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The World on Time

UNGA expresses sympathy for cyclone victims

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) yesterday extended deepest sympathy to the government and the people of Bangladesh for the loss of lives and property in Monday's cyclone, reports UNB.

President of the UNGA, Ambassador Razali Ismail, in a statement at yesterday's session of the Assembly, conveyed this on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

He also expressed the hope that international community would show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

On behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations expressed pro-

US offers help for cyclone victims

WASHINGTON, May 21: The United States offered help Tuesday to Bangladesh, where a devastating cyclone has killed at least 95 people, injured thousands, and left many more homeless, reports AFP.

The United States would like to offer its condolences to the families of those who have been killed or who are missing, who have been made homeless, and our condolences for all the destruction caused by this terrible cyclone," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

"We obviously will do whatever we can to assist the Bangladeshi government in trying to recover from this catastrophe," he said.

Meanwhile, charitable organisations in the Netherlands and France on Tuesday agreed to send aid to Bangladesh.

The Dutch aid group Novib said it will send aid worth 600,000 guilder (315,800 dollars) to Bangladesh. Its first aid shipment, mainly shelters and water purification equipment, would go to the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, it said.

The French Roman Catholic aid organisation Secours Catholique sent 200,000 francs (35,000 dollars) worth of equipment, mainly anti-cyclone shelters, to a sister organisation, Caritas Bangladesh, the group said in Paris.

The DB police produced Aslam and his accomplices before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court yesterday. The court granted the remand for further interrogation.

Police were interrogating Aslam alias Sweden Aslam, and the eight others mainly to find out the sources of their arms and ammunition. A senior police official said, they were also trying to identify the gang which had patronised and used Aslam for their own interest for a long time.

Meanwhile, charge sheets accusing Aslam in three murder cases had already been submitted to the court. These cases were filed with Tejaon, Kotwali and Mirpur thana.

Another villager of Boalia, Abdus Saitar, 60, was found rebuilding his rice mills that was damaged by Monday's cyclone.

On way to interior villages of Anwara thana hardly any kutchha house was found standing. Debris of trees and kutchcha houses littered the entire coastal area of Anwara.

Chairman of Raipur union Abu Sayeed felt that to protect the people of Anwara from the wrath of the sea a permanent embankment was needed in addition to construction of more cyclone shelters.

He said that since the 1991 cyclone, the dam has never been repaired properly.

At Sandwip two students — Aiyub Ali and Md Shamim — told reporters that the cross-dam in the island which was damaged in the 1991 cyclone has not yet been repaired. They also complained that till yesterday noon they got no relief.

Shafiq Ahmed, a salt and betel-leaf cultivator, at Teknaf told The Daily Star that salinity caused by tidal surge was the main problem in the area.

The Prime Minister distributed some relief among the affected people at Banshkhal, as she did at some other places. Addressing a gathering at Shekher Khil, Sheikh Hasina

praised peoples' courage in facing natural calamities and assured that a green belt would be raised along the coastal area through a massive afforestation programme.

Extensive damage to shrimp and salt beds was seen as the helicopter, carrying journalists, flew low over the affected areas of Cox's Bazar, Chokoria and Banshkhal.

Deputy Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukder Abdul Khalek accompanied the Prime Minister during the visit.

Earlier on Tuesday, Sheikh Hasina also visited areas of Cox's Bazar, Moheshkhali and Kutubdia.

Minister Jawadul Karim told the newsmen.

Giving an update on the devastation caused by the cyclone, he said 5,12,593 houses, 718 cyclone shelters, 608 educational institutions, 75 bridges and culverts, 153 km of roads and embankments and crops in 29,951 hectares of land were damaged while 1899 cattlehead were killed.

He said the government has sanctioned 400 MT of wheat, 33.4 MT of flattened rice, 8,513.5 kg of molasses, 8,355 water cans, 8,000 metres of cloth, 1,19,500 sarees, 2300 lungis, 12,000 pieces of children's clothes, 35,000 pieces of old cloth, 50,600 pieces of plates, 400 tents, 100 bundles of CI sheet, 2,100 tins of biscuit and Tk 25 lakh in cash for distribution among the affected people until yesterday.

The government has also sent 622 medical teams to the affected areas and no report of any outbreak of diseases has been reported, he added.

According to them, the existing curricula for police training is insufficient and there is no comprehensive institutional arrangement at the police headquarters or police training institutes to assess the needs for developing a suitable curricula.

Deputies of the ruling and opposition parties of Turkey slug it out as a brawl breaks out during a speech by opposition leader and former prime minister Mesut Yilmaz who accused the government of being unable to rule the country in a parliamentary debate Tuesday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was shot dead of Kalshi Road at Pallabi in the city yesterday afternoon. One Zakir Hossain, 25, sustained at least seven bullet injuries when a gang of five unidentified men attacked him near a slum in Block-E of Pallabi at about 5 pm.

Police said Zakir died on the spot.

Son of one Safiuddin, Zakir is a resident of Balughat area under Cantonment thana. The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. However, it was alleged that Zakir was killed following a conflict between two rival groups.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. A case has been filed with Pallabi thana.

Mannan Bhuiyan condemns filing of cases against Rafiq, Abbas

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP, yesterday condemned the filing of cases against two top leaders of the party — Rafiqul Islam Mia, a standing committee member and Mirza Abbas, party's joint secretary general — and demanded immediate withdrawal of the cases.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau filed Corruption cases on Saturday against Rafiq and Abbas on charges of misappropriating public fund while holding public office.

In a statement last night, Mannan Bhuiyan alleged the filing of the cases were filed with the ulterior motive of harming BNP's image.

He also alleged of ruling party repression and police harassment on his party leaders at Laximpur and Narayanganj and asked the government to stop all those acts.

Transport strike in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 21: The traffic movement remained suspended in Sylhet district as the transport workers began a strike for an indefinite period this morning.

They went on strike to protest what they said, 'unauthorised' collection of tolls from the trucks carrying stones from the quarries in Gowainghat thana.

According to sources, there is a dispute between the Lessee of the quarries and truckers for the last few months over the collection of tolls.

Soft-term agri loan for cyclone affected people

The government will disburse soft-term agricultural loan and distribute seeds at fair prices among the cyclone-affected farmers, reports UNB.

Agriculture and Food Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury and Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury assured this while visiting the cyclone-hit areas in Chandanaish and Satkania thanas.

They visited the houses of those killed in the cyclonic storm on Monday to express sympathy for the bereaved family members.

The ministers also distributed relief materials among the affected people, said an official handout.

Heroin worth Tk 75 lakh seized in B'baria

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, May 21: Seven hundred and seventy-five grams of heroin worth about Tk 75 lakh were seized from Sezamura village of Sadar thana on May 20, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team went to the village to nab the drug trafficking but sensing the police presence, the heroin traders left the spot leaving the packer of heroin beside a road.

American pure heroin — 'trade mark Lion,' was written on the packet, police said.

A case was filed with Brahmanbaria police station.

House wife kidnapped, raped in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 21: Kotwali police yesterday arrested one person on charge of kidnapping and raping a young housewife. The victim would be examined in the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital tomorrow, an official said.

A mother of three children, she was kidnapped by a gang of four persons from her residence in Mirabazar area of Sylhet town Sunday night.

The kidnappers then gang-raped her at a house.

They also kidnapped her brother-in-law.

The next day, a case was lodged after which police arrested the main accused Helal. The others have been absconding, police said.

3 children electrocuted in West Bengal

ALIPURDUAR, (West Bengal), May 21: Three children were electrocuted at a tea garden of Hasimara in Kalchini block, near here yesterday, reports PTI.

Relief goods

From Page 1

unions of Maheshkhali thana have caved in flooding the area with saline water and forcing people to take refuge in cyclone shelters.

Fifty four out of 64 unions of the district are affected by the cyclone, officials added.

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One burnt alive, shops gutted in N'ganj

NARAYANGANJ, May 21: A youngman was roasted alive and several shops were gutted in a fire at Godmile Bazar in Siddirganj thana of the district today, fire brigade sources said, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Khairul Islam, 24, a trader of the bazar. The fire originated from a short circuit in one of the four shops at 12:30 am, was brought under control by Siddirganj fire fighters.

Teacher representatives

White Panel to take part in DU Senate polls

By Staff Correspondent

The 'White Panel' has announced the names of its candidates for the election of 35 teacher representatives to the Dhaka University Senate.

The election will be held on May 29. The White Panel, however, said it would have been better if the Senate election had been deferred as, with the academic year coming to a close, the university teachers were very busy taking examinations and completing other academic work.

Besides, the first year honours admission tests are being held during this month, the statement said.

"Though the university authorities were apprised about our position regarding the Senate election, the Vice Chancellor did not accept our views," the statement said.

The White Panel observed that by announcing the Senate election date in this month, the university authorities gave importance to the election than to the academic activities of the university.

The press release was signed by Prof Wakil Ahmed, advisor, White Panel, Prof Mohammad Shaif Chowdhury, convener and Prof Saidur Rahman and Prof Khalilur Rahman, joint convenors.

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Members of the Buddhist community praying at Bhabho Bouddha Bihar in the city on the occasion of Bouddha Purnima yesterday. — Star photo

Sher-e-Khwaja

From Page 1

ceive any formal training as a freedom fighter. He says he carried out operations in Dhaka during the war. His family was not financially well-off.

After independence, along with his sister's husband Abdul Bari Lat Mia, Anwarul Haq Chowdhury took over some shops in Maulvibazar. Lat Mia is dead now. Anwarul Haq Chowdhury owns Chistia Enterprises at 78 Maulvibazar.

After 1976, Anwar launched into business as a contractor and around that time he became the local agent of the Indian chocolate drink Maltova.

At the same time he also began business with the well-known businessman. Their ventures included ship breaking, cement and other businesses. However, things didn't work out and Anwarul Haq felt badly cheated in the deal.

But then things looked up for Anwarul Haq Chowdhury. The Chernobyl crisis occurred and Chowdhury had just imported a consignment of powdered milk. Milk powder was being subject to minute examination for radiation and it so happened that Chowdhury's consignment of milk was completely radiation free. Overnight he became rich.

He visited Ameer Sharif for Khwaja Baba's blessings and became a devout devotee of the Khwaja Baba and a regular visitor of Ameer.

Chowdhury then joined hands in business with Salman Rahman. He would look after Beximco's marketing though he was not a director. His close relation with Salman Rahman is no secret. "I was involved with Beximco but not any more," says Anwar, "I try to maintain a distance with controversial personalities."

Anwarul Haq Chowdhury's ostentatious red house in Dhanmondi has been subject of much speculation. He claims he received the design of the architectural eyecore in a 'dream'. Others say he studied several grand houses in Dhaka and then got an engineer of RAJUK to design and construct the house.

Skeptics question how a 'spiritual' personality has so much material possessions. His house itself is an epitome of luxury. He has even encroached on government-owned land, building a personal ghat on the lake.

The allotted 15.42-katha plot is in the name of his wife Rehana Chowdhury who had bought it from one Shamsul Huda in 1990. Obvious from outside that the new owner was encroaching upon government land, the Public Works Department (PWD) served a notice in 1992 to Rehana Chowdhury asking her to vacate the illegally occupied stretch of land.

In November, 1992 PWD surveyed the land and identified 1.66 kabha of government land under illegal encroachment. The owner even went ahead to construct a ghat on the lake with security fence all around it. In the same month higher PWD officials gave green signal to evict the encroacher. In May, 1993 a 'final notice' was served upon Rehana Chowdhury in this regard. Said a PWD official, "for mysterious reasons no official step has ever been initiated to recover the land."

And how did he get the title Sher-e-Khwaja? Simply by paying money. "If someone pays five lacs every year," says Latif Chisti, a Khadem in Ameer. "Why won't he be named Sher-e-Khwaja? There is no authority in Ameer to bestow any such title."

"He is undoubtedly a genuine devotee of Khwaja Baba and visits Ameer thrice a year, during both the Eids and to attend the Urs," Latif says.

In his passport his name is registered as Sher-e-Khwaja Anwarul Haq Chowdhury. His profession is recorded as business and as chairman of Chistia Group of Companies.

An incorrigible name-dropper, Sher-e-Khwaja has video recordings of high-placed persons and business personalities paying obeisance to him. His walls are covered with pictures of everyone from Sheikh Hasina to Phoolan Devi.

Why do they visit him? What force draws these big names to this strange house? "No esoteric force," says a well-known politician. "If someone calls you up ten times and asks you over, how can you refuse? You are bound to visit him at least once." And the Khwaja spares no pains to capitalise on these visits.

When a British diplomat visited Sher-e-Khwaja recently, the latter made a phone call and in a few minutes a bureaucrat turned last minute politician, turned minister quickly came to the place. The diplomat was impressed. He is the man to get things done.

Anwarul Haq has pictures of himself placing a turban on the head of former Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda, with the India President and Narasimha Rao. Indian politicians are used to giving such 'spiritual' persons a few minutes of their time. Sher-e-Khwaja does have contact with politician Chandra Shekhar in India. Chandra Shekhar is known for his contacts with 'holy' men.

People are said to visit Sher-e-Khwaja to seal business contacts and deals. "I do try to help everyone," he says magnanimously, "But I take nothing in return."

He has a long standing rivalry with another prominent pir of the country, Mujibur Rahman Chisti. When Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto called upon Chisti personally during her visit to Bangladesh, it was a bit too much for Sher-e-Khwaja to swallow.

Anwarul Haq was aware that Mujibur Rahman Chisti was aspiring to build a large orphanage in Bogra, with as many rooms as there are chapters in the Holy Quran. Sher-e-Khwaja sent a message to Chisti that he would get a businessman to donate for the orphanage if Chisti would come to his Dhanmondi house.

Chisti arrived in due time and Sher-e-Khwaja filmed the entire visit. He relishes the part of the film which shows Chisti bending down to touch his feet. "I was merely picking up the tasbeeh I dropped," protests an angry Chisti.

Sher-e-Khwaja has developed a wide network of contact, and has his links in the present government. His visitors include minister, political leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen, etc.

It is said that Sher-e-Khwaja tried in vain to get BNP leader Khaleda Zia to visit his house when she had been in power. However, his visitors did include several BNP leaders.

Tripura state officials, refugee leaders to visit Khagrachhari

KHAGRACHHARI, May 21: A 14-member joint team of Indian Tripura state officials and tribal refugee leaders will visit here from May 29 to observe rehabilitation of the repatriated refugees, reports UNB.

Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ismail told local newsmen at his office today that next phase of repatriation of the tribal refugees from Tripura is expected to begin soon after the visit of the team.

Refugee Welfare Association vice-president Ranjit Narayan Tripura will lead the 11-member refugee delegation while South Tripura district magistrate K Rajeshwar Roy lead the three-member Indian team.

They will visit different places of the hill district to see the rehabilitation activities under the 20-point agreement signed between the government and the Refugee Welfare Association.

A total of 6,703 refugees of 1,248 families have been repatriated from camps in Tripura after repatriation process began last April.

Rao acted

From Page 1

enforcement directorate (ED) Deputy Director, AP Nandi, from St Kitts island in October 1989.

"Rao had issued instruction to test the documents under the instruction from PMO in the normal course of his duty without having the knowledge that they were forged. The Indian consulate, RK Rai, in his statement to CBI has also verified this fact," Anand contended.

Ctg: Power

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Sitakund and Mirersarai has also been put into service, according to a BTBTS press release.

However, tele-link with Sandwip could not be restored as the UHF tower on the island was damaged by the cyclonic storm. Necessary equipments could not be sent to Sandwip as the sea is still very rough.

But alternative steps have been taken to re-establish tele-link with the islands. Similar steps have also been taken to restore telecommunications with Ramu and Naikhongchhari.

Meanwhile, some 10,000 telephone lines in the port city of Chittagong were disconnected as uprooted trees fell on the hanging cables at different points.

Voltage

From Page 1

bazar, the DESA has no automatic protective devices to stabilise the flow of electricity, they said.

While the electricity is supposed to flow at 220 volts, it hardly exceeds 200 volts at most places. At times, the voltage drops to as low as 100 volts.

Worst of all, sometimes the power supply totally ceases for few seconds and resumes quickly. This disruption instantly affects appliances like refrigerators which operate continuously.

The Chairman of DESA was not available for comment last night.

Khaleda

From Page 1

He said 60 to 80 per cent kutchha houses of the locality and embankments in several places were damaged, affecting some five lakh people in Chokoria thana alone. Some 550 kilometre electric wires were also partially damaged, he informed.

The UP chairman alleged that he did not find any government official nor did he receive relief although two days had passed. "I had only six bags of rice which is not enough and already has been distributed among the affected people."

Hossain was echoed by M Ismail, a village of coastal Darbeshkaha. Hafez Abul Kashem of Kurakhal said he lost eight cows, six goats, 200 maunds of salt and 150 maunds of rice in the cyclone but did not get any relief or saw any government man.

"This is Khaleda Zia whom we found first," said Ismail. Like him many others burst into tears while telling that they lost everything in Monday's cyclone. Thousands of people were found passing day and night in the open.

Member of Parliament from the constituency Salahuddin Ahmed told UNB that loss of life was less but economic loss was colossal. He informed that all the shrimp enclosures and saltbeds were washed away in the cyclone.

He demanded from the government immediate and proper relief supplies, rehabilitation programme and repairing of the embankments. "If the embankments are not repaired, Shrimp, salt and crops cultivation will be seriously hampered."

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