

Lanka civilians need 'urgent help'

Says aid group

AFP, Colombo

Civilians pouring out of the war zone in Sri Lanka's north are in dire need of emergency surgical and psychological help, an international aid group said yesterday.

Medecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors Without Borders, or MSF) also voiced "extreme" concern for 150,000 Tamil civilians still trapped by fierce fighting between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels.

The statement is the latest sign of the aid community's alarm over the situation in northern Sri Lanka, where most agencies are barred by the government from working.

"MSF remains extremely worried about the situation for approximately 150,000 civilians remaining in the Wanni," MSF

said of Sri Lanka's northern jungles.

Most of those managing to escape the fighting were injured or traumatised, it said.

"The majority of the surgical cases are violence-related. The wounds are predominantly caused by shrapnel and shooting," MSF said, without accusing either side of responsibility for civilian casualties.

"Many have lost relatives or even entire families. They have no contact with the family or friends and often do not know whether those they left behind are still alive."

Sri Lanka's government says that nearly 40,000 people have fled the fighting while placing the number left behind at fewer than 70,000.

Those who reach government-held

areas are housed in controversial "transition shelters" guarded by armed troops. Critics have described them as concentration camps.

"There is literally nothing for them to do except wait. In the camps, they have no jobs or schools. They have lost all autonomy. Their lives are on hold with constant fear about the safety of their loved ones," MSF said.

The Sri Lankan military accuses the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of using civilians as human shields, and that escaping Tamil civilians are being well-looked after.

But last week the United Nations' human rights chief, Navii Pillay, said she feared both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers could be guilty of war crimes.

Indian EC seeks report on Gujarat minorities' safety

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Gandhinagar

The Central Election Commission (CEC) has asked district electoral officers across Gujarat to conduct a vulnerability analysis of religious minorities, tribals, backward classes and economically weak sections to prevent them from being threatened by political parties during the Lok Sabha polls, an official said on Thursday.

The district collectors, who are working as electoral officers, have been entrusted with the responsibility of identifying all sections that could face harassment and be forced not to vote by political parties, a senior official at the State Election Office here told IANS.

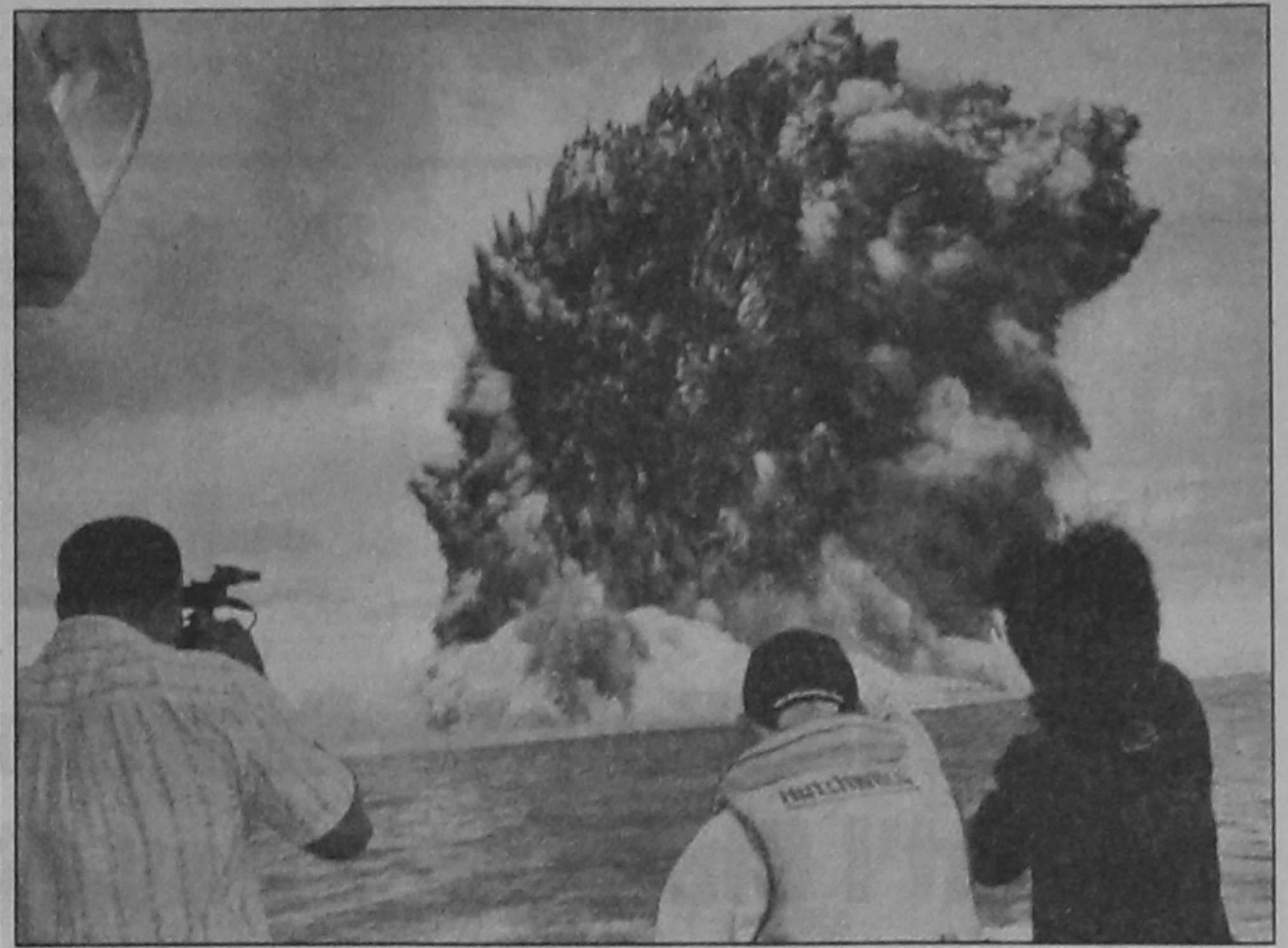


PHOTO: AFP

Picture dated March 18 shows an undersea volcano eruption about 10 to 12 kilometres off the Tongatapu coast of Tonga sending plumes of steam and smoke hundreds of metres into the air. Tonga's head geologist, Kelepi Mafi, said there was no apparent danger to residents of Nuku'alofa and others living on the main island of Tongatapu.



PHOTO: AFP

Relatives wave at newly freed Iraqi prisoners upon their arrival aboard buses following their release by US soldiers in Baghdad yesterday. Around 120 prisoners were released by US troops. Iraq marks today the sixth anniversary of the US-led war that toppled executed dictator Saddam Hussein, but triggered a deadly insurgency and sectarian conflict.

Six years on, Iraq still living dangerously

AFP, Baghdad

The end of war and occupation is in sight, six years after the US-led invasion of Iraq, but the moment is loaded with danger as new Iraqi forces take over security from withdrawing US troops.

With a dramatic fall in death tolls since early 2008, US and Iraqi officials offer repeated assurances that everything is in place for a smooth transition.

However, two major bomb blasts this month that killed more than 60 people and maimed scores more served as gruesome reminders of the risks ahead of the March 20 anniversary of the 2003 invasion.

In just three months time, US forces are to withdraw from major cities and towns in a prelude to a total pullout from Iraq in 2011.

The US military sees a return to enough stability for Iraqi forces gradually to take responsibility, and it has been playing down fears of a return to high levels of sectarian strife or even all-out civil war.

The army argues that quitting the cities by June 30 -- an official deadline in the US-Iraq security pact signed in November -- will bolster urban security by allowing American troops to focus on catching insurgents in the countryside.

Kuwait emir dissolves parliament for second time in a year

AFP, Kuwait City

The emir of the Gulf state of Kuwait dissolved parliament on Wednesday for the second time in a year after a new row between MPs and the cabinet, which is dominated by members of his Sabah family.

Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah called a snap election within the next two months, the official KUNA news agency said, the second poll in the Western-backed oil producer since May last year and the third since June 2006.

The emir, whose country is the main rear base for US-led operations in neighbouring Iraq, said he took the decision to "safeguard the security of the nation and its stability."

He strongly criticised what he called "regretta-

ble practices by MPs that have distorted the image of Kuwaiti freedom and democracy."

The emir expressed particular anger at repeated demands by some MPs to summon before parliament his nephew, outgoing Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmed al-Sabah.

The demands had prompted the cabinet to tender its resignation in support of the premier.

He accused the 50-member chamber of abusing its constitutional powers and warned he would not "hesitate to take any step to safeguard the country's security."

The new parliamentary polls will be held in mid-May, a government source told AFP.

MPs had expressed concern that the emir would suspend parliament without a snap election and rule by decree for the next two years.

All-party body

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Speaker Hamid said, forming the parliamentary body last night in parliament.

The committee was also assigned to investigate allegations, if any, against Hamid during his tenure as the speaker for three and a half months during the seventh parliament in 2001.

"I willingly put myself under the jurisdiction of the parliamentary body," the speaker said.

The probe body was formed in consultation with Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina in the face of growing demands from the treasury bench lawmakers for investigating allegations of unbridled corruption against Sircar.

Jamiruddin Sircar was the speaker from October 28, 2001 until January 25, 2009. He was mired in deep controversy over allegations of corruption in recruitment and procurement for the Parliament Secretariat and unlawfully taking huge amount of money as medical bills.

On Monday, Speaker Abdul Hamid proposed forming the probe body and the House unanimously approved it.

AL lawmakers ASM Firoz, Shajahan Khan, SK Abu Baker, Abdul Mannan, Habibar Rahman, Mazharul Haque Prodhon, ABM Anwarul Haque, Opposition Chief Whip and BNP lawmaker Zainul Abidin Faroque, Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujibul Haque Chunu and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal's Mainuddin Khan Badal are the members of the committee.

The Parliament Secretariat will assist the probe body.

On Tuesday, former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, who is contesting the parliamentary by-election from Bogra-6, said at a press conference that the treasury bench lawmakers raised the allegations against him to destroy his image and thus benefit his opponent AL candidate in the by-poll.

Immediately after formation of the committee, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque took the floor and asked why the probe body will investigate allegations against Sircar only.

In response, Hamid said allegations of corruption were not raised against any other previous speaker except Sircar. Besides, some of the former speakers have already died, he added.

According to the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Act 1994, the Parliament Secretariat is independent and gets separate budgetary allocation and all its money is spent under the speaker's authority.

Meanwhile, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque said he would discuss with party chief Khaleda Zia whether he will work with the probe committee or not.

"The committee has been formed to tarnish the image of former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar," Faroque told reporters outside the parliament building.

Fazle Rabbi Mia, head of the committee, told reporters that he would try his best to dig out the truth and uphold the dignity of the House.

After yesterday's sitting, the speaker adjourned the House until 4:00pm of March 29.

RMG food

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Abdur Razzak will brief the leaders from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) on March 22 at the ministry regarding operation of the programme, he said.

Rahman said presently the government warehouses have 12 lakh tonnes in stock, which is enough to continue the rationing.

The market operators and workers' leaders said the initiative will help reduce the prices of rice in the local markets, as a good number of consumers will be benefited directly and indirectly.

Welcoming the move, Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Workers' Federation, said "The low-paid garment workers would be greatly benefited from such move."

The secretary said if BGMEA and BKMEA want to start the rationing programme from April, they can do it as the ministry has already completed all the formalities.

In a query Rahman said the ministry has no plan to launch food rationing at this moment for other low-paid groups as 30 lakh readymade garment workers (RMG) will be directly benefited under the programme.

The ministry would strictly monitor the whole process of rationing to detect malpractices, he warned.

The government bought a significant quantity of rice at Tk 28 per kg, which will be subsidised for the programme, he said.

When contacted, BGMEA President Abdus Salam Mursheedy said they are identifying the spots from where the rationing will be operated.

He said it is very difficult to gather information about garment workers instantly as the factories are not located in one place while the rate of internal migration of the workers is very high in Bangladesh.

"We will sell rice among the workers with valid ID cards or service books to check any mismanagement in rice distribution," Mursheedy said.

In a recent meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he suggested continuing the rationing for RMG workers for 12 months, but it is yet to be finalised, he said adding, "We are still lobbying with the government for running the rationing for 12 months."

The BGMEA leaders will meet with the prime minister very soon to make an appeal for the bailout package for the exporters in view of the financial recession, he added.

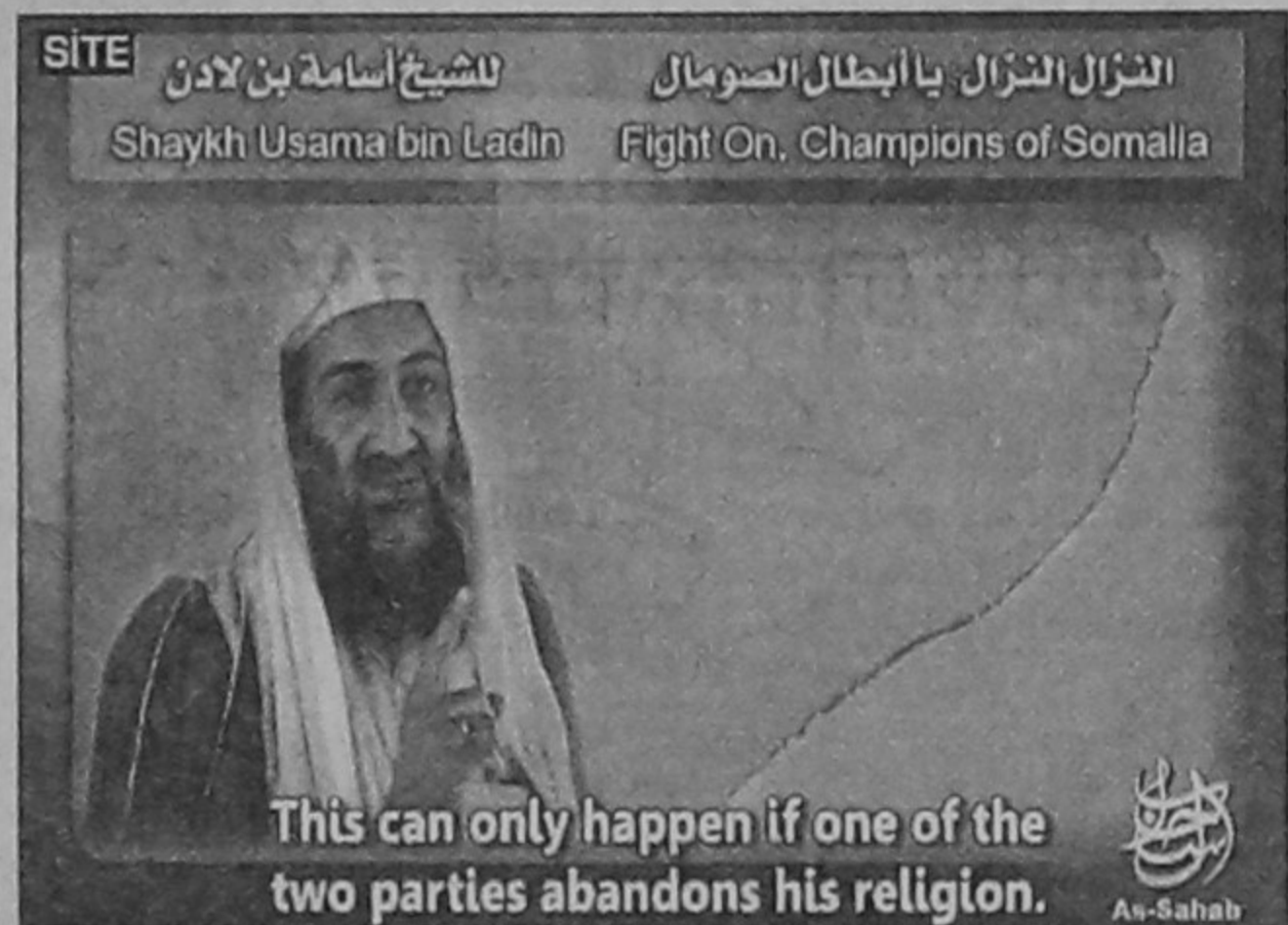


PHOTO: AFP

This handout still photo released by the SITE Intelligence Group shows a portrait of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden which accompanied a new audio message yesterday.

Laden urges overthrow of Somali president

AFP, Dubai

al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden called on radical Islamists in Somalia to overthrow new President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, according to an audiotape posted on the Internet yesterday.

Ahmed, a moderate Islamist, was elected president of the war-ravaged African state in January following UN-brokered reconciliation talks but faces a tough task to bring peace to a country wracked by civil war since 1991.

"This Sheikh Sharif... must be fought and toppled," bin Laden said in a message addressed to the "champions of Somalia," the third audiotape attributed to bin Laden that has been broadcast this year.

"He is like the (Arab) presidents who are in the pay of our enemies," he said in the tape, whose authenticity could not be immediately confirmed.

Somalia has had no effective central authority since the 1991 ouster of former president Mohamed Siad Barre touched off a bloody cycle of clashes between rival factions.

ACC clears Mashhud

FROM PAGE 1

is based on the report of an investigation committee formed by it.

The committee comprised of two ACC members - Habibur Rahman and Abul Hasan Manjur Mannan - said it prepared the report after scrutinising the allegations and relevant records.

The report mentioned that the allegations made against Hasan Mashhud, who was chairman of governing body of the bank, proved baseless and motivated as no evidence of his links with misappropriation of money or causing loss to the bank by laundering money was found.

The probe committee was formed in January this year as former executive chairman of the Board of Investment and Amar Desh Publications Ltd Chairman Mahmudur Rahman lodged a complaint with the ACC. He brought allegations of misappropriation and laundering of Trust Bank money and abuse of power by the ACC chief.

Although Mahmudur Rahman claimed that the allegations are true, he did not provide the investigation committee with any evidence to substantiate those despite being asked to do so, the committee said in its report.

The committee issued a notice on the complainant on February 25 this year to appear before it and give statement, but he sent a letter to it without giving any documentary evidence, and did not appear in person, said a summary of the report given to journalists yesterday.

Referring to the statement given by Hasan Mashhud before the committee, the report said when the bank's incurring losses had come to his notice, he had taken several steps including formation of an inquiry committee and action against those responsible, and carried out necessary directives from Bangladesh Bank.

The report mentioned that as chairman of governing body of the bank, Hasan Mashhud did not have any connection with daily operation of the bank.

The allegation of money laundering by Mashhud under Money Laundering Prevention Ordinance, 2008, was not correct as the incident occurred in 2002 and 2003, while the ordinance was promulgated on April 15, 2008, the report said.

Trust Bank is an institution of Army Welfare Trust that began its business activities in November in 1999. Hasan Mashhud was chairman of its governing body between June 2002 and July 2005 as the then army chief.

'Top Pak cops were lazing at home during Lahore attack'

ANI, Lahore

A high level probe into the security lapse during the terror attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team has revealed that all three Superintendents of Police (SP) who were entrusted to look after the security arrangements during the Lankan convoy's movement didn't reported on duty on the day the attack took place, and were in their residences.

It has been learnt through an enquiry conducted by the

Additional Inspector General of Police Salahuddin Niazi that SP Model Town, Dr Raja Abid, SP Security Ehsan Younis, and SP Civil Lines Rai Ijaz were at their residences when the Lankan team was being sprayed with bullets in the heart of Lahore.

The enquiry report said these officers should have been on duty at around 6:00 a.m. to check security measures along the route, but they reached Liberty Chowk 40 to 45 minutes after the attack.

Thai PM hits back at censure motion

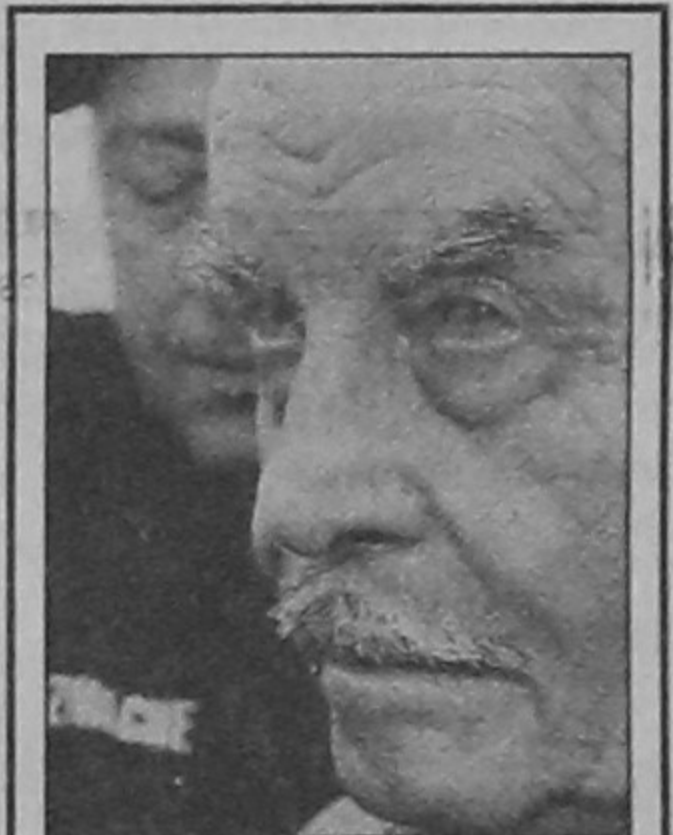
AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva rejected allegations of corruption and draft-dodging yesterday as the opposition launched a heated censure debate against the government.

The move, led by allies of fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, is almost certain to fail but opposition lawmakers hope that the allegations against Abhisit and five ministers will weaken the ruling coalition.

During the live televised debate Abhisit held up pictures of himself to prove his military status, hoping to deflect claims about skipping military service, which have dogged him since he came to power three months ago.

"I have full legitimacy under the constitution to take this position," Abhisit, the head of the ruling Democrat Party, told parliament. A vote is due to take place on Saturday.



MURDER-INCEST TRIAL

Fritzl guilty on all charges, sentenced to life

AFP, Sankt Poelten, Austria

A jury yesterday ordered Josef Fritzl jailed for life for treating his daughter as a sex slave in the cellar of his home during a 24-year orgy of depravity in which he fathered seven children.

The court in the Austrian town of Sankt Poelten said Fritzl would have to spend the rest of his life interned in a mental institute after a psychiatrist warned that the 73-year-old Fritzl felt "born to rape".

The jury found him unanimously guilty of murder one of the seven children after Fritzl and other charges of rape and incest and sequestration in the cellar of the family house in Amstetten.

Govt mulls

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children," Monnujans said. She said child labour was not only a rights issue but also a development one.

The United Nations' childrens fund Unicef, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Unesco jointly organised the seminar yesterday following a four-day Capacity Building Training attended by representatives from different ministries, employers, workers and members of the civil society.

Monnujan said under the non-formal education programme, the government has set up schools in different districts for working children. Terminating child labour a socio-economic problem in the country, the minister also stressed the need for poverty reduction to fight the problem.

Director of ILO Country Office Panudda Boonpala said basic education and training for jobs in the labour market is extremely important and all sectors have to work together in this regard.

"The education system has

to include the needs of marginalised children and a comprehensive holistic education policy is needed," said Carel de Rooy, country representative of Unicef.

Among others, Director and Country Representative of Unesco Malama Meleisea, Head of the Child Labour Unit and Joint Secretary (labour) of the Ministry of Labour and Employment Azizur Rahman also spoke at the seminar.

During the capacity building training the participants discussed current situation of child labour and education in the country and challenges in eliminating worst forms of child labour.

They also made recommendations to eliminate child labour, their points including a multisectoral approach to the problem. They also recommended ratification of section 138 of the ILO Convention where the minimum age of the children in hazardous job is fixed and adoption of the National Child Labour Policy underlined as a matter of urgency.

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 - iii. S/he must have excellent command on a variety of software applications (MS Word, Excel, Outlook, etc.) with a minimum typing speed of 40 per minute.
 - iv. Excellent command over English and good Communication skills.
- b) **Executive Assistant - Public Relations**
 - i. Must have Masters degree from a reputed University. Candidates with diploma in relevant field will be given preference.
 - ii. Must have at least 5 years experience in managing media, coordinating media events and responding to all sorts of external queries. Capable of maintaining good liaison with different government & private bodies and preparing press releases and articles on different programs.
 - iii. Having good interpersonal skill and excellent command over MS Word/Excel in English and Bangla.
 - iv. Command over English Language is mandatory.

Candidates are advised to fill up application form available at BRAC University website (www.bracu.ac.bd) and apply to the Registrar, BRAC University, 66 Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. Tel: 882-4051 ext. 4004/5 by 15th April 2009. Application may also be sent by email to registrar@bracu.ac.bd