

6.0 quake rumbles ocean off Brazil coast

AFP, Washington

A 6.0-magnitude earthquake rumbled yesterday in the Atlantic Ocean off Brazil, US-based seismologists said.

The quake, which struck at 1308 GMT, was located along the central mid-Atlantic ridge, 1277 kilometres east-northeast of Natal, Brazil.

The United States Geological Survey said the quake was at a depth of nine kilometres, but there were no immediate indications of a tsunami.

Khaleda

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and the son broke into tears after a few moments' silence.

Tarique, also the senior vice chairman of the party, has been living in London for treatment since September 2008.

Before his departure, he alleged that the law enforcers tortured him in custody causing serious injuries to his spinal cord.

Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007 on charges of corruption during the military-backed caretaker government. He went to London after his release on bail on September 3, 2008.

Khaleda, also leader of the opposition, left Dhaka on Saturday for London en route Athens and reached Heathrow International Airport at 8:15pm local time that day.

Leaders of the party's UK chapter welcomed her at the airport.

Outside, the UK chapter of the ruling Awami League waved black flags protesting her visit.

Immediately after she left, supporters of the two parties engaged in a clash when police picked up two BNP activists.

The BNP chairperson was scheduled to address a party meeting at Grosvenor Hall yesterday afternoon (10:00pm Bangladesh time).

During her weeklong stay in London, she will meet with political leaders and government officials.

Khaleda is scheduled to meet Alan Duncan, minister of state for International Development, and Labour Party leader Ed Miliband. She will also attend receptions hosted by Anne Main, chairman of all party parliamentary group and Tower Hamlets Mayor Latifur Rahman.

Rid case

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official went to court with photocopies of the seizure list.

Special Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir told The Daily Star that the court could not start the trial due to the negligence of the official.

Yesterday, Judge Mohammad Abdul Majid of the court did not record the statement of the complainant. He fixed July 3 for the next hearing and asked him again to show up with original copies of relevant documents.

The case was filed in August 2009 against five people of Rid Pharma in connection with using toxic diethylene glycol in manufacturing paracetamol syrup that caused deaths to 28 children the same year.

Accused Mizanur Rahman, managing director of Rid Pharma and his wife Sheuly Rahman, one of the directors of the company, are now out on bail. They appeared before the court yesterday.

Three other accused, Abdul Gani, a director of the company, and two pharmacists Mahbubul Islam and Enamul Haque, are still absconding.

On March 9, the court framed charges against the five in connection with manufacturing the adulterated syrup.

Four similar cases were filed against Adfame Pharmaceutical Ltd, Polychem Laboratories Ltd, BCI (Bangladesh) Ltd, and Rex Pharmaceutical in 1992. They too had allegedly used diethylene glycol in the manufacture of paracetamol syrups.

This claimed the lives of 2,700 children.

None of these companies have been brought to book.

Khoka stays

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general Khandaker Delwar Hossain in June 2008, as Khoka and some prominent others of the committee sided with the reformist faction.

A press release issued last night also announced city BNP leader Abdus Salam as the member secretary, and 19 others as joint conveners. Twelve of these joint conveners are councillors of Dhaka City Corporation. However, there is no regular member in the committee.

Controversial leaders like former lawmaker Salahuddin Ahmed, popularly known as "dour Salahuddin"; Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, who is an accused in the 2009 BDR mutiny case; and SA Khaleque were appointed joint conveners of the committee.

When asked about inclusion of controversial leaders in the committee, Khoka said they are just victims of a conspiracy by the ruling party, adding that all of them are former lawmakers.

Other joint conveners are -- Kazi Abul Bashar, MA Qaïum, Abu Sayeed Khan Kokhan, Abdul Latif, MA Mazid, Shamsul Huda, Sazzad Zahir, Shahabuddin, Ali Asgar Matabbar,

Nurjahan Mahbub, Atiqullah, Aziz Ullah, Anwaruzzaman, Abdul Alim Noki, Bazul Basit Anzu, and Mohammad Mohon.

The newly announced convening committee will form a full-fledged executive committee within the next six months by holding a council, said the press release signed by Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, joint secretary general of BNP central committee.

Party insiders said formation of the committee was delayed due to serious infighting within the party over Khoka's possible appointment as the Dhaka city committee's chief.

Khoka's arch rival Mirza Abbas and his followers were staunchly opposed to rehabilitation of reformist leaders like Khoka in the party.

Khaleda Zia held a series of meetings with senior party leaders and finally succeeded in persuading the anti-Khoka group to accept the new committee for the greater interest of the party, the insiders added.

They said the party chief was fully convinced that there was no alternative to Khoka for leading the Dhaka city committee.

Health complex

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switched off. Kalapara upazila health complex was built on 1.75 acres of land of four plots in 1949. Later, the complex was shifted to another location.

Dr ASM Jahurul Hasan, upazila health and family planning officer, said he had informed the higher authority about the matter and also filed a GD [general diary] with Kalapara Police Station on May 7.

"Police did not take any action," Dr Hasan alleged.

Ishaq Ali, officer-in-charge of the police station, admitted recording the GD. "We will provide lawful support if they [health complex authorities] want to evict the intruders from khasland," he said.

Asked why he did not take any action yet, the OC said the authorities filed only a GD, not a case accusing anybody.

Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Yusuf said he had already asked the UNO [upazila nirbahi officer] to stop the market construction.

"If anybody wants to possess a piece of khas land, he or she has to follow legal procedure," he said. "Nobody can just take over a public land."

Tax holiday

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As per the plan, the industries that are currently entitled to the facility will continue enjoying it until 2013.

The minister also said that after 2013 everybody will have to pay tax whatever small the amount may be.

About providing lawmakers with duty-free cars, he said the government frequently faces embarrassing situation in this regard.

Earlier, steps were taken to provide transport facility to the MPs instead of giving them duty-free cars but that could not be done. Muhi, however, did not mention the reason.

He urged the lawmakers to have second thoughts themselves about enjoying the opportunity.

In yesterday's meeting, many businessmen raised the demand for duty-free import of equipment for agriculture and other sectors.

NBR Chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed said they will organise tax fairs in seven divisions in the next fiscal year to encourage people to pay tax.

Every year before the budget, the FBCCI presents to the government its proposals relating to tax and duty through the consultative committee meeting. FBCCI President AK Azad and other businessmen placed their proposals yesterday.

US envoy

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completed his three-year tenure in Bangladesh. Moriarty was confirmed as US Ambassador to Bangladesh by the Senate on March 13, 2008 and sworn in on March 26, 2008.

Moriarty is expected to leave Dhaka sometime in June, sources said.

President Obama on May 13 announced a number of appointments to key administrative posts including Dan W. Mozena.

The nomination will now be sent to the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate for hearing, which will give final conformation after his testimony.

Mozena is currently a professor at the National War College.

From 2007-2010, Mozena served as the US ambassador to Angola. A career member of the senior foreign service, Mozena served as director for the Office of Southern African Affairs from 2004 to 2007.

Mozena was deputy chief of mission in Lusaka, Zambia, where he began his foreign service career in 1982.

At US embassy in Islamabad, Mozena held the position of deputy political counsellor from 1995-1998.

Other overseas assignments have included New Delhi, India and then Zaire, where he and his wife had earlier served as Peace Corps Volunteers. Mozena received a BS from Iowa State University, and a MA and MPA from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Govt takes heart

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and roads, rapid increase in the number of motorised vehicles, mixed traffic flow, poor traffic-control law enforcement, inadequate infrastructural safety features and inadequate post crash response."

He also said they detected some barriers in prevention of road accidents, including inadequate legislative provisions, enforcement of laws and acts, absences of coordinated strategic policy and action, lack of human-friendly road environment and difficulty in accessing emergency health care.

The National Steering Committee for Injury Prevention on the decade of action on road safety made a series of recommendations to halve the casualties on roads by 2022.

They suggested speed reduction, using seatbelts, introducing child seats in

the vehicles, helmets for motorbike riders, low-cost engineering measures, safer vehicles and ensuring pre-hospital and -trauma care.

The committee suggests introducing nationwide single emergency telephone number, providing early rehabilitation and support to injured victims, introducing insurance schemes and investigation into crashes and providing legal response.

A few government wings already started their work in this connection.

The BRTA and the health department sources said they have taken some initiatives which will help the country to achieve the goal.

BRTA Director (enforcement) Tapan Kumar Sarkar said, "We have started holding rallies with drivers in different districts to create road-safety awareness and so far we have held them in

18 districts."

He said they formed a committee in each district for holding such rallies by June.

To provide post accident medical care, the health ministry already established trauma centres on highways including at Feni, Comilla and Sylhet, said AK Jafor Ullah, adding that they will establish 12 more trauma centres along highways across the country.

The government is going to introduce highway ambulances to transport victims to nearby trauma centres and hospitals, he added.

He said the committee will take steps to install central reservations on all regional and national highways to reduce accidents. They will also take steps to incorporate road safety education in text book curriculum.

SC reduces case backlog

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leadership of outgoing Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque, who attends office today for the last day.

The chief justice at a meeting yesterday urged the HC judges to give their best efforts to dispose of cases quickly in order to reduce the sufferings of litigants.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the meeting organised on the occasion of signing a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) involving \$7 million between the SC, the law ministry and the United Nations Development Programme at SC's Judges' Lounge yesterday afternoon.

Justice Khairul will go into retirement on May 17. The SC will remain closed that day [tomorrow] due to holiday on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.

Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan said the recent rate of case disposal is a very good sign, but the cases were mostly related to bail.

If those cases were related to writ, appeal, quashing and other civil proceedings, it would be more effective, he said, adding that if the next chief justice pursues the system, the situation will further improve in near future.

SC Deputy Registrar Sabbir Faiz told The Daily Star the rate of case disposal has improved thanks to the chief justice's initiatives.

After assuming office on October 1 last year, Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque took measures for quick disposal of more than one lakh criminal cases pending with the HC, he added.

Faiz said the pending cases have been classified on priority basis upon instructions of the chief justice, who also constituted some benches for their quick disposal.

A number of cases, which were disposed of

constitute a committee to monitor filing and disposal of cases, which will further enhance confidence of people in the SC, Dr Malik observed.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said the rate of case disposal in the HC is encouraging and satisfactory. The next chief justices should take steps so that the success rate remains higher, he added.

He said the number of pending cases increased since thousands of people have moved petitions in recent years to the HC for bail in criminal cases.

The courts of magistrates and sessions judges are the appropriate courts for granting bails, he said, adding that the HC should grant bail only on some specific grounds.

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before the chief justice took the initiative but were not dropped from the lists, have been struck off, he added.

The deputy registrar said Justice Khairul constituted nine vacation benches in the HC in April for hearing and disposing of old criminal cases which were filed between 1991 and 1995. Those benches have disposed of 315 cases, which was unusual.

Earlier, the number of cases filed used to exceed those disposed of, he added.

Lunar robot

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computer science and engineering. "The competition will have entries from 46 nations, including Harvard University, Virginia Tech, University of Illinois, McGill University, among others."

An eight-member team of Brac University, led by Shiblee Imtiaz Hasan and Jonayet Hossain designed BRACU Chondrobot.

The remote-controlled robot, weighing 75kg, is designed to travel on rough lunar surface, collect soil samples and carry them to lunar shuttles for examination.

"We have analysed past successes and failures to see what works and what does not, and this is the result," said Shiblee Imtiaz Hasan.

"It is controlled via WiFi and has a simple, yet efficient and reliable, tele-robotic design that will be useful for lunar excavation," Shiblee told The Daily Star.

It is not space-ready yet and the prices of the parts used for making the robot add up to Tk 35,000, he said.

Speaking as chief guest, Brac Chairperson Sir Fazle Hasan Abed congratulated the students and urged them not to get disheartened if they do not win the first prize.

"This is about participating. Come back and celebrate even if you do not win the first prize," he said.

Brac University Vice-Chancellor Prof Ainun Nishat chaired the programme.

British marine killed in Afghanistan blast

AFP, London

A British marine was killed yesterday in a blast in southern Afghanistan, the Ministry of Defence in London announced.

The troop, from 42 Commando Royal Marines, was killed by an improvised explosive device while searching a compound in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand Province.

"The Royal Marine was involved in an operation which was investigating suspected insurgent activity in a number of compounds in the Loy Mandeh Wadi area," said Task Force Helmand spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick.

OMS starts

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One buyer will be able to buy three to five kg of flour at a time and also be able to buy rice at the same time, says a press release of the food and disaster management ministry.

4 factories

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Textile Mills and FKN Printing Mills -- dumping chemical mixed water into the river on the outskirts of the capital.

Munir Chowdhury, director (enforcement) of DoE, led the drive with the help of members of Rapid Action Battalion-2.

The DoE officials found Anlima Yarn Dyeing dumping its waste into the river although its effluent treatment plant (ETP) was functioning.

Anlima Yarn, which has been operating without environmental clearance certificate since 1998, was fined Tk 26.62 lakh.

Abedin Textile Mills Ltd was fined Tk 4.99 lakh, as its ETP was dysfunctional.

Blue Text Netware and FKN Printing Mills were fined Tk 8 lakh and Tk 4 lakh on the same ground.

According to the Bangladesh Environment Protection Act 1995, these four factories are categorised Red which is considered very dangerous for environment.

The DoE officials directed the authorities of the four factories to immediately repair their ETPs to avoid cancellation of their gas, electricity and water connections.

Ctg arms haul

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moved a petition seeking two months more saying that many issues in the statements given by some witnesses under Section 164 needed to be verified.

The previously granted deadline ended yesterday.

Taking part in the argument, state lawyer and Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (PP) Kamal Uddin Ahmed told the court that the ongoing investigation has already revealed some former senior ministers and intelligence officials' involvement with the arms smuggling and more investigation is needed.

Nurul Amin, the then acting secretary of industries ministry, spent the night of unloading of the huge cache of arms at the rest house of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL), the PP told the court quoting the judicial statement of some witnesses given recently.

Saying that Nurul Amin might be involved in the smuggling and he should be interrogated, the PP informed the court that an appeal has already been submitted to arrest him.

PP Kamal said identifying the proper criminals is more important. Two police sergeants including Md Alaaddin, the then in-charge of Bandar Police Outpost, and Helal Uddin Bhuiyan, the then in-charge of Koilar Depot Police Outpost, gave separate statements as witnesses before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mahabubur Rahman on May 2.

The police officers said they arrested five persons from the spot during unloading of the arms on April 2 in 2004 but they were later released on orders of former state minister for home Lufozzaman Babar.