

'Aftershocks to rock Gujarat for months'

AFP, New Delhi

Aftershocks will rock India's Gujarat state for many more months in the wake of last week's massive earthquake, meteorological officials said Friday.

R.K. Kelkar, director general of the Indian Meteorological Department said the magnitude of the earthquake was such that stress in the region's geology would cause continuing tremors.

"Since Friday, there have already been more than 50 shocks which measured above 3.5 on the Richter scale," he said.

More than 140 shocks above 3.0 on the Richter scale have also been measured.

Kelkar defended his office's measurement of the quake's magnitude at 6.9 on the Richter scale. Foreign seismological stations, including the US Geological Survey, put it at 7.9.

Kelkar said the discrepancy was due to other agencies using a different "surface view" magnitude system.

Wahid refuses to step down

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Earlier, presidential spokesman Wimar Witoelar told reporters Wahid would meet the legislature's demands that he explain his role in the scandals.

"The president will follow whatever (parliament) says," Witoelar said. "The president is confident in his innocence and asks the people to believe in his innocence."

If he does not respond satisfactorily to parliament's demands within 90 days, the legislature can censure him again. A month after that it can start impeachment proceedings.

Top security minister Gen. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said Wahid had already prepared political and legal responses.

"Parliament's decision is nothing to worry about," Yudhoyono said after meeting with Wahid yesterday. "The government is functioning normally."

Still, minister of justice Yusril Mahendra -- a member of a small Muslim party that voted against Wahid on Thursday -- recommended that Wahid should step down.

"It is better that the president resign because it is clear that the majority (in) parliament supported the letter of reprimand," Yusril said yesterday.

Earlier this week, the parliamentary committee issued its report

Arsenic contamination

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take a full-scale research programme after close examinations of available data.

Initially, the 5,000 tested tube-wells were divided into six groups according to degree of contamination, with a tag put on each denoting the level of arsenic in its water.

During a recent visit, members of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) found out that sophisticated equipment linked to satellite are used to examine groundwater at Darishatabandi, a village under Arahazar thana.

Seven monitoring tube-wells have been installed at the depth of 20, 30, 40, 50, 100, 120 and 140 feet respectively, Dr Stute told the FEJB reporters.

Another production deep tube-well has been set up at 300 feet. The idea is to study the degree of arsenic contamination in different layers of the ground aquifer.

He said that they would also

TUs at Ctg Port

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The ministry hardly give any direct appointment, they added, saying "such appointments may hamper seniority and block the promotion of other employees."

Talking to this correspondent CBA president of Chittagong Port Mahfuzur Rahman Khan said "we would launch a movement to resist such interference by the ministry as it would affect the normal procedure of promotion of our employees."

"Despite repeated appeals the ministry concerned has not yet given clearance to CPA for filling up the 1900 vacant posts here," Khan said.

Admn turns

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not done this even in three weeks. Local sources said that the TNO is now in trouble as he had earlier given a report in favour of the kiln. They quoted the TNO as saying that he could now give a report against the kiln if the "protesters helped" him return the money he had taken from its owner.

Meanwhile, villagers who protested setting up of the brick kiln in their village have come under threat from some local mastans. They have threatened that a case would be filed against the protesters under the Public Safety Act.

Despite repeated attempts, neither the TNO nor the DC could be contacted over telephone.

Estimates of the death toll from the Gujarat quake have ranged between 30,000 and 100,000 people.

He said the Kutch area of Gujarat, which was at the epicentre of the earthquake, lay in the highest seismic zone for India.

The other regions which fall in the same category are the Himalayan range, northeastern states and the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean.

The Indian capital of Delhi is also in a quake-sensitive area.

"There will be rattling even in Delhi. There are possibilities (of bigger quakes)," Kelkar said, responding to a query on whether the Indian capital itself was vulnerable.

"We should move forward to implement safety measures," Kelkar added.

He said the meteorological department was setting up six new stations in addition to the 10 which already exist.

linking Wahid to the scandals, but presented no conclusive evidence that he had benefited from the schemes.

It claimed Wahid was involved in the illegal transfer of 40 million from the coffers of the state food agency, Bulog, by a former business associate. It also accused him of failing to officially declare a 2 million aid donation from Sultan Hasanah Bolkihah, the ruler of neighboring oil-rich Brunei.

The president has consistently denied any wrongdoing.

With the vast majority of lawmakers against him, Wahid's political survival hinges largely on the continuing support of his deputy, Megawati Sukarnoputri.

She has yet to comment, but her party -- the largest in parliament -- led the charge against him along with the Golkar Party of former dictator Suharto.

Ironically, both Golkar and Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle have been accused of involvement in corruption.

As the ruling party during Suharto's 32-year dictatorship, Golkar was ridden graft in a regime that was regarded as one of the most corrupt on earth. And Megawati was forced recently to fire 13 party officials because of shady financial dealings.

identify the causes of mobilisation of arsenic in groundwater.

Dr Martin said that the team so far collected samples from 30 wells for geo-chemical examination. The samples will be sent to the Columbia University for final examination, he added.

Chief of health-related activities in the Bangladesh chapter of the project, Dr AZM Ifitkhar Hussain told reporters that blood and urine samples are being collected from people in the project areas and shipped monthly to laboratories at the university.

Data is being also compiled using a 21-page questionnaire, he added. Besides, experts are also trying to find out whether the arsenic has link with nutrition or genes.

Dr Ifitkhar informed that they have decided to set up a clinic within a couple of months in the project area to provide treatment to arsenic-affected people. He said appropriate measures would be taken after the geo-chemical survey and test.

He said six health teams are working, taking interview as well as collecting data from people of the three union in Arahazar thana to identify affected people. The objective is to find out how fast arsenicosis spreads, he pointed out.

Also, the experts are trying to find out whether arsenic crosses the placental barrier and harms the foetus and also to assess the effects on the cognitive development in young children.

A Daily Star team prepared background papers on the nominees. An 11-member panel of

judges comprising top economists, businessmen, professionals and academicians analysed the contribution of the candidates and chose one winner from each category.

The Business Person of the Year award will be given for outstanding corporate success. Integrity, business and financial acumen, management skills and leadership qualities will be considered.

The Outstanding Woman in Business award will be given to someone in business or profession who has made an outstanding contribution to her company or profession and can be considered as an inspiring model for other woman entrepreneurs.

The Enterprise of the Year award will be given to a company that has distinguished itself through entrepreneurial spirit and innovation.

Without removing the Awami League government, it will not be possible to win the next general election, she said.

"Because, Awami League does not believe in vote. They want to come to power through election fraud," she told a group of BNP leaders of Kalaroa in Satkhira who met her in the evening yesterday.

Some 46 leaders and workers of local BNP, who were implicated in a case under the Public Safety Act (PSA) centering a chaos on October 5 last year when Khaleda was obstructed at Kalaroa, came to meet the opposition leader after obtaining bail.

Narrating the "misdeeds and

Global warming may cost world \$300 b a year: UN

AFP, Nairobi

The annual costs of the effects of global warming could top 300 billion dollars 50 years from now if action is not taken to slash greenhouse gas emissions, the UN warned in a report released on Saturday.

That would constitute a 750 per cent increase on today's costs of global warming, and would cost some low-lying states more than 10 per cent of their national wealth.

The figures, in a report drawn up from data compiled in part by a German reinsurance company, Munich Re, assume that concentrations of carbon dioxide will in 2050 be double those of the pre-industrial era.

"Global warming may cost the world several billion dollars a year unless urgent efforts are made to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and the other gases linked with the 'greenhouse effect'," said the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a statement.

"Losses due to more frequent tropical cyclones, loss of land as a result of rising sea levels and damage to fishing stocks, agriculture and water supplies, could annually

'Uphold dignity of mother tongue'

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language through a long struggle and supreme sacrifice. She expressed the hope that people of the world would love their respective mother tongue and uphold its dignity.

The Prime Minister said it is a matter of pride for the whole nation that Amar Ekushey would be observed through the world as International Mother Language Day.

She said the world would also remember the supreme sacrifices made by our heroes for the cause of the mother tongue on that day in 1952.

She said the inherent strength of the Language Movement and the aspiration of the entire nation cleared the path for the War of Liberation in 1971 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through movements against military and autocratic regimes in 1962, '66, '69 and '70.

"We've set an example of how to love the mother tongue by giving blood. We also want people across the world to love their own mother tongues and work together for their development," she said.

Sheikh Hasina paid rich tribute to poet Rabindranath Tagore for bringing international glory to Bangla by winning the Nobel prize and to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for addressing the UN General Assembly in Bangla, thereby giving it international status.

Referring to the proposed Mother Language Research Centre for research on Bengali language and culture, the Prime Minister said that the institute would preserve the specimen of all known and recog-

nised languages of the world. She noted that so far 4000 specimens were available to carry out research. She said the education ministry is implementing the project.

Sheikh Hasina said that there was no clash between our mother tongue and other foreign languages of the world. "Rather our language would be enriched by interacting with other languages," she said.

She also urged the academicians and educationists to translate books from other languages and also to translate our books into foreign languages so that there could be an effective interaction among the languages which could benefit all. She asked the Bangla Academy to take a leading role in this regard and assured all possible cooperation from her government.

Describing the Ekushey Book Fair as an indispensable part of Bengali culture, Hasina said this book fair is not only a commercial fair, but "this is part of our thinking and spirit."

She termed the poets, litterateurs and intellectuals as the conscience of the nation and hoped that they would try to give a strong mooring to the nation's mind and intellect alongside their creative writings.

The Prime Minister announced that the government would set up a welfare trust for helping the distressed artists, litterateurs and cultural activists. A draft bill has been approved by the cabinet, thereby giving it international status.

Amidst cheers from the audience, Hasina said her government has scrapped the Drama Control Act allowing exercise of free thinking in a democratic environment.

"Without democracy, exercise of

cost around 304.2 billion dollars," UNEP said.

"In some low lying states such as the Maldives, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, the losses linked with climate change could, by 2050, exceed 10 per cent of their national wealth or Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," the statement said.

"The time to act is now," urged UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer.

"We must all work to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. But mitigation is not enough. "The world has already signed up to a certain level of human-induced, climate change, as a result of over a century of industrial emissions primarily from the developed world.

"We must help vulnerable areas of the world, primarily in the developing countries, to adapt to the consequences of global warming. We have a moral responsibility to our fellow men and women to protect them and their families from food shortages and devastating floods," added Toepfer.

"These estimates ... of the costs

of climate change to the world's economy serve to further underline the need for governments to act to avert the damaging impacts of rising greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere," said the UNEP chief.

According to Gerhard Berz, who heads Munich Re's geo-science research group, climatic change could lead to natural catastrophes, such as cyclones and hurricanes, of hitherto unknown force and frequency.

Extra burdens on water management systems, the increased need for flood defence systems, damage to delicate ecosystems and agricultural land are some of the factors behind the predicted rise in the cost of global warming.

About 100 environment ministers from around the world are due to gather in Nairobi to attend the 21st session of UNEP's Governing Council from February 5 to 9.

A study by thousands of scientists released this year showed that average temperatures across the world could climb by between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Centigrade over the coming century.

free thinking is not possible. We want the poets, litterateurs and cultural activists to get the opportunity to exercise free thinking, which was obstructed since 1975," she told the gathering of litterateurs and intelligentsia.

Calling for peace and healthy academic atmosphere on the campus, the Prime Minister said: "We no longer want to hear bomb blasts or gunshots."

She said the situation at the Dhaka University has improved a lot, but it could have improved further had there been cooperation from the opposition.

She requested the vice-chancellors and teachers of universities to take tough action against any kind of vandalism or rowdiness and assured government's cooperation in maintaining academic atmosphere in all educational institutions.

The Prime Minister said: "Let's start our journey towards light from darkness, let's build a nation free of illiteracy, hunger and poverty. Let's build a self-respecting nation exploiting the immense prospects."

The function was also addressed by State Minister for Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Qader, editor Obaidul Huq, chairman of Bangla Academy Prof Anizuzzaman, director general Syed Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Publishers and Sellers Association Abdur Razzak and president of Srijanshil Publishers Association Mafidul Huq.

Later, the Prime Minister went round different book stalls at the fair and showed interest in new books

Bangladesh Business Awards

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release said, The Daily Star and the DHL hope to create an environment of excellence and competitiveness which will drive members of the business community to achieve greater heights in productivity, efficiency, financial discipline and modern management that will make Bangladesh a worthy partner of the global economy.

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AL does not believe in vote: Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson and Opposition Leader in Parliament Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her partymen to intensify the oust-government movement.

Without removing the Awami League government, it will not be possible to win the next general election, she said.

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Narrating the "misdeeds and

Heroin worth Tk 2cr seized in city: 6 held

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Detective Branch of Police arrested six people and recovered heroin worth over Tk 2 crore from the city's Gulshan area on Thursday night.

A squad of DB police raided DCC market at Gulshan Circle-2 and arrested Moslem Uddin, 40, Habibur Rahman, 45, Nazrul Islam, 40, Abdur Rab, 42, Dulal Sarker 38, and Mujibur Rahman, 38, while they were selling and purchasing the contraband.

The squad seized two kilograms of heroin from their possession. A case has been registered with Gulshan Thana in this regard.

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Rangpur rally to be held on schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting of Central Liaison Committee of the opposition alliance on Thursday decided that the alliance's planned joint public meeting at Rangpur tomorrow will be held on schedule.

The meeting at Rangpur had become uncertain when Jatiya Party Acting Chairman Roushan Ershad recently left for a visit to US. JP Chairman H M Ershad is in jail in connection with a corruption case.

But leaders of the four component parties of alliance -- BNP, JP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote -- are firm to hold the meeting, meeting sources said.

Held at Jamaat office with BNP Vice-chairman M Shamsul Islam in the chair, the meeting also decided that JP Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manjur will represent the JP acting chairman at the public meeting.

Without removing the Awami League government, it will not be possible to win the next general election, she said.

Erhsad imporving

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president and Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad, now under treatment, is improving.

He was admitted to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) Thursday afternoon with chest pain.

Doctors last night said Ershad's condition was stable and he was gradually improving. He may be taken to his cabin from the coronary care unit (CCU).

"Ershad is doing better and he is talking to people", one doctor said. Another source at the hospital said a medical board formed for his treatment is likely to meet today.

Ershad suffered a mild pain in his chest in his prison cell at the Dhaka Central Jail on Thursday. Doctors from Dhaka Medical College Hospital examined him and advised hospitalisation.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party Presidium at a meeting last night demanded proper treatment of Ershad.

Twenty one members of the Presidium out of 31 attended the meeting held at the party office with Dr MA Martin in the chair.

The meeting decided that all the central leaders of JP would leave for Rangpur by 6 am today for the 'grand rally' of the four-party opposition alliance at Rangpur tomorrow, meeting sources said.

Confce on Bangladesh Parliament begins in city today

BSS, Dhaka

An international conference on "Bangladesh Parliament in the 21st century," begins today at Sheraton hotel here.

Organised by Parliament Secretariat, in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, the conference will be attended by parliament members including leading parliamentarians from home and abroad.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate will open the conference at 10 am. Former speaker of the Indian Lok Sabha P A Sangma, former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian Parliament Geert Versnick, MP, former Associate Finance Minister of New Zealand David Butcher will present keynote papers at the conference.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP, former finance minister Saifur Rahman, MP and prime minister parliamentary affairs adviser Suranjit Sengupta, MP are expected to take part in the conference.

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Biman's Hajj flights begin

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Biman Airlines started its hajj flights yesterday with the departure of its first flight for Jeddah carrying some 572 pilgrims.

A chartered Boeing 747 aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines departed Zia International Airport at 2:40 pm.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mosharrif Hossain and State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Mohammad Nurul Islam saw off the pilgrims at the airport, said a Biman press release.

Earlier, the ministers spoke to the pilgrims at a brief inaugural ceremony in the holding lounge where a munajat was offered seeking blessings of the Almighty for a safe pilgrimage.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Chowdhury Mohammad Mohsin, and high officials of the ministries of Religious Affairs and Civil Aviation and Tourism were present.

Dhaka, Yangon

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fire between the border forces of the two countries January 8.

Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry Janibul Haq led the 15-member Bangladesh team at the talks yesterday. It included Cox's Bazar DC Pulin Bihari Dey, DDG of BDR Brigadier General MA Salam and representatives from the Joint River Commission, National Security Intelligence, Bangladesh Water Development Board, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and Surveyor General's Office.

The 15-member Myanmar delegation was led by Deputy Director General of Foreign Ministry U Ong Bah.

Cosmetic company

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The amounts were determined by checking the company's monthly statements on sales, stocks delivery and sale bills.

During the period, the company supplied goods worth Tk 256.30 crore but declared that the price of the supplied goods was only Tk 49.93 crore.

The company declared 80.51 per cent less value of the goods in documents, the notice said.

Russia steps up campaign against US missile defence

AFP, Moscow

Moscow stepped up its campaign Friday against US plans to build a national nuclear defence shield (NMD), saying it had no guarantees the system would not grow in size and affect Russian defences.

As a result, Russia's command argued against any possible amendments to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic (ABM) treaty that would allow Washington to deploy even a limited missile defence programme.

"Although the Americans are talking about small changes to the ABM, what we are saying is that this would break ground for a system that could be aimed against our own rockets and strategic forces," said General Valery Manilov, the deputy chief of staff.

"The US will then have all the technological, economic and financial means at its disposal to unfold this system to its full potential," said Manilov.

Moscow and Beijing have led the diplomatic offensive against the NMD, and further sought to exploit European unease about the system to pressure new US President George W. Bush to delay its deployment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin

last week warned the shield would create "irreparable damage to the architecture of international relations."

Washington argues that the shield is aimed only against so-called rogue states like North Korea and Iran, which are seeking to develop long-range missiles.

The White House further argues that such a shield would in no way affect Moscow since Russia's nuclear arsenal is so vast.

However Moscow is concerned that