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China fights to stave off disease amid miracle quake rescues

AFP, Shifang

China ramped up efforts yesterday to stave off disease for millions of earthquake victims, as more miracle rescues amid the rubble offered hope in an increasingly desperate battle to save lives.

Five days after the enormous earthquake that the government estimates killed more than 50,000 people, there were rising concerns over potential disease outbreaks among the nearly five million people who have lost their homes.

"Combating epidemics is the most urgent and the biggest task facing us right now," Wei Chao'an, vice minister of agriculture, told reporters in Beijing.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the 7.9-magnitude quake continued to climb as authorities cleared their way through pulverised towns and gained better access to isolated areas - gaining a clearer picture of the full scale of the horror.

The government raised the confirmed death toll by more than 6,000 to 28,881. But many expect

the eventual figure could surpass even the government's estimate of more than 50,000.

Entire towns in mountainous Sichuan province were flattened in Monday's quake, with the main zone of destruction spreading across 100,000 square kilometres (40,000 square miles) - an area three times the size of Belgium.

The tremor, which could be felt as far away as Bangkok, saw mountainsides in Sichuan sheared off, roads split in two and countless

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Official car registered in PGCL staff's name

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A microbus purchased by Pashchimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL) has been found registered as a private vehicle to the company's Manager (Service) Kazi Nowfel Anwar.

A preliminary investigation has also found an alleged suppression of an incident of fire over five years ago in which the microbus along with two other vehicles of PGCL was burnt inside the company garage on the PGCL head office premises at Nilka in Sirajganj.

It is also alleged that Nowfel gave a PGCL official a vehicle of the organisation for his personal use and kept fake logbook to hide the private use and purchase fuel for it.

The irregularities were informed to the PGCL authority

after being discussed in a meeting of the PGCL Officers' Welfare Association executive committee on February 19.

The minute of the meeting was also recently sent to Petrobangla, which asked the PGCL authority to investigate the allegations.

Nowfel Anwar claimed that the microbus was registered to him "mistakenly" and that the mistake was later corrected.

The PGCL authority, however, said the late project manager Azizul Haque Chowdhury sent an official letter to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority to register the vehicle in favour of the Gas Supply to West Zone Project.

An instalment of the vehicle's insurance premium was paid at the time of registration.

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Gatco case to be faced politically Says Nizami

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiuur Rahman Nizami, a charge-sheeted accused in the Gatco corruption case, said yesterday his party will resort to legal and political means to fight the case he termed politically motivated.

"When the court process will start in the case, my lawyers and the party will definitely face it legally. But since it does not seem merely a legal matter, rather politically motivated, political workers will obviously face it politically besides the legal means," he said.

Talking to UNB at Jamaat central office, Nizami, who was the agriculture and industries minister

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GATCO GRAFT CASE Arrest warrants reach police stations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arrest warrants against the 12 'absconding' accused in the Gatco graft case reached the police stations concerned in the city last night, said police sources.

Officers-in-charge however declined to say anything about the matter.

Earlier on Thursday, a Dhaka court issued the warrants against the 12 including former BNP ministers M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MK Anwar, M Shamsul Islam and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, and Jamaat Ameer Motiuur Rahman Nizami.

Contacted yesterday afternoon, none of the police officials could say if the accused would be

arrested on receipt of the warrants or would be allowed to surrender before the court during the next hearing of the case due on May 22.

Meanwhile, family members of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters on Friday that he may surrender before the court today if his lawyers suggest.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on May 13 pressed charges against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 22 others in the graft case.

Of those charge-sheeted, Khaleda, Koko, former health minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain,

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Anwar Choudhury bids farewell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anwar Choudhury left Dhaka yesterday ending his four-year stint as British high commissioner to Bangladesh.

Choudhury, the first Bangladeshi-born British high commissioner here, told reporters before his departure, "Farewell Bangladesh. Stay well."

He had arrived in Dhaka in May 2004 and his tenure ended in May last year but it was extended to May 13 this year. He will be replaced by Stephen Evans.

Choudhury will join Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office as director of international organisations.

During his eventful tenure here, Choudhury survived an attempt on his life. He was the target of a grenade attack in Sylhet that left him seriously wounded and three others killed.

2 die jumping off train in panic

UNB, B'aria

Two people died and two others were injured as they jumped from a moving train at Sadar Rasulpur on Dhaka-Chittagong route yesterday morning.

Police and witnesses said passengers of the Dhaka-bound inter-city train got panicked as it suddenly jerked at about 10.30am.

They said four of the panicked passengers jumped from the train and two of them died on the spot while the rest received injuries.

One of the deceased was identified as Nayeem, 12, while the other, aged around 30, could not be identified.

The injured, Taslim Sheela, 7, and Shamim, 30, were admitted to Akhaura Hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Seven large trees felled by Roads and Highways Department on the road linking Farmgate and Manik Miah Avenue as the authorities feared those were 'threat' to pedestrians during storms.

SC to publish annual report for first time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) for the first time in its history is going to publish its annual report for the year of 2007.

The report is scheduled to be published on May 31 -- the day before incumbent Chief Justice Md Ruhul Amin goes into retirement on June 1 this year.

Sources at the SC said the report will contain the history of separation of the judiciary from the executive, statistical and personnel data of the SC and district courts, data on all sorts of cases, salient features of the amended code of criminal procedure (CrPC), and

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Clarification

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in a clarification of a report published in The Daily Star said the trend of migration of semi-skilled and skilled workers has been positive over the period of successive years in number.

The clarification comes following publication of the report titled "Skilled workers' job abroad marks a dip" published on May 13 that said the percentage of Bangladeshi skilled workers going abroad decreased over the years.

The government instructed recruiting agencies to recruit 30

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Prayer Timing

May 18

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Storm kills 3, damages over 2,000 houses

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed and 220 others injured yesterday as storms lashed different parts of the country damaging over 2,000 houses.

The dead are Subarna, 10, daughter of Shahabuddin Bapari of Char Gobindapur village, Kabir Uddin Sikdar, 45, of Charnachana village in Madaripur and Nabir Uddin, 3, son of Sirajul Haque in Noakhali.

Our Madaripur correspondent reported that Subarna was killed as a tree fell on her while playing in a field near her house during a storm at Char Gobindapur village at

about 12:00noon. A lightning struck Kabir Uddin Sikdar while working in a field at Charnachana village at about 11:00am. He was killed on the spot.

Meanwhile, three-year-old Nabir Uddin was killed as the roof of his house collapsed during a storm at Hatia in Noakhali.

About 200 people were injured and over 300 houses were damaged in the storm that battered several parts of the district.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna reported that around 2,000 makeshift houses were damaged as a storm battered Southkhali union in Bagerhat in the afternoon.

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POWER PLANT CASE Court order today on charge-framing against Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

The special court will give its order today whether charges will be framed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and seven others in the barge-mounted power plant graft case.

After closing arguments by both the prosecution and the defence lawyers on Thursday, Judge M Firoze Alam fixed Sunday for its ruling.

The special court took up the case on February 7 for hearing.

On September 2 last year, ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan filed

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মরণেরে তুচ্ছ করি স্মরণেরে উর্ধে তুলে গেলে...

আমরা শোকাহত

জন্মেছিলে বরিশালের মেহেন্দীগঞ্জ থানার হাসানপুর গ্রামে। সারা জীবনে ন্যায়, আদর্শ, পরোপকার আর মানুষের কল্যাণে করেছো অরিশতে সংগ্রাম। সেই আদর্শের সঞ্চার তোমায় উপহার দিয়েছে বরেন্দ্রা কিছু কৃতি সন্তান, এক বিশাল পরিবার-পরিজন এবং ধার্মিকতা, শোকাহত এলাকাকারী...

আলহাজ্ব মোহাম্মদ শামসুল হক সিকদার (১৯৩২ - ২০০৮)

১৬ই মে, ২০০৮ শুক্রবার দীর্ঘ রোগভোগের অবসান করে তিনি চলে গেলেন পরলোকে (ইদ্রা.....সাজেউন)। রেখে গেলেন ৭৬ বছরের অদ্বাদা স্মৃতিময়, সংগ্রামী কর্মজীবনের এক মহান উত্তরাধিকার। তিনি অমর, অক্ষয়, অবিনাশী হয়ে রইবেন তাঁর স্বী, ৬ পুত্র ২ কন্যা সন্তান, অসংখ্য পরিবার-পরিজন ও জনস্বার্থীর মাঝে।

মহান প্রতিপালক আত্মার বাঙ্গল আলমীন তাঁকে বেন সেই শান্তিতে রাখেন, যে পরম নিবিড় পিতৃপ্রেমে তিনি লালন করেছেন তার সন্তানদের (হাস্কির হাং হুয়া কামা বারুা ইয়ানি সাগিরা)। আমরা তাঁর বিদেহী আত্মার মাগধিসাত কামনা করছি ও তাঁর মৃত্যুতে ব্যাধা শোকের সমর্মিতায় আমাদের পাশে এসে দাঁড়িয়েছেন তাদেরকে জানাচ্ছি আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা।

আজ বাদ আছর ৬৮/৭, ভগ্নরমোড়া, সিআরপি, সাভারস্থ নিজ বাসভবনে এবং আগামীকাল ১৯শে মে, সোমবার, বাতী # ১০, রোড # ৫, জনতা হাউজিং, পশ্চিম আগারশাও, ঢাকা-২ বাদ আছর মরহুমের কুলধানিতে শরিক হয়ে দোয়ায় সমিল হতে অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

বিনীত -

সারা এ্যাডভারটাইজিং লিমিটেড পরিবার ও মরহুমের সকল পুত্র-কন্যাপণ

Lankan army bombs rebel air strip

Clashes leave 16 Tigers dead

AP, AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan air force jets bombed an air strip used by Tamil Tiger rebels, while 16 insurgents were killed in ground clashes in the north, the military said yesterday.

The attacks Friday came hours after a suicide bomber rammed his motorcycle into a bus carrying riot police in the heart of the capital, killing 10 people.

A military statement said pilots confirmed bombing the runway in rebel-held Iranaimadu village. It gave no details of casualties or damage. The air force has claimed to have bombed the same strip several times in the past.

The air sorties were carried out over the rebel-held Iranaimadu area late on Friday, the ministry said in a statement.

The offensive came hours after a suicide bomber rammed into a police bus in the capital of Colombo, killing 11 people and injuring more than 80.

Troops advancing into rebel-held areas killed at least 16 guerrillas in Vavuniya on Friday, the statement said, without detailing the casualties suffered by government forces.

Friday's fighting brought the number of rebels killed by security forces since the start of the year to 3,716 while 276 soldiers have died

in combat during the same period, according to ministry figures.

Also, a hand grenade exploded in northern Vavuniya town Saturday, wounding 17 civilians, the military said.

It was not possible to independently verify the military's claims because reporters are not allowed in the war zone. The two sides are known to exaggerate their enemy's casualties while underreporting their own.

Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirayan could not be contacted for comment.

The military blamed the Tamil Tigers for Friday's blast in Colombo that killed 10 people, including eight police, and wounded 85.

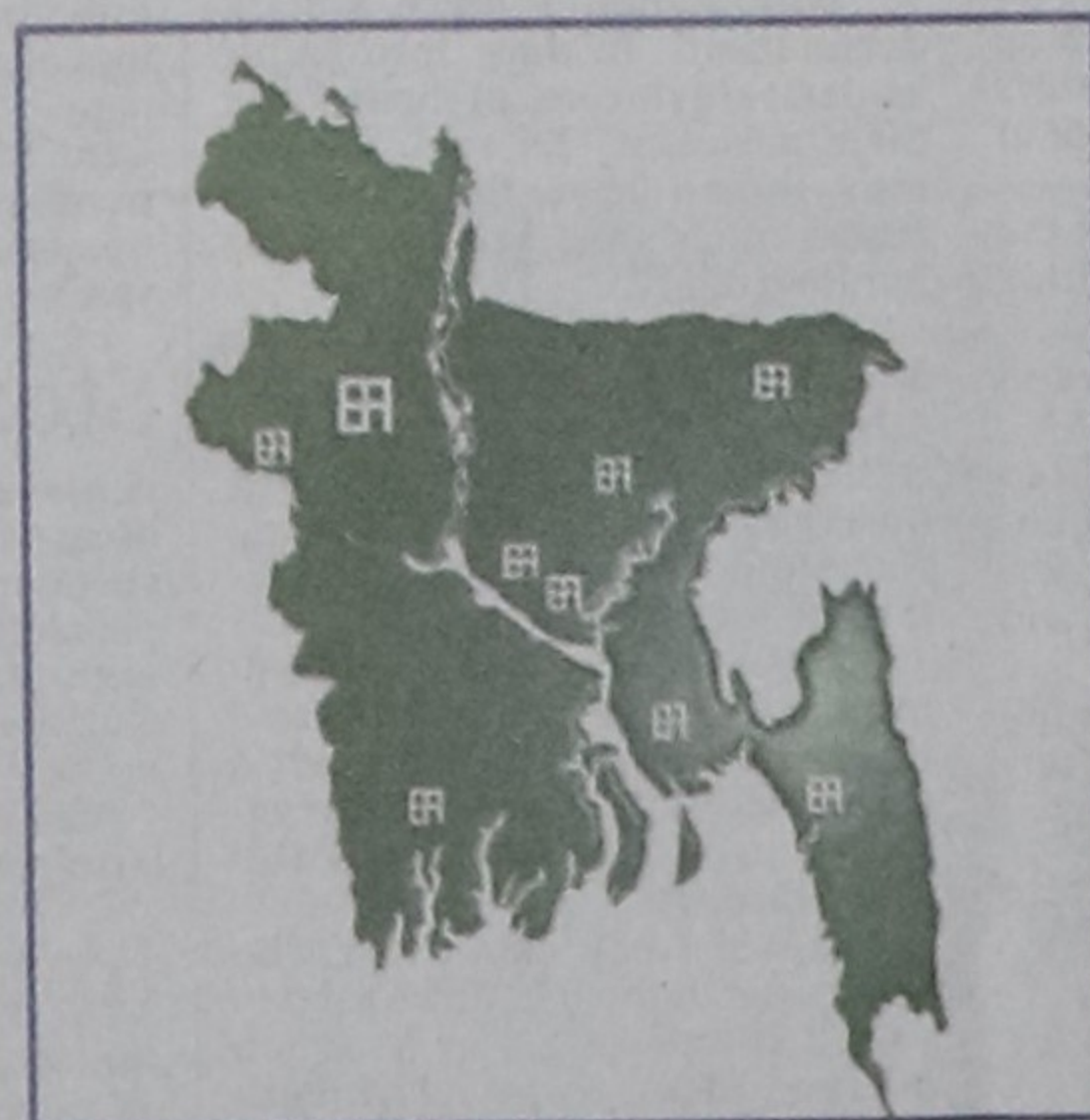
President Mahinda Rajapaksa said the rebel group has "demonstrated to the world its total commitment to violence and terror to achieve its separatist goals in Sri Lanka, and its absolute contempt for democracy and human rights."

The rebels, blamed for more than 240 suicide attacks, have been listed as a terror organization by the United States and European Union.

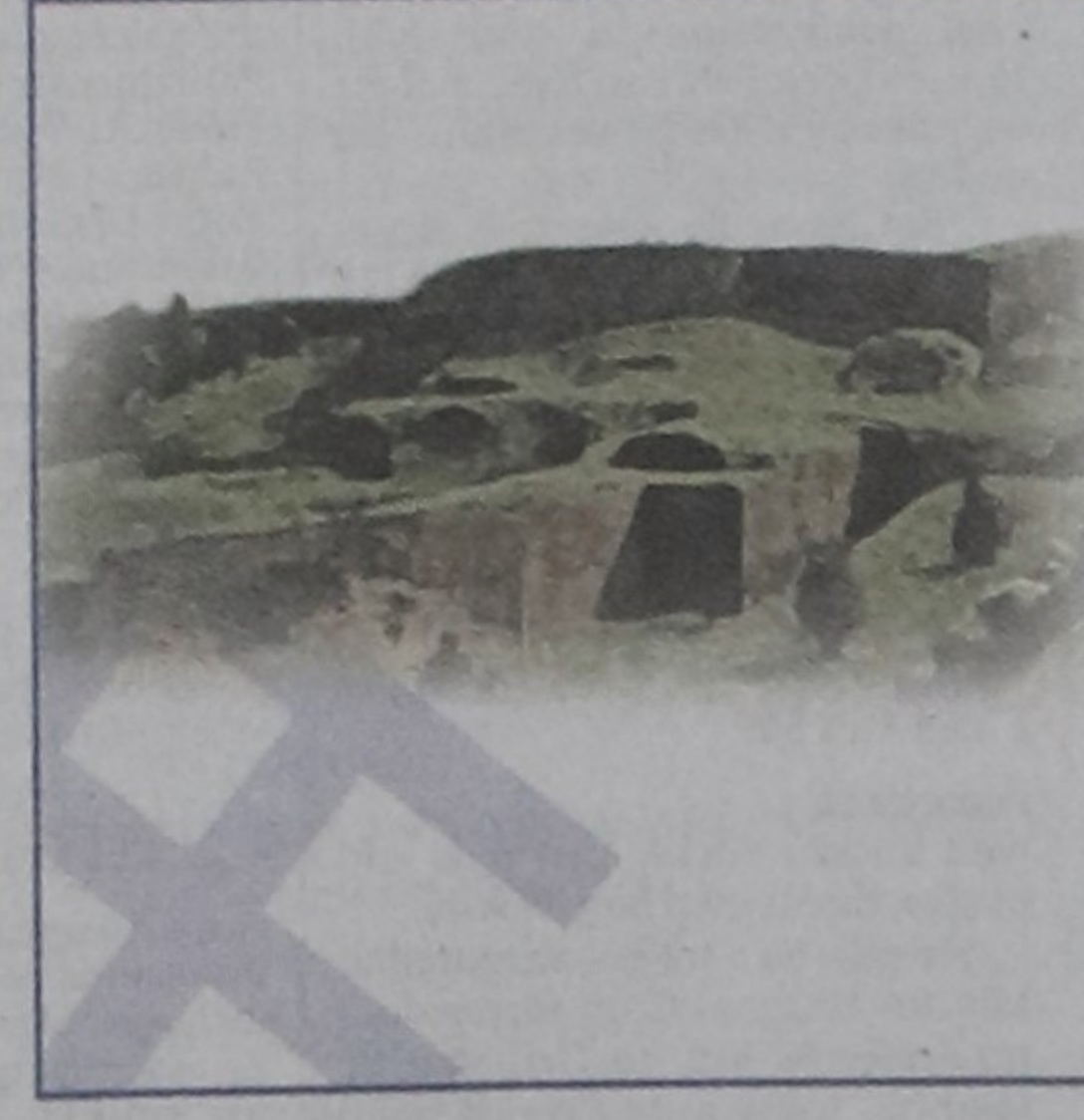
Casualty numbers cannot be independently verified as Colombo bars journalists and rights groups from travelling to embattled areas.

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Now 31



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