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58 killed, thousands homeless as tremor hits Sumatra

JAKARTA, June 5: A powerful earthquake and dozens of strong aftershocks struck the Indonesian island of Sumatra at night, killing at least 58 people, leaving hundreds injured and thousands homeless, officials said today, reports AP.

Widespread panic was reported in Bengkulu, a province of about 1.2 million people near the tremor's epicenter, as rescuers dug through the rubble of ruined buildings in search of bodies and trapped survivors.

The Indonesian Meteorological and Geophysical Service said the quake, measuring 7.3 magnitude, hit at 11:29 pm Sunday and lasted for several minutes, jolting people from their beds. The US Geological Survey in Golden, Colorado, estimated its magnitude as 7.9. A magnitude 7 earthquake is capable of causing widespread and heavy damage in urban areas.

Ali Muchtar, Bengkulu health department chief said 58 people were confirmed dead. Almost 500 people had been reported injured, 255 seriously.

A police officer in the Bengkulu, Lt. Ritonga, said the death toll was expected to rise further as volunteers and emergency workers searched

through ruined buildings. Communications to many parts of the province had been cut, he said.

Witnesses said local hospitals were overwhelmed with injured people and were struggling to cope as few staff members had arrived at work.

Doctors in the provincial capital, Bengkulu town, treated injured people in an outside parking lot, fearing that aftershocks might bring down the state hospital, the official Antara news agency reported.

Muchtar said the hospital had been badly damaged. Electricity and water supplies had been cut and many phone lines were down in the town of about 250,000 people.

Medical supplies were running low. Antara reported that some doctors had been forced to perform some minor operations without anesthetics.

The city's airport was closed because of damage to its communications equipment and passenger terminal. Some roads to the city had been blocked by landslides.

"Many houses have collapsed, and the walls of bigger buildings have been fractured,"

helped save three of my neighbours who were trapped under rubble," said Eddy, a resident of Bengkulu, which is 100 kilometers east of the quake's epicenter. Like many Indonesians, Eddy uses only one name.

Seismologists said the tremor was centered beneath the Indian Ocean, 650 kilometers northwest of Jakarta. A magnitude 6 aftershock hit 11 minutes afterward the quake, and 53 smaller tremors were recorded before 6 am Monday, frightening residents and hampering rescuers, Indonesian seismologists said.

Thousands fled their homes as aftershocks continued, and many were left homeless by the damage.

"The quake went on for many minutes. Dozens of homes have been destroyed and almost all houses and buildings in the city seem to have been damaged," said Bengkulu police Sgt. Hariyono. "People are terrified every time they feel aftershocks," he said.

President Abdurrahman Wahid offered no immediate emergency response, saying instead that his government had to assess the problem.



Opposition BNP held a meeting with envoys and representatives of donor countries and agencies at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Stick procession Showcase on state, 5 ministers, AL leader

The High Court asked the state, five ministers and a central Awami League leader to show cause within two weeks why the lower court's order of accepting the final report and rejecting the Naraji petition to final report in the case filed against five ministers should not be set aside, reports BSS.

A High Court Division Bench comprising Justice Mohammad Nurul Islam and Justice Mohammad Muntaz Uddin Ahmed issued the rule after hearing the application filed by Advocate Golam Kibria against the orders passed by the judge, Mohammad Shahnewaz of Jananirapatta Bighnakeri Aparadh Daman Tribunal (Special Judge Court), Dhaka.

Advocate Kibria, complainant of the case, had filed a Naraji petition in which he sought an order from Special Judge Court to reject the decision of accepting final report (police report) and reinvestigate the case. But the Special Court rejected the Naraji petition on May 7 last.

The investigation officer of Motijheel Police gave the final report of the case saying the complaint was not proved and the Special Court disposed of the case in line with the final report releasing the accused persons from charge.

Advocate Kibria, on April 25 filed a case with Motijheel Police against Ministers Abdus Samad Azad, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury

Maya and central Awami League leader Mukul Bose accusing them of violating Public Safety Act (PSA) by bringing out a stick procession which paraded different streets of the city chanting objectionable slogans or remarks against Judges.

The police recorded the said case on April 27. The IO recorded the statements of 101 witnesses and submitted the final report on May 2.

Ershad barred from leaving country

By Staff Correspondent

Immigration police at Zia International Airport yesterday evening barred former president and Jatiya Party chairman Hossain Mohammad Ershad, MP, from boarding a London-bound flight of the British Airways.

His passport was also seized. Immigration officials said there was 'restriction' on the JP chief to leave the country. But they would not elaborate.

Ershad told the Daily Star over telephone last night that the immigration officials gave him a receipt after they impounded his passport and informed him that there were orders not to allow him to get out of the country.

Earlier in last October, his passport was seized when immigration prevented him from going to China. It was returned following a High Court order two weeks ago. Ershad said he would consult his lawyers to retrieve the passport.

Non-govt teachers submit memo to Speaker

Non-government school teachers yesterday submitted a memorandum to Speaker Humayun Rashed Chowdhury to press home their demand for raising the government portion in their salary to cent per cent from the present 80 per cent, reports UNB.

Leaders of the non-government teachers while submitting the memo to Speaker at his Sangsad Bhaban office requested him to pursue their demand to the Prime Minister.

The Speaker assured the teachers of forwarding the demand to the PM for her consideration, said a Parliament Secretariat press release.

President of Bangladesh Teachers' Association Sheikh Aman Ullah, secretary general M Selim Bhuiyan were present.

Pakistan win

From page 1

never reached to such magnitude before. Shoab Malik affected two run outs while Wasim, Youhana and Nazir one each.

One-down Marvan Atapattu scored the highest 62 off 102 balls with three boundaries followed by middle-order Upul Chandana who added 46 off 57 balls inclusive of two sixes and a four.

Opener Jayasuriya hit five boundaries on his way to a run-a-ball 28.

For Pakistan, right-arm medium pacer Azhar Mahmood was the wrecker-in-chief. He took three wickets for 24 runs from eight overs. Young fast bowler Sabbir Ahmed, left-arm spinner Arshad Khan and leg-spinner Shahid Afridi took one wicket each.

The Pakistanis rested yesterday three of their great guns in Saad Anwar, Wasim Akram and Abdur Razaq.

Sri Lanka also made two changes, replacing Tillekerante Dilshan and Nuwan Zoysa with Upul Chandana and Sajewea de Silva.

However, both teams are expected to fight it out in the grand finale full strength.

Budget deficit on increase

By Staff Correspondent

The most alarming trend in the country's fiscal management is that budget deficit is increasing and a sizeable portion of revenue budget is spent for debt servicing.

Stating this, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, noted that budget deficit in this fiscal year (1999-2000) would be around six to six and a half per cent. This is even higher than that in the 'flood year', 1998-99, the most difficult year in the country's history, he added.

The budget deficit in 1998-99 was around five per cent.

Debapriya Bhattacharya was speaking at a pre-budget discussion organised by the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) at its auditorium in the city yesterday.

Debapriya also said around one fifth of the revenue budget is spent for debt servicing and it would continue for another two to three years, adding that 17 to 18 per cent accounts for domestic debt servicing and about five per cent for foreign debt.

Against this backdrop, Bhattacharya said, in the coming fiscal year the major task of the government would be to balance the budget and if it fails to make up the deficit, it would have to borrow from the bank-

Alleged criminal stabbed to death

By Staff Correspondent

Unidentified miscreants stabbed to death an alleged criminal in front of Nightingale Restaurant at Bijoyganj in the city last night. The dead was identified as Monir, 20.

Monir was arrested earlier by Demra police for his alleged involvement in cutting tendons of a young man in Demra area. He was released on bail yesterday from the Dhaka Central Jail, sources said.

The incident took place at about 8:30 pm when he was passing the area. He was stabbed in his chest and belly and died on the spot.

The body of the victim was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

No case has yet been filed, Motijheel police said.

Pak businessmen protest new tax

PESHAWAR, June 5: Pakistani police fired tear gas and beat merchants today to break up a rally against the government's plans to document business transactions and impose a 15 per cent sales tax, says AP.

Defying a ban on protests and rallies, more than 2,000 merchants and storeowners marched through the narrow, dusty streets of this northern border city chanting slogans against the tax drive.

Muggers stab Daily Star reporter

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of muggers stabbed Reaz Ahmed, a Staff Reporter of The Daily Star and robbed him of Tk 2500 in front of Saidabad police box while he was going home from office in an auto-rickshaw on Sunday night.

The incident took place at about 10:30 p.m. The muggers, numbering three, forced their entry into the auto-rickshaw as the vehicle was moving slowly in a traffic jam.

The victim immediately reported the incident to nearby Demra police station. A mobile police team and the victim then went to the spot but failed to find any one of the muggers at the spot.

When contacted yesterday evening, Demra police said none was arrested in connection with the incident. A General Diary was registered, they added.

The investigating officer did not respond to requests from The Daily Star to talk on the incident although the duty officer said that he (IO) was present at the police station.

Schoolboy drown

By Staff Correspondent

A schoolboy drowned in the Bumiganga river at Basila near the city's Mohammadpur area yesterday and another boy was missing.

The boy who drowned was identified as Amjad Hossain Sumon 16, a student of class eight at Lalmatia Boys High School.

Sumon's body was recovered by Fire Brigade personnel at about 8 pm and sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Sumon along with two friends went for bathing in the river at about 4:00 pm yesterday. One of them rose from water within few minutes and two others who did not know swimming did not, hospital sources said quoting their family members.

At one stage, Sumon and one of his friends were washed away by the tide. The other friend cried for help. Local people jumped into the river but failed to trace them.

PSC report placed in JS Number of civil service job seekers increasing

The number of civil-service job seekers is increasing every year, highly outnumbering the posts on stake as scope for employment is limited, reports UNB.

It was revealed in the annual report of the Public Service Commission that was placed in Parliament yesterday.

Education Minister A S H K Sadique placed the report before the House.

In 21st BCS examination held in 1999 about 86,406 candidates applied against a total of 934 posts. In the 20th BCS examination held in 1998 about 83,287 candidates applied against 1322 posts while in the 18th BCS the number of candidates was 80,057.

According to the report, the number of candidates is increasing rapidly from 10th BCS examination as vacancies are not increasing comparatively.

In 1989 the ratio of candi-



A colourful procession marking the World Environment Day paraded the city yesterday. — Star photo

BGMEA to cancel membership for quota forgery

By Rafiq Hasan

BGMEA has decided to cancel membership of garments factory owners who will be found guilty of quota forgery or selling imported fabrics violating bonded warehouse rules, according to sources.

An Extraordinary General Meeting of BGMEA held on Saturday last made two major amendments to its Articles of Associations which empowered its Governing Board to take the decision for such punitive action.

The other amendment says, from now on, any member will be allowed to appeal against the decision of BGMEA arbitration committee regarding dispute with buying houses and buyers. A five-member committee headed by a retired judge will hear his appeal.

The committee will comprise two BGMEA members and two lawyers.

"These are very good decisions. First of all, we want to clean ourselves," said BGMEA Vice-President Anisul Haq. "It is a very strong step forward. It will help us improve our image in and outside the country. The garments sector has come to a stage that we should upgrade our image."

Anisul Haq said this will significantly reduce quota forgery and other fraudulent practices in the sector.

The EGM, held at Hotel Sonargaon, was presided over by BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha. Around three hundred garments factory owners participated in it.

The decisions will be implemented soon. The appeal committee will be able to solve most of the disputes with BGMEA members quickly, the sources said.

One of the sources termed the decisions revolutionary and said the BGMEA has set an example. He hoped that other business association in the country would also follow the example and take such decisions.

DB takes up Shipu murder case

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch of Police took over yesterday the murder case of Iftekhar Ahmed Shipu, 38, a cellular phone trader of UAE market in the city.

DB inspector Rezaul Karim visited the victim's residence and the shops at Banani soon after taking over the case, police said.

The DB team assured the family of nabbing the culprits at the earliest as "they were the top-notch investigating authority in the country for such investigations."

The May 5 double murder case, in which two brothers were killed at Mohammadpur, was also transferred to the DB soon after the incident, though there has been no headway to date.

Some businessmen of the UAE market told the Daily Star yesterday that they doubt whether the killers would be arrested since one of them was the son of a ruling party MP.

"How come police could not arrest the killers even after reported instructions from the prime minister," asked one angry businessman. He wondered whether they should try the killers of Shipu on their own.

"The businessmen of the area will try the accused listed in the FIR if they are found loitering around the market premises," said another businessman.

Muggers stab businessman in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 5: Muggers stabbed a businessman and snatched Tk 10,000 from him at Kapasgola in the city today, police said.

The businessman, Sekander Meah, was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) with stab injury in his thigh.

Sekander was waylaid by the muggers while he was going to deposit the money with a local bank at 12 noon, police said.

The muggers stabbed him as he refused to hand over the money, police said adding the muggers then snatched the money and fled the scene.

PAY DWASA BILLS IN TIME WITHOUT SURCHARGE

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Last Date : 20th June, 2000

- It is notified for esteemed consumers and Heads of Govt./Semi Govt. Organizations that special drive has started to disconnect water line for non-payment of Water /Sewer bills.
- It has been decided to extend time to pay upto-date bills with arrears on or before 20th June 2000 without surcharge.
- Consumers are hereby requested to pay upto-date Water /Sewer bills immediately to avoid disconnection of water line and court case under PDR Act for non payment of bills.
- Consumers are advised to contact with Zonal revenue officer immediately for non-receipt of Water /Sewer bills.
- For any complaint regarding Water/Sewer bills, please contact the concerned zonal revenue office or Chief Revenue Officer (☎9131569) or Commercial Manager (☎9120557) or Deputy Managing Director (F&A) (☎8116799).

We are at your service

DHAKA WASA

Wasa: PI-204/2000

Warehouse of cotton factory gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent

Fire gutted a warehouse of cotton at Kadamtali in the city's Shampur area yesterday afternoon.

The fire which originated from a spark at the chimney at the first floor of Oriental United Industries at Kadamtali at about 1:05 pm, fire officials said. It engulfed the godown on the floor, officials said.

Three fire fighter units from Sadarghat and Postagola brought the situation under control after about two hours.

Shyampur police said that a general diary was filed in this connection and an officer has been to the spot to investigate. No casualties were reported.

Dhaka National Medical College
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Notice

1st year MBBS course for the session 1999-2000 will start on 14.6.2000 at 10:00 AM.

(Prof. Mahmud Rahman)
Principal
Dhaka National Medical College

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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