

Man pulled alive from Indonesia rubble

AP, Gunung Sitoli, Indonesia

A man heard crying out for water was pulled alive yesterday from beneath the rubble of a building demolished by Indonesia's most recent earthquake, a day after rescue teams formally called off the search for survivors.

The 42-year-old man, identified only as Hendra, was carried in a stretcher to a waiting ambulance after five days trapped in the remains of his three-story shop and home.

Hundreds of onlookers watched the seven-hour rescue operation, many breaking into cheers when he was pulled out.

Hendra lived in the building in Gunung Sitoli, Nias Island's capital, with his wife and two children. He said he was the only one to survive. A doctor who treated him said Hendra suffered only minor scratches and dehydration.

"Thank you very much, thank you very much," he said, hugging his rescuers.

Monday's 8.7 magnitude quake killed at least 548 people, most on Nias Island. With few exceptions, rescue efforts in the capital proved futile, and on Friday, search teams abandoned Gunung Sitoli to focus on other towns.

Hendra was found after laborers hired by the family to look for him and his family heard him calling weakly for help and water.

"We had given up hope. Look, we had even provided coffins," Hendra's brother, Kok Ciong, told The Associated Press earlier Saturday, pointing to coffins nearby.

Rescue workers cut through the rubble and went down a hole to feed Hendra crackers and water. But they said they did not find the bodies of his wife and children.

"It was the most challenging operation we have ever taken part in," said C.W. Ong, head of the Singapore search team.

Also Saturday, aid finally reached thousands of homeless and hungry victims on remote islands still reeling from the December tsunami disaster. A ferry docked in Sinaung, where most of the 31,000 people have lost their homes some 23,000 by the Dec. 26 tsunami-earthquake and the

Rokan for taking

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Along with the government at the end of the government's tenure, since he is elected by a party and cannot work neutrally during the time of election," he said.

He added that having a politically appointed president and a caretaker government at the same time means a dual government system that can stand in the way of holding a free and fair election.

A neutral person acceptable to all parties should be the president during the three-month tenure of the caretaker government mandated to hold general elections, he said.

On the provision of an immediate past chief justice's heading the caretaker government as a neutral person, Rokanuddin said: "There should be two conditions here. He (the chief justice) should be one who has never been a member or office-bearer of any political party and who has never held any position of the state on political appointment."

"The caretaker chief should be acceptable to all parties that had representation in the just dissolved parliament."

About the advisers, he said, "They should be appointed after discussions with the political parties."

Those who for once have become advisers to the caretaker government should not be made advisers for a second time, Rokanuddin said.

"The constitution should be amended, if necessary, to introduce the changes and the amendment should be made on the basis of a consensus."

The outgoing SCBA president also demanded reforms to the Election Commission. "The chief election commissioner should be made on a consensus among all political parties."

Talking on the 13th amendment

Parody poster

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The others, while returning after making the complaints, found Jabhed lying unconscious on the road.

Jabhed was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

The victim's father Haji Zafor Ahmed filed a case with the Bandar Police Station while police arrested one Nuru alias Nuraiya, 22, in this connection.

Jabhed's relatives and local people alleged that some people loyal to a local Jamaat-backed ward commissioner candidate was involved in the incident.

Jabhed's body was handed over to his family after autopsy yesterday afternoon.

rest by Monday's quake.

The Dec. 26 earthquake-tsunami killed more than 126,000 people in Indonesia mostly in Aceh province. At least 48,000 others died in 10 other countries on the Indian Ocean rim.

Govt absolves Pintu

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Mohammad Salauddin said, at about 9:30am on April 15, 1998, Pintu led out a procession in support of hartal called by the then opposition BNP. The BNP procession came face to face with that of the then ruling AL at Baby Ice Cream crossing in Lalbagh.

The SI said Pintu and his group swooped on AL leaders and activists in the procession, as well as the policemen who came to intervene, injuring a number of AL men and police including the complainant.

Police arrested Pintu and the 12 men from the spot and filed the case against them the same day. Later, all the accused obtained bail from court.

A senior lawyer, on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star yesterday he wonders how the charges could be labelled 'politically motivated'. "It's nothing but a bid to save the lawmaker from a judicial trial," he added.

Moreover, he questioned how the 12 accusees who are now absconding could be released from the case?

Masud Ahmed Talukder, a lawyer representing Pintu, on the other hand said the government decided to take back the charges after scrutinising the case documents and finding them to be false.

Besides, Talukder pointed out that Section 494 of the Criminal Procedure Code authorises the government to retract any case filed against any person.

BIDDING PAPER SNATCHING

Pintu was also arrested on December 26, 2001 on the charge of snatching at gunpoint some documents pertaining to the auction of a bankrupt company's property.

Advocate Jahangir Alam Khan filed the case with Motijheel Police Station accusing Pintu and a number of his accomplices.

Lawyers

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court for fixing a new date, sometime later, for hearing the petitions saying that he would go abroad for treatment.

As the court fixed April 23 for the next hearing, he told it that he might not be able to return by that time and asked for more time. The court, however, turned him down and said it wanted to hold the hearing quickly.

Rokanuddin told the court that the BNP government filed these cases against Awami League leaders with political motive. Similar cases were filed earlier against incumbent Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the court had quashed those.

The court told him that it did not care about what had happened earlier and that it might not deliver a similar judgement in this case.

Rokan at this stage said he was worried at the court's 'too much interest in the cases'. He expressed the fear that his clients may not get justice and that they do not have confidence in the bench.

Attorney General AF Hassan Ariff stood up and pleaded with the court for quick disposal of the petition and fixing a fresh date for hearing.

Newly elected President of Supreme Court Bar Association Advocate Mahbub Alam and Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun also appealed for more time before the next hearing.

As the court stood by its decision, Rokanuddin said it was impossible to take part in the hearing.

Barrister Amir-UI Islam blamed the bench for bias and reiterated the apprehension that their clients would not get justice with the bench. The lawyers then left the courtroom.

The attorney general told the lawyers at that time that what they were doing was not proper.

The court stayed proceedings of the cases at the lower court until the next hearing.

India go 1-0

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caught at mid-on while attempting an awkward pull.

India captain Sourav Ganguly, criticised for his poor batting form, was bowled round his legs for a first ball duck as he shuffled across his stumps to flick, giving Navel his second wicket in two balls.

Sehwah cracked nine fours and three sixes in his explosive 95-ball 108 and Dravid had six hits to the fence in his 104.

Pakistan made a promising start, Salman Butt hitting two fours in the opening over, but they lost wickets at regular intervals.

The visitors, reduced to 64 for four, were looking to consolidate when Tendulkar got the key wicket of captain Inzamamul Haq, bowling him for 37 with a quicker delivery.

The next match of the six-game series will be played in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

New pay scale

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Though the IMF previously advocated cutting down interest rates, its officials yesterday advised the finance minister to the contrary, to scale them up.

The mission also expressed concerns at the poor revenue collection, especially by the customs. Saifur told them that the customs revenue is paltry as most of the imports fall in low-duty categories. Besides, a number of customs lawsuits have blocked realisation of a good amount of money in import duties.

He said, "We have initiated some steps which are expected to improve the revenue situation by the year end. Several customs cases meanwhile have also been settled, which means a substantial amount will be added to the import duty coffers."

The IMF team is scheduled to leave Dhaka on April 9, after collecting answers to some 50 questions sent to the government last month.

Charge-sheet

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the remaining four were earlier arrested.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against the accused were primarily proved and they were brought under trial.

The IO prayed for the warrant of arrest and attachment of property against the fugitives.

Metropolitan Magistrate Towfiqul Alam accepted the charge sheet and ordered attachment of the fugitives' property yesterday.

In the case filed with Mirpur Police Station, it is alleged that Sergeant Atiqur Rahman and five others went to the Mirpur house of Ratan Ali, the complainant in the case, at about 12:20pm on March 23. Identifying themselves as Rab-4 members, they wanted to know how much money he had with him.

As he replied that he had Tk 7.8 lakh in an almira, the Rab members threatened to kill him in 'crossfire', and stole the money.

Of the six, five managed to escape in two CNG-run three-wheelers waiting outside, but Sergeant Atiq was nabbed by locals.

Later, following leads obtained from Atiq, a joint team of police and Rab arrested Waliullah and Khorsheed Alam. They recovered Tk 2,45,500 from Waliullah and Tk 10,000 from Khorsheed Alam.

Ratan Ali filed a case with Mirpur Police Station under the Speedy Trial (Law and Disruption) Act the same day, accusing the six people.

Kibria killing

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an expected general election in 2006, political violence has escalated sharply in Bangladesh," says the release quoting the letters.

They noted that at an opposition political rally in Dhaka last August, grenades were hurled at the opposition leader and former prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, in an "attempted assassination" which killed 22. The violence culminated in the recent grenade blast that killed five opposition Awami League members and led to a series of countrywide strikes called by the Awami League in February.

In their letters to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Bangladesh Ambassador to the US Shamsheer M Chowdhury, the legislators urged a fully independent investigation by the FBI aimed at helping to bring the perpetrators to justice, said the press release issued by Congressman Barney Frank on April 1 in Washington.

In their letters to the Bangladesh ambassador, they said, "This latest grenade attack is part of an escalating wave of political violence in recent years against moderate forces in Bangladesh, and it appears to us that the permissiveness of at least some within the Bangladesh government and the police in allowing violent groups to operate unconstrained, and the apparent failure to investigate previous similar attacks, led to a climate of impunity that encourages a continuation of such violence."

Immediately after the attack, the State Department strongly condemned the bomb attack, and the Bangladesh government subsequently sought assistance from the US in investigating the incident.

According to the State

Department, the United States wanted to make sure the FBI would have full access to all evidence and witnesses before committing to an investigation. The State Department has since signalled that the FBI is assisting in the investigation, "though it's unclear the degree to which the FBI is able to investigate with full authority and to work without interference".

In their letters to Secretary of State Rice, the legislators pointed to the recent State Department's human rights report on Bangladesh, which describes "frequent government use of police for political purposes".

The release on the letters continued, "The report also describes an increase in the number of killings by security personnel, in which nearly all abuses went uninvestigated and unpunished, which creates a serious obstacle to ending this kind of political violence. Because this pattern of political terrorism goes counter to basic democratic principles, we strongly urge you to make it clear to the Bangladesh government that an independent investigation by the FBI is essential if we are to maintain our longstanding supportive bilateral relations with your country."

They noted although Bangladesh government reportedly charged several low-ranking activists of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party in recent days, Asma Kibria, the widow of Shah AMS Kibria, and opposition party leaders questioned the impartiality and thoroughness of the investigation, particularly in light of the fact that the government has refused to make the findings public.

Opposition asks CJ

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In a written proposal placed at the meeting, the 11-Party Alliance said amendment to the constitution is not necessary to find a person who is acceptable to all as the existing constitutional provisions are enough.

"The caretaker government must be headed by a person who is above controversies and whose non-partisanship cannot be questioned," said Dr Kamal Hossain, president of the Gono Forum, and an eminent jurist.

He said, "If any person has partisan colour he should not take office of the chief adviser of the caretaker government and I will tell him not to be the chief adviser if anyone raises questions about his neutrality."

Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon also requested the immediate past chief justice not to assume office of the caretaker government chief saying that opposition parties as well as people have serious reservations about him.

"We hope he (former chief justice) will not do anything that may originate crisis in the country centring an election," he said.

The speakers alleged that the government has extended the retirement age of judges to ensure that Justice Hasan will take over as chief of the next caretaker government.

"The extension of the judges' retirement age has made the caretaker government questionable," observed Dr Kazi Kholiquzaman Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Economic Association at the roundtable.

Echoing him, Barrister Amir-UI Islam said, "The extension of retirement ages of judges has damaged the integrity of the judiciary as many are now calculating when he or she will become head of the caretaker government."

He expressed his reservations about the concept of the formation of the caretaker government system that says the immediate past chief justice will be the head of the interim government.

"Any sitting government through politicisation and superseding the judges can easily find a loyal person to head the caretaker government after

the end of their term," the eminent lawyer said.

He proposed formation of a team of 10 ombudsmen in line with the constitutional provision and said the team will not only conduct the general election but also act as watchdog for all time and an acceptable person from the body will lead the caretaker government.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil tabled his party proposals about electoral reforms and formation of the caretaker government. He urged all parties to formulate a single proposal after reviewing their individual party proposals.

Stressing the need for voters' education to stop rigging and fake votes in elections, Jalil urged the political parties to take initiatives to educate the voters.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manjurul Ahsan Khan blasted the prime minister's rigid opposition to reforming the caretaker government system and said the next election must be conducted under a caretaker government acceptable to all.

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad emphasised strengthening of the EC so that it can conduct the elections as an independent body.

Journalist Ataas Samad said they should seriously think over the issue of proportional representation in parliament. He urged all to finalise the proposals and place those to the government at the earliest possible time.

Human rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain stressed that the rights of the minorities and women in casting votes be ensured in the general election process.

Gono Forum General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader Mainuddin Khan Badal, Hunger Project Executive Director Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, Gono Azadi League President Abdus Samad, Ganoantrik Party Acting President Azizul Islam Khan, Communist Kendro's Dr Asit Baran Roy and JSD Joint Secretary Shirin Akhter also spoke.

Teletalk suspends

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subscribers will be notified of the announcement via mass media and at different exchanges.

Earlier on Thursday, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited, managed by Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), made the subscription open to the public. It started distributing subscription forms at 10 centres across the city.

The commercial launch of the much-publicised mobile phone service, fifth in the cellular industry and first ever in public sector, was however marred by violence. At least 50 people were injured because of mad rush for subscription at different distribution points on Thursday.

Meanwhile, rush for the state-owned mobile phone connections at different distribution centres in the city did not lessen despite reported poor service of the phone and police harassment.

Police resorted to mild baton charge to restore order for the second consecutive day yesterday as thousands of people queued for hours to collect subscription forms from Maghbaz Exchange. None, however, was reported to be hurt in the incident.

Some of the prospective subscribers even spent the Friday night

JU meet

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They however failed to demonstrate yesterday as 50 to 60 activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) led by its JU unit president forced them to give in. The JCD also threatened them of dire consequences if they staged further demonstrations.

The JCD president, Parvez Mallick, however disputed the allegation and claimed they had rather expressed their solidarity with the botany students.

Teachers and students of the department are agitating simultaneously against the appointment bid since March 22, refraining from attending classes and examinations.

Teachers and students' representatives from different departments and left-leaning organisations held a teacher-student protest rally in front of Social Science Faculty at 11:00am. The rally demanded that the JU authorities desist from appointing teachers to favour their own people or gain politically.

Vice-chancellor Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman said, "The selection committees have made the best choices. The syndicate will now decide about the appointment."

Four bogies

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derailed at the southern end of the Domar station at the Chikan Mati point.

The incident left Shahida Begum (40), Rafiqul Islam (38), Abdul Karim (37), Amichha Bewa (62) and Sazir Uddin (51) critically injured. They were admitted to Domar Upazila Health Complex.

The driver of the train, Fazul Haque, said the train carrying two hundred passengers met with the accident as there are no sleepers and rocks between the rail tracks. He added that the train escaped a major accident as it was moving only at 30 km per hour.

There are no sleepers and rocks at different points on the rail lines from Chilahati to Parbutipur. All trains moving on this route are at high risk of accident.

The derailed coaches have yet to be removed.

Power Cell faces

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apparently a joint-venture between an Irish company called Cadogan Engineering, and Manning Industries of Texas, US. Both the partners lack experience in implementing Independent Power Projects (IPPs), according to sources.

Cadogan Consultants was formed by Scottish company Rendel Palmer & Tritton in 1997, which has experience of some infrastructure projects. Manning Industries is mainly involved in installing used equipment. On its website, it claims that it has helped develop a 120 MW power project but does not say what role it played. It also lists that it was involved in a 600 mw project in Nigeria but without giving the name, location or details of the project. It further claims to have experience in power plants of 2.5 mw to 125 mw but gives no project reference list.

In Bangladesh, power project implementation authorities like the Power Development Board and Power Cell seek companies having experience in building at least 300 mw power projects for setting up 450 mw plants.

A few months ago, one of the businessmen lobbying for Cadogan for Meghnaghat -3 project told this correspondent that he had strong backing at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Although his proposal was in contradiction with the government policies, he was hopeful that it would make its way, he added.

The lobby is pushing the project when the Meghnaghat-2 power project has not been approved due to flaws in its bidding.

Clampdown

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Over 20 per cent of some 1.25 lakh Bangladeshis migrating to Saudi Arabia annually go on an individual visa, sources said.

"Sponsors often leave the sponsored people without any job and many people going abroad on such individual visas stay without any job for several months and create social problems there," said a high official at the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

"The cases of visa advice are being thoroughly verified to check any fraudulent practices," he said, adding, "A person will not get clearance for leaving the country on an individual free visa unless he shows confirmation of a specific job there."

However, the individual visa advice attested by the Bangladesh Embassy in Saudi Arabia will not come under this restriction, he said.

The State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare Mohammad Quamrul Islam said, "The restriction is to ensure that none should go abroad without confirmation of job."

Asked about the duration of the restriction, the minister said, "I will go to Saudi Arabia on Monday for a week-long visit and observe the situation there. I will take a decision after returning home."

The minister will meet the labour minister in Saudi Arabia and discuss increasing manpower export there.

Saudi Arabia is the largest manpower market for Bangladesh, with over 15 lakh Bangladeshis now working there.

Meanwhile, manpower exporters fear the move will have a negative impact on manpower exports from the country, resulting in a decline in the flow of remittances.

Pope slips closer

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pontiff's dying hours. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pope's overall heart and breathing conditions had not changed and remained "very serious."

In an indication of his worsening health, a mass was celebrated during the morning in the pope's presence, but significantly he did not take an active role in the ceremony as he had the day before.

Navarro-Valls said the pope's overall condition remained "very serious."

"The general, cardio-respiratory and metabolic conditions of the Holy Father are substantially unchanged and therefore are very serious," he said.

As of dawn Saturday, the pope appeared to be moving in and out of consciousness, he said.

Navarro-Valls said in answer to questions that "we noticed a reduction in his consciousness. That absolutely does not mean, technically, that he is in a state of coma."

"When spoken to, he opens his eyes and remains conscious. At times it seems he is sleeping or that he is resting his eyes."

He said a new medical bulletin would be issued by 6:00 pm (1600 GMT).

Hundreds of pilgrims who had kept up a traditional all-night vigil for the dying pope stayed in St Peter's Square, overlooked by the apartment of the leader of the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics.

The pope "gave signs of recognising people," an Italian cardinal, Achille Silvestrini, said after visiting the pope Saturday morning.

"I saw him very relaxed," he said, adding he had prayed beside the pope and kissed his hand.

In the last communion, issued shortly before 7:00 pm Friday, Navarro-Valls said the pontiff's condition was worsening, his breathing had become shallow and his blood pressure was falling.

"The pope has an extraordinary physique and at the moment even his doctors are surprised" at his will to live, said Corrado Manni, an anaesthetist who has been present at several of the pope's 10 surgical operations.

"I believed that, given the conditions described in the medical bulletin, yesterday he was nearly finished, but he's still not."

"That's surprised everyone a little, even me who has known him well for so long," the doctor said.

The pope was lying under white blankets in the centre of his room,

propped up by pillows, according to Cardinal Mario Francesco Pompada who went to see him on Friday.

"I was captured by the beauty of this smiling look. He clearly wanted me to understand that he recognised me," Pompada told the daily La Repubblica.

For many newspapers, however, the pontiff was already spoken of in the past tense. The Turin daily La Stampa published a full obituary on its front page, entitled "John Paul II 1978-2005."

Others were more restrained. La Repubblica headlined "The last hours of the pope" while the Corriere della Sera led with "An embrace for a dying pope" as it recounted what it called the pope's "day of agony".

The pontiff, who has Parkinson's disease, severe lung and throat problems and has long been confined to a wheelchair, suddenly took a sharp turn for the worse late Thursday, when he was given the last rites.

The crowd in St Peter's Square swelled to nearly 70,000 at one point late Friday after reciting a series of prayers, but as the hours passed the numbers dwindled to several hundred gazing up at the pope's windows.

Across the world, from his native Poland to Indonesia, from the Americas to the Middle East, millions of others also prayed for a pontiff who has led the Roman Catholic Church for more than a quarter of a century.

Born Karol Wojtyla in a small town near Krakow, southern Poland, he is the first non-Italian pope in more than four centuries and the 263rd successor to Saint Peter — one of the disciples of Jesus — as Bishop of Rome.

Elected pontiff in 1978 at the age of 58, he revolutionised the papacy and contributed to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

However he also alienated many Catholics with his conservative social views, especially dealing with sex in a world struggling with Aids.

In the Philippines, a bastion of Roman Catholicism in Asia, Church leaders held prayer vigils for a pope who President Gloria Arroyo said was "a lasting source of strength in a troubled world."

In Poland, too, the press prepared for the death of their countryman. "The pope is in his death throes," the Gazeta Wybrcoza said.

Ahsanullah murder

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but the court fixed today for recording statements of the witnesses.

Nurul Islam Sarker and others will submit written statements to the court today pleading not guilty, court sources said.