

6.4-magnitude

FROM PAGE 16

of the darkened Marshal Hotel building and a crane carrying them up to the higher floors, which were leaning at an angle.

Officials from Hualien fire department said 28 people had been rescued from the hotel and a residential building.

Photos on Apple Daily showed a man calling for help from the window of another building and wires dangling from the collapsed ceiling of a local hospital.

One Facebook user in Hualien told of damage around him.

"The quake is so big... There are cracks on the wall, even the fridge moved," he said.

The quake hit at 23:50pm (1550 GMT) around 21 kilometres (13 miles) northeast of Hualien, according to the United States Geological Survey.

It follows almost 100 smaller tremors to have hit the area in the last three days and comes exactly two years since a quake of the same magnitude struck the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan, killing more than 100 people.

Most of the death toll from the February 2016 earthquake was from the 16-storey Wei-kuan apartment complex, which toppled on its side with many of its residents buried in the rubble.

It was the only high-rise in Tainan to crumble completely in the quake, which came two days before Lunar New Year, when many people would have been visiting relatives for the biggest celebration of the Chinese calendar.

The safety of the building was called into question immediately after the disaster, when metal cans and foam were found to have been used as fillers in the concrete and residents said there had been cracks in the structure.

Five people were charged over the disaster, including the developer and two architects, with prosecutors saying they "cut corners" that affected the building's structural integrity.

Taiwan lies near the junction of two tectonic plates and is regularly hit by earthquakes.

The island's worst tremor in recent decades was a 7.6 magnitude quake in September 1999 that killed around 2,400 people.

Hamid awaits

FROM PAGE 1

The paper will be scrutinised today. Hamid will be considered elected if the papers are accepted.

Hamid took office on April 24, 2013, and his five-year term expires on April 23. According to article 123 of the constitution, presidential election should be held between 90 and 60 days before the five-year term expires.

Before becoming president, Hamid was elected as lawmaker seven times and also served as the Speaker twice.

He became acting president on March 14, 2013, after Zillur Rahman, president at the time, was admitted to Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on March 10.

Zillur breathed his last at the hospital on March 20.

Constitute monitoring committees

President asks pvt universities

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the private universities to form monitoring committees at their institutions to keep eyes on their teachers and students so that no one could get involved in militancy and terrorism.

The country's image gets tarnished when teachers and students are involved in religious fanaticism, said Joynal Abedin, president's press secretary, quoting Hamid as saying.

The president, who is also the chancellor of the universities, gave the directive while holding a views-exchange meeting with vice-chancellors of private universities at the Bangabhaban in the evening.

Hamid also directed the private universities to shun their commercial attitude over education, provide international standard education and prepare curricula accordingly so that students could prepare themselves for global competitions.

Expressing grave concern over the vacant posts of VCs and treasurers at 23 universities, he asked the authorities concerned, especially the education ministry and the University Grants Commission, to monitor the overall academic environment of those universities.

Fifty-eight VCs, out of 95 private universities, and secretaries concerned to the president were present at the meeting.



This picture shows damaged Marshal Hotel in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, after a strong quake struck the island yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Section 32 not to harass

FROM PAGE 16

Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

LRF President Ashutosh Sarkar presided over the programme which was attended by the forum's former and present leaders as well as a number of journalists and law ministry officials.

Anisul claimed that Section 32 of the proposed act would not hamper investigative journalism as "it is not the duty of the journalists to spy".

"If anybody sends secret information of the government to its enemy or to any foreign country, it will be considered as spying, which is an offence according to the law," he said.

On January 29, the cabinet approved the draft of the Digital Security Act, 2018, which included most parts of the controversial Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act.

Section 57 deals with defamation, hurting religious sentiments, causing deterioration of law and order and instigating against any person or organisation through publishing or transmitting any material in websites or in electronic form. It provides for punishment of a maximum of 14 years in prison.

The draft of Digital Security Act, 2018, being dubbed "the emerging media-gagging law", splits these offences into four separate sections with punishment ranging from three to 10 years' term.

Journalists and rights defenders fear the freedom of the press and expression was put to the sword due to the proposed digital security law. They say there will be every chance of the act being misused against the people's right to express themselves after its passage in the Jatiya Sangsad.

They also feel duped by the government as Section 57 of the ICT Act was kept in the proposed law with some changes despite assurances in the past of scrapping the controversial provision.

Replying to another query yesterday, the law minister said the proper authorities would investigate the allegations of corruption raised against the immediate past chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha.

The law would take its own course and it is equal for all, he said.

In reply to the next question, Anisul said the trial in the corruption cases against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was being conducted on the basis of documents and evidence and the judges would deliver their verdicts taking all those facts into consideration.

The statement by Khaleda alleging that the country's lower courts were in the grip of the government and they did not have the power to deliver proper judgments is completely false, he said.

In response to another query, the minister said the formulation of a law for the recruitment of Supreme Court judges was "under process".

ANISUL MEETS CJ

The law minister yesterday expressed his hope that Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain would take a step to conduct an inquiry into the allega-

tions of irregularities in the functions of the High Court and corruption against its officials and employees as cited by the attorney general.

He expressed the hope while talking to reporters after making a courtesy call on the newly-appointed CJ at his Supreme Court office in the afternoon.

"I have met the chief justice to congratulate him. I had earlier met the then chief justices -- Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Surendra Kumar Sinha -- when they were appointed as the chief justice as the law ministry acts as a bridge among the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

"I told the chief justice that an inquiry needs to be conducted into the allegation mentioned by the attorney general. I hope, the chief justice will take steps in this regard", he said.

Citing irregularities in the judicial and administrative functions of the HC, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam on February 4 said "the judiciary had seen degradation" in the last few years, and the image of the HC had changed.

The image of the whole judiciary is being damaged by some HC judges' failure in running their courts properly, he said, adding that a number of court officials and employees were involved in "corruption".

SpaceX

FROM PAGE 16

Moon and Mars," Erik Seedhouse, assistant professor of applied aviation sciences at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, told AFP.

The launch is a "huge deal, even for a spaceflight company that routinely accomplishes huge deals," said Jason Davis of the Planetary Society, describing the Falcon Heavy as "mythical."

No people are on board, just a mannequin wearing a futuristic space-suit, strapped into CEO Elon Musk's very own cherry red Tesla car.

"Starman in a Red Roadster," Musk posted on Instagram Monday, showing the rocket's payload on a pedestal, aimingskyward.

Musk has also said David Bowie's hit "Space Oddity" would play in the vehicle during the launch.

An animated video released by SpaceX to preview the launch showed all three rocket boosters returning to upright landings on Earth, while the car and mannequin emerged from the protective nose cone and sailed into orbit.

The car is destined for an elliptical orbit around the Sun, taking it into the vicinity of Mars.

"At times, it will come extremely close to Mars, and there is a tiny, tiny chance that it will hit Mars," Musk told reporters. "Extremely tiny."

Musk reiterated his warning that the maiden launch of the Falcon Heavy -- a project he first unveiled in 2011 -- may indeed fail. It may even explode on the launchpad.

"I would consider it a win if it just clears the pad and doesn't blow the pad to smithereens," he said.

Editors demand

FROM PAGE 1

an environment that may stifle press freedom, the organisation said in a press statement yesterday.

The statement was issued after a meeting of the Parishad with its President and Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar in the chair at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

According to the proposed law, if anyone collects and keeps secret information of any government office in his or her computer or digital and electronic devices, it would be tantamount to digital or computer spying.

And the person will face harsh punishment -- a maximum of 14 years in jail or a fine of up to Tk 25 lakh or both. If that person commits the crime again, he or she will face life imprisonment or a maximum fine of Tk 1 crore or both.

In Section-57 of the ICT Act, four issues -- hurting religious sentiment, damaging the country's image, hampering communal harmony, and causing deterioration of law and order -- were incorporated without any specific explanations, the Parishad pointed out.

Following repeated misuse of the section, journalists and civil society members raised strong demands for repealing the law, it said.

In the name of revising the law, those four issues were put in separate sections of the proposed law with separate provisions of punishment, mentioned the statement.

The law minister had assured that sections 54, 55, 56, 57 and 66 of the ICT Act will be revoked through the enactment of the digital security law. But the controversial elements of Section-57 were tactfully included in sections 25, 28, 29 and 31 of the proposed digital security act, it added.

The meeting was attended by The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam; Chief Editor of Manabzamin Matir Rahman Chowdhury; News Today Editor Reazuddin Ahmed; The Financial Express Editor AHM Moazzem Hossain; Acting Editor of Sangbad Khandaker Muniruzzaman; New Age Editor Nurul Kabir; Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta; Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Nayeem Nizam; Naya Diganta Editor Alamgir Mohiuddin; Acting Editor of Jughantor Saiful Alam; Banik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud; The Independent Editor M Shamsur Rahman; Daily Azadi Editor MA Malek; Daily Inquilab Editor AMM Bahauddin; Korotoa Editor Md Mozammel Haq; Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan; and Prothom Alo Editor Matir Rahman.

PM to visit Barisal

FROM PAGE 2

a water treatment plant, an auditorium, six muktijodda complexes and a hospital are among the projects she will inaugurate in Barisal.

In Patuakhali, she will inaugurate different other projects including a Diabetic Hospital, officials said.

Sheikh Hasina last visited Barisal in 2011.

Democrat rebuttal

FROM PAGE 16

Republicans voted along party lines to declassify their own memo over objections by the FBI and Justice Department.

Trump had strongly backed the release of the Republican memo last week. Should Trump refuse to declassify the Democratic version, a standoff between the White House and Democrats could follow.

Republicans "found themselves in an insupportable position when they released a misleading memo and refused to release the Democratic response, so I think they were compelled to take the action they did today," Schiff said.

The panel voted last week to declassify a memo composed by Chairman Devin Nunes that claims Democrat-funded research prompted the Federal Bureau of Investigation to spy on a former Trump campaign aide.

Democrats feared Trump would use the memo as a pretext for firing senior officials and subvert the investigation, led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, into Russia's meddling in the 2016 US election and possible coordination between Trump's camp and Moscow.

Schiff, concerned that the White House might "redact our memo for political purposes," said he has asked the FBI and Justice Department to review his document and report back on what redactions, if any, they would make to protect classified information.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said that, as a matter of "full transparency," and given that Schiff's memo is based on the same underlying documents as the Republican's document, the president should be fully prepared to release it.

"If he refuses, the American people will be forced to wonder: what is the president trying to hide?" Schumer said.

Critics have warned that releasing evidence during a prominent investigation that could reach the highest level of government would set a dangerous precedent.

Meanwhile, Trump's lawyers have urged him to refuse to sit down with Special Counsel Robert Mueller as part of the probe into his campaign's ties with Russia, The New York Times reported Monday.

However, Trump himself has repeatedly stated that he would like to speak with Mueller about the ongoing investigation.

"I'm looking forward to it, actually," Trump told reporters at the White House last month, though adding: "subject to my lawyers and all of that."

The president said he would even testify under oath. While Mueller's questioning would not be under oath, it is a crime to lie to

federal investigators.

The New York Times cited four people briefed on the matter as saying the president's lawyers are concerned that he could be charged with lying to investigators, as he has previously made false statements and contradicted himself.

The sources said lawyer John Dowd, his deputy Jay Sekulow, long time personal lawyer Marc Kasowitz and many West Wing advisers want to resist the interview request, claiming Mueller lacks the legal standing on some of the issues he is investigating.

However, a refusal could lead Mueller to issue a subpoena for the president to testify before a grand jury, with a court fight that would be decided by the US Supreme Court.

It could also trigger accusations that Trump is hiding information from the public, a painful distraction for Republicans seeking office in November's mid-term elections.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

Resources sent by individuals to LDCs as a group (remittances) totalled \$36.9 billion in 2017, down by 2.6 percent compared to the peak of \$37.9 billion in 2016.

In absolute terms, the largest recipients of remittances among LDCs included Bangladesh (\$13.6 billion in 2016), Nepal (\$6.6 billion), Yemen (\$3.4 billion), Haiti (\$2.4 billion), Senegal (\$2 billion) and Uganda (\$1 billion), according to Unctad.

Economic development in the world's most-disadvantaged countries -- mostly in sub-Saharan Africa -- is stalling against the background of a lukewarm global recovery, risking widening inequality, new analysis from Unctad has revealed.

Data suggests that the least developed countries (LDCs), a long-established category of nations requiring special attention from the international community, will fall short of goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development unless urgent action is taken.

"The international community should strengthen its support to LDCs in line with the commitment to leave no one behind," Paul Akiwumi, director of Unctad's Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, said.

"With the global economic recovery remaining tepid, development partners face constraints in extending support to LDCs to help them meet the Sustainable Development Goals."

GDP growth rates will likely continue to fall short not only of their 2002-2008 average, but also of their 2010-2014 levels, Akiwumi said.

The analysis highlights that LDC growth averaged just 5 percent in 2017 and will reach 5.4 percent in 2018 -- below the target of 7 percent growth envisaged by target 1 of Sustainable Development Goal 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

While international prices for most primary commodity categories have trended upwards since late 2016, this modest recovery barely made a dent to the significant drop experienced since 2011, particularly in the cases of crude petroleum and minerals, ores and metals.

In 2017, the LDCs as a group were projected to register a current account deficit of \$50 billion, the second-highest deficit posted so far, at least in nominal terms.

World markets

FROM PAGE 16

a rock," said analyst Naeem Aslam at trading firm ThinkMarkets.

"Traders have been looking at the market for the past year moving in one direction which was skewed to the upside. Now, it's time for the bears to take their revenge."

Prior to this week's chaotic selloff, Wall Street had enjoyed an impressive record-breaking run ever since Trump's 2016 election on hopes over the US president's pro-business tax-cutting policies.

Asia and Europe had meanwhile reaped bumper gains from the improving economic outlook.

"If investors had been waiting for an opportunity to take profits, the prospect of higher than expected inflation and tightening by the Fed provided just that," added Richard Hunter, head of markets at online stockbroker Interactive Investor.

"Rising interest rates, whilst potentially good news for savers, increase the cost of borrowing and the possibility of loan defaults," he told AFP.