



Tornado battered Gazipur, above, and people removing a body, below. —Star photo



### 20 killed

From Page 1 Col. 8

intact in the villages. The air was filled with the wailing of the affected families. Many of the injured were lying on the ground shouting for help as stretcher could not be used due to the bad condition of the roads. Men and women were grouping in the dark for their lost children and family members.

People were frantically searching the debris with the hope of finding their near and dear ones.

Hatem Ali, an eye witness said the tornado formed in the northwest and then moved to the south. "I saw some papers flying in the distance" he said, "but when the tornado came nearer, I realised that the papers were in fact tin roofs of houses."

Suddenly the tornado hit my house. I became blind by the dust. Hatem was inside the house when the tornado hit. His house is now beyond recognition.

The body of a child was recovered from the debris of a house in Dager Chala village. But none was there to claim it.

High voltage electric lines going across the villages snapped as electric poles collapsed. Tins were seen hanging from the electric lines beside the Gazipur road.

Families who lost everything in the tornado were seen sitting with a vacant look. An old man was seen lamenting the death of his granddaughter and his son whose bodies could not be recovered from under the debris. He just pleaded for help to recover the bodies.

Along with the fire personnel, local people were also helping in the rescue operation.

Our correspondent from Mymensingh said, three people were killed and some 200 others, wounded when nor-wester lashed over four upazilas of the district mid-night Monday night.

The storm also caused damage to over 1000 kutchas houses and standing Boro paddy and uprooted many trees.

Two of those killed were identified as Akram Ali (35), a farmer of Kurkuti village of Fulpur upazila and a boy Ali Hossain of the same village. Other victim, a woman aged about 30, could not be identified.

The upazilas affected by the nor-wester were: Mymensingh Sadar, Fulpur, Gouripur and Gafarganj.

Another report from Sherpur said, one person died on the spot and two others were injured when they came in touch with loose electric wire during a storm that hit the district Monday night. The victim was identified as Santosh Kumar Chakravarty (55), a primary school teacher.

About 30 educational institutions of the district were damaged during the storm. Standing Boro and Irri crops were affected. Many electric poles were uprooted plunging many areas of the town into darkness.

Our correspondent from Kishoreganj adds: A nor-wester swept over the district in the early hours of Monday injuring at least 25 persons, damaging about 1500 houses and standing crops over a large area.

Of the injured, the condition of three were stated to be critical.

In the worst-hit area of Itna, 60 engine boats were missing. Roofs of Itna High School hostel and Itna flood shelter centre were blown away while the roof of Itna police station along with its wireless tower were damaged.

With water of river Dhanu rising, the protection embankment along Dhanu Bazar is now under serious threat.

She said the loss on account of the cyclone and tidal surge was colossal and Chittagong port alone suffered loss of Taka 241 crore.

She criticised what she called government ban on showing bodies and carcasses on television saying, "I do not find any reason for such censorship."

Editor : S. M. Ali

## Essafi : Massive aid

From Page 1 Col. 3

donor nations NGOs and others.

"Undoubtedly, it is a great tragedy — it is not possible for the government alone to face such a situation although it is doing its best" Essafi said prior to his departure for Geneva.

"We would make an international appeal again on the basis of what we have seen," he said. Essafi said the list of immediate requirements included helicopters, which would be most useful for relief operations.

He said UNDR0 made an immediate appeal to the international community on May 1 on Bangladesh's needs in the wake of the cyclonic disaster and would keep on making fresh appeals.

He said food, medicine, clothes and housing materials were all needed urgently but the food requirement could be met from Bangladesh government's own stock which could be replenished later.

Cooked food and high protein biscuits were badly needed at this stage, he said. Essafi said drinking water was needed but its supply has now improved considerably.

About relief operations, he said it was a massive job — government and others were working round the clock but that might not be enough.

"Bangladesh needs great help under this situation," he observed.

The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, who was here in 1987 and 1988 in the wake of floods, said some kind of effective ways would have to be evolved to protect people of Bangladesh from nature's onslaughts.

He mentioned the flood protection schemes under the supervision of World Bank after the 1988 floods and said several projects were under execution.

Essafi said reconstruction of infrastructures that suffered badly in affected areas needed priority. His report to the Secretary General would envisage short and long-term measures to minimise people's sufferings.

The UNDR0 Secretary General told a questioner that needs of the affected people were being met from different sources as far as possible. The Red Crescent and other voluntary relief organisations were also doing a commendable job, he added.

Some Members of Parliament, who also visited affected areas in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, were present at the press conference. They were Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Rashed Khan Menon, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Maulana Obaidul Huq, Nurul Islam Moni, Dipankar Talukdar, Shahjahan Seraj, Mazhar Hussein and others.

Sheikh Hasina said that rescue and relief works were not upto expectation and thus scores of bodies and carcasses were lying in the coastal areas of Kutubdia, Moheshkhali, Chakaria of Cox's Bazar and Anwara, Banskhali, Sandwip, Chittagong. She said the stench of decomposed bodies and carcasses make it impossible for survivors to live there.

She said she saw some relief work here and there but they were quite inadequate in consideration of the serious-

ness of the situation. She said the government had received huge amount of money and relief goods from friendly countries but had failed to reach them to the needy people.

Sheikh Hasina claimed at least ten lakh were killed in the cyclone and tidal surge in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar she said that disrupted communications between district headquarters and upazilas and particularly with Kutubdia and Sandwip were not restored and the government officials did not visit most of the affected areas.

## Writ for holding presidential polls within 180 days rejected

By Staff Correspondent

A Division Bench of the High Court Division of Supreme Court on Tuesday summarily rejected the writ petition for direction upon the Election Commission for holding election to the offices of the President and Vice-President by June 4, 1991.

While rejecting the writ petition the court certified that the case involves a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution. The appeal will now lie with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

The petition was heard by a Division Bench comprising Justice Md. Abdul Jalil and Justice Md. Badruzzaman. The petitioner M. Saleem Ullah raised substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution with regard to the holding of elections within 180 days ending on June 4, 1991.

The copy of the judgement delivered by the High Court Division was not readily available for reporting.

## Master plan

From Page 1 Col. 3

NGOs, she told a questioner. She told the newsmen that it was not true that relief and rehabilitation activities were not well coordinated at the centre and said: "How can there be coordinated relief activities at the field level if we do not give directives from the centre?"

She told another questioner that the Government was in constant touch with the affected areas through wireless communication. Data are being collected through government officials and ministers deputed to the cyclone-hit areas, the Prime Minister said.

She said, a relief coordination cell was opened at the Supreme Command headquarters and all information about relief and rehabilitation activities would be available from the cell. A high powered emergency relief committee headed by the PM is functioning. Relief committees have been formed at regional, district and upazila levels.

She said the people were now united to face the natural disaster.

About assistance received from abroad she said, at the hour of distress many brotherly and friendly countries had offered spontaneous help and support. "We are confident that the international community will stand by us and extend support and help to our democratically elected government to face the present catastrophe and in implementing future rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes."

She denied reports that food was not reaching the affected people. No relief goods are stockpiled at the airport or anywhere in Dhaka, she said adding relief goods were being sent by planes, helicopters, trucks and trains.

The Prime Minister denied reports that diarrhoea was widespread in the cyclone affected areas. She said the Press in Bangladesh was free, and newspapers wrote anything they liked. But reports about diarrhoea were not based on facts. There is outbreak of diarrhoea at some places, and the Government has taken adequate measures to prevent further spread of the disease, she said.

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## Ershad's trial

From Page 1 Col. 5

ted Iraq in 1985. In his statement before the Tribunal, Ershad who could not remember the exact year of his visit, said that he probably visited Iraq in 1984 and that the certificate issued by the Iraqi Ambassador Zuhair Mohammad Al Omar on April 21, 1991 was correct.

Abdul Jalil who carried a statement on Ershad's foreign visits between 1982 and 1990 to the Tribunal at the behest of the Military Secretary to the President was examined by the Judge Mohammad Habibullah and the Defence Lawyer Sirajul Haque.

On the fourth of May Judge Mohammad Habibullah had asked the former Chief of Protocol of the deposed President and the Military Secretary to the President Manjoor Rashid Khan to send documents related to the foreign visits of Ershad to the Tribunal.

Abdul Jalil further said that there was no record in the hands of the protocol that Ershad received any gift from the Iraqi President during his visit to Iraq from August 14 to 16, 1989.

The Iraqi Ambassador, summoned by the Tribunal as a witness, did not appear before the Tribunal yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Habibullah first examined the Protocol Officer:

Judge: How long have you been serving as Protocol Officer?

Protocol Officer (Abdul Jalil): Since 1980.

Judge: Have you come after getting summoned by the court?

PO: Military Secretary to the President asked me to come.

Judge: Have you given the list of the foreign visits of the ex-President during the years 1985 and 1989?

PO: Yes.

Judge: See whether there is any date of his going to Iraq in 1985?

PO: No.

Judge: He visited Iraq from August 14 to 16, 1989. Did he receive any gift at that time?

Defence Lawyer Sirajul Haque intervening asked: Is it mentioned in the tour programme?

PO: There is no record.

Later the Defence Lawyer cross-examined the witness.

DL: Do you know how many times Ershad visited foreign countries from 1982 to 1989?

PO: I don't know.

DL: Can you give any proof on the timings of the foreign visits of Ershad if the court wants it?

PO: If there was any record it could be given.

DL: What was your job?

PO: Protocol Officer.

DL: Do you have any list?

PO: No.

DL: When did Ershad visit Yemen?

PO: I don't know.

Judge: There is no need to know about the Yemen visit.

Then Judge Mohammad Habibullah asked Ershad, sitting in the dock, to give his statement under Section 342 about his visit to Iraq in 1985.

Deposing before the Tribunal Ershad said that he had visited Iraq three to four times during his presidency. The first visit was probably in 1984 when, he added, he was given as a gift one black pistol by President Saddam Hussein. "Who was my close friend."

He said, he visited Iraq last in 1989 when he was gifted two golden pistols by Mrs. Saddam Hussein as a gesture of goodwill.

Occasions of presenting such gifts were not ceremonial

and as such were not mentioned in the certificate. But the fact remained that he had received those pistols as gifts from Iraq, he added.

He suggested that the confusion over the year of the visit could be cleared by the Foreign Ministry with the Iraqi government.

He said that he is confident the truth will come out from the Iraqi government.

He also said that the persons who accompanied him on his first visit to Iraq also received pistols as gifts.

On ending his statement Ershad prayed to the Tribunal that he be given a chance to see his lawyer. He said that he could not meet his lawyer for the past one and a half month.

At this stage, the Attorney General Aminul Haque said that he had no objection to allowing the Lawyers, except Kazi Shahadat Hossain, meet the accused.

The deposed President literally broke down into tears while complaining that he was not being allowed to see his son.

He screamed, Why can't I see my son?

Judge Mohammad Habibullah said that it had not been brought to his notice earlier. He asked the Attorney General to provide the accused all facilities in accordance with law.

Ershad also made a petition through his lawyer to allow him to donate Taka one lakh as relief to the distressed people of the April 29 cyclone.

But the Judge returned the petition to the Defence Lawyer saying that the petition should mention in detail the number of the account from which the money would be withdrawn and the fund to which the money would be donated.

At the beginning of yesterday's hearing the Defence made a plea that the Tribunal exempt the accused from appearing at the hearing during the current session of the Parliament, and till seven days after the end of the current session, and also to adjourn hearing of the case till that date.

The petition was filed quoting the privileges guaranteed to the Members of Parliament in the Court Privileges Guaranteed Act 1963 and the East Pakistan Assembly Members Privileges Act 1965.

In the petition it was said that those laws were adapted through Bangladesh Order (Adaptation of Existing Laws) 1972.

Attorney General Aminul Haque objected to the petition saying that those laws were not effective as those were made for the East Pakistan assembly members.

The judge said that judgement on the petition would be given today at the Sessions Court.

The Special Tribunal was adjourned yesterday afternoon to resume on May 14. The Prosecution and the Defence are expected to start arguments on that day which may continue for two days.

Till yesterday 14 Prosecution Witnesses, three Defence Witnesses and two Court Witnesses have testified before the Tribunal.

Yesterday was also the date for hearing of the case on Ershad's amassing of resources beyond his known sources. The court set the date for hearing of the case on May 21.

The Special Tribunal scheduled the date with the suggestion of the Prosecution Counsel that the second case may be started after judgement on the first case.

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## The Midnight File

From Page 1 Col. 7

foreign guests. These drops carried an obvious danger with them. Whenever they landed, people simply surrounded the craft, eager to get whatever they could. But on all occasions people ran the risk of being killed by the rotor blades at the top and tail section of the chopper. Sometimes crew had to hold back the crowd to a safe distance with one hand while unloading bags with the other. In parts of these islands, there was no such thing as local administration or police, and if there were, they too were looking to survive like everybody else. Therefore, there was no one on the ground to conduct an orderly or even safe distribution.

Air crew were looking for empty roads or fields, and before any crowd was seen on the horizon, swooped down low and unloaded the bags as fast as they could and took off. Danger to life was minimised that way. What happened to the materials was another matter. All we could do was hope that people, all being on the same boat of hunger and thirst, would share with one another.

Our staffer A.K.M. Mehsin filed the following eyewitness account after touring the cyclone affected areas on Tuesday:

This was another day, another relief mission aboard an Air Force helicopter. But there was a difference. This was Operation Parachute Drop.

We took off from Dhaka at around 12:30 p.m. in a Bell helicopter, and followed another Bell which had Air Chief Air Vice-Marshal Moutazuddin Ahmed on board.

Our destination Hattia and Sandwip.

Within 45 minutes we were over Hattia. This was vastly different from what I had seen in Kutubdia. For one thing, the devastation did not look as widespread. It was also clear that the death toll here would not be as heavy as in Kutubdia. But all the paddy fields were still under saline water, mostly kept locked by high aisles dividing small plots.

We flew over Sonadia union in the western part of Hattia. The pilot landed his craft on what looked like dry land, but was in fact quite wet and muddy. As the chopper came down, there did not seem to be anybody around, but suddenly literally hundreds of people, men, women and children, came running from all directions. Amazingly, they were swarming all around the helicopter as we landed. Air Chief Moutazuddin Ahmed seemed quiet at home talking to the crowd, enquiring about how they had been since the storm. This was the first time any relief had come their way since the night of April 29, they told him.

A radio message was then sent to the AN-32 transporter high above in the sky to begin its drop. People were asked to clear the area, and the drop began.

Large bags came tumbling out of the AN-32, and glorious red parachutes unfolded to guide the sacks full of dry food and jerry cans of water to a soft landing. Wherever they landed, at least they would not burst on contact, like some had done before.

Base Commander Rashid Ahmed proved another soft touch. He was so moved by the plight of the hungry multitude that he emptied his pockets, right there and gave away whatever money he had.

Then we moved on. Flying low over Sandwip, we spotted a large group of people waving, as if to call us down. On landing we were quite surprised to find two stranded foreign journalists among the crowd. This was an uncheduled stop, so we unloaded two extra 100 kg bags to make room for the

US troops to stay in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, May 7: Some US troops are to remain in Kuwait for "months to come" but the United States wants to avoid any permanent basing of its forces in the Gulf, US Defense Secretary Richard Cheney said today. He was speaking following meetings with Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Defense Minister Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem, reports AFP.

28 killed in Punjab

NEW DELHI, May 7: Sikh separatists today gained down seven police and federal troopers in India's Punjab state, where violence linked to a bloody Sikh homeland campaign claimed 28 more lives. The unrelenting campaign for a theocratic state called Khalistan (Land of the Pure) has left at least 1,701 people dead this year, reports AFP.

Bury the dead

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