

# 138 killed in El Salvador as earthquake rocks Central America

SAN SALVADOR, Jan 14: Death toll from an earthquake which rocked Central America rose early Sunday to at least 138 people, but many more were missing in El Salvador, where a landslide triggered by the quake buried hundreds of homes, reports AFP.

Rescue workers and members of the public toiled through the night searching for survivors in the worst-hit areas of El Salvador, often in darkness where the quake Saturday had cut power lines.

The authorities said the death toll was likely to rise further, with 1,200 people missing in a neighbourhood near the capital, according to Red Cross figures.

The strength of the quake, which happened midday Saturday, was estimated at between 7.4 and 7.9 on the Richter scale.

Salvadoran President Francisco Flores declared a nation-wide state of emergency and his government issued an urgent appeal for international aid.

At least 136 people were killed in El Salvador, with some 500 injured according to rescue officials. At least two people were killed in Guatemala. In El Salvador, the Red Cross said that about 1,200 people were missing in the residential neighbour-

hood of Las Colinas, 12 kilometres west of here, where a massive landslide triggered by the quake left 330 homes in ruins.

The number of confirmed deaths at Las Colinas rose to 30 by the early hours of Sunday, as relatives of the missing, alongside rescue workers, searched frantically for survivors trapped in the rubble.

In the towns of Usulután and Cuscatlán in the east of the country, 14 people and four people respectively were killed, according to the authorities.

In the low-income northern neighbourhoods of the capital San Salvador itself, thousands of people opted to sleep in parks and squares rather than remain inside their houses, which are often built in a flimsy manner.

"There have been serious and painful human losses and a lot of material damage," Flores said in a message to the nation broadcast on radio and television after he had travelled to some of the affected areas.

Flores appealed for calm, and reassured the public that police had been deployed in some of the worst-hit areas to prevent looting. They were also

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Workers are working round the clock to get the work done before the International Trade Fair opens next Friday. A near-complete pavilion is seen in the background. -- Star photo

# MCCI suggests ways to identify bank loan defaulters

By Monjur Mahmud

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) yesterday suggested some changes in the proposed Bank Company Act (amendment) Bill to make a distinction between an individual shareholder or partner and a corporate or business entity in determining a bank loan defaulter.

At a meeting with Finance Minister SAMS Ribia, the newly elected MCCI leaders pointed out that as per a provision in the proposed bill, an individual in a public limited company will be termed a defaulter for corporate default if he holds 50 per cent of the shares or more, and if he is a director.

They suggested that the provision be seriously reviewed. "Our chamber strongly feels that the shareholding limit be reduced to a level of 15 to 20 per cent in public limited companies."

They said that in public limited companies, the shares held by an individual, except in a very few cases, does not exceed 15 to 20 per cent, but many of such

individuals hold important decision making positions.

In such cases, they will not be penalised though in private limited companies, there will be penalty on such individuals for business default, they mentioned.

The business leaders also recommended raising the shares of directors or partners in private limited companies or partnership firms to a higher level from the proposed 20 per cent.

The proposed bill says, in private limited companies or partnership firms, a director/partner will not be individually treated as a defaulter if he has 20 per cent or less ownership.

The MCCI also said that the Bill should be passed without any delay. "It will save running industries from being closed down for cross-directorship, involving any enterprise not doing well in business."

# Copies of HC split verdict sent to CJ

By Special Correspondent

Copies of the High Court's split judgement in the Bangabandhu Murder Case were sent to Chief Justice Latifur Rahman yesterday.

Two judges of the High Court's Death Reference Bench gave the split verdict on December 14. One judge upheld the death sentence of all the 15 accused and the other acquitted five of them.

The trial court sentenced the 15 to death on November 8, 1998 for murdering Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family at his residence on August 15, 1975.

The copies of the judgement were sent to the office of the Chief Justice (CJ) after 5 pm yesterday. He was not in his office at that time.

The CJ is expected to form a Third Bench today to hear the case concerning the five acquitted by one judge.

The December 14 judgement by Justice Ruhul Amin gave benefit of doubt to the five in his 394-page judgement, he acquitted Lt Col (rtd) Mohiuddin Ahmed on the ground that charges against him were not proved and

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# Clash on DU campus Crisis in JCD deepens

By Staff Correspondent

Crisis in the Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) further intensified as activists of Pintu-Laltu group and their rivals in the organisation clashed on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Witnesses said the trouble began when some members of the Pintu-Laltu group, ignoring warning by the rebels, came to the campus at about 12:30pm and took position in the DUCSU Building while the rebels positioned themselves in front of the IBA Building.

The two groups chased each other and exchanged fire. None, however, was injured, campus sources said.

The rebel leaders and activists, however, ousted the Pintu-Laltu men from the campus.

Crisis in the JCD began when BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced a five-member central body on December 23 with Nasiruddin Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu as president and general secretary, triggering violent protests by the majority of JCD activists in the city. They demanded cancellation of the committee on the ground that the members of the new body are

non-students and terrorists.

The crisis continued despite a conciliatory move by Khaleda on January 8. Pressured by Khaleda, the rebels withdrew their agitation and assured her of their acceptance of the new body.

But the situation remained unchanged as the dissidents on Thursday asked Pintu and Laltu men not to come to the DU campus until the central committee is full-fledged.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) men allegedly beat up Amiruzzaman Shimul, president of Ziaur Rahman Hall unit of JCD during yesterday's incident.

BCL, the student front of ruling Awami League, brought out a procession on the campus soon after the incident and held a rally in front of the DUCSU Building.

They alleged that Khaleda Zia was trying to disrupt the peaceful academic atmosphere on DU campus by making non-students and terrorists leaders of her party's student front. They vowed to resist any such group on the campus.

# Hartal disrupts normal life in Ctg: 5 held

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG: Jan 14: Normal life was disrupted in the port city today, the first day of a 36-hour hartal enforced by Jamaat-backed Islami Samaj Kallyan Parishad (ISKP).

ISKP enforced the hartal demanding release of its 40 activists arrested on November 10 last year.

They were arrested during a clash with police in front of Jame-Mosque over holding of a Tafsir Mahfil in the city.

Police arrested five pickets during hartal hours in the city. Delivery of goods to and from Chittagong Port remained suspended though cargo handling inside the jetty was as usual, port sources said.

Most of the vehicles except rickshaws stayed off the roads while train service to and from Chittagong was as usual.

Attendance in both public and private offices was thin and transactions in banks remained suspended during the hartal.

Mills and factories here suffered production loss due to thin attendance of workers, sources said.

# Dispute with senior officer over FWP? Brig General resigns

By Staff Correspondent

Brigadier General Kalam Shaheed, now commanding a brigade in Chittagong, recently resigned from the army. His resignation will be officially announced soon, sources said.

The sources claimed that his resignation followed a dispute with his senior officer who was pressuring him to sign official papers regarding a "Food for Work Programme".

Shaheed reportedly refused to sign the papers on the ground that there were some irregularities in it.

The Ministry of Defence, upon receiving his resignation letter, initially suggested an investigation into the matter, one source claimed. Later, a lobby influenced the ministry to abandon the idea of investigation.

However, a top official of the ministry said that the ministry had not decided to undertake any investigation. Therefore, there was no question of any lobbying to influence the ministry.

"Kalam Shaheed in his letter sought retirement, showing personal reasons. His letter came to the ministry via the Army Headquarters. Therefore, there is no reason why the ministry would try to resist his resignation."

The official said the Brigadier General in his lengthy letter

made some comments regarding Food for Work Programme but did not say what the comments were.

"His resignation letter has been sent to the President," he added.

The sources said Brigadier General Shaheed is a brilliant officer. He was also a good student and obtained first class first position in Political Science from Dhaka University in the mid-80s. He also obtained PhD degree. Known to be committed to army career, his sudden resignation has raised questions, the sources said.

# Rubel murder Ex-Ramna OC cross-examined

By Court Correspondent

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, the then OC of Ramna thana as well as the 26th prosecution witness in the Shamim Reza Rubel Murder Case was cross-examined in the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court Dhaka yesterday.

Judge, Mollah Mostafa Kamal adjourned the proceedings of the case. See page 11 col 6

# Errant manpower recruiters may lose licence

By Reaz Ahmad

The Ministry of Labour and Employment will take punitive action against four manpower recruiting agencies for sending some 1000 Bangladeshis to Middle East countries without jobs, official sources said here yesterday.

The agencies are Meridian International, Paradise International, Sarkar Recruiting Agency and Silverline Associates.

The action may include cancellation of recruitment licence and forfeiture of their security money deposited with the ministry.

They were served with show cause notices earlier but their replies to the ministry last week were "not satisfactory".

The ministry on Thursday sent urgent messages along with copies of the replies to Bangladesh missions in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE to verify the facts given by the four recruiting

agencies. Punitive action will be taken after messages are received from the missions, the sources said.

The move follows a directive from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the ministry for action against unscrupulous recruiting agencies, given at its meeting on January 4. At that meeting, ministry officials told the JS body that it would be apprised of the follow-up action at the next meeting, likely on January 18.

Following reports on miseries of undocumented Bangladeshis in Middle East countries, a parliamentary team visited the three countries from September 28 to October 12.

After the visit, the JS body in a report said that hundreds of Bangladeshi workers in Middle East countries were facing hostile situations because of lack of job

security, cheating by some unscrupulous recruiting agencies and non-cooperation from a section of the staff in the country's missions. But the victims can not take recourse to legal aid.

Sometimes, difference of opinion between envoys and labour attaches on important labour issues add to their miseries, it added.

Even legal expatriates are low-paid compared to their colleagues from India and Pakistan because of an unholy competition among recruiting agencies in Bangladesh, the JS body report said.

The report suggested that two Saudi lawyers be engaged to bail them out.

More than half of Bangladesh's three million remittance senders work in Middle East countries and most of them are in Saudi Arabia.

# One strangled allegedly by her husband in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young housewife was strangled allegedly by her husband at their residence at Sonargaon Janapath in the city's Uttara area in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Shefali Begum, 32, wife of Hasanuzzaman.

Police recovered her body from the house with mark of injuries at about 2 am yesterday. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Police said that they were informed about the incident in the early hours of yesterday by Shefali's landlord.

Shefali, mother of four daughters, returned home from Pakistan one year back. Later, her husband went to Italy and again returned to the country one month ago.

Hasanuzzaman married to another woman recently at Tongi. See page 11 col 2

# Sedition case Charges framed against Adel, his two sons

By Court Correspondent

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday framed charges in a sedition case against Jahangir Mohammad Adel and his two sons for hoisting a Pakistani national flag atop his residence in the old city on August 14, last year.

Judge, Hrishikesh Saha fixed February 25 for cross-examination of the witnesses in the case.

The accused pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after hearing the charges brought against them.

Jahangir Mohammad Adel and his son Zobayer Mohammad Adel were present in the court. But his another son Tareq Mohammad Adel has been absconding since the incident. Charges were framed against Tareq in absentia.

Advocate T M Akbar, lawyer for the accused had earlier submitted a petition before the court for discharging the accused from the charges and made submissions on the petition yesterday. The Metropolitan PP Quamrul Islam opposed it and prayed for framing charges against the accused.

After hearing both the sides, the court framed charges against the accused.

The officer-in-charge of Kotwali Thana filed a petition case with the CMM's Court, Dhaka on August 21 against Adel and his two sons in this connection.

Adel was granted ad-interim bail by the Supreme Court in September last year.

The court fixed January 29 for hearing on bail petition of Zobayer Mohammad Adel, earlier submitted before the court.

# An eloquent protest



Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Khaleq) Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan paints a promotional poster black as part of a demonstration in the city yesterday, denouncing overdose of vulgarity in local films. Later on, leaders and activists of the party set ablaze some posters.

# Opposition's jt rally in Comilla today

Four-party opposition alliance will hold a joint public meeting at Town Hall Maidan in Comilla today, reports UNB.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, JP senior president member Begum Rawshan Ershad, Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami and IJO's Sheikhul Hadit Moulana Azizul Huq are likely to address the rally.

The alliance will also hold public meetings at Bandarban, Rangpur and Faridpur.



Stall attendants share a joke in between their work at the five-day UK Trade and Education Fair at Sonargaon Hotel which was inaugurated yesterday. Star photo

# 100 SC lawyers find PM's remark "very unfortunate"

By Staff Correspondent

One hundred lawyers of the Supreme Court have strongly protested Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent remarks about lawyers and said those are "very unfortunate".

In a joint statement yesterday, they said, "Terming lawyers as mastans is objectionable and the PM, who herself dishonoured the court, can not make such comment. The Prime Minister should exercise restraint in speaking".

It said the lawyers' community is witnessing with grave concern that the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have been making "irrelevant and insulting remarks" for the last four and a half years.

Moreover, the government also violated rules repeatedly and appointed ruling party men as judges of higher courts. Finally, it appointed two judges in the Appellate Division violating seniority, which angered all conscious citizens of the country, it said.

Referring to lawyers' demonstration on the Supreme Court premises on January 11, the statement said it was a "peaceful programme" to protest government's acts.

"Why she kept silent when her party activists brought out a stick procession under Home Minister's leadership, laid siege to the High Court, damaged hundreds of vehicles in the city in presence of ministers and attacked the house of a judge's relative following a recent verdict of the High Court?"

"The entire nation was surprised at those incidents", the statement said.

The lawyers urged the Prime Minister to refrain from making "objectionable remarks" and requested her to uphold sovereignty of the judiciary.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 15		5.33 pm
Jan 16	6-43 am	

Prayer Timings		
January 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-10
Zuhr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-35	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30

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