

Earthquake hits off Japan's coast

AFP, Tokyo

A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the south coast of Japan's main Honshu island yesterday, the United States Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The quake hit at 12:22 pm, 644 kilometres south of Tokyo, at a depth of 424 kilometres, the USGS said.

Japan's Meteorological Agency said there was no risk of a tsunami.

Tokyo and its suburban Kanto region were rocked by minor tremors but there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, the agency said.

We have received no reports of damage to properties nor reports of injuries so far," a spokesman for the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department said.

The area is prone to earthquakes.

Another, weaker 4.2-magnitude quake struck at 7:27 pm in Fukushima prefecture in the northeast at a shallow depth of 10 kilometres and was felt throughout the region, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

It had no impact on the tsunami-ravaged Fukushima Daiichi plant, its operator Tokyo Electric Power Company said.

Shafiul, Ziaur

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return to Bangladesh as he injured his right knee while bowling in the nets during the fourth day's lunch break of the first Test in Harare on Saturday.

"Shahadat may be fit for the second Test, but seeing the workload of the pacers in the first Test, it was decided not to risk him because if he breaks down after bowling seven overs then the team will be one bowler short for the Test. Since he is not part of the ODI team, it was decided to send him back home," said Vibhav.

Rubel's niggles, according to the physio, is more a result of his throwing technique than a product of the long overs he bowled in the first Test. Rubel had recently had an operation on his right shoulder. "It is the same area that is causing problems. He complained of pain yesterday [Saturday], and it sometimes happens that a problem area flares up," said Vibhav. "He has been rested for the second Test so that he can be fully fit for the ODIs and T20Is."

The injury issues of the pacers in Zimbabwe have brought forward Shafiul and Ziaur's travel dates, as both players were expected to travel in time for the one-day matches next month.

Shafiul had recently injured himself while training and missed out on the tour of Sri Lanka. He has played six Test matches so far and has taken eight wickets. The last time the bowler featured in a Test match was against Zimbabwe in 2011. Ziaur, on the other hand, is yet to make his Test debut.

Meanwhile, the other more high-profile injury concern, Tamim Iqbal, faced bowling in the nets at the Harare Sports Club during the Tigers' practice session for the first time since fracturing his right thumb in Sri Lanka in late March.

An ultra-sonogram on Friday showed that there was still a thin fracture on the thumb, an expected result at this stage of recovery. While pain management is still the pivotal issue in whether he will be fit in time for the second Test, an encouraging sign is that there was no swelling yesterday.

"He complained of pain after receiving throwdowns on Saturday, but no complaints yesterday. There was also no swelling on either day, which is good. But I have to assess him tomorrow [Monday] to know the impact of today's practice," said Vibhav.

"He is in a good space mentally at the moment and although he has not batted for four weeks, he feels very much a part of the team process," the South African physio added.

MOJAHEED'S TRIAL Last prosecution witness cross examined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An investigation officer of a war crimes case against Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed yesterday said the East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Sangha had addressed Al-Badr men at their headquarters even two hours before the surrender of the Pakistan army on December 16, 1971.

Mojaheed was the Chhatra Sangha president from October till Victory Day in 1971, Abdur Razzaque Khan, the investigation officer, said while testifying at International Crimes Tribunal-2 on April 2.

The accused also directly took part in genocide and other crimes against humanity "as the Al-Badr commander" during the Liberation War, he told the tribunal on March 28.

Al-Badr, a notorious auxiliary force known especially for orchestrating the killings of intellectuals before liberation, was formed with the leaders and activists of Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, according to the prosecution documents.

The 17th and last prosecution witness in the case, Razzaque made the disclosures before Tribunal-2 during his cross-examination for the fourth day yesterday.

At one point in his four-hour cross-examination, Mojaheed's counsel Syed Mizanur Rahman asked Razzaque questions over "Al-Badr", written by Selim Mansur Khaled, which was a prosecution document.

"Was the writer of Al-Badr Bangalee?" asked Mizanur and Razzaque replied that he was a Pakistani national.

"Was he [the writer] in Bangladesh in 1971?" asked Mizanur. Razzaque replied, "I don't know."

Replying to another question, Razzaque said the book was originally published in Urdu and a Dhaka University teacher had translated it into Bangla.

"Is there anything specific in the book about the leaders of Al-Badr in different areas?" asked Mizanur.

The book mentioned the names of the commanders of three Al-Badr groups which were responsible for Dhaka, responded Razzaque.

"Is there any reference in the book that Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed was involved with Razakar [another auxiliary force of Pakistani army]?" asked Mizanur.

"He [Mojaheed] was not a Razakar. However, on pages 135-136 of the book, the condition of Al-Badr forces on December 16, 1971 was narrated. East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Sangha Nazem [president] addressed the Al-Badr men, which was also narrated there," said Razzaque.

He also read out the specific parts of the book before the court.

During his testimony on April 2, Razzaque said he had learned from witnesses' statements and documentary evidence that Mojaheed was the president of Islami Chhatra Sangha of Faridpur district in between 1968-1970.

He was the president of Chhatra Sangha's Dhaka city unit in January-July 1971 and became the general secretary of its East Pakistan unit in July 1971 and was the president from October to December 16, 1971.

Razzaque replied in the negative when Mizanur asked him whether the book mentioned any source about the address of the East Pakistan Chhatra Sangha president.

Mizanur Rahman also questioned him about some other prosecution documents.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam recorded his cross-examination before adjourning the case proceeding until today, when Razzaque is set to face further cross-examination.

The Jamaat secretary general is facing seven

charges of crimes against humanity, including conspiracy to kill intellectuals during the war.

SQ CHOWDHURY'S CASE

A physician yesterday testified that he had provided treatment to Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury in the last part of September 1971 when the latter was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

AKM Sofiullah, who was an assistant registrar of CMCH in 1971, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that he had seen army and policemen when Salauddin was admitted to the hospital at night.

Earlier, two prosecution witnesses in Salahuddin's case testified that they had conducted an operation to kill Salahuddin in September 1971. Salahuddin survived with serious injuries and his driver was killed in the attack.

Sofiullah, the 27th prosecution witness from Chittagong, said after passing MBBS he had joined CMCH as an institution trainee on July 27, 1970 and after the training period joined the hospital as an assistant registrar.

In the last part of September 1971, around 10:00pm, Sofiullah got a "call message" from the hospital and after 30 minutes, when he reached the hospital, he found many people there, among whom were soldiers and policemen.

"I saw Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury bed-ridden in my room with serious injuries. As far as I can remember, he [Salahuddin] had received injuries in his leg and I had given him necessary treatment," said Sofiullah.

After three to four days, he had heard that Salahuddin had been taken to another place for better treatment, the witness added.

On August 28, 2012, two freedom fighters -- SM Mahbub-ul-Alam and Qazi Mohammad Nurul Absar -- said they had conducted the operation to kill Salahuddin together as he was "killing and torturing people" with the help of the Pakistani army and their collaborators.

They testified that they along with two other freedom fighters had launched an attack on Salauddin in September when the latter was coming out of a house in his car.

After Sofiullah's testimony, Salahuddin's counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena completed his cross-examination before the tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir adjourned the proceedings until today.

BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury is facing 23 charges of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

North Caucasus rebels deny link to Boston attack

AFP, Moscow

A website used by Russia's North Caucasus rebels yesterday denied any link to the deadly Boston Marathon bombings that have been blamed on two ethnic-Chechen suspects.

"The command of the Vilayat Dagestan mujahedeen... declares that the Caucasus fighters are not waging any military activities against the United States of America," the Kavkazcenter.com website said.

"We are only fighting Russia, which is not only responsible for the occupation of the Caucasus, but also for monstrous crimes against Muslims," the rebel site said.

US media reports said the FBI was studying possible links between the two suspects -- brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev -- to the Caucasus Emirate movement led by feared warlord Doku Umarov.

It has also been one of the most violent regions of Russia since the second of two post-Soviet era wars ended in Chechnya about a decade ago.



PHOTO: PTI

Acting president Abdul Hamid signs his nomination paper for the presidential election at the parliament office of the Speaker yesterday. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, whose party nominated Hamid, is seen sitting beside. Hamid is very likely to become president unopposed.

President Hamid

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second Speaker to become head of state -- an elevation from the state's number three position to number one.

His predecessor Abdur Rahman Biswas was also elected president when he was the Speaker in the fifth parliament in 1991.

Presidents Biswas in 1996 and Iajuddin Ahmed at the end of 2006 had moved to resolve political crisis centring parliamentary polls by holding talks with political rivals.

Both failed in their attempts.

"It was very much expected that he would be elected to the presidency. He is very familiar with the country's politics," Akbar Ali Khan, a former adviser to a caretaker government, told The Daily Star. "Time will say how much he can meet the

expectations," he said.

Another former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan said, "We hope he will take necessary steps to overcome the political crisis."

Sources said Awami League senior MP Amir Hossain Amu, who at the Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting seconded the proposal for nominating Hamid, said, "He would be a good candidate considering the nation is at a critical juncture."

Political scientists Prof Dilara Chowdhury said she doubts whether Hamid would be able to resolve the political crisis.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a member of national standing committee of BNP, said his party would come up with a formal reaction to Hamid's nomination

for the presidency later.

Ruhul Amin Hawlader, secretary general of Jatiya Party, a component of Awami League-led alliance, wholeheartedly welcomed Hamid's nomination for the presidency.

After Hamid's election to the presidency, the office of Speaker would fall vacant and the House would need to elect a new Speaker in the current session.

The Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting, which picked Hamid as the party's presidential candidate yesterday, did not discuss the prospective candidate for the Speaker's office.

"The issue of electing the new Speaker would come when the office of the speaker falls vacant," Syed Ashraf Islam, Awami League general secretary, told The Daily Star after the Awami League

Parliamentary Party meeting.

Emerging from the meeting, Hasina called on Speaker Hamid at his office in the parliament around 2:00pm and signed the nomination paper for Hamid.

Later, a delegation of the Awami League submitted the nomination paper to the Election Commission.

Talking to reporters, Chief Election Commissioner Rakibuddin said Hamid, the lone candidate to file a nomination, would be declared elected uncontested after scrutiny of his nomination paper.

Hamid became the acting president on March 14 after late president Zillur Rahman fell sick and was flown to Singapore for treatment. Zillur passed away in Singapore on March 20.

Mayhem

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murder.

Babu had been looking after a tin-shed house of a relative since its purchase in 2005, his father Hedayat Ullah said. The owner handed over the piece of land to a developer last year. But one of the previous owner's son Titu, who is known as a local goon, wanted to have the property back forcibly.

Two months ago, their relative gave Titu Tk 2 lakh to settle the issue, Hedayat said.

In March, Titu was beaten up by local people for extortion and handed over to police. Being released on bail, Titu threatened to kill Babu, accusing him of the incident, Hedayat added.

Kazi Wazed Ali, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station, said victim's family and some people in the neighbourhoods blamed Titu and an unidentified accomplice for the killing. But they have no specific information.

"We raided Titu's residence at Savar and other places to arrest him but he went into hiding," he said.

Police, meanwhile, held garage owner Jahangir last night for interrogation, the OC said, adding Jahangir had called Babu to the garage an hour before the shooting.

Juror jailed

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was texting.

Marion County Circuit Judge Dennis Graves cleared the courtroom and excused all jurors except 26-year-old Benjamin Kohler.

According to a news release from the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Kohler had no explanation for his actions.

Jurors in Oregon are given explicit instructions at the outset of each trial not to use cellphones in court.

Graves held Kohler in contempt, and Kohler spent most of Tuesday and Wednesday in the county jail. He was released Wednesday night.

Neither the nature of the text message nor its recipient was disclosed.

Kohler did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment Thursday.

Cleared for release

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of al-Qaida. His legal team alleges that the US, Saudi Arabia - where Aamer was born - and the UK security services are trying to ensure that he never goes home.

Were he to return, he would almost certainly become a key witness in Scotland Yard's investigation into allegations of British complicity in torture in the post 9/11 era.

Despite Foreign Office pressure to bring Aamer back to his family in south London, it has been confirmed that he has only been officially cleared to be sent to Saudi Arabia, where officials have threatened him with imprisonment. A letter dated 18 February 2013 from William Hague, the foreign secretary, to Aamer's lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, states: "It is our understanding that Mr Aamer has only ever been cleared for transfer to Saudi Arabia."

Stafford Smith, director of the legal charity Reprieve, said, "It seems highly probable that the British security services are in bed with the

Americans on trying to keep Shaker from coming back to the UK, since Shaker is such an important witness against them for their complicity in torture. We can only hope that Hague will hold them to account. Scotland Yard has got a lengthy statement from Aamer about his abuse and British complicity in that abuse. The only way to prevent that going forward is for Shaker to go to Saudi Arabia."

In an exclusive interview with the Observer, via an unclassified phone call to Guantanamo Bay between Aamer and Stafford Smith, he revealed his desperation to return to London. The father-of-four, who is approaching day 70 of a life-threatening hunger strike to highlight his plight, said, "I hope I do not die in this awful place. I want to hug my children and watch them as they grow. But if it is God's will that I should die here, I want to die with dignity."

An online petition calling on the British government to bring him home has more

than 115,000 votes, triggering a parliamentary debate on the issue.

On Saturday, Saeed Siddique, Aamer's father-in-law, said, "Shaker did nothing wrong. He has been cleared for release twice by the US government. So why is he still rotting in the hell of Guantanamo Bay? Why can't the British government get him back?"

A Scotland Yard spokesman said that a joint panel involving the Crown Prosecution Service and police had convened to assess allegations of complicity in torture involving British officials. A statement said, "Having assessed 12 cases, it has referred three to the Metropolitan police. The Met has decided to undertake further investigation into these three cases."

The Foreign Office said it remained committed to securing Aamer's return to the UK and that the decision lay with the US government. "The position of the British government remains that Aamer should be returned to the UK."

Modasser tried

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"This is tantamount to obstructing the activities of the audit team," Tajul Islam, convener of the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry, told Modasser during an interrogation on November 7 last year.

When Tajul asked him to explain why he had given his business cards to the auditors, Modasser avoided a direct reply.

Citing bank officials, ACC sources said Modasser had spent about half an hour in the branch that day when he had no official business there.

Contacted, the adviser told The Daily Star yesterday that he had distributed his business cards so that the auditors could contact him to discuss "issues relating to their promotion".

But the committee report observed that Modasser had gone beyond his jurisdiction and portfolio by paying frequent visits to the branch and by hobnobbing with Hall-Mark officials.

The committee has sent the report to the ACC recently.

According to the report, Modasser told the committee on November 7 that he had "sort of a blind faith" in Azizur Rahman.

He, however, agreed that Azizur led a luxurious life and used an expensive car, the report said.

When asked to comment on reports and the popular belief that he visited the branch all too often for financial gain, Modasser told the committee: "This is not true at all. I had gone there in good faith."

The Hall-Mark scam, the biggest in the country's banking sector, involves more than a Tk 3,600-crore swindle by Hall-Mark and five other companies from Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch between October 2011 and May last year.

Of the sum, Hall-Mark alone took Tk 2,686 crore. A section of bank officials helped the swindle, disbursing the loan against fake documents.

The scam rattled the banking industry as it has a collateral effect on the sector as a whole. Sonali Bank still owes

dozens of public, private and multinational banks crores of taka as they had given acceptance to purchasing bills of Hall-Mark and the other companies.

Six months after the scam surfaced in April last year, the ACC on October 4 filed 11 cases with Ramna police against 27 top officials of Sonali Bank and Hall-Mark for the swindle. Modasser was not named in the case.

Four accused, including Tanvir and Azizur, are now in jail in connection with the case.

Abul denies

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corruption conspiracy in the Padma bridge project.

Referring to a report published in The Daily Star's April 21 issue, Syed Abul Hossain said he was not involved with the "misconduct" of Canadian company SNC Lavalin.

He added that any move on the part of Lavalin to get work order in its favour through bribery did not mean that he had responded to any unethical offer.

HC rejects

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Mahmud seeking its directive to the government to cancel the remand.

Detectives arrested Mahmud on April 11 from the daily's office on charges of publishing a Skype conversation between Justice Md Nizamul Huq, then chairman of International Crimes Tribunal-1, and Ahmed Ziauddin, an expatriate Bangladeshi legal expert.

A Dhaka court on the same day put Mahmud on a 13-day remand in connection with three cases, including the one filed on December 13 last year on charges of sedition for publishing the conversation.

The other cases were filed on March 17, in connection with hartal and pre-hartal violence, and on March 26, for assaulting police and obstructing their work.

Greece shooting

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embassy in Athens yesterday.

Six of them may be released by today while the other -- Md Farhad -- may be treated for a few more days as he has not improved much, added BM Jamal Hossain, the counsellor, by phone.

However, Mohammad Tipu Chowdhury, one of the wounded who received first aid after the shooting, said the condition of at least three of the seven remained unchanged.

They are Morshed Chowdhury of Habiganj, Md Farhad of Brahmanbaria and Abul Khayer of Joypurhat, Tipu told The Daily Star over the phone.

The workers were shot when some 150 Bangladeshi employees of the farm, Vagela Tos, went on a strike on Wednesday, demanding six months' wage arrears.

As for the Bangladeshis who were not injured in the incident, they are staying at the farm. But the farm is not providing them with food as it remains closed, said Tipu.

However, the Bangladesh embassy has given them 15 days' supply of food, he mentioned, adding the Bangladeshi community living there has also stood by them.

Tipu complained that the Bangladesh government had not issued any statement regarding the incident.

"We are drawing the attention of our prime minister [Sheikh Hasina] so that she intervenes and negotiates with the Greek government to regularise our jobs here," Tipu noted.

Meanwhile on Saturday, the Greek parliament condemned the shooting and expressed sadness over the incident, said the embassy official.

Know context

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at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, several AL lawmakers told The Daily Star later.

In 1975, the then AL-led government headed by Bangabandhu formed Baksal, introduced one-party rule and switched over to a presidential form of government by amending the constitution.

This had generated a huge public outcry then, and the AL still faces criticism for this.

Hasina brushed aside criticism of Baksal, saying that formation of such a political platform comprising all political parties and groups was not anything bad in a newly liberated war-torn country or in a crisis period.

"In this regard, she [Hasina] also cited the instance of Singapore where a government was formed comprising representatives from all sections of people during a crisis period," Iqbal said.

"You will have to be well equipped with knowledge about all this to fight back those who speak ill of Baksal," he added, quoting Hasina.

Another lawmaker said the premier asked them to know the philosophy of Baksal and counter the opposition propaganda against it.

Bitterly criticising civil society members for giving different formulas about polls-time government, Hasina said they are complicating the political situation by doing so, according to another lawmaker.

The premier urged the AL lawmakers to remain vigilant to avert possible violence by BNP-Jamaat activists in their constituencies.