

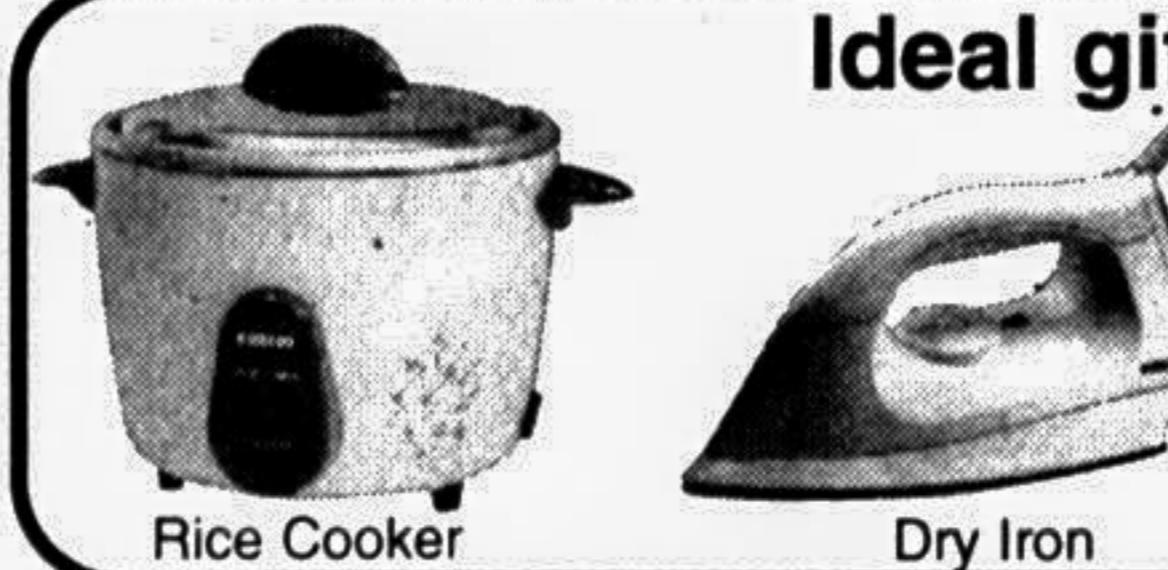


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PHILIPS

## Down to Earth

### Earthquake hazards for city

By ASM Nurunnabi

Apart from the people in general, it is felt by geologists and other experts in this field that the level of earthquake hazard for the Dhaka city is not quite negligible. Earthquake is a natural calamity. It originates deep inside the earth by a number of geological processes, the technical details of which may not be of interest to a layman. A more intriguing question is whether an earthquake can be predicted. Though a variety of prediction methods have been used for centuries, since the 60s, scientific efforts on prediction have grown in an explosive manner particularly in Japan, Russia, China and the USA. The aim, according to geologists, is to establish as much reliability in earthquake forecasting. Since the prediction of earthquake intensity at a particular site is an important aspect of earthquake forecasting, this factor is largely emphasised in choosing the sites of important structures such as dams, hospitals, nuclear reactors and human settlements.

Bangladesh has been divided into several earthquake vulnerable zones on the basis of certain specific geological parametres. It is known from the past record that Dhaka was rocked in 1664. The 1737 earthquake claimed thousands of lives in the vicinity of Calcutta. Since then this region has experienced several earthquakes between the years from 1762 to 1950. Among these, the Shillong earthquake of 1897 with a magnitude of 8.7 in the Richter scale, the Srimangal earthquake of 1918 and the Assam earthquake of 1950 with the same magnitude are more notable events.

According to our quake experts, an earthquake of the intensity of 6 in the Richter scale

can create havoc in the capital city of Dhaka. In their opinion, Dhaka city is one of the most vulnerable urban quake zones of the country. Recent tremors in Sylhet, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the past few months are somewhat indicative of the quake-proneness of many of our territorial spheres. The Chittagong quake was reported to have taken toll of public and private property and quite a number of lives with some buried alive.

With the rapid growth of population in the city, a building spree is in operation in order to meet the fast growing demand for new housing. In this hectic pace for new construction, the ordinary rules for safe construction are often neglected. Sites unsuitable for new constructions are acquired by many at low prices without regard for proper filling, compaction or piling, where necessary, thereby creating potential hazards in case of tremors.

Since we are, by and large, quite helpless in the face of inexorable physical forces, experts say that earthquakes will continue to be unpredictable into much of the next century. So it is incumbent on us to mount adequate preparedness strategies in time to minimise the impact of quakes as much as possible.

As experts have opined, town planning, city development, construction of roads and buildings must now incorporate the quake factor. And people should be motivated not to feel scared but to face any possible disaster with knowledge and management aptitude, logic and co-operation.

According to expert opinion, a seismic observatory network should immediately be set up in order to precisely determine the state of seismicity in our country for sustainable policy making and socio-economic development.

There is another aspect. The vulnerability of metropolitan Dhaka even to moderate intensity of tremors is said to have grown considerably due to subsidence of land caused by free-

#### Bedaruddin hospitalised

Bedaruddin Ahmed, a prominent musician and singer and principal of the Bulbul Academy and Fine Arts (BAFA), was admitted to Suhrawardy Hospital on Thursday night following a heart attack, family sources said, reports BSS.

#### Direct bus service

From page 1

not seek permission of Indian state governments for movement of foreign vehicles within their territory, while forwarding the proposal for having an umbrella agreement.

Earlier, the proposed agreement for inter-state bus service envisaged passage of passenger vehicles on only one route. This route was initially planned to be Dhaka-Aricha-Daulatdia-Jessore-Benapole on the Bangladesh side and Petropole-Calcutta-Delhi and Ajmeer on the Indian side.

According to the projection paper prepared by the Ministry of Communications, nearly one lakh people were expected to avail of the Dhaka-Calcutta direct bus service within a year of its operations.

Available figures show that an estimated 2,67,000 people travelled to India from Bangladesh by land and air in 1996, while nearly 2,09,000 people came to Bangladesh from India.

#### BTB

From page 1

told The Daily Star.

Abdur Rakib Saber, director (coordination) of Grameen-Phone admitted that they did not pay any money to the BTB as revenue but said everything had been accounted for and will be paid after the signing of final agreement.

"When the final inter-connection agreement is made involving a mutually agreeable revenue-sharing arrangement, the call charges to each other will be computed from March 26, 1997," he said quoting from the temporary agreement.

Rakib further said the temporary agreement also allowed them to settle the financial arrangement between the two organisations mutually. So, the allegation that they had been doing business illegally was not true, he argued.

The Grameen and AKTEL have so far given mobile connection to about 22 thousand people and have been getting Tk 500 fixed rent per month excluding outgoing call charges.

Rakib, however, said they do not have any plan to impose incoming call charge on the subscribers even after revenue-sharing agreement with the government is finalised.

Meanwhile, due to hard competition among the operating companies the price of mobile telephone has now come down to one-fourth of that in the last few years.

Now any one living in the city and surrounding areas can have a mobile set at around Tk 20 thousand against its 1993 price of more than Tk 80 thousand.

#### Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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#### Forged certificates recovered: Two arrested

Police unearthed a forged certificate-making factory from Kalyanpur area in Mirpur thana in the city on Thursday and arrested two people, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip off, a special squad of CID police, led by ASP Khalequzzaman, raided a house in Pakistan area and found several forged marksheets forms. They arrested one Abdul Hannan from the spot.

According to information provided by Hannan, police raided two more places — one in Ansar camp area in Mirpur and another at Kalyanpur. A large number of forged marksheets and certificates of different universities and education boards, and seals were recovered from there.

They also arrested team leader Moslem Uddin Mollah from Kalyanpur. Mollah was earlier arrested in 1987 and 1992 on the same charge.

Police said the accused have long been engaged in selling forged certificates.

#### Dacoity in city house

By Staff Correspondent

Armed dacoits looted a gun, gold ornaments, cash and other valuables from a house in the city's Azimpur area yesterday after noon.

Equipped with firearms and sharp weapons a gang of four youths stormed into the house at New Paltan at around 1.15 pm and decamped with the booties worth about Tk 1.68 lakh, police said.

One Mosaddekur Rahman and his family lived in the first floor flat where the incident took place, but during the dacoity, only his mother and a maid was in the flat.

As the maid opened the door after hearing knocks, the dacoits forcibly entered the flat and looted the valuables.

After about half-an-hour, they decamped with a double barrel gun with two round cartridges, electronic goods, gold ornaments and Tk ten thousand.

However, none was arrested till filing of this report last night.

#### BCL founding day tomorrow

Bangladesh Chhatri League, the student wing of ruling Awami League, has drawn up an elaborate programme to observe its 50th founding anniversary tomorrow, reports UNB.

The day's programme includes placing of wreath at the Bangabandhu's portrait at zero hour, hoisting of national flag at the party central office at 7 am and discussion at Ramma Batamul at 10 am, said a press release.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to be present as chief guest at the discussion meeting.

#### Black box

From page 1

ATP in the domestic service.

The decision will be taken after getting reply from the Australian company, considering the financial involvement, a senior Biman official said yesterday.

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A Chinese Muslim girl praying beside her mother at the Niujie Mosque in Beijing yesterday in the holy month of Ramadan. China has about 20 million Muslims.

— AP/UNB photo

## Madhyapara Hardrock Project Flaws in PP, red-tapism may delay handover

Flaws in project proforma and bureaucratic tangle are likely to make the handover of the Madhyapara Hardrock Mining Project uncertain from the foreign contractor, due in 2001, reports UNB.

The uncertainty loomed as the original PP kept no provision for necessary local manpower that has to be trained, a lapse later followed by usual bureaucratic red tapism delaying the process of recruitment for the project.

As per the contract, the North Korean company, NAM-NAM, which is developing the Madhyapara hardrock mine, was to train 20 local people in Korea and 320 people locally by 2001 when the project will be handed over to Petrobangla.

However, the concerned authorities submitted a revised PP in January last year suggesting a raise in the local manpower, but ECNEC instead formed a

five-member secretary level committee to have a fresh look into the viability of the project.

The committee, headed by the finance secretary, is yet to submit its report, making fresh recruitment uncertain and causing a potential setback in the timely handing over of the project to the Petrobangla.

This delay might force Petrobangla to go for a new agreement with the foreign contractor to run the project and that would cause a serious financial setback for the project," said an Energy Ministry official.

The Madhyapara hardrock was discovered in 1974 and the government finally signed agreement with the North Korean company in 1994 to mine out 16.5 lakh tons of hardrock annually.

Today, the Hindu nationalists lashed out at Sonia Gandhi, arguing she would fail to resurrect Congress in the February-March elections, reports AFP.

ND Tiwari, a Congress leader, said Sonia Gandhi, who has agreed to campaign for the party, and 25-year-old daughter Priyanka had been urged to contest in the populous northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The United Nations of India (UNI) quoted Tiwari as saying Sonia Gandhi, 51, should be the Congress nominee in Amethi constituency and Priyanka Gandhi in adjoining Rae Bareli.

Neither of the Gandhis has any political experience. Amethi and Rae Bareli have previously elected members of the Nehru-Gandhi family, which ruled India for some 40 years after Independence in 1947.

Tiwari said he expected Sonia Gandhi to take "an early decision" on the request.

Sonia Gandhi, despite offering to campaign for Congress, has not presented herself as a candidate. The Gandhi family often compared to the Kennedy clan in the United States, enjoys considerable influence in the largely-rural Amethi constituency.

Congress hardliners believe the Gandhi name will revitalise the party following its steady decline in recent years. Her decision to plunge into elections has been hailed by Congress, but ridiculed by the Hindu nationalists — the main challengers to Congress.

Right now, nothing has been confirmed," the spokesman added.

Yusuf Abdullah Haroon, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said that holding the Business Summit would involve participation of a large number of business leaders of the three countries. However, he assured that if the date was fixed sometime this month, every effort would be made to ensure participation of a large number of leading members of the chambers of the three nations.

The national committee for the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan Business Summit, headed by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad held a meeting in Dhaka on December 28. On that day, the aftermath of postponement of the Summit was reviewed but there was no concrete decision on the arrangements.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka Declaration which is expected to be adopted by the three countries at the proposed Summit, had already received final approval at the meeting of senior officials of the three countries on November 20 in Dhaka, three days ahead of its postponement.

Right now, nothing has been confirmed," the spokesman added.

All-rounders Ajay Jadeja will continue as vice-captain in one-day internationals, but no deputy was named for Test matches. Desai said the team for the Bangladesh tournament will be named tomorrow.

India clash with arch-rivals Pakistan and Bangladesh in the January 10-19 tournament in Dhaka, organised to mark the host nation's 25 years of independence.

The selectors reportedly lost patience with the talented 24-year-old batsman, who failed to win his 12 Tests in 36 one-day innings.

Following this move, Petronas-Mobil stepped off the negotiations on the pretext of "rethinking" the proposal.

At this point, the negotiation was suspended.

Afterwards, Tullow proposed to sit with Chevron-Texaco on the first week of January.

## Khaleda takes iftar with orphans in city

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday took her iftar at an orphanage at the Shahi Saheb Bari of Narinda Mashurkhola in the old part