

Schoolchildren beg in tornado-torn Netrakona

Villagers allege 'very limited' relief in only roadside areas

STAR REPORT

Largely without food and water for five straight days after Wednesday's twin tornadoes in two northern districts, a phalanx of schoolchildren begged yesterday while most affected families continued to camp out in their devastated homesteads.

Three more injured people died in hospital yesterday, taking the death toll from the monster twisters that battered 45 villages in Netrakona and five villages in Haluaghat in Mymensingh to 68. At least 13 Haluaghat victims contracted diarrhoea drinking contaminated water and inedible foods.

"There is no difference. Children from both rich and poor families are begging in desperation for survival here," said Ripon, 6, one of about 100 children begging in Netrakona Sadar.

Mosque loudspeakers blared appeal for help for the victims, espe-

cially unfed children.

The tornado-stricken villagers alleged government relief efforts were 'very limited' and covered only villages accessible by vehicles.

Only 'a lucky few' of about 3,000 twister-torn families in Netrakona and residents of five villages in Haluaghat received tents, they added.

"The government claims that it is distributing cash and corrugated iron sheets, but we are yet to see them," a villager said.

Visiting far-flung Dholamulgaon union and Shaldigha, Kuakanda, Laujana villages in Netrakona Sadar and Atkapara village in Purbodhala, The Daily Star correspondent did not find any relief activity.

"I have been waiting here since morning, but relief is yet to arrive," said schoolteacher Monirul Hasan, sitting helplessly on Atkapara High School ground.

"I have received only 10 extra

lungis which I'll have to send back," said Mustafizur Rahman, chairman of Mougati union.

Many people alleged they were denied the minimum relief materials being distributed in their areas as they were not listed with the local administration.

Some from the unaffected villages in Netrakona and Mymensingh and from neighbouring Kishoreganj, Lalmonirhat and other districts distributed relief among the victims on their own.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds: Most villagers of Kaliani Kanda were near-starving as no relief reached the worst affected village. Locals opened a community kitchen there for the survival of villagers.

People in Samuliapara and Boalmara villages nestled

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PHOTO: STAR

A cluster of houses clogs the Buriganga waters although Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority cleared illegal structures off the lifeline of Dhaka last year.

Hamas appoints new leader, vows 'volcano of revenge'

State of alert in Israel
REUTERS, AFP, Gaza City

The militant Islamic group Hamas appointed a secret successor to Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi hours after he was assassinated in an Israeli helicopter missile strike and vowed to wreak a "volcano" of revenge against Israel.

Faced with an Israeli threat to kill all leaders and operatives of Hamas, the movement has decided to keep the name of Rantissi's successor secret, a Hamas source said.

"We will explode a volcano of revenge," the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades said in a statement sent to AFP a day after Rantissi was killed in an Israeli helicopter strike in the Gaza Strip.

"Our revenge will come a

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5 Marines die in battle near Syrian border

US forces struggle to maintain control of highways

AP, Baghdad

US Marines backed by helicopters battled hundreds of Iraqi insurgents yesterday near the Syrian border, where an ambush killed five Marines. At least 10 Iraqis, including the city police chief, have been killed in two days of fighting, a hospital official said.

Meanwhile, US forces struggled to maintain control of Iraq's highways. The military announced new closures around Baghdad that severed long stretches of roads into the capital from the north, south and west -- a reflection of the damage from a two-week guerrilla onslaught on US supply lines.

Insurgent attacks and kidnap-

pers' roadblocks have forced the military to curtail supply convoys and are part of the reason commanders have boosted ground forces by more than 20,000 US troops. The military has already been tied down since April 1 on fronts in southern and central Iraq in the worst violence since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Officials have said the violence threatens to hamstring US reconstruction effort and drive up prices of civilian goods, dealing a blow to a delicate economic recovery in Iraq.

More than 1,500 foreign engineers and contractors have fled Iraq for fear of being abducted or killed, Iraqi Housing Minister Bayan Baqer said yesterday.

In Baghdad, two Iraqi civilians and one American soldier were killed in multiple attacks, the US military said yesterday.

The US soldier was killed Saturday morning when a roadside bomb exploded near a military convoy, the military said. The soldier was from Task Force Baghdad, which is made up mostly of troops from the 1st Cavalry Division.

The death brought to 90 the number of U.S. troops in violence killed since April 1. At least 687 US service members have died in Iraq since the war began in March 2003. Those figures don't include the reports of Marine deaths in Husaybah.

Unity a means to replace govt: says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Conscientious people must unite to replace the ruling alliance with a government mandated through an election free of black money and muscle power, Dr Kamal Hossain said yesterday.

"We want a change of government but the new one must come through democratic means," he said in an online interview organised by Kobita O Gaan, a cultural group operating in the Unites States and Bangladesh.

"It's a matter of great regret that none of the three parliaments since the fall of military dictator in 1990 has proved effective," Gonoforum and Oikya Prochesta President Dr Kamal said from his chamber while directly responding to questions of

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SEXUAL ABUSE SUST students demand arrest of JCD man

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Thousands of agitating students of the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) yesterday brought out a procession and held a rally in the campus demanding punitive actions against the JCD cadre and his accomplices who allegedly sexually abused a fellow student.

The students kept the acting vice chancellor confined in his office since noon till 6pm. They laid siege to the Administrative Building and held a rally there.

For the last two days a tense situation prevailed in the campus as a frenzy of anti-agitation activity ran parallel to the preparation for the agitation programme by the general students. At about 10pm on

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CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTMENT RU to spend extra Tk 5.5 lakh every month

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

Rajshahi University (RU) is most likely to suffer an 'unnecessary' additional expenditure of about Tk 5.5 lakh every month following the 'controversial' appointment of 544 employees.

The RU authorities Saturday appointed 327 third class and 217 fourth class staff on daily basis against 270 vacant posts for the categories allegedly without proper appointment procedure.

The third and fourth class employees are entitled to get Tk 75 and Tk 60 each respectively. The RU authorities, which have been bearing about Tk 19 crore budget deficit for the last two years, will have to pay Tk 5.5 lakh a month for the additional 274 staff.

RU sources said half of the employees belong to ruling BNP and another 30 percent to the Jamaat-e-Islami, while the rest have been recruited on political recommendations.

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanges views with editors of newspapers, news agencies and electronic media at a meeting at Prodhannantri Bhavan yesterday.

Ahmadiyyas urge govt to withdraw ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to withdraw the ban on its publications, terming the government move 'unjust'.

In a press release, the sect's General Secretary Kawsar Ali Mollah said the government decision has encouraged the religious zealots, who have long been spreading anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments to create instability in the society.

Kawsar said the Ahmadiyya devotees are suffering a lot due to the ban. The government being subservient to the anti-Ahmadiyya religious bigots took the decision that was 'unjust' and 'wrong', he added.

The government banned all publications of the Ahmadiyya sect on January 8, a day before the end of

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Proshika HQ under Jubo Dal siege

Activists call its chief AL agent, demand cancellation of its registration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The youth wing of ruling BNP yesterday besieged the Proshika headquarters in Mirpur and demanded cancellation of its registration as a non-government organisation (NGO), accusing its chief of acting as an agent of opposition Awami League (AL).

The Mirpur Ward 13 unit of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal organised the siege to protest hartal and what it said was 'crimes instrumented' by the AL.

Chanting slogans against

Proshika President Kazi Faruque Ahmed, the besiegers alleged he was involved in a conspiracy against the alliance government.

"Faruque has collected a fund of around Tk 4,500 crore from foreign donors and is now spending that in political activities," a Jubo Dal leader told the gathering.

Some speakers urged Proshika employees, who were looking through the windows of the high-rise building, to refrain from all political activities.

Local BNP lawmaker S A

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Quit this month or face 'grim future'

Hasina warns govt at Manikganj rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday warned the BNP-led alliance government of a 'grim future' if it does not step down by April 30.

Addressing a rally in Manikganj, she claimed there is a massive support at home and abroad to the deadline her party has set for the government to quit. "People have voiced no-trust to this government by responding positively to the deadline."

In an oblique reference to the coalition government, the AL chief said, "If they cling to power by force

even after April 30, their future will be very grim."

The district unit of AL organised the rally in Manikganj Govt Devendra College playground to drum up public support for the AL's movement to bring down the government.

Hasina, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, alleged the huge arms cache seized recently in Chittagong came from the 'masters' of the alliance government by a ship owned by Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and was unloaded at a jetty, which is under a ministry headed by a collaborator (Razakar).

She claimed people want an end

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Hasina can't meet wife of Rabbani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina was not allowed to meet the wife of the fatally-wounded Managing Director of Korean Export Processing Zone in Chittagong Golam Rabbani at their Navy Headquarters residence at Banani yesterday.

A navy officer on duty also barred Rabbani's wife from coming out of

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| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| April 19 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-35 | 5-10 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-24 | 6-28 |
| Esha | 7-45 | 8-15 |
| Source: Islamic Foundation | | |