

7.6 quake

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eastern Philippines fears two hours later, raising fears that bigger waves were imminent.

But the US Pacific Tsunami Warning Center shortly afterwards lifted its tsunami warnings for the Philippines and Indonesia.

Tsunami warnings had also initially been raised for Japan, Taiwan and several Pacific islands, but they were almost immediately lifted.

The warnings led to a few hours of terror for residents along the east coast of the Philippines, many of whom were without electricity because power lines had been cut during the earthquake.

Leticia Amos, 35, a government employee, said hundreds of families on Samar rushed to a hillside area, carrying their belongings as soon as the alert was raised.

"It is very dark, there is no electricity and everyone is panicking," she told AFP by phone before the tsunami alert was lifted.

"Our place is on a hilly portion along the highway, and hundreds of people from low lying bayside areas rushed here."

Philippine authorities said the quake shook large areas of the eastern Philippines, but there were no immediate reports of damage or deaths.

"So far there are no casualties reported, but it was felt from the north to the south of the Philippines, on the eastern seaboard," civil defence chief Benito Ramos told AFP.

Paula Daza, the governor of northern Samar province, one of the areas closest to where the quake struck, said there were reports of damage to infrastructure.

"Some cracks appeared on concrete roads, and at the base of at least one bridge," he said.

Sol Matugas, the governor of another eastern region, Surigao del Norte, said on DZMM radio that the quake had severely shaken homes.

"We were rather frightened. For the first time, we saw objects falling out of our cabinets," he said.

The USGS had initially reported the quake as having a magnitude of 7.9, but revised it to 7.6.

Woman

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and Nila strangled inside a room. Some locks of hair of Nasima were found beside the body, said Razia.

Razia also said Nasirul had bought a house, beside their house, in the municipal area from his elder brother Mujibur. But Mujibur was reluctant to leave the house. He used to threaten Nasima, whenever he was asked to leave.

Ariful Haque, additional superintendent of police, suspected Nila's uncle Mujibur of committing the double murder, adding that they have picked up Mujibur's wife Tohra Begum and his son Humayun Kabir for quizzing.

Mujibur has been on the run, he added.

One mobile phone was missing from the house, said Ariful.

Police sent the bodies to Adhunik Satar Hospital for autopsy.

A murder case has been filed with Sadar Police Station.

Pakistan extremist leader held in jail

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistan court on Friday remanded the head of a banned extremist group in jail for two weeks after he was arrested on suspicion of inciting sectarian hatred.

Malik Ishaq, the leader of the Ishaq Lashkar-e-Jhangvi organisation, which is said to have al-Qaeda links, was held for making a "provocative" speech earlier this month.

Ishaq has been implicated in dozens of cases -- mostly murder -- and was accused of masterminding a 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore.

Buet stalemate

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the students.

Since last week, no initiative is visible on the part of the government to settle the crisis at the country's leading engineering university.

The students of the senior-most '07 batch decided to hold a mass gathering on the campus at 11:00am today and bring out a protest procession. They will also form a human chain to press home their demand, said the agitating students.

"We declared the programmes after consulting with the students of other batches to save our institution," said Sudipto, one of the students of the batch studying mechanical engineering, adding that the next step would be decided after today's demonstration.

"Our stance is clear. We will return to the classes only after the removal of the vice chancellor and the pro-vice chancellor. It is our decision and we are doing it spontaneously," he told The Daily Star.

Asked why they resumed their demonstration when the teachers suspended it following the HC order, Sudipto said the HC order directed the teachers' association and its two leaders -- president and general secretary -- not to stage any agitation involving officials or students. "But the directive did not say anything about processions or meetings of the students," he mentioned.

LETTERS ISSUED TO START CLASS

The authorities, quoting the HC directives, yesterday issued a notice to all deans, heads of departments, teachers and officials concerned asking them to resume classes and start the process of admission test for first year immediately.

Contacted, VC Prof Nazrul said, "We have issued the notice today [yesterday] and will issue letters to all academic council members tomorrow [Saturday] to attend the academic council meeting scheduled for Monday to take decision about the admission test."

"I hope the teachers will soften their stance and return to the classes and participate in the academic council meeting," he said.

Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday that he hoped the teachers would go to classes in accordance with the HC order.

Prof Ashraful Islam, general secretary of the teachers' association, said, "The only solution lies in the removal of the VC and the pro-VC as the general teachers have expressed no confidence in them. Moreover, the duo were involved with irregularities and now are failing to resume the normal activities of the university."

"Buet is virtually stagnant and government's intervention is required to break the deadlock," he added.

Fund crunch

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following allegations of irregularities in the bidding process. Fresh tenders are yet to be floated.

The project was planned to be funded from the public exchequer. But like many other schemes of the communications ministry, it has been dogged by funding crisis.

Project Director Md Mafizul Islam said, "Last year we received only Tk 1 crore, and Tk 5 crore has been allocated for this year. You cannot deliver the project with such a small amount."

Talking to The Daily Star, he hinted there would be no fresh tenders for the other packages until availability of funds was guaranteed.

The concessionaire, Rana Builders, has been filling earth at the site.

"We have started our job but now we doubt whether we can carry on without money," said the company's director Masud Rana.

"So far we have received only Tk 1 crore and already spent Tk 7 crore. We can complete our work only if the fund is available in time."

The project faced an initial hiccup when the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council last year had asked the communications ministry to include walkways on both sides of the road.

Asked about receiving the notice, Prof Ashraful replied in the negative. He hinted that the teachers might not be present at the academic council meeting due to these reasons.

Singapore

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During his six-day stay, Zulkifli will meet high government, opposition and business leaders, and discuss newer areas of trade and investment in Bangladesh.

He is also making the official visit to commemorate the 40 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries, officials sources said.

The government is giving importance to this visit as Bangladesh can learn from Singapore's developmental experience and knowledge to achieve development.

Singapore is a small country without a hinterland or natural resources, but in the immediate years after its independence in 1965, the country with technical assistance from developed countries and international organisations transformed itself from a third world country to a modern city-state.

During his visit, the minister will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Home Minister Shahara Khatun and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia.

Zulkifli will hold meeting with the business leaders of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He will also go to Chittagong and hold meeting with Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation Manzur Alam and the business leaders of Chittagong Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He will visit ship breaking industry at Bhatiyar and Youngone Corporation garment factory at Chittagong Export Processing Zone.

The Singapore minister will also attend separate receptions to be hosted by Singapore community in Bangladesh and participants of Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) in Dhaka. He is set to attend lunch hosted by Citycell Chairman Morshed Khan and a private dinner with Expatriates' Welfare Minister Mosharruf Hossain.

9 forest

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Station Officer Sohrab Ali, Forest Guard Aminur Rahman, Mizanur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, and Boatmen Mirza Shahidul, Nesar, Farid and Hafiz.

Sources said they received their suspension order on August 27 issued by the forest and environment ministry.

On June 11, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel arrested Zakir Hossain, a poacher, along with the tiger cubs, which were one-month old, from a house in city's Shyamoli area. The cubs were captured from the Sundarbans and brought to Dhaka for smuggling.

Later, Alauddin filed a case against seven unidentified poachers with Shyamnagar Police Station under the Forest and Environment Act.

A five-member committee, led by Sathkira Range official Toufique Islam, was formed to investigate the matter.

The forest and environment ministry constituted another five-member probe panel, led by Akbar Hossain, in this connection. The committee submitted its report accusing nine staff, including Alauddin, for the incident.

Later, the ministry issued the suspension order against them on August 21.

CHINA MINE BLAST
Death toll rises to 41

AFP, Beijing

The death toll from a gas explosion at a coal mine in China has risen to 41, making it the worst reported mining accident this year, but one more worker was pulled out alive yesterday, authorities said.

Five people remain trapped underground two days after the blast hit the Xiaojawan mine in south-west China's Sichuan province on late Wednesday -- the latest in a string of fatal incidents for an industry known for poor safety.

Jica extends

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the government gets more time for negotiation with the lead financier, the World Bank.

The ADB had pledged a \$615-million loan and Jica \$400 million for the construction of the 6.15km bridge that would connect the capital with the country's 16 south-western districts.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit for the bridge, the biggest-ever infrastructure project in Bangladesh, on June 29 alleging a "corruption conspiracy".

In September last year, the global lender suspended the fund, saying that some Bangladeshi officials and executives of a Canadian company and some individuals were involved in the conspiracy.

Later, the WB in a letter to the government gave certain conditions for ensuring corruption-free implementation of the \$2.97-billion project.

The conditions included removal of Syed Abul Hossain from office.

When the allegation was first raised in September last year, Abul was communications minister. In the face of widespread criticism, he was removed from the ministry in December last year and was made information and communications technology minister. The WB, however, insisted that Abul must resign from office for it to reconsider its suspension on the loan.

Abul did resign, but that came nearly a month after the WB had scrapped the deal. He has all along denied that he was involved in corruption in the project.

Recently, a highly placed government source has said prime minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Mashiur Rahman has to resign to meet the last condition of the World Bank.

Mashiur too denied that he had anything to do with the corruption conspiracy, but said he would go if the government asked him to.

Motorcade

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preparation to the next general election.

Former minister and Awami League lawmaker Syed Abul Hossain has been winning from this constituency with Awami League ticket in several elections.

When Golap's motorcade reached the Alinagar Upazila Parishad office yesterday around 11:00am, a group of people, allegedly loyal to Abul Hossain, barred Golap and his supporters on their way to Enayettagar union.

At this, a clash erupted and both sides started hurling brick chips at each other. At least three homemade bombs and several cocktails were used during the clash. Four people were injured in the clash.

On information, additional police, besides those assigned for Golap's security, rushed to the spot and fired several tear-gas canisters to calm the situation down.

The PM's assistant then continued his mass contact at Khalakerhat area under police protection.

During the time, the alleged supporters of Abul Hossain again tried to intercept Golap and his supporters which triggered another clash. At least 16 people, including a correspondent of local daily Dainik Bisleshon BAK Mamun, were injured in the fight.

Supporters of Golap at this time vandalised 12 shops and 15 motorbikes, including that of the local correspondent of daily Prothom Alo.

Although Madaripur police rushed to the spot but they failed to bring the situation under control immediately. Tension is prevailing in the area.

AKM Shahin Mondol, officer-in-charge of Kalkini Police Station, however, claimed the situation in the area to be calm.

The injured were taken to the local clinics in Kalkini and Madaripur.

Contacted, the PM's special assistant declined to elaborate on the reason behind the clashes.

Meanwhile, Syed Abul Hossain said, "I do not know the motive behind the clashes. Those who attacked the motorcade were the supporters of Awami League and the prime minister, not mine."

He said he had asked Tahmina Siddiqui, president of Kalkini unit Awami League, to find out the reason behind the clashes.

BNP ranks want Tarique's

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correspondent Wednesday.

Tarique left the country for UK on September 11, 2008, and has been living in London for "treatment" since then.

At Sunday's meeting, standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan proposed that Tarique Rahman should be brought back to lead the party to make its movement a success. And it was supported by two other members -- Mirza Abbas and Goyeshwar Chandra Roy.

"We should not keep mum. We have to say that Tarique Rahman should be brought back to lead the party. We will achieve victory under his leadership," the sources quoted Nazrul as saying at the meeting.

Abbas and Goyeshwar echoed him, saying they (BNP) will be able to foil all conspiracies under the

leadership of Tarique Rahman, and their movement will be successful under his guidance.

Eleven other members of the committee present at the meeting, however, did not say anything on the proposal.

Tarique, eldest son of Khaleda, was highly criticised for "corruption and other allegations" by different quarters including his political opponents. He had conducted his activities from Hawa Bhaban, which was known as an "alternative centre of power" during the BNP rule.

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

On December 8, 2009, he was elected senior vice

chairman of the BNP at the fifth national council of the party on December 8, 2009. On the same day, the post was included in the party constitution.

Tarique was not present at the council.

On July 30, (last month) leaders and workers of pro-BNP student body Jatiyatabadi Chharta Dal (JCD) at a meeting with the party chairperson demanded Tarique's leadership.

But Khaleda categorically said, "Tarique is sick and under treatment. He is not involved in active politics."

Many people, however, believe Tarique still has an important role in the party.

The chairperson and other leaders of the party repeatedly alleged that Tarique was tortured in custody during the caretaker government's tenure.

Indian SC

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from the 22 million investors "without complying with any regulatory provisions".

It added that a retired justice would oversee a probe into actions of the subsidiaries, which it said collected the money in violation of securities rules.

"We direct the money collected to be deposited in a nationalised bank," the court ordered said.

Sahara India Pariwar, or Family, straddles finance infrastructure, housing media and entertainment consumer goods, manufacturing and services. It is also a top sponsor of Indian cricket and motor racing.

Roy, a flamboyant businessman, is a hero to millions of poor Indians and one of the country's best-connected businessmen who counts top politicians, entertainers and cricketers among his friends.

The court warned in the event of "non-compliance", the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) bourse watchdog could seize property of Sahara, based in Uttar Pradesh state capital Lucknow.

The court order said SEBI would pass the money on to the investors.

The verdict upheld a previous order of a securities tribunal that Sahara had flouted SEBI guidelines while raking in deposits from mainly poor and rural savers.

Sahara had issued bonds to investors that gave them the option to convert the debt repayable by the company into equity shares.

SEBI had ordered the two group companies to return the money as they had "mobilized huge public money in the guise of private placements" without adhering to the regulatory framework.

A Sahara spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

The Supreme Court had previously said Sahara had "exploited" small depositors "in the lower strata of society."

Roy, who styles himself as the "worker's friend" has a rags-to-riches story. The son of a poor millworker, his group posted meteoric growth after starting out as a rural savings scheme with just three employees.

ADB calls

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to low monsoon rainfall in India, a major rice producer.

The FAO said global rice production is now expected to reach 724.5 million tonnes, 7.8 million tonnes lower than its original forecast.

While this year's output is likely to exceed last year's, the FAO urged countries to ensure enough stockpiles because high volatile prices are expected to remain.

Adriano said that while current rice prices were holding steady, the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) needed to play a leading role in ensuring adequate supply to the world's most populous region.

Asean, which produced 110.5 million tonnes of rice last year, could do this by setting up a rice price index, along with an exchange to trade the grain, she said.

This would help ease global price fluctuations while allowing farmers to cut out the middlemen and sell directly to the market at better prices, she added.

Asean includes the top exporters Thailand and Vietnam, with fellow members Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar seen by the study as having huge potential to expand their rice exports.

The group also includes Indonesia and the Philippines, the world's top rice importers, along with Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Meanwhile, the World Bank on Thursday said global food prices soared 10 percent in July, increasing the threat to millions of the world's poor especially in Africa and the Middle East.

The Bank warned that a repeat of the price surges of mid-2008 and early 2011 endangered the health of millions in food-importing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa most at risk.

Thousands of foreign

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London Metropolitan University had its Highly Trusted Status -- which allowed it to sponsor visas for students from outside the EU -- revoked by the UK Border Agency on Wednesday following a six-month audit.

The agency said the university had "failed to address serious and systemic failings".

Immigration Minister Damian Green said inspections had shown that students' English fell short of the necessary standards and that the university had failed to monitor if students were turning up for classes or not.

Other checks had shown that more than a quarter of the students at the university who were checked in a random sample lacked the necessary permission to remain in Britain.

But Green sought to reassure prospective students that "this will not be replicated across the university sector".

The move means current

overseas students have 60 days to enrol on a course elsewhere, with more than 2,000 facing deportation if they fail to find another university, according to the National Union of Students (NUS).

The union warned of "catastrophic" effects on Britain's industry for educating students from overseas -- almost 300,000 non-EU students were enrolled in Britain in the 2010-11 academic year.

The university's vice-chancellor Malcolm Gillies described the accusations against the institution as "not particularly cogent" and said it would challenge the government's decision.

Professor Eric Thomas, President of Universities UK, said a taskforce had been set up to attempt to place the students affected with other universities.

"Our first priority is to support the international students affected by this action to ensure that, wher-

ever possible, they can stay in the UK and continue their studies," he said.

Campaign groups claim that student visas have become the "back door" to Britain, especially for applicants from countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

A small group of London Metropolitan University students held a protest outside Prime Minister David Cameron's Downing Street residence, some with tape over their mouths before police ordered them to move across the street.

The NUS labelled the crackdown on London Metropolitan University -- which has 30,000 students in total -- as political, linking it with promised immigration quotas brought in by Cameron's government.

London Metropolitan is among the top 20 British recruiters of international students, with 6,000 EU and non-EU overseas students in 2010-11, according to government figures.

AL keeps door open

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But the ruling party camp is uncertain whether parliament would be dissolved during the elections and the Awami League high ups said a dialogue with the opposition could be held to settle this.

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad recently told The Daily Star that they also demand that the parliament be dissolved ahead of the elections to create a level playing field for all parties.

Asked about it, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed said, "It will depend on the dialogue whether the election will be held by

dissolving the parliament. "But I can say that the election will be held based on a decision made by all [different political parties]," he added.

He also claimed that the election would be held according to the present constitutional guidelines and the present government would oversee day-to-day functions during the election period.

Veteran parliamentarian Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star that the government and the opposition were in a position to sit for dialogues over the overall election issue.

Urging the opposition to come up with their formal proposals on how to hold the next polls, Suranjit, a

minister without portfolio and a member of the Awami League advisory council, said they were waiting for a discussion with an open mind.

About the BNP's demand for restoring the caretaker government system, Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the main opposition should back off from its demand as there was no support from the people for it.

According to Awami League insiders, informal discussions were going on among the leaders of Awami League and BNP on how to hold the next parliamentary election.

Nam backs right

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government attending, and senior officials filling out the other two-thirds of the heavily secured hall, Iran portrayed the summit as a triumph over Western attempts to isolate it over its disputed nuclear activities.

Ahmadinejad said the summit was "unique in quality and in the number of participants."

But the nuclear issue came back to take a bite out of that goal, with the UN atomic watchdog releasing a report half way through the summit accusing Iran of having "significantly hampered" inspectors' efforts to investigate a suspect military site, Parchin.

The report also said Iran had in the past three months installed more than 1,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges in its fortified Fordo nuclear bunker that is one of the prime concerns of the United States and fellow permanent UN Security Council members.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in his opening speech on Thursday, railed against the "dictatorship" of the Security Council.

He said Iran would "never" cease its nuclear energy activities, which he asserted were

not aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi also rejected the Parchin allegations, telling the ISNA news agency they had "no technical basis" and that "one cannot clean a site" of nuclear work.

A member of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy committee, Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, called the timing of the release of the International Atomic Energy Agency report "politically motivated."

UN chief Ban Ki-moon, who attended the summit over criticism from the United States and Israel, spent much of his visit hammering Iran's leaders for defying UN resolutions demanding that they curb their nuclear programme.

In speeches and meetings, he stressed "the cost of Iran's current trajectory" and said that "any country at odds with the international community... finds itself isolated from the thrust of common progress."

Ban warned that international tensions over the issue risked degenerating into "a war of violence," implicitly referring to Israeli and US

threats to possibly bomb Iran's nuclear facilities.

The UN chief also tackled Iran on its human rights record and suppression of political dissent.

He called on Tehran to release "opposition leaders, human rights defenders, journalists and social activists" to promote public discourse ahead of a 2013 presidential election to choose Ahmadinejad's successor.

On Syria, Ban urged all sides to stop fighting, but said the Damascus government "had the primary responsibility... to halt its use of heavy weapons."

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, who handed over the Nam chair to Iran on Thursday in the first visit by an Egyptian head of state since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, also embarrassed Tehran on Thursday by publicly siding with the Syrian opposition.