



Italian rescuers recover a body from a collapsed building yesterday in the Abruzzo capital L'Aquila, the epicentre of an earthquake measuring 5.8-magnitude on the open-ended Richter scale. At least 50 people were killed in the quake that struck central Italy.

Muffled cries for help amid Italian quake devastation

AFP, L'Aquila

"I feel like I'm in a movie, this just doesn't seem real," one woman sobbed, saying she was heading for a friend's house in a "neighbourhood that's still standing."

The medieval walled city was in shock after the quake struck just after 3:30 am (0130 GMT), killing dozens of people, with many residents packing up a few belongings and heading out of the town as tiny aftershocks rumbled on and off.

Some could be seen sheltering in their cars near their homes destroyed in the quake. Hundreds wandered around with packs of water, or with blankets over their shoulders in spite of the sunshine. White dust covered many heads.

"Let me through, my son is on his own, and the phone isn't working," a woman pleaded with police who were keeping people out of a building crawling with rescue workers.

Rescue workers had already pulled several people out alive from the rubble and were readying a crane to try to pull the roof off the ruins of the building in L'Aquila, capital of Abruzzo.

NBR chief made OSD

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Nasir Uddin Ahmed has been made acting NBR chairman, said a handout.

Meanwhile, Public Service Commission (PSC) Secretary Hedayetullah Al Mamun has been made acting secretary of civil aviation and tourism ministry while former establishment secretary Mohammad Hossain Serniyabath made member of PSC.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) Chairman Md Mahbubur Rahman has also been made acting secretary of housing and public works ministry.

Besides, Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries

Corporation (BSFIC) Chairman Apurba Kumar Biswas has been made OSD while Bangladesh Employee Welfare Board (BEWB) Director General Abul Kashem appointed chairman of BCIC on deputation.

OSD Muhammad Golam Quddus has been made Director General of BEWB while OSD Aslam Iqbal made secretary of PSC secretariat and OSD Tariq ul Islam has been appointed chairman of BSFIC on deputation.

Meanwhile, Md Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Abdus Sobhan Golap have been appointed special assistant to the Prime Minister. Their rank and salary will be equivalent to the secre-

tary to the Prime Minister.

Sources said the changes will continue as the Awami League led government is willing to 'thorough reshuffles' in the civil and police administration.

"More officers will be made OSD while some will be appointed on contractual basis," said an official.

ALAMGIR MADE PDB CHAIRMAN:

The government in an order yesterday gave additional charge of the chairman of Power Development Board (PDB) to its member (generation) SM Alamgir Kabir following retirement of its chairman Shawkat Ali.

Merkel visits Afghanistan

AP, Berlin

German Chancellor Angela Merkel made an unannounced visit to northern Afghanistan on Monday to meet with her country's troops and view rebuilding efforts.

Merkel and Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung visited a German base in the northern town in Kunduz and later continued to Mazar-e-Sharif, spokesman Thomas Steg said in Berlin. She also planned to visit civilian projects supported by German groups.

Merkel wanted "to get an impression of Germany's military and civilian commitment in northern Afghanistan," where its 3,800 troops are deployed. Steg told a regular government news conference.

Lanka braces for final battle against Tigers

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military readied yesterday for a final assault on Tamil Tigers boxed into a strip of jungle with thousands of trapped civilians, after urging the rebels to surrender or face annihilation.

Security forces were moving ahead after killing at least 480 Tiger rebels in four days of fierce fighting in the northeast of the island that ended on Sunday, military officials said.

Troops recovered the bodies from Puthukkudirippu district which was brought under control of the security forces on Sunday, military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said.

He said the guerrillas were now confined to a 20 square kilometre (eight square mile) coastal area, which the military has designated a "safe zone" for tens of thousands of civilians trapped in the conflict area.

"They continue to use civilians as a human shield and attack security forces from the safe zone," Nanayakkara said. Sporadic clashes were reported from the region on Monday.

Army chief Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka told US ambassador Robert Blake that he believed Tamil Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran may still be hiding in the area.

An "exodus of trapped civilians could

be expected at any moment," Fonseka told Blake according to an army statement.

In the past four months, some 65,000 people have managed to flee the war zone and find shelter in government-run camps.

The United Nations and other foreign aid organisations say as many as 150,000 civilians may still be trapped, although the Sri Lankan government insists the figure is less than half that.

President Mahinda Rajapakse on Sunday announced that the military was on the verge of wiping out the Tigers after decades of bitter fighting.

BCL's DU unit

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may erupt any time between the post-seekers and the followers of BCL DU unit President Sobel Rana Tipu and General Secretary Sajjad Sakib Badsha.

The post-aspirants and their followers yesterday brought out a procession immediately after Tipu and Badsha formed a human chain on the campus demanding reconsideration of Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's decision to quit from BCL as its organisational chief.

Some BCL men who led the procession ignoring the unit high-ups also demanded resignation of Tipu and Badsha citing their failure to form any of the DU hall committees during their three-year leadership.

The procession came as a sign of revolt by the hall unit leaders, who were demanding declaration of hall unit committees for about three years.

Committees to DU dorms were last formed in 2002.

Tuhin of Surya Sen Hall told The Daily Star, "The university unit top leaders did not inform us about the human chain. So we held the procession demanding review of our leader's (Sheikh Hasina) decision regarding Ghattra League."

The procession was organised by Tuhin and Saeed of Surya Sen hall, Ziku of Ziaur Rahman hall, Faruk of AF Rahman hall, Suman of Jahurul Haque hall, Shohag of Jasimuddin hall, Utpal and Milton of Jagannath hall, among many others.

On the other hand, Mostak of Surya Sen hall, Salahuddin of Jasim Uddin hall and Mehedi of AF Rahman hall joined the human chain with their followers.

"We demand resignation of the university unit president and general secretary as they did not throw any programme regarding our leader's decision straightaway. They have failed to run the unit," said a BCL hall unit leader seeking anonymity.

Sources say the hall unit leaders might bring out fresh programmes today as well.

Similar move took place on the campus last year when the hall unit leaders showed their grievances in front of the central and DU unit top leaders on grounds of not forming fresh committees.

The hall unit leaders were then calmed with the assurance of forming new hall unit committees soon.

Contacted, BCL DU unit chief Tipu refused to comment on the matter.

IMF offers help in dealing

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The sources said the government would have to formally ask the IMF for the assistance.

"Our foreign currency reserve is good which now stands at above \$ 6 billion. Decision on seeking assistance from the IMF will be made later as the matter is still premature," Dr-Mashiur Rahman said.

The IMF Aide-Memoire said, "These budgets are a critical test for the recently elected government to indicate its policy intentions for the future. The government is encouraged to take innovative policy measures to lay a foundation for long-term sustainable growth."

The government should also address implementation bottlenecks -- perhaps with help from the World Bank, ADB and other donors -- that for many years have forced under-spending of the development budget, it said.

Given the vast need for infrastructure, the government should seek to expand its fiscal resources through revenue reform -- including the broadening of the tax base and a overhaul of income tax and VAT laws -- the proceeds of which can be

invested for long-term prosperity, said the Aide-Memoire.

The IMF said Bangladesh has been largely insulated from the global crisis. While there are some signs of a slowdown in economic activity, the economy seems likely to hold up in the short run.

The confluence of downside risks will likely accumulate as the fiscal year turns, making the next budget critical not only for weathering fallouts from the global financial crisis, but also for determining the course of medium-term development, it said.

There are clear signals of a likely deterioration in the near future. The global retrenchment in consumer spending is beginning to manifest itself in the decrease in garment export orders, which is likely to depress exports. The difficulty in securing new employment opportunities overseas implies not only stagnant remittance inflows down the road, which could drive the current account to deficit, but also excess labour at home, which will strain the existing social safety net, the Aide-Memoire added.

Pro-AL employees

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After the clash, Rajuk Chairman Md Nurul Huda told reporters that outsiders damaged the main entrance of Rajuk building.

"We have asked the enquiry committee to submit its probe report by seven days and actions would be taken according to the report," he added.

MA Malek, who is leading one faction of Rajuk Sramik League, alleged that Milki and some other employees of Rajuk, accompanied by around 200 outsiders, attacked Rajuk Bhaban and vandalised its entrance.

"When they made the attack, we in cooperation with the general employees chased and drove them out of the Rajuk building", he said.

"Milki and Jalil have claimed themselves the leaders of the faction of Sramik League to make money illegally from Rajuk", he added.

Shamsul Alam Milki, president of Rajuk Sramik Karmachari Union, also claimed that his faction is the main faction of Jatiya Sramik League and said he was the secretary of education and literature of Jatiya Sramik League in 2001.

He alleged that Malek group along with outsiders attacked them when they entered Rajuk building at about noon.

Milki said he complained to the Rajuk chairman against Malek on Sunday after Malek and his associates beat up two employees. "They made the attack on us due to the complaint," Milki alleged.

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