

Tsunami toll tops 175,000

REUTERS, Galle, Sri Lanka

Asia's tsunami death toll soared past 175,000 yesterday as Sri Lanka confirmed thousands more dead, while fears re-emerged over the safety of aid workers in Indonesia's shattered Aceh province.

Denmark said it had information "imminent" terror attacks were planned against aid workers in Aceh, where US and other foreign troops have joined relief teams clearing rubble from the Dec. 26 disaster which killed 115,000 in that province alone.

"We have received information from sources abroad that somebody would be planning an attack today," Danish Foreign Ministry official Niels Erik Andersen told Danish radio.

Indonesia's foreign minister dismissed the report as "unfounded rumor." But it reignited fears that aid workers might become political targets in Indonesia, which has seen both a separatist rebellion in Aceh and deadly bomb attacks targeting Westerners blamed on an Islamic group linked to al-Qaeda.

US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz urged political opponents in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka -- facing a separatist rebellion of its own -- to put aside their differences and concentrate on relief work.

"Hopefully they will realize on all sides that the stakes that they are fighting for are relatively trivial," he said on arriving in Sri Lanka.

Removal of fish

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convenor of the committee while divisional engineer, divisional mechanical engineer and divisional signal engineer are members.

Press reports said ten bogies of the Meghna Express derailed near Hajiganj on Sunday, injuring over 50 people.

Rescue operation started shortly after the accident and completed by 9.45pm. Train service on the route resumed yesterday morning, the official handout said.

Tk 37,413

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to use any car of any project under the ministries or directorates. He if anyone is found using such a vehicle, he will be punished," the report said.

Referring to a similar scheme introduced by the Bangladesh Bank for its staff, the commission said the system has successfully reduced expenses and checked corruption there.

The commission also proposed to increase the transport allowance for the employees who are not eligible to get individual vehicles. It suggested monthly Tk 250 for first class officers who reside in the Dhaka metropolis, Tk 200 for Chittagong metropolis, and Tk 150 for Narayanganj municipality and other metropolitan cities.

It proposed to give Tk 150 a month to the second class officers who reside in Dhaka metropolis, Tk 125 in Chittagong metropolis and Tk 100 in Narayanganj municipality and other metropolitan cities.

The suggested transport allowance for the non-gazetted employees is Tk 125 a month for residents of Dhaka metropolis, Tk 100 of Chittagong metropolis, and Tk 80 of Narayanganj municipality and other metropolitan cities.

Azam Reza to die

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Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed arguments and the court recorded statements of 13 out of 20 prosecution witnesses.

Special Public Prosecutor Aminul Islam yesterday expressed his satisfaction over the judgment. He told The Daily Star that Azam Reza's sister television actress Shampa Reza and his girl friend were accused of damaging the evidence of the murder. But the investigation officer of the case allegedly dropped their names from the charge sheet. The SPP said he, however, had no jurisdiction to bring them into trial though the allegations were under section 201 (destruction of alafamat) of the Penal Code.

According to law, when one's wife gets killed at his own residence, he will have to explain the killing. But Azam Reza in this case not only failed to do so but he attempted to project his wife's death as an unnatural death.

Azam Reza's father Ahmed Reza, mother Mrs Reza and sister Shampa Reza were present in the court but they did not comment on the judgment. They said they would appeal to the HC against it.

In his judgment, the judge said Azam Reza, whose first wife is paralysed, contracted a marriage with Jayanti Munshi three and a half years back. But Reza's extra-marital affair with TV actress Afana Mimi soon threw his relationship with Jayanti in jeopardy. Jayanti could never come to terms with her husband's affair with Mimi, the court mentioned.

As the marital difficulties got exacerbated Reza started to torture Jayanti both physically and mentally. He considered her an obstacle to his affair with Afana Mimi, said the judge adding the accused of the gruesome killing of Jayanti does not

Sri Lankan officials said another 7,275 people were now known to have died in the Dec. 26 catastrophe, taking the national total to 38,195. The jump was not due to the sudden discovery of more bodies, but rather a backlog of figures from remote areas.

In a quick visit to a small village near Galle, in southern Sri Lanka, Wolfowitz clambered over rubble to reach a group of women waiting outside an elementary school.

"We are very sorry about what happened. The whole world wants to help you, my country especially," said Wolfowitz, who is touring the countries worst hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Sri Lanka announced a reconstruction drive to build 15 new towns on its southern and eastern coasts. The government will help people rebuild in safe areas, or simply construct new towns.

Zhao Ziyang

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died at a Beijing hospital "after failing to respond to all emergency treatment."

Zhao, a former premier and the dapper, articulate protégé of late supreme leader Deng Xiaoping, helped to launch China's economic boom, bringing new prosperity and opening his nation to the world.

But he fell out of favor with Deng and was purged on June 24, 1989, after the military crushed the student-led protests, killing hundreds and possibly thousands of people. He was accused of "splitting the party" by supporting demonstrators who wanted democratic reforms.

"Zhao made the right choice. He stood with the correct side of history," said Ding Zilin, a retired Beijing academic whose son was among the slain protesters. "He sacrificed his freedom because of what he chose. But I believe the Chinese people and international society will not forget him."

Zhao was surrounded by his family when he died, said Frank Lu, a human rights activist who said he spoke to Zhao's daughter, Wang Yannan.

"He was very peaceful," Lu said by phone from Hong Kong.

The government took steps Monday to minimize any public reaction to Zhao's death, apparently still worried about his potential as a political symbol.

The official announcement to China's people was limited to a two-sentence Xinhua report carried on Web sites. It wasn't on the midday state television news and CNN broadcasts to hotels and apartment complexes for foreigners were blacked out when they mentioned Zhao.

15 cops closed

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Chuaadanga. District police authorities subsequently closed all the involved police from the police line.

The police personnel are sergeants Hemayat Hossain and Golam Jakaria, havildars Nikhil Chandra Kar and Rakibul Islam and constables Nabil Uddin, Abdul Wadud, Aiyub Ali, Jahidul Islam, Nawab Ali, Matiar Rahman, Hafizur Rahman, Ikman Ali, Fakrul Alam, Abdur Rashid and Mizanur Rahman.

When contacted the police superintendent of Chuaadanga, Dr Aftab Ahmed, told The Daily Star that all would be punished if the probe finds them guilty.

deserve any mercy.

Police recovered the body of Jayanti, a teacher of Australian International School, hanging from the ceiling fan in their Banani house on January 9 last year. Jayanti's mother Lusil Sadekin filed a General Diary (GD) with Gulshan Police Station. In the GD, she mentioned that Azam murdered his wife with the intent to have Mimi as his life partner.

Jayanti's mother later filed a case accusing Azam Reza, his sister Shampa Reza and Afana Mimi of killing her daughter.

The Detective Branch (DB) on March 30 last year indicted Azam Reza for murdering Jayanti Munshi alias Jayanti Reza, while dropped the names of Shampa Reza and Afana Mimi from the charge sheet on the grounds that there was not enough evidence against the two.

Investigation Officer (IO) DB Inspector Ruhul Qudus submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka 82 days after the incident.

Ruhul Qudus said in the charge sheet that primary investigation based on the first information report (FIR), statements of 20 witnesses and the post-mortem report found Azam Reza guilty.

The IO quoting the post-mortem report said cerebral failure resulted from head injury caused the death, which was homicidal in nature.

The court framed charge against Reza on August 16 last year and the trial of the case began on September 16 the same year with the deposition of Lusil Sadekin, the complainant of the case.

Advocates Khan Saifur Rahman and Abu Hanif appeared for the accused while Advocate Ruhul Amin appeared for the state.

3 cops closed

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Bangladesh Chhatra League and Bangladesh Chhatra Front yesterday brought out a procession on the campus supporting the demands of the students.

Students' meetings with Vice Chancellor SMA Faiz at his office could not reach any agreement till 4:00pm.

The VC, however, told reporters that the authorities settled the matter through meetings with the students and police.

Meanwhile, some students aggrieved at the news item published on a few dailies, yesterday assaulted eight journalists including two photographers in front of VC's office.

VC SMA Faiz assured the journalists of taking actions against the attackers.

Three policemen -- Shohag, Mukhtadir and Majid who were on duty on the campus Sunday roared with laughter at a female student when a mentally disturbed man pulled her scarf.

The three assaulted her and a male student of the same department when they protested.

Reckitt factory

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crore, fire brigade sources said.

The origin of the fire could not immediately be ascertained, fire brigade sources added.

The fire broke out inside the factory at around 3am. On receipt of the information, fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and fought the blaze for three hours, bringing it under control at around 6am.

One fireman received minor burn injuries during the operation, fire brigade sources said.

Reckitt Benckiser Security Officer Zahir Uddin said the fire originated after a coil drier machine over heated, causing a fire that spread inside the factory premises. Police said that personnel manager of the factory, Mobarak Hossain, informed them of the fire after it was brought under control at approximately 6am. They then rushed to the factory to inspect the damage resulting from the blaze.

Quoting factory sources, police said the property damage caused by the fire would be approximately Tk 1 crore.

Members of the press who rushed to the spot to cover the incident were prevented from entering the factory premises by factory officials, who said that nobody would be allowed to enter until the arrival of the factory's managing director.

Suspected

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Shafiqullah said he was introduced to Joynal in an Islamic function three to four months ago. He said that he came to Bogra to view the archaeological site at Mahasthan Garh. Joynal's wife Monwara Begum said Shafiqullah teaches Arabic to her children. He came to their house at 9:00pm on Sunday, she added.

"Shafiqullah might have a link to the Saturday's bomb attacks. He might have brought the explosives to carry out further attacks in future," said a top police official seeking not to be named.

JS body

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Minister Moudud Ahmed are members of the committee.

Sources said Awami League members sought protection from the House claiming that arrests of lawmakers and search of their residences without warrant during the Operation Clean Heart had violated their privileges. Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and Whip Mirza Azam also raised the issue of violation of their constitutional rights by certain atrocities committed by law enforcers during hartals.

AL lawmaker Talukdar Abdul Khaleq complained law enforcers had violated his privileges by arresting him without any warrant during the operation and by not providing him division while in prison.

AL lawmaker Shawkat Ali alleged law enforcers had arrested him without any specific charge in violation of his privileges.

In a notice, BNP lawmaker Nurul Islam Moni alleged after the 2001 general elections a Jatiya Party leader, who is also a lawmaker, threatened him with death and thus violated his privilege.

BNP lawmaker Abu Hena also raised an issue of privilege violation by a press report.

Outlaws kill 2

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in-law Nasim of the matter.

On the day of the incidence, Nasim was at Bablu's house in village Chitulia.

Family sources said some 10 armed JCB cadres stormed Bablu's house and called him out at about 11:00pm. As Bablu got out, they caught him. After having him knelt down on the ground they chopped him indiscriminately. Meanwhile, as Nasim tried to save his son-in-law, the outlaws pounced on him as well and hacked him.

Critically injured Bablu and Nasim were taken to Kushtia General Hospital where doctors declared them dead at about 6:00am.

US forces inside Iran to pick sites for air strikes

Reports New Yorker

AFP, Washington

Teams of US commandos have been operating inside Iran since last summer, selecting suspected weapons sites for possible air strikes, The New Yorker reported yesterday.

The magazine's award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, who last year exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, wrote that he was repeatedly told by US intelligence and military sources that "the next strategic target was Iran."

President George W. Bush has signed a series of orders authorizing commando groups to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia, the New Yorker said.

The Bush administration has been conducting secret spying missions inside Iran at least since mid-2004, gathering intelligence on declared and suspected nuclear, chemical and missile sites, it said.

"The goal is to identify and isolate three dozen, and perhaps more, such targets that could be destroyed by precision strikes and short-term commando raids," Hersh wrote.

"This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign," a former high-level government intelligence official told the magazine.

"The Bush administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign. We've declared war and the bad guys, wherever they are, are

the enemy," the official said.

A top government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon told the magazine that Pentagon civilians -- especially Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz -- "want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible."

Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz believe that Iran's clerical regime could not withstand a military blow and would collapse, the magazine reports.

International allies are helping the Pentagon with its Iran plans, according to the magazine. Israeli consultants are helping develop potential weapons targets inside Iran. Pakistan is also involved.

Pakistani scientists are providing information to an American task force that is penetrating eastern Iran searching for underground nuclear installations, the magazine said.

In return, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has received guarantees that he will not have to hand over disgraced nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan to international authorities for questioning.

Khan, the architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme, in February took responsibility for transfers of nuclear technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

The New Yorker article went on to describe how the Bush White House has solidified control over US intelligence operations and how the Pentagon has finagled new powers to conduct covert operations without oversight from the US Congress or involvement by the CIA.

Four top outlaws

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accused in several cases including five for murder.

Our Kushtia correspondent reports: Delwar Hossain Dulal alias Dayal, 38, regional leader of Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) and Sarajul Islam alias Iltu, 30, commander (arms) of outlawed Jashod Gono Bahini (JGB) died reportedly in a shootout with Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) and police in Kushtia early yesterday.

A Rab-6 team arrested Dayal at village Ratulpur in sadar upazila at about 5:00pm on Sunday, said Rab sources. Iwardi police arrested Sarajul Islam at Blackpara area of Iwardi municipality area the same day and handed him over to Kushtia police.

Both the arrestees were taken into the custody of a joint team of police and Rab in Kushtia town. During the interrogation, the two admitted to possessing firearms hidden at various locations throughout Kushtia.

Following the leads, Rab-6 men with a contingent of police left for village Bahadurpur in Bheramara upazila of Kushtia to recover the firearms at about 4:00am. When they reached Bakapul area, a band of outlawed operatives fired on them resulting in an hour-long gunfight.

The law enforcers said Dayal and Iltu while trying to escape from the police van got caught in crossfire and died on the spot.

The law enforcers retrieved two LG guns and 30 rounds of ammunition from the spot.

Police said Dayal stood accused in 14 cases including seven for murder and Iltu in 11 cases including six for murder cases.

Our Rajshahi correspondent adds: Lal Potaka, a top leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP M-L), was killed in 'crossfire' between police

and his followers in Durgapur upazila of Rajshahi in the early hours Monday.

Rajshahi DB police arrested the PBCP publicity secretary for international affairs Muhammad Shafi Sarkar on Sunday shortly after he was released on bail.

Ramna police arrested Shafi and Ali Tareq from Aziz Cooperative market in Dhaka on May 22 last year. He had been interrogated in the joint interrogation cell and admitted his involvement in a number of murders.

A police press release claimed Shafi, also known as Internet Shafi, was accused in a dozen of cases including four for murder.

Following information obtained from him under interrogation, a police team led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Alamgir Kabir took him to Aroil village in Durgapur to retrieve arms.

On the way at Raghunathpur, Shafi's accomplices ambushed the police team at around 4:00am. Police returned fire that escalated into a shootout that left Shafi dead on the spot.

Police recovered a locally-made gun and three bullets from the scene.

Sources in Rajshahi Central Jail said three plainclothes policemen were seen handling papers of Shafi's bail before he was freed at around 1:00am on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Rapid Action Battalion in Rajshahi exchanged gunfire with 'criminals' at Sujon Palsa village in Bagmara upazila here yesterday afternoon leaving one injured.

The injured, Abdus Samad, is a charge sheeted accused in Subhodanga Union Parishad chairman Golam Rabbani murder case, Rab said.

616 gas field fire

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his Secretariat office yesterday, the minister expressed grave concern at the massive economic and environmental losses due to the fire caused by the January 8 blast in a drilling well.

Niko had declared a 'red alert' within a one-square-kilometre area around the gas field and asked villagers to leave their homes for safer places in the wake of fire. If the red alert continues, the company will give further compensation, a Niko official said.

Locals have demanded compensation for people within a three-square-kilometre area as they also had to leave their houses, and Niko authorities are now considering the matter, Kolim Uddin said.

Meanwhile, Niko on Sunday started preliminary work for drilling a relief well at a site about 300 feet away from the exploded well.

Sources said Niko's move to bring a huge rig now lying in Chittagong has failed and it is looking for other options.

In the capital, Tariqul Islam demanded adequate compensation for the damages at Tengratila when two Niko officials met him at his office.

The minister blasted the Niko officials for not bringing with them the Canadian experts now in Bangladesh. Niko's local President Kashem Sharif and Advisor Gazi Nuruzzaman Babulmethim.

State Minister for Environment Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Director General (DG) of the Department of

WB MD

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during his talk with the prime minister.

The WB officials at the meeting noted that remarkable progress has been made in the domestic resource mobilisation and investment opportunities have improved in the country.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, ERD Secretary Mirza Tasadduk Hossain Beg, Secretary to the Prime Minister Khandakar Shahidul Islam and Country Director of the World Bank Christine Wallich were present.

The prime minister sought continued support of the World Bank to different priority sectors including education, girls' education, agriculture, power and energy.

Shengman said Bangladesh had made significant progress in many areas but could not uphold the successes for lack of better projection in the media.

The WB executive mentioned the assistance given by the multilateral funding agency to different sectors, including agriculture, power and energy.

He said the WB is the best friend and partner in development and that its role will be to help Bangladesh achieve its development goals.

Gujrat train

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judge U.C. Bannerjee, who headed the committee.

"Moreover the possibility of an inflammable liquid having been used is completely ruled out as there was first a smell of burning, followed by then smoke and flames thereafter," he added.

"On the basis of the available evidence, the committee has found it unbelievable that Kar Sevaks (Hindu pilgrims) armed with Trishuls (tridents) would allow to get themselves burned without a murmur."

About 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in rioting and bloody reprisals after the train fire on February 27, 2002.

Railways Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, who came to office in May as part of a coalition government led by the Congress Party -- which won support from Muslim voters -- set up the committee in July.

It made at least two trips to the Gujarat town of Godhra, where the compartment caught fire. A Muslim mob had previously been alleged to have started the fire.

Gujarat's Hindu nationalist administration has been accused by several domestic and foreign human rights groups of turning a blind eye to the riots and in some cases helping the trouble-makers.

The previous Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party-led federal government was also seen as a passive bystander to the riots.

Samples sent

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assistance in identifying the cause of the disease.

Till yesterday evening, 26 people were identified to have symptoms similar to those who died of the disease in three villages -- Pathkhaguri, Motora and Gullah.

"A good news is that those who have been treated at Tangail Sadar Hospital have improved significantly. We are giving treatment on the basis of international clinical guidelines for treating such unknown diseases," said Rahman.

When asked, Civil Surgeon of Tangail Dr Dewan Abdul Latif said, "We are advising people to strictly follow hygienic practices and avoid sharing food and utensils to prevent further spread of the disease. But there is a rush of patients at the outdoor wing of the sadar hospital as simple fever is also triggering panic about the unknown disease."

The first case of the disease was detected at Tangail hospital on January 6 and 11 people of the age group of three to 60 years died till January.

Experts mentioned that symptoms of the disease are similar to Nipah and Hendra viral attacks in Faridpur last year and in Meherpur in the previous year.

Iraq attacks

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conflict between the two communities.

Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Alawi and the US government have insisted the polls should go ahead, although they concede that some areas may be too unsafe for voting to take place.

The government says it is preparing a range of measures to protect voting stations, including a possible ban on traffic. Iraqis in dangerous areas will also be allowed to register and vote on the same day, rather than having to pre-register.

US troop levels will be at their highest in Iraq over the election, at around 150,000. American soldiers are expected to form an outer line of defense while Iraqi security forces will guard polling stations.

"We will provide broad area security coverage, while the Iraqi military and police provide security closer to the polling sites and polling centers. You won't see coalition forces at the polling centers," the top US commander in Iraq, General George Casey, said in a statement yesterday.

"You will see Iraqi police primarily, and those police will be supported by other Iraqi police and National Guard. So, it will essentially be a ring concept around the polling centers."

Poor legal system

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are so powerful that we are unable to bring them to justice," she said, adding, "The Latin American countries have improved the situation by revamping the legal and justice system."

Regarding changes, she said, "The office of the attorney general can take an independent role and the public prosecutors have to act independently." She also suggested infra-structural development, especially building shelter houses for women and children.

In the discussion attended by human rights workers from non-government organisations, local government representatives and legal experts, the eminent human rights activist also talked about her experiences on the issue, role of the UN, challenges for human rights activists in the context of the US led 'war against terrorism'.

Asma said some countries, especially the US, are redefining human rights and related issues after the September 11, 2001 incident.

"The Iraq situation following the 'illegal war' by the US has brought a new challenge for human rights activists who have to redefine issues like arbitrary detention," she said.

On the roles of the UN and its different components in upholding human rights, she said, "The organization works very slowly. Besides, there are political interventions in the UN... the US is very much influential there."

Eminent lawyers Dr Shahdeen Malik and barrister Sara Hossain also addressed the programme moderated by Shireen Khan, senior programme officer of DANIDA.

"Extra judicial killings by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in 'crossfire' have created a very bad image of the country," said Shahdeen Malik, adding that those who do not believe in democracy are using such forces.

He called upon the government

to immediately stop such 'organised and regular killings'.

Dr Malik said the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord has not been implemented even after more than seven years. Indigenous people there may go for armed conflict again if the government continues denying their rights for years, he said.

Sara Hossain lauded the role of media and NGOs in bringing human rights issues to the fore and said public interest litigation has been proved effective in bringing about positive results.

After the general session, five workshops were held on different issues related to human rights and governance.

Maleka Begum placed a keynote on 'Violence against Women' and Monira Rahman of the Acid Survivors Foundation and Dr Ferdous Azim of the Nari Pakkha took part in discussions. Dr Shahnaz Huda moderated the programme.

Professor Ahmed Kamal moderated another workshop on 'Rights of Marginalised People' where Khushi Kabir and Dr Nafsur Rahman spoke. In another workshop on 'Rights of Children', Afshan Chowdhury of Birc placed a keynote and UM Habibunnesa and Dr Nayla Khan took part in discussions.