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Govt firm on
rehabilitation
of Sidr-hit
people

Says chief adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed yesterday said his government is determined to take measures for complete rehabilitation of the Sidr-affected people.

He made the remark while receiving donations for the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund in aid of the cyclone-affected people from a number of individuals and organisations at the CA's office.

The chief adviser informed that Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme for 26 lakh families in the cyclone-hit areas began partially on Saturday.

He said the objective of the VGF programme is to ensure that

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Three Ctg Wasa
engineers get
15yrs for graft

Chief engineer acquitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday sentenced four people including three engineers of Chittagong Wasa to 15 years' rigorous imprisonment and fined them Tk 4.25 lakh each in a corruption case filed in 2004.

The court also ordered attachment of all their movable and immovable properties. It, however, acquitted accused Shafiqul Islam, chief engineer of Chittagong Wasa, of the charges.

Former inspector of the then Bureau of Anti-corruption Mubinul Islam filed the case against the five with the Chittagong Police Station on May 24, 2004 in connection with misappropriating about Tk 16.9 lakh through irregularities in installing PVC pipes at Panchlaish in the port city in 2002.

Chittagong Divisional Special Judge SM Solaiman gave the verdict against Wasa Superintendent Engineer Mohammad Shafiqul Islam, Assistant Engineer AKM Abdul Kuddus, Assistant Engineer (retd) Kazi Abu Taher and contractor AN Faruk Ahmed.

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Maj Gen (retd)
Ibrahim set to
float new party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maj Gen (retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim Bir Pratik, a political analyst, is going to float a new political party tomorrow.

"At the fag end of my life and also at the crisis moment of the nation, I've taken a hard decision to enter into politics and float a new political party," he said in a letter to journalists.

The name of his political party has not yet been finalised. But it is most likely to be Bangladesh Kalyan (welfare) Party (BWP), said Maj Gen (retd) Ibrahim.

He will arrange a press conference at a city hotel tomorrow and declare the launch of the party, he added.

Prayer Timing

December 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



WIFE OF MD. FAIZUR RAHMAN

We request all relatives and friends to pray for Mrs. Yasmin Rahman, the dearest member of our family who passed on to eternity eight years ago.

40 Taliban
killed in
Afghan
clashes

AP, AFP, Kandahar

Afghan and Nato-led troops battled with Taliban militants and called in airstrikes in a series of clashes in the country's south that left 40 insurgents dead, an official said yesterday.

The joint force clashed with militants in the mountainous Shah Wali Kot district in Kandahar province during a three-day operation that ended Saturday and left 35 insurgents dead, said provincial police chief Sayed Agha Saqib.

Ten other insurgents were detained near the militants' hideouts, which they used to launch attacks against Afghan and foreign troops in the area, Saqib said. Authorities recovered the militants' bodies along with their automatic weapons and ammunition, he said.

In Kandahar's Zhan district, Afghan and foreign troops clashed with another group of militants hiding in a compound Saturday night, killing five militants and detaining four others, Saqib said.

Among those killed was a regional militant commander, Mullah Faizullah, he said.

INTERNATIONAL RELIEF

USS Tarawa to take over from Kearsarge
US contributes \$5 mil to WFP fund

STAR REPORT

A second US amphibious naval ship 'Tarawa' will join the current cyclone relief operation soon, as American Marine Commander Brig Gen Ronald Bailey said usually it takes two weeks to meet the emergency relief needs, reported UNB.

A French company, TOTAL, through its subsidiaries TOTAL E&P Bangladesh and TOTAL GAS Bangladesh, yesterday announced a relief donation of US\$100,000 to be distributed by Friendship, an NGO.

Bangladesh Medical Association of North America, an organisation of expatriate Bangladeshi physicians in the USA, donated \$10,000 to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund, reported UNB.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a US contribution of \$5 million for an

emergency operation designed to support 2.2 million people in nine districts whose lives and livelihoods had been devastated by cyclone Sidr.

At a press briefing in the American Club in the capital Brig Gen Ronald Bailey said they have yet to finalise the date for completing the emergency relief operation in the cyclone-battered coastal areas.

The US ship Kearsarge entered Bangladesh territorial waters on November 22 and had started full-scale 'Operation Sea Angel-11' a week before entering to the immediate need of pure water for the victims.

Since November 29, the Kearsarge delivered over 12,000 gallons of water by helicopters to different hard-to-reach localities along the coast.

In reply to a question, Brig Gen Bailey, Commander of the 3rd US

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Govt asked to
set up vacation
courts in dists

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to constitute civil vacation court in each district for disposal of urgent cases as the civil court judges at district level enjoys a month-long annual vacation from December 1.

The HC directed the law secretary to take steps for constituting civil vacation bench with the joint district judge who would dispose of urgent civil matters during vacation.

A High Court division bench comprising Justice ABM Khairul Hug and Justice Abdul Awal delivered the judgment following a public-interest litigation writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2005.

Terming the judgment a landmark in Bangladesh judiciary,

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**ESSENTIALS' PRICES
Matin accuses
businesses of
playing tricks**

UNB, Barisal

Communications Adviser MA Matin yesterday expressed dissatisfaction at the role of businessmen and NGOs in the cyclone-affected areas.

"Businessmen have played many tricks with prices of essentials. They must not do it anymore. Everybody is answerable and accountable to the people and nobody would be allowed to play with the fate of distressed people,"

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**Muggers shoot
dead two in
Narayanganj**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A gang of muggers shot two people dead as they were being chased by a mob following a robbery attempt last evening at Araihajar upazila in Narayanganj.

Locals captured two of the muggers and gave them a mass beating.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Matin, a labourer, and Arman, a garment factory employee, while the captured muggers were identified as Hanif Sheikh and Mafiz.

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**Ctg mayor, wife
sued for
ill-gotten wealth**

UNB, Ctg

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against detained Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and his wife Hasina Mohiuddin in connection with illegally amassing property worth Tk 1.46 crore and concealing information about their wealth worth Tk 2.37 crore.

Abu Mohammad Arif Siddique, deputy director of the ACC, filed the case with Doublemooring

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**SIDR-AFFECTED AREAS
Classes start in
schools, colleges
from Dec 15**

UNB, Dhaka

The government has taken initiatives to get academic activities up and running in the Sidr-affected areas by December 15 after reconstructing and repairing the educational institutions.

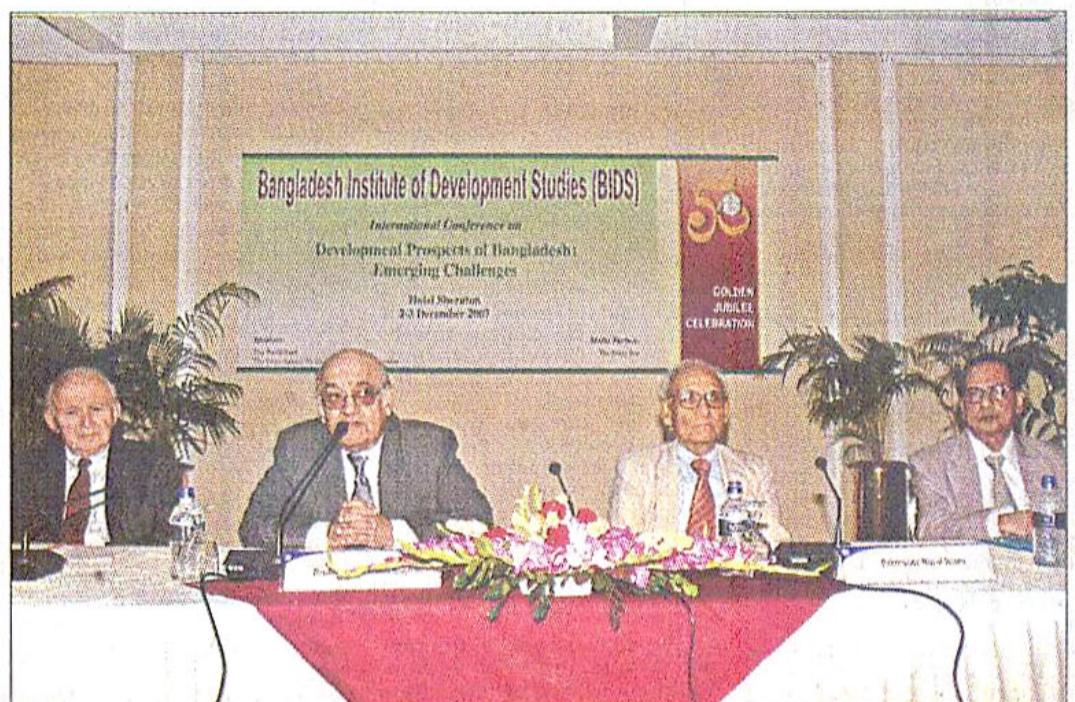
In this regard, the education ministry allocated Tk 27.82 crore for buying furniture, books and reconstructing 554 destroyed and repairing 2,050 damaged educational institutions in 72 upazilas of 11 districts, said a handout.

The ministry also sent related allocation letters along with expenditure guidelines to district and upazila offices.

At least 83 officials and teachers have been temporarily involved to complete the tasks properly and transparently by December 15, as per the government guidelines.

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FROM LEFT... Prof Gustav Ranis, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Prof Nurul Islam and Dr Quazi Shahabuddin at an international conference organised by BIDS at a city hotel yesterday. The conference was on "Development Prospects of Bangladesh: Emerging Challenges".

**SC overrules HC
judgment on
hartal activities**

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday overruled a High Court judgment and set aside its order that violence and coercion for or against hartal constitute criminal activities.

A seven-member full court of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice M. Ruhul Amin, passed the order following an appeal filed by Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan while he was secretary general of BNP.

A High Court division bench, in a suo moto rule on May 13 in 1999, affirmed that violence and coercion for or against hartal constitute criminal activities and directed police and court to take appropriate action in this regard.

In Bangladesh, hartal is recognised as a political weapon for articulating political demand. During the Awami League rule,

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**Pakistan polls boycott
would help Musharraf
Says Benazir**

APP, Peshawar

Former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto said Sunday an opposition boycott of upcoming polls would only help President Pervez Musharraf legitimise his imposition of emergency rule.

Benazir said she would meet early next week with former rival Nawaz Sharif, who has called for a boycott of the January 8 election, to discuss the issue.

"If we all boycott elections, then it will give Musharraf a two-thirds majority in the parliament to validate his provisional constitutional order," she told a press conference in northwestern city of Peshawar, an Islamic political stronghold.

"That is why we are saying that we will take part in elections under

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protest, but we will also leave the door open (to talk on a boycott)."

"I am getting conflicting signals from Nawaz Sharif and Qazi Hussain Ahmad about (an) election boycott as they have filed nomination papers and if someone does that it means he is taking part in election," Benazir told reporters.

Ahmad is the chief of Islamist Alliance Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, which is also divided over boycott issue.

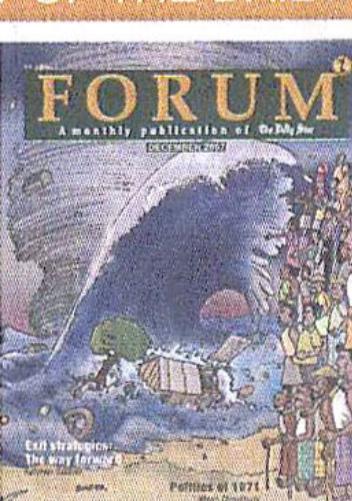
Benazir made the comments after launching the election campaign of her Pakistan Peoples Party here on Saturday.

She said she had decided to take part in elections despite fears they would be rigged by the government.

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