

Miracle rescue from Iran quake

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the quake. She was located first by sniffer dogs yesterday afternoon -- more than 8 1/2 days after the quake buried her under a building.

Rescue workers then spent three hours excavating her from the rubble.

"She is now being treated in a Red Crescent centre and is in good condition," Malek said.

There have been no survivors found in the devastated city since Thursday when three people were rescued despite long odds. Experts say it is extremely unlikely to survive even beyond three days without food or water in such conditions.

The tremor killed at least 30,000 people in Bam, an ancient Silk Road city that once had 103,000 inhabitants. Government officials have said the final toll may reach 50,000. Ninety percent of its buildings were also ruined.

In an attempt to restore a semblance of normality to the south-eastern city, state media said at least three of Bam's 23 schools were reopened briefly yesterday -- the start of the week in Iran.

"We opened the school this morning but we decided to close again," Abbas Burunabadi, a consultant to the governor of Bam, told Reuters at a boys school in Rudab just outside the city that appeared undamaged. He said they would try again Monday.

"Less than 30 percent of the pupils attended classes today and I haven't seen many of the teachers," Burunabadi said, as several children played on the street in front of the one-story brick building. "Most lived in Bam and a number were killed."

One group of six boys between eight to 12 were kicking a stone around on the street in an impromptu football match while children in another slightly larger group played with sticks or leaned against the walls of the school beneath a yellow banner that said classes had been postponed until Monday.

"I went along this morning but it was cancelled," said Aboljassen Nezamabaei, 7, on his bicycle outside school.

Mohammad Taqizadeh, head of education in the Kerman province, told the official IRNA news agency classes would start Monday in tents if there are enough pupils.

"There were 27,000 pupils in Bam before the earthquake, but we have no figures on the number now," he added. "More than 90 percent of the schools were damaged."

Burunabadi, in Rudab, said there were also other worries.

"From a psychological point some pupils are afraid to go back inside a building," he added.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is being seen off by her council of ministers at the Zia International Airport before she flew off to Islamabad to attend the 12th Saarc Summit.

Cold snap claims

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-- bundled up in warm clothes amid a daylong countrywide hartal enforced by the main opposition Awami League.

Hundreds of people, especially children and the elderly, were taken to cold-related complications over the days.

"The veil of dense fog not only covered Bangladesh, but also giant northern stretches of neighbouring India and Nepal," said Asadur Rahman, deputy forecasting officer of the meteorological department.

"The situation is likely to improve from Monday when day temperatures will begin to rise."

"But the mild cold wave sweeping Jessore and Kushtia regions may last a couple of more days," a weatherman said.

Yesterday's lowest temperature in Dhaka was 12.3 degrees Celsius, down from 12.8 degrees on Friday.

Bangladesh saw its coldest winter in 1968 when mercury slid to 2.8 degrees Celsius in Srimangal.

Launch and ferry operators said the blankets of fog doggedly hanged until midday blurring vision in a

Cabinet meet

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concerned and the Chittagong Circuit House, venue of the cabinet meeting, was also given a face-lift last month, sources said.

But the plan for holding the cabinet meeting on the date was dropped as Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will not be able to lay the foundation stone of the third Karnaphuli bridge due to incomplete preparations for launching the project work, sources added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Shafiqul Islam said that no date has been set for the meeting in the port city. "So far, I know it may be held in February, just one week after Eid-ul-Azha, but that too is not yet confirmed," the DC said.

"But the prime minister is expected to arrive in Chittagong on January 13 to attend the ground-breaking ceremony of Asian Women University," the DC disclosed.

The existing two bridges on the river Karnaphuli have become almost worn out posing threat to communication between the port city and the southern part of Chittagong.

Sources said different development issues in line with the demands and aspirations of the residents of Chittagong are likely to feature in the cabinet meeting that is to be held in the port city.

UNDP team

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appointed staffs in the three hill districts towards that end.

But the UN agency could not properly restart the works as Jyotirindia Bodhipriya Lama alias Shantu Lama, chairman of CHT Regional Council and chief of Parbatya Chatagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), accused it of trying to exclude the regional and district councils from the development process. The regional council also sent a letter to UNDP Assistant Secretary General Hafiz Pasha alleging violations of the UN's development strategy for the indigenous people in the CHT by the UNDP country office.

The regional council alleged the UNDP tried to implement its projects in the CHT denying the 'hills reality'. The council also objected to the inclusion of Bangali settlers by the UNDP as beneficiaries of its projects.

The allegations, for all practical purposes, brought the UNDP development works in the CHT to a standstill. In response, the UNDP headquarters in New York decided to send the high-profile delegation to review the situation.

The team is scheduled to start visiting the three hill districts from January 8.

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Harsher law

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sations are also engaged in the crimes.

Some people take allotments of lands in the name of welfare organisations and turn them into their own property craftily and some others throw up slums, rickshaw and automobile garages.

The committee said crooks grab land in direct or indirect collaboration with government officials, employees and their relatives, and expatriates, the poor, hapless women and innocent people are their prime targets.

The committee put government land, vested property, abandoned and nabaw estates and shoals under the land ministry and wakf (endowed lands) under the religious affairs ministry high on the list of grabbed lands.

Lands under the department of forest, roads and highways and railway division and unused lands of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, water-bodies and river banks under the land and fisheries and livestock ministries, unutilised or abandoned lands of government housing estates, city corporations and other local government bodies and ports are encroachers' favourite targets.

It said vast stretches of unutilised lands under agriculture, textiles, jute, liberation war affairs, food, science and information technologies, disaster management and relief and housing and public works ministries were encroached across the country.

Int'l phone tariff

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charges as we need to pay overseas operators in foreign currency. Otherwise, the country will lose a huge amount of foreign exchange," BTB Chairman Md Nurul Islam said.

He mentioned that the BTB is not allowing its service telephones to enjoy the new facility.

There are 36,602 government telephones and 6,386 BTB service telephones.

In reply to a question, Nurul Islam said some subscribers are facing congestion due to lack of required knowledge about using the new code.

He categorically denied the BTB's reported involvement in the VoIP (voice-over internet protocol) to terminate calls at the reduced rate. "We are using a special compressed technology to apply the reduced rate, instead of using the conventional International Trunk Exchange (ITX)," he said.

About VoIP licence, he said the BTB does not need such licence because it is authorised to send voice since the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) came into being.

The BTB chairman said a section of the VSAT (very small aperture terminal) abuses the technology for transmission of voice instead of data, causing a huge loss to the state.

About the criticisms by telephone subscribers outside Dhaka for not getting the facility of reduced call charges, he said the facility will be extended to all in phases.

Nurul Islam, who took over as chairman late last month, said all efforts are being made to introduce the BTB's mobile phone service in time. "The purchase committee is evaluating the bids now," he added.

The BTB plans to introduce 2.5 lakh GSM (Global System of Mobile Communications) mobile phones by June this year.

2 journalists

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Earlier on Friday, a journalists' convention at Barisal criticised the home minister for "repression" on journalists and branded them as enemies of the press.

Meanwhile, Janakantha's Pirojpur correspondent Shafiqul Huq Mithu, who was seriously injured by alleged BNP cadres on December 29, was sent to Dhaka last Thursday after attackers threatened him following the withdrawal of his police protection. Mithu is currently undergoing treatment at Dhaka Pongu Hospital.

The public handed Russell, one of the attackers, over to police, but the other attackers are still at large. A case was filed.

Motia, 50 others hurt

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Dhaka and other cities and towns. However, rickshaws plied almost as usual.

In the capital, Motia Chowdhury received injuries in the legs as police charged batons on the demonstrators, who were trying to break a police cordon in front of the AL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue to parade on the streets in support of the hartal.

The law enforcers, both male and female, assaulted pro-hartal women pickets on Bangabandhu Avenue and dragged at least four of them onto police vans.

A woman police constable was also injured during the clashes at Bangabandhu Avenue, Golap Shah Mazar and Noor Hossain Square areas.

Police also charged batons on a crowd inside Osmany Udyan.

The protesters including AL leaders Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Akhtaruzzaman, Sultan Mohammad Mansur, Mohammad Hanif, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Pankaj Devnath sat on the street, encircled by police. They sang patriotic songs and shouted slogans against the government.

At about 12:30pm, Awami Jubo League brought out a pro-hartal procession from the Muktangan. Police clubbed the participants and dispersed them near the General Post Office (GPO). Jahangir Kabir Nanok and Mirza Azam MP were injured. The youth front activists gathered again and sat on the street with its top leaders. Later, AL leader Tofail Ahmed came to the spot, talked with police and marched to the party office area along with the demonstrators.

A procession led by AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Kader, Abdur Razzak, Abu Sayeed and KM Jahangir marched down the Mirpur Road during the hartal hours. The AL activists also staged demonstrations at Jigatola bus stand, near Dhaka University campus and at Shahbagh intersection, Jatrahari and Mirpur.

Egyptian plane crashes

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involving civilian airliners, which has led to the cancellation of seven US-bound flights in just over a week.

Egyptian military aircraft and ships, helped by small boats from nearby diving centers, launched a rescue operation at first light. Eyewitnesses said they were finding pieces of human bodies but no complete corpses and no survivors.

"We have half of a body here, half a body there. But we don't have any body in one piece," said a rescue worker, speaking by telephone from one of the boats.

"There's lots of personal stuff, small bags and toys. We have collected very small pieces of the plane but the body of the plane has sunk," said another rescue worker, who asked not to be named.

Yasser Imam, a spokesman for the local authorities, said: "What they have picked up so far is just fragments of bodies. The chances of finding complete bodies look slim because of the force with which the plane hit the surface of the water."

The plane crashed in the Strait of Tiran, between the Sinai peninsula and Saudi Arabia, where the water is hundreds of meters (feet) deep -- too deep for divers to reach the flight recording devices, diving school managers said.

French President Jacques Chirac telephoned his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak to obtain details of the crash and expressed his "deepest shock" at the tragedy, his office said.

Eyewitnesses in Sharm el-Sheikh said the rescue operation was concentrating on an area about half a mile off Naama Bay, the site of many large hotels.

An Egyptian armed forces C-

Sudden exercise poses heart risk

BBC ONLINE

Scientists have proof that people who seldom take exercise may be best off avoiding sudden bursts of vigorous physical activity.

University of Essex researchers found infrequent strenuous exercise poses a serious risk of a heart attack.

It keeps the heart racing for a long period - extending the time when problems could occur.

The researchers said it was not only those with known heart problems who should take care.

Dr Valerie Gladwell and Samantha Dawson compared the recovery times of volunteers after high-intensity and moderate intensity exercise.

Dr Gladwell said: "Following high-intensity exercise, heart rate remained significantly higher than normal for up to 30 minutes."

"In fact up to an hour after exercise heart rate still hadn't completely returned to normal."

But with more gentle, moderate exercise, heart rate returned to normal within 15 minutes - only slightly slower than with the lowest intensity exercise.

Gladwell added: "The quicker your heart rate recovers, the smaller the period of time within which heart problems can occur."

"Basically, you're hoping that the activity of nerves that control heart rate quickly return to normal."

The researchers said exercise training was an important treatment for patients who had experienced heart problems, like a heart attack, but it should be carefully controlled to avoid any dangers.

However, they said it was not just heart patients who needed to consider the risks of strenuous exercise.

Gladwell said: "The study suggests that short bouts of unaccustomed high-intensity exercise increases the chances of heart problems."

"For example, shovelling snow is well-known for causing heart attacks."

"It is unaccustomed exercise, it is hard work and it occurs in cold conditions - all factors contributing to an increased risk."

The researchers said moderate exercise and training could help reduce the risk of experiencing heart problems when doing heavier activities.

The results of the study were presented at the Physiological Society's conference at the University of Cambridge.

Indo-Pak talks

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countries have moved from a dead-end to silver-lining," Jamali told The News daily in an interview published yesterday.

He was quoted as saying that he expects "a structured Indo-Pak summit."

However Vajpayee, who arrived in Islamabad Saturday afternoon for his first visit to Pakistan since the rival neighbours came close to war in 2002, ruled out formal bilateral talks with Pakistan.

"In Islamabad, there will be no bilateral talks. We want to give all our energy to making the Saarc (South Asian Association Regional Cooperation) talks successful," Vajpayee told state-run Indian television before his departure for Islamabad.

"If we talk about things other than economic issues, then confusion could arise and even these could get blocked."

The 12th Saarc summit represents the first chance for Indian and Pakistani leaders to come face-to-face since coming close to war in 2002 after a deadly attack on India's parliament. New Delhi blamed the December 2001 attack on Pakistan-backed militants. Pakistan has denied any involvement.

Jamali's expectations stem from the exchange of confidence building measures between the two countries since April last year, when Vajpayee offered a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan and his final bid for peace.

"Ice has been broken with the recent spate of confidence-building measures initiated by Pakistan and India," Jamali said.

Vajpayee was warmly received by Jamali accompanied by Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz, complete with an honoured guard.

Indian officials have been downplaying the possibility of talks between the Indian and Pakistani leaders on the sidelines of the summit, saying if at all a meeting takes place, it would be an informal

PM

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bilateral talks were being finalised by the foreign ministry officials who had left earlier for Islamabad. The broad agenda, however, would include mutual cooperation with the nations concerned and regional and international issues.

The Bangladesh team at the summit consists of Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, Home Secretary Omar Faruk, PM's Principle Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, PM's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury and her Press Secretary Tajul Islam.

The issues that Bangladesh will particularly focus on in its deliberations at the summit include trade, investment, information and communication technology, environment and cooperation in harnessing common natural resources.

The dominating issue of this summit -- adopting a South Asia Free Trade Agreement (Safta) framework -- has already received support from the seven member countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Khaleda is scheduled to return to Dhaka on January 6 on conclusion of the summit.

Dhaka request

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member-secretary of Central Zoo Authority (CZA).

India is considering a consignment of eight male and 32 female marsh crocodiles and 50 fertile eggs pending approval of the Indian environment ministry, said official sources here yesterday.

Once approved, the consignment will be sent from the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, a captive-breeding centre of marsh crocodiles.

Sinha said Bangladesh should undertake a sustained follow-up action to conserve the species, adding that India has expertise in preserving the species and is willing to extend the same to Bangladesh.

The chief conservator of forest of Bangladesh in a letter in December last year asked the Indian environment ministry to save the species from extinction.

The letter pointed out that the number of the marsh crocodiles has come down to three due to the lack of a successful breeding programme in the last 15 years, said the sources.

India also faced an alarming fall in the number of marsh crocodiles in 1970s but now has more than 1,000 of the kind.

The threat of extinction to marsh crocodiles in Bangladesh was first brought to light by Vice-chairman of IUCN's Crocodile Specialist Group Romulus Whitaker, who visited the country a few months ago.

The skin of the species fetches fabulous price in international markets and poaching is cited as a key reason for the sharp decline in their number.

CZA Scientific Officer Bipul Chakrabarty said crocodiles help prevent the rivers from pollution and ecosystem in Bangladesh might be disturbed if an expedition re-introduction programme of the species is not met.

Marsh crocodiles are found in the wetland of India and Bangladesh, especially in rivers, freshwater lakes and marshy lands.

Chakrabarty said under the IUCN norms, India is bound to help Bangladesh in conservation of the species. India also received the same from Britain, he added.