

Strong quake rocks Greece, Turkey

Two tourists dead, scores injured

REUTERS, Kos

A powerful earthquake killed two people on the Greek holiday island of Kos in the early hours of yesterday, sending tourists fleeing into the streets, and causing disruption in the nearby Turkish tourist hub of Bodrum.

A Turkish and a Swedish tourist, aged 39 and 22 years, died when the roof of a popular bar collapsed, Greek police said. Kos's port was put out of action and, across the strait, a small tsunami damaged vehicles parked near Bodrum's shore.

On Kos, around 115 people were injured, including tourists of various nationalities -- 12 of them seriously. More than 350 people visited hospitals in Turkey, though most had only light injuries.

The quake struck at 1:31 am (2231 GMT), and many of Kos's tourists spent the rest of the night in the open as a precaution, hotel owners said.

"All of a sudden it felt like a train was going right through the room," said Vernon Hausman, a German holidaying on Kos.

"I told my son: 'Looks like an earthquake, so let's get the hell out of here!'"

Greek authorities said the 12 people seriously injured on Kos included tourists from Turkey, Sweden and Norway; four were transferred to Crete and three to Athens.

LUCKY ESCAPE

Turkish and Greek authorities put the magnitude at 6.3 and 6.6 respectively and reported several aftershocks, with one estimated at 5.1. The US Geological Survey located the epicentre of the main quake in the Aegean Sea, 10 km (6 miles) SSE of Bodrum and about 16 km ENE of Kos's main port.

Hotel owners in Bodrum told Turkish broadcasters that some tourists were checking out.

"It was a lucky escape and it could have been much worse," said Issa Kamara, a 38-year-old personal trainer at the Maca Kizi hotel in Bodrum's smart Turkbuku area.

Constantina Sivnou, head of the hoteliers' association in Kos, told Greek state television that many visitors had spent the night outside their hotels.

"There are about 200,000 tourists on the island, we are at the peak season. Our first reaction was to calm the tourists, following basic rules and evacuating hotel buildings," Sivnou said, adding that there had been no injuries at hotels.

PM to open

ROM PAGE 2
government management.

From this year, flights carrying the Hajj pilgrims will also go to Madinah.

Robo-footballers

FROM PAGE 16
make the robots play soccer," team supervisor Timothy Wiley of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) told AFP.

"We've got a lot of expertise in what we call autonomous robotics. So this is getting robots to think and act for themselves, and this is what has allowed us to do really well over the last few years."

While the human version of the game has long used a black-and-white ball, the robots are still getting used to the monochrome colours.

"They introduced the black-and-white ball for 2016, and that's actually really difficult because the robots have no depth perception," first-time RoboCup participant and UNSW student Amri Chamela, 19, told AFP.

"So there's been a major challenge for the team in actually having to identify this (ball)."

This year, the Aussie robo-footballers -- named after Pokemon characters Eevee, Mew, Abra, Pikachu, Rapidash and Ditto -- also have to adapt to a bouncier artificial turf after years of playing on green carpet.

Team leader Hayden Smith believes the new challenges will ultimately pay off for the wider population, with the artificial intelligence being developed for such games set to assist humans in everyday tasks.

"This has a lot of real-world applications. We've had people in this team move on to... self-driving car companies, other robotics companies," the 24-year-old said.

"They take parts of either the vision system knowledge that they develop or knowledge of motion of how robots move and apply them in their occupational work."

The RoboCup World

Championships are at the Nagoya International Exhibition Hall in Japan from July 27-30, with 24 teams from 15 nations competing.

AL suspends

FROM PAGE 1

triggered an outrage on social media. Many praised the UNO's idea of placing a fifth-grader's drawing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the invitation card.

The case against the Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Barguna Sadar was readily accepted and he was arrested.

Obaidullah Sazu, religious affairs secretary of Barisal District AL and president of Barisal Lawyers' Association, sought Tk 5 crore in the defamation case filed last month.

An AL source said when Quader talked with the PM about the issue, some leaders called the actions against the UNO "excessive" and they opined that it tarnished the image of the party. Then the PM agreed to suspend Sazu.

Bangladesh Administrative Service Association termed the case "motivated" and "humiliating" and demanded withdrawal of the case in a press release issued on Thursday.

The association also called the incident unprecedented as the "important public servant was harassed over a baseless allegation".

After filling of the case, Tariq Salman was transferred to Barguna Sadar from

Barisal's Agailjhara upazila. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Barisal asked the UNO to appear before it by July 27. He surrendered to the court and applied for bail on July 19, but his prayer was initially rejected because he did not have the necessary documents.

However, he was bailed two hours later when he produced the papers. During the period, the UNO was in the custody of the court. After giving him bail, the court fixed July 23 for hearing the case.

Hasina was surprised and appalled after learning what had happened, her Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam told BBC Bangla on Thursday.

The prime minister was delighted to see the portrait. "This officer has done a good job by arranging a painting competition among class-V students... No distortion [of Bangabandhu's image] was made here. It deserves an award. The officer deserves an award," he quoted the PM as saying.

"In return, we did this. It is condemnable," he quoted the PM as saying.

On different occasions, the PM used children's drawings on her formal greeting cards. Last year, she used the artwork by children with autism.

Leaving a legacy

FROM PAGE 16

Under the Indian constitution, it is the prime minister and his council of ministers who wield executive power and the president is just a figurehead.

But he was not a "rubberstamp president".

As the president, Mukherjee took special interests in strengthening India's relations with Bangladesh, from where his late wife Subhra Mukherjee hailed, and gave the rare honour of hosting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as a guest in Rashtrapati Bhavan when she paid an official visit to India in April this year.

With his vast experience as a politician, parliamentarian and a federal minister and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Indian constitution, rules and conventions, Mukherjee always went by the copybook and knew his limits and authority as the president.

The role of the Indian president comes into play in a major way when the general elections produce a fractured mandate with no party or alliance of parties gaining clear majority and he or she has to decide and invite those in the strongest position to form a stable government.

During his tenure, Mukherjee, however, did not face that situation after BJP led by Narendra Modi had got clear majority in the 2014 parliamentary elections.

Modi himself considered Mukherjee as his mentor in his primary days as the prime minister. He himself said, "In my initial days, Pranabda held my hand to settle down."

Mukherjee's presidency has left no space for the government, ruling party or the political opposition to complain about.

However, he never shied away from speaking out his mind. He privately made known his unhappiness over a series of ordinances brought by the Modi government and consistently

spoke out against rising intolerance and lynching, leaving ruling BJP squirming.

At the same time, he backed many of the Modi government's schemes, including the scrapping of the high-denomination currency notes which was sharply attacked by the opposition.

The opposition also found it uncomfortable when Mukherjee endorsed the Modi government's dismissal of the Congress governments in the states of Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh.

For Mukherjee, governance and statecraft had to be delinked from sentimentalities.

Unlike his predecessors Pratibha Patil, India's first woman president, who sat over clemency petitions, Mukherjee rejected 30 mercy pleas of death row convicts, including that of Afzal Guru in connection with Indian parliament attack, Ajmal Kasab for the deadly terror attack on India's financial hub that left 166 people dead in November 2008 and Yakub Memon for Mumbai blasts in 1993, and accepted only four.

It was during Mukherjee's presidency that the portals of Rashtrapati Bhavan were thrown open wider to the people and the former house of British Viceroy, a witness to many historic events, went through renovation.

Before venturing into politics, Mukherjee was a college teacher in Kolkata and his abiding interest in India's education system was evident in his efforts to have regular interactions with vice-chancellors of universities.

It was during his tenure as the president that Mukherjee introduced in-house programmes for scholars and artistes which saw Bangladesh's internationally-acclaimed painter Shahabuddin Ahmed spending a week in Rashtrapati Bhavan earlier this year.

Ahmed was the first Bangladeshi artist to get that honour.

UK to engage

FROM PAGE 16

Pressure on freedom of expression persisted and extremist attacks and sectarian violence against religious and other minority communities continued," reads the report.

The British government said they would press for zero tolerance against "inhumane treatment and abuse" of due process in the justice system and by law enforcement agencies.

"And we will encourage the Bangladeshi government to uphold the international human rights standards it has signed up to and to keep open the space for debate and challenge, including through our support to media and civil society."

The FCO report said an increasing number of terrorist attacks, including at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan on July 1 last year, saw the government pursue a strict "zero tolerance" approach to terrorism.

It said there were allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearances involving law enforcement agencies.

According to the report, concerns about the treatment of women and girls remain, and the death penalty is still a legal punishment for a wide range of offences.

New laws were introduced that had the potential to restrict freedom of expression, the report said, adding civil society groups expressed concern that the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) law passed in 2016 might hamper the ability of Bangladeshi NGOs to deliver vital programmes and hold government to account.

Last year, the UK had called upon the Bangladeshi government to treat all arrestees in line with Bangladeshi law

and international standards. It was also clear that there must be no impunity, irrespective of the individual circumstances of the victim or alleged perpetrator, said the report.

"We encourage the government to implement fully the Supreme Court's judgment on provisions of arrest without warrant and on interrogation on remand."

The British High Commission in Dhaka had supported a review on implementing the "Rabat Principles" and how legitimate restrictions on freedom of expression to prevent hate speech should be applied in Bangladesh, read the report.

The UK also worked closely with international partners to link bloggers under threat from extremist attacks with organisations that provide shelter and support for human rights defenders.

Despite impressive progress towards middle-income status and promoting gender equality, Bangladesh continued to score poorly against some indices, the FCO said.

It mentioned that the 2016 Global Slavery Index (GSI) placed Bangladesh 21st out of 167 countries for the estimated percentage of people living in conditions which the GSI described as modern slavery.

The FCO supported work to help UK businesses in Bangladesh meet their obligations under the UK's Modern Slavery Act (2015).

"Through our partnerships with local human rights NGOs and projects in the justice sector, the UK pressed for improved implementation of policies protecting and promoting the status and empowerment of women and girls," the report added.

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BSF picks up

FROM PAGE 16

strongly protested the incident and urged the BSF to return the boy through a flag meeting.

But the BSF did not respond to the call.

The BSF also detained four more Bangladeshis on Wednesday and Thursday from near Kalumdanga border in Sapahar upazila.

The four are Rubel Hossain, 28, of Baldiagh village, Firoz Kabir, 22, of Kalumdanga-Chowmohani village, Mahbub Rahman, 28, of Kalmidanga village, and Mozammel Haque, 30, of Kariarpura village.

The BGB of 14 Battalion protested the incident and urged their Indian counterpart to send back the detainees.

Villagers said Rubel and Firoz went to India to bring cattle on Wednesday night. The BSF detained them from Adaldanga village of India when the two were returning home early Thursday.

The BSF also detained Mozammel and Mahbub from the same village early Wednesday. The two went there to bring cattle, said locals.

A flag meeting was held on Thursday. The BSF there informed the BGB that the detainees were handed over to police in Malda for illegal entry into India.

Lt Col Khizir Hossain, commanding officer of 14 BGB Battalion in Sapahar, confirmed those incidents.

Malaysia

FROM PAGE 16

victimised by three other Bangladeshi men who were agents.

The trio, who were in the house, was arrested.

"The team found all the victims cramped into two rooms," Mustafar said in a statement.

Officers also seized 20 mobile phones belonging to the victims and RM28,500 kept by one of the agents.

Mustafar said the agents would hold their victims until they received a cash offer.

"We believe the syndicate was linked with a migrant smuggling syndicate that was busted last December.

"We expect to uncover more such syndicates as a result of these arrests," he said.

The department would cooperate with neighbouring countries and other enforcement agencies to curb migrant smuggling syndicates at the international level, he added.

Mustafar said from 2014 till June, 99 cases of human trafficking and smuggling were tracked and crippled.

Of these, he said the cases involved sex services (41 cases), forced labour (27) and migrant smuggling (31).

3 killed as clashes rage

FROM PAGE 16

gas towards protesters outside the Old City, while Palestinians threw stones and other objects at security forces in some areas.

The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that 109 people were wounded in Jerusalem, of whom 38 were taken to hospital. No injury toll was given for the West Bank.

"They turned back everyone who came here to pray but then I told them I was going to the doctor, but they did not let me in," said Ulfat Hamad, 42, who was visiting from the United States.

"I am going to pray here with others," he said outside the walls.

Tensions have risen since police installed the metal detectors in a move Palestinians and other Muslims perceive as a means for Israel to assert further control over the compound containing the revered Al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock.

The controversy has resonated beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories, with the United States and the UN Middle East envoy expressing concern.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas spoke with US counterpart Donald Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

He urged the US administration to immediately intervene, warning the situation was "extremely dangerous and might spiral out of control," the Palestinians' official Wafa news agency reported.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan too has called on Israel to remove the detectors. He spoke by telephone with both Abbas and Israeli President Reuven Rivlin on Thursday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed the metal detectors were intended to ensure the safety of worshippers and visitors and not an attempt to disturb the fragile status quo under which Jordan is custodian of the site and Jewish prayer is forbidden.

Palestinians have been refusing to enter the compound all week in protest at the metal detectors.

The main weekly prayers on Fridays draw the largest number of worshippers -- typically thousands -- and speculation had been mounting that Netanyahu might order the metal detectors removed.

But after consultations with security chiefs and members of his security cabinet, Netanyahu