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Thousands feared dead in Haiti quake

PM says death toll could be more than 1,00,000; presidential palace, UN mission HQ, major parts of capital ravaged, 3m affected

AFP, AP, Port-au-Prince/Geneva

Haitians piled bodies along the devastated streets of their capital yesterday after a powerful earthquake flattened the president's palace, hospitals, schools, luxury hotels, the main prison and whole neighbourhoods.

Officials feared hundreds of thousands may have perished but there was no firm count. Haiti's Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive told CNN the final death toll from the quake could be "well over 100,000."

With victims pinned under debris and powerful aftershocks rattling the country, looting broke out soon after the 7.0 magnitude quake, which spared no part of the capital Port-au-Prince, close to the epicentre.

Injured residents of the crowded city poured

into the streets screaming in panic with each new tremor. Many bodies were just left in the streets or crushed under debris.

The earthquake has left an estimated 3 million people in need of emergency aid, a Red Cross official said, as aid groups and governments scrambled to send tons of disaster relief to the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Humanitarian officials said the proximity of the quake's epicentre, only 15 kilometres from the capital, and Haiti's crumbling infrastructure meant it was impossible to gauge exactly how many people might be dead or wounded.

"There's probably 3 million people potentially affected," said Paul Conneally, spokesman for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

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The Haitian presidential palace stands in ruins in Port-au-Prince after a huge earthquake measuring 7.0 rocked the impoverished Caribbean nation on Tuesday toppling buildings and causing deaths of thousands.

PHOTO: AFP

6 Bangladeshi peacekeepers missing, 1 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi national, who is working at the headquarters for UN peacekeeping mission in Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, suffered minor injuries after a quake struck the Caribbean country Tuesday while the fates of six officials of Bangladesh Police remained unknown till last night.

The six policemen, including two traffic officials, were working for the peacekeeping mission in Haiti, said sources from the police headquarters. However, none of them was posted to the headquarters or anywhere in Port-au-Prince.

Assistant Inspector General (AIG-UN Desk) Harun-ur-Rashid told The Daily Star, "We tried to know the whereabouts of the six policemen but failed due to

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BANGABANDHU CASE SC to hear review pleas on Jan 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday fixed January 24 for hearing the petitions filed by detained convicts in Bangabandhu murder case seeking review of its judgment confirming their death sentence.

Three of the five condemned prisoners -- Bazlul Huda, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Sultan Shariar Rashid Khan-- have already filed review petitions with the apex court.

Huda and AKM Mohiuddin filed the petitions on January 10 and Shariar Rashid on January 12 through their counsels.

The other two -- Syed Farooq Rahman and Mohiuddin Ahmed-- will file review petitions next week, their counsel Abu Hanif said when contacted yesterday.

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PM defends move to allow port use

Nepal, Bhutan too will be allowed to use ports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wrapped her four-day official visit to India yesterday describing it as 'totally successful'.

She also justified the decision to allow India to use Chittagong and Mongla ports saying, "In the present day world you cannot live with doors closed."

In her opening remarks at a crowded media briefing attended by Bangladeshi and Indian journalists, she said, "India is our natural friend. India is a big country and it has a very strong economy. It should look after all neighbours -- whether they are big or small -- on the basis of respect for their sovereignty and equality."

During the 30-minute briefing broadcast live by a number of leading Indian news channels, Hasina answered deftly to a wide array of questions on a range of bilateral issues including security, terrorism, trade, transit, food situation in Bangladesh, and 'anti-India sentiments in



some quarters' in her country.

Replying to a query as to how she would assess her visit to India, Hasina said, "My visit is totally successful. But I don't know what the opposition will say."

She said the joint communiqué signed by Bangladesh and India on Tuesday will 'open an era of mutual cooperation and understanding'.

"I am returning with friendship and cooperation from India," she added.

Replying to another question, she said talks are on for an extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India, adding, "If we can cooperate, we can go to any extent to tackle terror."

She pointed to the agreements Bangladesh and India signed during her visit on transfer of sentenced persons, and on mutual legal assistance on criminal matters, and said, "I feel these agreements are enough. I feel if the two countries can work together and there is a friendly atmosphere, we can make the two agreements

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City struck by welcome nightmare

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN and KAILASH SARKAR

Rashid Ahmed remained stranded in a vehicle near Zia International Airport from 5:00pm to 7:15pm while Shahana and Yiasmin on the Mohakhali Flyover for the same period.

Like Rashid, Shahana and Yiasmin, thousands of city dwellers and commuters had to go through untold sufferings, as almost all the city streets were jammed with vehicles.

This was due to ruling-party men bringing out processions to receive the prime minister on her arrival from India at the airport. They also formed a human chain, about ten kilometres long, from the airport to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), worsening the situation.

A private company official Rashid, who got stuck on his way to his New DOHS home from Ashulia, told The Daily Star over phone, "Law enforcers did not let any vehicle

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PHOTO ON PAGE 16

DEALS WITH INDIA, GOVT'S 'WRONGDOING' BNP plans protests, may return to JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP has planned to stage a series of protests against the government in and outside the parliament on various issues including signing of a number of treaties with India.

A number of senior BNP leaders said most of the party lawmakers want to join the parliament and stage a strong protest in the House against the treaties signed with India claiming those would not uphold the interest of the

country. If deputies belonging to BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party join the parliament, they will demand holding a discussion on a number of issues including price hike of essentials, law and order situation and the treaties signed with India, party insiders said.

The party policymakers also planned to wage street agitation against the government, terming it a failure in running the country, BNP insiders said.

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Paper importers taxed heavily on false allegations

ERSHAD KAMOL and DAVID BERGMAN

Bangladesh Customs has been requiring importers to pay extra tax on paper purchased from India after receiving a letter from Bangladesh Paper Mills Association (BPMA), which made false allegations that paper importers were faking invoice documents.

The Customs started imposing the additional tax even though an international pre-shipment inspecting company had reported twice that there was no basis to the allegation.

Importers have now significantly reduced purchasing cheap paper from India. This, combined with the local manufacturers' decision to sell their paper at a higher price, appears to be behind the 20 percent increase in the cost of paper for ordinary consumers.

In a surprising twist, The Daily Star has found that the person making the allegations on behalf of BPMA was not actually the

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Gratitude

Successful Lottery of Trust Bank First Mutual Fund
Oversubscribed By Ten Times

Trust Bank Limited and RACE Asset Management PCL are proud to announce the successful completion of the IPO lottery and subscription phase of the Trust Bank First Mutual Fund - the largest mutual fund in Bangladesh

The total subscription amounted to over Taka Four Hundred and Eleven Crore for a total IPO size of Taka Forty Crore. This represents an over-subscription of over ten times (10x).

We would like to offer our sincere gratitude and humble thanks to all retail, institutional, domestic and international investors who participated in the Trust Bank First Mutual Fund subscription process. Your enthusiasm and confidence are very much appreciated.

We would also like to thank the Bangladesh Bank, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Dhaka Stock Exchange, Chittagong Stock Exchange, all our Bankers to the Issue, Merchant Banks and all others who have directly or indirectly provided valuable support and guidance to Trust Bank and RACE during this process.

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