



PHOTO: REUTERS

Rescue workers arrive to the devastated residential area of tsunami hit Otsuchi as the forest burns above the town yesterday. In the fishermen town of Otsuchi in Iwate prefecture, 12,000 out of a population of 15,000 have disappeared following Friday's massive earthquake and tsunami.

Evacuation

FROM PAGE 1
International Development visited the Choucha camp today to oversee repatriation and welfare of the stranded migrant workers.

The United Arab Emirates yesterday opened a camp with modern facilities and a field hospital readily accommodating over a 1,000 people from Choucha camp. This has also eased the pressure on the existing facilities and resources.

Meanwhile, gusty wind blowing 70 km an hour since this morning and temperature falling sharply hampered movement of general people as well as aid workers.

Bangladeshi stranded workers mostly preferred to remain in their tents but they had to come out and stand in long queues for food despite the inclement weather.

While aid workers saw relief from suffering of the stranded people, others said it was a lull due to fighting at Zouara in Libya, 25 km from the Tunisian border of Ras Jdir, where Gaddafi forces are trying to take over the town from rebel fighters.

"The fighting on the main road at Zouara has definitely slowed down the exodus of migrant workers from Libya," said an official. "The situation may take a turn for the worse if the fighting is over there, paving the way for easier movement."

According to Bangladeshi migrant workers, hundreds of families with children, and female nurses are stranded in Libya unable to make a dash for the border fearing attacks by armed hoodlums in uniform.

"As they stop you on the way, you do not even know which group they belong to, all look the same," Abdur Rahman of Chadpur at the Choucha camp said. "You do what they ask you to do."

Reports reaching here said Gaddafi forces are asking all foreigners, camping around the Tipoli airport for repatriation, to leave the country as soon as possible.

State of emergency declared in Bahrain

AP, Manama

Bahrain's king declared a three-month state of emergency yesterday and gave the country's military chief wide authority to battle a Shiite-led protest movement that has threatened the Sunni monarchy and drawn in forces from around the Gulf.

The martial law-style order was read out on Bahrain state TV a day after more than 1,000 Saudi-led troops arrived to help prop up the US-backed regime in the first major cross-border military action to challenge one of the revolts sweeping across the Arab world.

Yesterday, clashes broke out across the tiny island nation, with a doctor reporting that hundreds of protesters were injured by shotgun blasts and clubs and that one died from a bullet to the head. One of the Saudi soldiers was also shot and killed by a protester, said a security official in Saudi Arabia.

Further underlining the regional implications of the unrest in Bahrain, Shiite power Iran denounced the intervention of foreign troops as "unacceptable" and predicted it would complicate the kingdom's political crisis.

Iran holds no deep political ties to Bahrain's Shiite groups, but some Iranian hard-liners have hailed their efforts over the years for greater rights for their community, which represents a majority of the nation's population. In the month of protests, the Shiite-led opposition is also pressing for political freedoms.

Other Gulf leaders have urged Bahrain's king not to give ground, fearing that gains by Bahrain's Shiite Muslims could offer a window for Iran to expand its influence on the Arab side of the Gulf. Yesterday's worst confrontations took place on the Bahraini island of Sitra.

Asia's nuclear drive despite Japan crisis

AFP, Manila

Asian governments that are ramping up nuclear power will face huge pressure to curb their programmes in the wake of Japan's atomic crisis, but dozens of reactors will still be built in the near future.

In China alone, where 27 nuclear reactors are under construction and 50 more are planned, authorities have said they will push on with their atomic energy efforts despite a potential radiation disaster in Japan.

"The plan and determination for developing nuclear power in China will not change," China's vice minister of environmental protection, Zhang Lijun, said at the weekend.

Asia has led the world's nuclear renaissance in recent years as countries in the region have looked for ways to power their booming economies while lessening their dependency on imported fossil fuels.

Of the 62 reactors being built around the world, 40 are in Asia, according to the World Nuclear Association.

Aside from China, the association said the major players are India and South Korea, each with five reactors already under construction, and about 25 more planned between them.

South Korea indicated this week it remained determined to pursue its domestic atomic ambitions, and would also press on with efforts to export its technology.

Authorities in Vietnam, which has plans to put eight nuclear plants into operation over the next 20 years, said they were similarly unfazed.

Nevertheless the deepening crisis in Japan, where authorities are scrambling to prevent a meltdown at reactors damaged by last week's catastrophic earthquake and tsunami, will likely curb parts of Asia's historic atomic drive.

LIBYA TURMOIL

West's no-fly diplomacy crawls

REUTERS, Ajdabiyah

Muammar Gaddafi's warplanes and helicopters bombed and strafed a Libyan rebel-held town yesterday while France admitted it has still not convinced world powers to impose a no-fly zone over the country.

Foreign ministers from the Group of Eight countries, meeting in Paris for the second day yesterday, were still no closer to agreeing to press the United Nations Security Council to back a no-fly zone to protect Libyan cities from aerial bombardment.

"So far I have not convinced them," French Foreign Minister said.

LATEST LEAKS

Manmohan was isolated over resuming Indo-Pak talks

AFP, New Delhi

The United States judged that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was isolated within his own government over pushing for resumed talks with Pakistan, cables obtained by WikiLeaks revealed yesterday.

The rival South Asian states suspended talks in 2008 after Islamist gunmen killed 166 people in the western Indian city of Mumbai, and only agreed last month to resume their dialogue.

In an August 2009 diplomatic cable published by The Hindu newspaper, US ambassador Timothy Roemer reported that Singh was "more isolated than we thought within his own inner circle".

Roemer said Singh lacked allies because he was a "great believer" in com-

municating with Islamabad -- in contrast to the then national security adviser MK Narayanan.

The prime minister said earlier this month he would approach new peace talks with an "open mind", adding that all disputes including a long-running feud over Kashmir would be discussed.

"We wish to resolve all outstanding issues between the two countries through friendly dialogue," he said.

Pakistan's recently-appointed Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar is slated to visit her Indian counterpart SM Krishna in New Delhi in July at the start of the full-scale resumption of talks.

India and Pakistan started a formal peace dialogue in 2004, continuing until the rupture caused by the Mumbai attacks.

Yahya met

FROM PAGE 20

on a one-to-one basis. According to Dr Kamal Hossain, at the time constitutional adviser to Bangabandhu and a member of the Awami League negotiating team, Mujib informed his colleagues that at the beginning of his talks with the president, Yahya explained the reasons why he had deferred the session of the National Assembly on March 1. For his part, the AL chief had told the president that the latter had blundered by not consulting him, despite the fact that he was the majority leader in the assembly, before taking such a drastic step.

Yahya Khan's response was that he wanted a reasonable and acceptable way out of the situation. Bangabandhu then made it clear to Yahya that much water had flowed under the bridge and the only way out of the crisis was for the president to accept the demands he had voiced at the March 7 public rally, especially regarding a withdrawal of martial law and a transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. Yahya (again in the words of Kamal Hossain) then informed the Bangalee leader that he had been told there would be a constitutional vacuum in Pakistan if martial law were to be withdrawn at that stage. This prompted Mujib into informing Yahya that he would instruct his advisers to get in touch with the president's advisers and have the two sides explore the possibility of a withdrawal of martial law without any constitutional problems coming in.

Following Bangabandhu's instructions, Dr Kamal Hossain met Lt Gen SGMM Peerzada and informed him rather bluntly that the manner in which the National Assembly session had been postponed had been uncalled for. Peerzada sounded defensive on the issue.

Quake alters earth's balance

Japan widened, moved close to America

NEW YORK TIMES ONLINE

The quake that struck northern Japan on Friday not only violently shook the ground and generated a devastating tsunami, it also moved the coastline and changed the balance of the planet.

Global positioning stations closest to the epicentre jumped eastward by up to 13 feet.

Japan is "wider than it was before," said Ross Stein, a geophysicist at the United States Geological Survey.

Meanwhile, Nasa scientists calculated that the redistribution of mass by

the earthquake might have shortened the day by a couple of millionths of a second and tilted the Earth's axis slightly.

That part of Asia, to the surprise of many who look at the geological map, sits on the North American tectonic plate, which wraps up and around the Pacific. In Friday's collision what geologists call a subduction zone the Pacific plate dives under the North American plate.

In the same way, the North American plate buckles, and the east-

ern part of Japan is slowly pushed to the west. But when the earthquake, which occurred offshore, released the tension, the land jumped back to the east.

As it unbuckled, a 250-mile-long coastal section of Japan dropped in altitude by two feet, which allowed the tsunami to travel farther and faster onto land, Dr. Stein said.

The quake also shifted the "figure axis" of the Earth, which is the axis that the Earth's mass is balanced around.

Earlier great earthquakes also changed the axis and shortened the day.



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