign being run in different media that if a power plant was built in Rampal near the Sundarbans, it would greatly harm the area has no scientific basis," he told parliament replying to a question from Awami League lawmaker Pinu Khan.

As an ultra supercritical technology would be used in constructing the 1320-megawatt coal-fired power plant, it won't harm the forest, the minister said.

Highest importance has been given to preparation of the project's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, as its site is near the biodiversity-rich Sundarbans region, Manju added.

The quality of the air to be emitted from the power plant would be within the permissible limits of the World Bank's guidelines and the Environment Conservation Rules, 1997.

No untreated and hot water would be released into the river, rather the water would be refined by an effluent treatment plant (ETP) for reuse in the power plant, the minister told the House.

He said high quality bituminous coal with less than 0.6 percent sulphur

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India claims surgical strikes

FROM PAGE 1

A surgical strike is anything but a war or a battle. It is a military operation undertaken to move on the offensive, hit enemy targets and installations, and return to primary positions -- all with lightning speed and with the added precaution of suffering limited casualties.

These strikes need to be carried out with absolute precision to achieve the objective of taking down targets with either no or minimal collateral damage.

India conducted a similar operation in June. The Indian army's strike inside Myanmar then took 70 commandos all of 40 minutes to kill 38 Naga insurgents, writes Times of India.

India's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) Lt Gen Ranbir Singh at a press briefing yesterday said that the security forces had acted after intelligence inputs about terrorists preparing to launch strikes against India.

"Significant casualties have been caused to terrorists and those trying to shield them in these strikes," Lt Gen Singh said.

"The operation has now ended," he said but didn't give details of operations or casualties inflicted on terrorists.

There were reportedly no Indian casualties.

Security expert Praveen Swami, writing in The Indian Express, said the army may have used artillery or anti-tank missiles to target the specific terror infrastructure without risking sending its troops across the de facto border with Pakistan.

Indian sources said special forces of the Indian army from Udhampur-based Northern Command carried out the surgical strikes. The commandos were airdropped at the Line of Control (LoC) from where they crossed over to the Pakistani side.

This was the first major military action taken by India after terrorists from Pakistan crossed into an army camp in Uri on September 18 and killed 18 Indian troops. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had pledged that the attack will not go unpunished.

Lt Gen Singh, who was accompanied by Indian external affairs ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup at the press conference, said the surgical strikes across the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir were carried out to prevent Pakistani terrorists who had "positioned themselves at launch pads with the aim to carry out strikes in Jammu and Kashmir state and other major cities of India".

Although Pakistan denied that the Indian troops carried out the surgical

strikes, Singh said Pakistan was informed in keeping with protocol of the cross-border strike.

"I have been in touch with Pakistan army DGMO and have informed him of our actions. It is India's intention to maintain peace and tranquillity in the region. But we cannot allow the terrorists to operate across the Line of Control with impunity and attack citizens of our country at will."

He further said Indian security forces have recovered items, including global positioning system, which have Pakistani markings.

Earlier yesterday, Modi chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to review the situation along the line of control.

He conveyed the news about surgical strikes by Indian army to President Pranab Mukherjee, Vice President Md Hamid Ansari and former premier Manmohan Singh.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh informed about the incidents to senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, chief ministers of a number of states including Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal and CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury.

"NAKED AGGRESSION" The Pakistani military, however, played down the scale of the strikes, reports AFP.

"There has been no surgical strike by India, instead there had been cross border fire initiated and conducted by India," it said in a statement.

"As per rules of engagement same was strongly and befittingly responded by Pakistani troops."

In a statement from his office, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif "strongly condemned the unprovoked and naked aggression of Indian forces".

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said two Pakistani soldiers killed and nine wounded by what he characterised as "small weapon fire".

Tensions between the two arch rivals have been boiling since the Uri attack, for which India blames Pakistani militants.

New Delhi has also been on a diplomatic drive to isolate nuclear-armed Pakistan since the raid on September 18.

On Tuesday, New Delhi said Modi would not attend the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit in Islamabad in November, in a major snub to its neighbour.

India's announcement on Saarc summit came hours after Sartaj Aziz, foreign policy adviser to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, warned India against drawing more water from three rivers that flow from India into

Pakistan.

Aziz said Islamabad would seek arbitration with a commission that monitors the Indus Water Treaty if India increased its use of water from the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus rivers.

India says it does not plan to abrogate the treaty but Modi said on Monday India should "maximise" the amount of water it uses without breaching the agreement warning "blood and water cannot flow simultaneously."

Ashok K Mehta, a retired major general in the Indian army, said it was the first time in a decade that officials in New Delhi had acknowledged its troops had crossed into the Pakistani side of the LoC.

"We have to see whether the Pakistani army will respond in kind.... Now the ball is in Pakistan's court if they want to escalate things."

Residents on the Pakistani side of the LoC were meanwhile hunkering down over fears that the situation could unravel further.

"I did not send my children to school today. The situation is very tense," said Tahir Iqbal, who runs a grocery shop in the town of Athmuqam.

Meanwhile, villages in India's northern state of Punjab near the International Border (IB) with Pakistan have been asked to pull back and schools within 10km radius were ordered to be shut until further orders.

Amritsar DC Varun Roojiam conducted a meeting to discuss further plan of action following orders of the evacuation within a 10km radius from the IB.

Border Security Force (BSF) has been put on further alert. Along with deployment of more forces along the border, BSF has restricted the movement for the evening retreat ceremony in at Waga in Amritsar in Punjab.

Punjab is not the only Indian state which shares land border with Pakistan. Rajasthan state of India also shares land border with Pakistan and Gujarat state has marshy land and sea border with that country.

Top Indian defence experts termed the "surgical strikes" on terror launch pads as an "operational necessity" and said those were necessitated as the "levels of tolerance" were crossed.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday afternoon briefed leaders of major political parties on the army's surgical strikes targeting terror launch pads across the Line of Control and the situation thereafter.

Separately, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met opposition Congress party head Sonia Gandhi to brief her on the surgical strikes.

Confiscate assets of Bangabandhu killers, war criminals

Says JS resolution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday unanimously adopted a private member's resolution to confiscate all movable and immovable assets of the convicted killers of the Father of the Nation and the war criminals.

Fazilatun Nasa Bappy, Awami League lawmaker from a reserved seat for women, placed the resolution before the House for confiscating all assets of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Two other AL lawmakers -- Monirul Islam and Sanjida Khanom -- then proposed confiscating also the properties of those convicted of 1971 war crimes.

The resolution was passed unanimously by a voice vote after Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, who was in the chair, placed it for vote.

Speaking in the House earlier, Law Minister Anisul Huq termed the resolution very timely and said parliament should adopt it.

He said his ministry already initiated the process of enacting a law to confiscate all properties of the war

criminals and the killers of Bangabandhu.

"I want to let this parliament know that a bill in this regard will be placed soon."

On confiscation of assets of Bangabandhu's killers, the minister said that at first the assets of those absconding would be confiscated.

Properties of the killers, who were executed, would be confiscated through enactment of a law, as their heirs inherited the properties after their execution, the minister said, adding that it would take some time.

But no law is required for confiscating the properties of the absconding killers of Bangabandhu. They have no right to own any property in Bangladesh, he noted.

A task force has been formed to bring back Bangabandhu's killers, said Anisul.

Six of the 12 killers of Bangabandhu have been absconding. Five killers were executed while one died.

The International Crimes Tribunal has so far convicted 50 war criminals. Of them, six walked the gallows.

Lethal lightning

FROM PAGE 1

The average age of those killed is 35, earning members of families and those families face dire consequences, said Nayeem Wahra.

WHY MORE DEATHS?

Scientists say that lightning -- caused by collision between charged water particles -- mostly occurs inside clouds, but in 20 to 30 percent cases lightning strikes the ground, said Prof AMM Amanat Ullah Khan of geography and environment department at Dhaka University.

He said as the world temperature was rising, it was causing more water vapour and cloud, and with more clouds come more lightning strikes.

His statement could be substantiated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports since 1990 which says global surface temperatures had warmed at a rate of about 0.15°C per decade.

Prof Colin Price, a lightning and climate researcher at Tel Aviv University, said climate models show about 10 percent increase in lightning for every one degree of warming, according to a BBC report.

Amanat Ullah Khan said the people working under the open sky were mostly to be killed in lightning strikes.

There might be a link between higher number of deaths and absence of tall trees like palms and coconuts that could take the hit, he said.

The professor negated the suggestion that more electric poles or mobile phone towers installed in the country were factors behind increased lightning strikes.

"If this is to be true, then the theory that tall trees absorb lightning

strikes is wrong," Amanat Ullah said.

Mobile phones or any metals held by the people under open sky may be a factor for death in lightning as such things attract electricity, but whether this has happened to the people killed in lightning in the country is still a matter of research, said M Khalid Mahmood of the DDM.

He said fatalities in lightning strikes happen in the rural areas, which suggests that the victims were either under the open sky or their houses did not have any lightning rods.

The local government has to work with the departments of meteorology and disaster management to educate people in this regard, Amanat Ullah said.

WHAT TO DO? Disaster management experts said the most important thing that the authorities need to do is to educate people so that they do not stay under the open sky when there are clouds and risks of lightning. They need to remain indoors.

The next thing is to have policies so that all houses have lightning rods installed.

The rods would have to be installed on top of the buildings and those are attached to thick conducting cables going directly into the ground, said Amanat Ullah Khan, he added.

"Buildings in the cities mostly have such arrangements, but not in rural areas," he said.

Brac's Gawher Nayeem Wahra stressed the need for more forestation as a natural way of preventing deaths from lightning strikes and mitigating global warming.

Trump's not as rich

FROM PAGE 20

Business magazine Forbes has revised the Republican nominee's wealth estimate down to \$3.7bn (£2.8bn) down from \$4.5bn last year.

The decline in his fortune has been put down to the worsening of conditions in the New York property market.

Several of his primary assets, including Trump Tower in Manhattan and Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, have declined in value compared with the previous year.

But Forbes also estimates that he has lost approximately \$100m in lost deals with companies such as NBCUniversal, Univision and Macy's over his controversial comments on the campaign trail.

Spanish language TV network Univision announced it would cancel its broadcast of the Miss USA pageant -

which is owned by Trump - in July 2015 after Trump called Mexican immigrants "criminals and rapists".

He said he would build a wall to keep them out of the US and make Mexico pay.

Trump later settled a lawsuit with Univision for an undisclosed amount in February this year.

The presidential candidate is also estimated to have spent a further \$50m on his own campaign.

Last year, Trump said the "beauty" of his candidacy is that he was very rich and could finance his own campaign without relying on establishment donors like his rival, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

Indeed, Trump has struggled to bring in major donors at the same pace as Clinton.

In August, Clinton raised \$143m

from donors for her presidential bid compared with just \$90m for Trump.

Trump, who once claimed he was worth \$10bn, is notoriously precious about disclosing his earnings.

He is so far the first major party presidential candidate since Gerald Ford not to publish his tax return.

In contrast Clinton and her husband declared that they had earned a reported \$10.6m in income and paid \$3.6m in federal income tax in 2015.

Forbes has also claimed that no other mogul featured on their annual rich list has been "more fixated on his or her net worth estimate on a year-in, year-out basis than Donald J Trump".

The magazine said that other billionaires on the list tended to complain that the estimate was too high rather than too low.