

Boiler blast kills 18 in India

A hundred suffer burns; Many feared trapped under debris at coal-fired power plant in Uttar Pradesh

HINDUSTAN TIMES, Lucknow

At least 18 people were killed and around a hundred others injured in an explosion at a government-run coal-fired power plant in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli district yesterday afternoon.

"A sudden abnormal sound" around 3:30pm at a recently commissioned 500 megawatt unit of the 1,550 megawatt plant in Unchahar, said a statement of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC).

"There was an explosion inside the boiler. After the coal burns it gets deposited and has to be cleared. The people who died were engaged in that cleaning," said a senior NTPC executive, requesting anonymity.

State Principal Secretary (home) Arvind Kumar confirmed the death toll.

Talking Hindustan Times, Additional Director General (law and order) Anand Kumar said, "The toll might quickly increase."

The plant has been shut down but several workers were still feared trapped under the debris as visuals showed people with severe burn injuries. The cause of the accident wasn't immediately known.

The accident occurred in the ash-handling section of the plant, and ash gushed out at high-temperature, burning several workers, said Lalmani Verma, an engineer at NTPC which is India's largest power-generation utility.

Two cops hurt in BCL infighting at CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

Two policemen were injured during a Chittagong University infighting on the Chittagong University campus last night.

Sources at the CU said BCL activist Mohammad Jobayer, an MBA student of marketing department, was hacked around 9:45pm as he tried to stop a scuffle between two groups of BCL. He was taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

As the news spread, the two groups chased and counter-chased and hurled brick chips at each other, leaving sub-inspectors Sanjjoy and Jahangir of CU police outpost severely injured. Both were admitted Alhazmuzzaman of that outpost.

Tension prevailed on the campus when this report was filed around 1:00am today. Additional policemen were deployed to avoid any untoward incident.

Active BNP

FROM PAGE 1 other activists to uplift her party leaders' and activists' morale, go for anti-government movement in a smaller scale on different public issues, and drum up support for the BNP.

And this made the ruling party, which had to weather almost no challenge in the political arena over the last few years, jittery and the AL has become concerned over public mobilisation by Rasheda's programme.

The AL believed the party should expedite its preparations for the next general election. It is also considering developing some new programmes where the party would be able to show off its public support and send similar message the BNP had sent.

The AL leaders think the primary issue before the polls would be the non-partisan interim administration to oversee the next elections and that the BNP may take to the streets demanding it.

On the other hand, the BNP was happy to see the huge gatherings of its supporters, leaders and the people when Khaleda Zia was on her way to Cox's Bazar.

A BNP standing committee member, who was with Khaleda on her tour to Cox's Bazar, told The Daily Star, "Actually we are very happy and the party men were lifted seeing the huge support for our chief."

"Our leaders and activists were a bit demoralised as we have no organisational activities at present on warfootings. Besides, our chief [Khaleda] was not home for three months when various important issues popped up," the BNP leader added.

The BNP's own preparation for the next polls faced a few snags recently. They include floods, verdict in 16th amendment case, and the Rohingya issue. The party leaders were busy with those and had little time for preparations.

The ruling party, however, is doing some informally groundwork. It has taken measures to resolve intra-party conflicts, started member collection drive, conduct survey to identify potential MP aspirants and make drafts of the AL's election manifesto.

AL President Sheikh Hasina also held a few public rallies in districts.

She during meetings with her party leaders on several occasions, said the next election would be tough as the BNP would take part.

Forgetting a dark past

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to his senses. Then and there he promised himself that if he survived he would give up theft once and for all.

"I readily admit to my past," says Moturi. "Each week I used to make off with hundreds of trees from the forest to support my family."

Looking for a new occupation, Moturi put his hand up to participate in training organised by a local non-government organisation, CODEC. He would learn about vermicompost, how to produce natural fertiliser using earthworms.

"Timber never really brought solvency to my family but vermicompost does," says Moturi. "Nowadays I produce more than 2,000 tons of compost to earn over 18,000 per month. My two shubhs are in high school and it's no trouble to cover their expenses. One of them achieved a GPA 5 in the primary school certificate."

Moturi's future looks bright, although a snake in the deep woods which offered some invaluable, if rather sharp, 'advice'.

NY attacker

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"We have no evidence yet of associations or a continuing plot or associated plots and our only evidence to date is that this was an isolated incident that he himself performed."

Vehicle rampages have been a frequent and deployed by 16 sympathizers in the West, including in Barcelona, London, Stockholm and in Nice, where a Tunisian suicide truck bomber killed 86 people on Bastille Day.

Busy life went yesterday, although New Yorkers confessed to feeling unnerved by an attack that brought back memories of 9/11 with a stepped up police presence across the city. The New York Stock Exchange observed a moment of silence.

"I am scared," said Megan Brosterman, a 38-year-old mother of three children at school close to the scene.

"It does bring memories from 9/11. I worked in a building in this same neighborhood in 9/11. I can't change my routine because of this," she said. "Life goes on."

Saipov reportedly moved to the United States in 2010, living in Florida and Ohio, before moving to Paterson, a former industrial hub in New Jersey about 32 kilometers northeast of New York, where he lived with his wife and two children.

He returned to broad daylight in the upscale neighborhood of Teaneck close to schools and just blocks from the memorial to the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qaeda hijackers killed more than 2,700 people in New York and brought down the Twin Towers.

Five of the eight killed were Argentines, part of a group visiting New York for a school reunion, the foreign ministry in Buenos Aires said. A Belgian woman and a man with her mother and sister was also killed, Brussels said.

One Argentine, a German and three Belgians, were among the at least 11 wounded.

President Donald Trump, facing what appears to be the worst jihad-inspired attack of his less than one year in office, denounced the culprit as "deranged" and announced a stepping-up of his "extreme vetting program" for foreign travellers.

He yesterday tweeted that the suspect had entered the United States via the green card lottery program supported by opposition Democrats.

"We are fighting hard for Merit Based Immigration, no more Democrat Lottery Systems. We must get MUCH tougher (and smarter)," Trump tweeted.

The announcement was met with criticism in New York, a Democrat-run state and city, which has for centuries been a key point of arrival for immigrants and prides itself on the diversity of its more than 8.5 million-strong population.

The New York Times said the attacker had previously been on the radar of federal authorities, but it was not clear whether he himself had been the focus of an inquiry or whether he was linked to someone else under scrutiny.

Replies to reporters' queries, Nizam Hazari said whoever involved in the attack should be punished.

At another press conference in the district town, the local BNP held the AL responsible for the attack on journalists' vehicles on October 28 and the incident on Tuesday.



Locals rush to the rescue of drowning JSC examinees after a boat carrying around a hundred students sank in the Pagla river in Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

JSC examinees

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The boat capsized after hitting a pillar of the Krishnanagar Bridge under construction. Most of the students, except eight, swam ashore. It is suspected that the eight girls did not know how to swim, Deputy Assistant Director Shahidul Islam of the JSC said.

Passersby helped recover bodies of two girls and the three others injured. All the rescued girls were rushed to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared two of them dead on arrival.

Nabinagar upazila nibabhi officer (INO) Tanvir Salehin Cazi told The Daily Star that firefighters are continuing their search for the three missing girls.

Meanwhile Comilla Education Board chairman Abdul Khaque, Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Rezwanur Rahman and officials of various administrative departments visited the spot.

The district administration of Brahmanbaria formed a three-member inquiry committee to probe the incident. The committee is headed by Additional Deputy Magistrate (ADM) Shahedul Islam as head and members are Nabinagar upazila nibabhi officer (INO) Tanvir Salehin Cazi and District Secondary Education Officer Gautam Chandra Mitra.

Comilla Education Board chairman Abdul Khaque said this was an unexpected incident. Necessary action will be taken if someone is responsible for it, he added.

Bhola gas

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The high gas pressure also confirmed a rich reserve, which was disclosed prematurely by the government last week.

Bapex finished another critical test

drill steam method to determine the extractable reserve two days back.

46m mobile

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Customers of Malaysia's biggest mobile service providers, including Maxis, Axiata Group's Celcom and Digi, among others, were affected.

Malaysia's oil opening oil major Petronas had to cancel its flight. The operator had met with local telecommunications companies to seek their cooperation in the probe, according to state news agency Bernama.

Celcom and Maxis said in separate statements they were cooperating with authorities on the investigation. Digi did not respond to requests for comment.

According to a Singapore-based cybersecurity researcher, the blast was initially being sold on several online forums for 1 bitcoin, which was trading at around \$1,600 at around 6:50pm. At least one other user was posting a link for someone to download for free.

The researcher, who declined to be named, said he had seen at least 10 people on an online forum in the dark web download the data before it was taken offline.

"Discussion in the dark web shows a high interest," he said.

Time stamps indicate the leaked data was last updated between May and June 2014, Lowyat net said.

"We are urging the telco and MNOs to take immediate action," he above alert, and start immediately replacing their SIM cards, all of affected customers, especially those who have not updated their SIM cards since 2014," Lowyat.net said in a post.

Malaysia's population is just around 32 million, but many have several mobile numbers. The lists are also believed to include inactive numbers and temporary ones bought by visiting foreigners, The Star newspaper reported.

Similar land use allocation followed in favour of Basundhara residential

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Myanmar's baffling claim

STAR DESK

Myanmar has come up with a baffling claim that Bangladesh is responsible for delaying the repatriation process of over 600,000 Rohingyas in hopes of gaining from international donations.

Myanmar was ready to begin the repatriation process any time, based along the lines of an agreement that covered returns of Rohingyas to Myanmar in the early 1990s, Reuters reported yesterday, quoting Zaw Htay, a spokesman for Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Clawing Bangladesh had yet to accept those terms. Zaw Htay linked the delay by Bangladesh to the money raised so far by the international community to help build gigantic refugee camps for the Rohingyas.

"Currently they [Bangladesh] have got \$400 million. Over their receipt of this amount, we are now afraid of delaying the programme of deporting the refugees," he said in comments carried in a front-page article in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper on Wednesday.

PM's residence

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children and two of his associates in massive explosions inside their flat. The Rab claimed those were suicide blasts. Habibullah was arrested during the drive.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Mufti Mahmud Khan, director legal advisor of the CID, who claimed Rab was killed by Sabir, said that Sabir had been planning either

carry out a suicide attack on the houses of government high-ups with an aircraft or kidnap passengers of an aircraft and take it to a country in the Middle East.

The Rab official did not give details of the alleged plans. He claimed that they came to know about the plots made by Sabir along with Abdulla and Sarwar Jahan before and after the Gulshan attack last year.

Sarwar Jahan, a suspected JMB man, died after he jumped off a five-storey building during a Rab raid in Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital on October 8 last year.

The Rab official also claimed that they came to know about Sabir from suspected militant Billal Hossain, who was arrested in Narayanganj on October 26.

Although Rab claimed that Billal Hossain was the top leader of Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), DMP's counterterrorism sources said the man, widely known as Kabir Abdulla, had cut ties with the banned militant outfit.

Wishing anonymity, a CTIC official

Dhaka doesn't need

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Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, chairman of Basundhara Group, one of the largest business conglomerates, and president of Bangladesh Land Developers Association, said keeping retention areas for storm water management is an archaic idea.

"Do not make a plan that you cannot implement," he said, adding Rajuk Chairman Md Abdur Rahman, who was present at the meeting, "Any attempt to propose DAP excluding us would be a blunder."

Major Gen Abu Sayed Md Masud, chairman of Islahijab Abashon, a private housing scheme in Rupganj for defence officials, said DAP should not be prepared hurriedly and should be implementable.

Lack of coordination among different government agencies is not favourable for planned development, observed General Sayed, also the chief coordinator of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge.

In response, DAP Project Director Md Asifur Rahman said the provisions for water retention areas in the city's eastern fringe are already incorporated in the DAP as a study by British consulting firm Halcrow Group.

According to the master plan, there is no scope for endorsing whatever wetlands and water bodies are filled up, said Rajuk board member for planning, Md Zillur Rahman.

Echoing him, Rajuk Chairman Md Abdur Rahman said officially recorded rivers, canals and water bodies would be conserved at any cost.

The 2,100-acre Islahijab Abashon proposed in between the Balu and Shitalakshya rivers in 24 montias of Rupganj and Koyatpara, unions of Rupganj upazila included flood zone, water bodies, agricultural lands and rural homesteads that the DAP earmarked as conservable.

However, a seven-minister committee later reviewed the DAP on recommendation by Rajuk and altered the designated land use on the basis of a water modelling design to make way for the housing scheme.

Similar land use allocation followed in favour of Basundhara residential

area towards the Balu river and several other private housing schemes around the capital to the much public outcry that allowing random earth-filling of wetlands, water bodies and agricultural lands would cause environmental disasters and waterlogging.

Leading environmentalists at a similar consultation meeting on October 30 demanded conservation of the rivers, canals and wetlands in and around the capital as per official records (RS and CS) for environment conservation, ecology and storm water management.

Both the DAP and the Structure Plan of Dhaka's master plan for 15,824 square kilometres area strictly prohibit development of housing projects in water bodies, rural homesteads and flood flow zones that facilitate movement of water during monsoon.

The current DAP suggests reclaiming over 2,500 acres of flood zone and agricultural land from the grip of illegal property developers, relocation of 3,000 industries and scrapping of 16 development projects.

Of the master plan area, conservable flood zone, water retention area and water bodies (canals, lakes, rivers) together constitute 405 square km and agricultural land covers 330 square km.

With the capital's present DAP remaining unimplemented in the face of opposition from the influential realtors, the government is drawing up yet another 20-year plan. With an objective to ensure "planned urban development" covering an area of over 1,500 square km, the plan would cost more than Tk 33 crore for implementation.

Noted urban planners have warned time and again that destruction of flood plains and wetlands would only bring about environmental disasters, waterlogging and health crisis for the capital, regardless of its economic status.

According to them, an estimated 83 percent of the conservable flood zones and wetlands have already been destroyed and grabbed by influential realtors and businesspersons.