





3,88,379 Recoveries





Cyclone hits Sri Lanka as southern India hunkers down

Cyclone Burevi hit Sri Lanka overnight, rattling the island nation but leaving it relatively unscathed on its way to southern India, officials said yesterday.

Burevi, the second cyclone in the southern Bay of Bengal in a week, slammed into north-eastern Sri Lanka just before midnight (1830 GMT).

Packing winds up to 100 kilometres (60 miles) an hour, it soaked parts of the country but caused no casualties and less devastation than feared.

"There was rain and strong

winds, but the cyclone did not cause any major damage in our area," Mangalanath Liyanarachchi, a local reporter in Trincomalee, 260 kilometres (160 miles) from

Thousands of people living along Liyanarachchi said.

Sri Lanka's Disaster Management out to sea.

1,036km to pave way

Of late, an armed group called the Marma Liberation Party has been

been active in Bandarban border for the last three years. Sometimes it is tough to reach remote areas, Superintendent of Rangamati Police Alamgir Kabir told The Daily Star.

enforcement and intelligence agencies, several hundred armed youths are operating in the rugged hills for four factions of two wellknown organisations -- Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS Santu Larma faction), PCJSS (MN Larma faction), United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and UPDF (democratic).

Mathew (not his real name) is a case in point. He joined the PCJSS in constructed, the trespasses will stop 2013 but now realises that he is on

Rights groups call

Colombo, said by telephone.

the coast had been asked to seek temporary shelter inland, but they have now moved back to their homes,

Centre (DMC) had issued a red alert and asked fishermen not to venture

discussion with his friend and joined,

being motivated by the speeches of

training and can now operate heavy

Tk 500 and was tasked for collecting

only then was I assigned to go," he

extortion money.

grenades.

said in an anxious tone.

He was moved to a border area for

He received a monthly salary of just

"If there was any big operation,

Mathew said the groups have

weapons like machine guns, self-

loading rifles, M16, AK-47s, AK-22s,

AK-56s and even rocket-propelled

No one, however, could estimate

"Once the border road is

the number of illegal firearms the

and the illegal arms trading too," SP

groups have in their arsenal.

First batch off to Bhasan Char

Daily Star over the phone.

Bhasan Char. I am going voluntarily,"

An official involved in the left with some 500 other Rohingyas.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of the legal and media wing at Rab headquarters, said two battalions of Rab-7 and -15 have been deployed on the Cox's Bazar-Chattogram highway to ensure smooth relocation of

Under heavy security, around 1,500 Char by 14 vessels. Noakhali Deputy Commissioner Khorshed Alam Khan said the Rohingyas are scheduled to arrive in Bhasan Char by 2:00pm today. Officials said some 2,500

Bangladesh Navy has prepared the Tk 3,100-crore housing project, funded with public money, after some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Myanmar's Rakhine state and took shelter in Cox's Bazar in the months following August 2017. They joined some 300,000 other Rohingyas, who had fled previous waves of violence in Rakhine.

Violence between different groups ghts activist working on refugees Destruction of forests and hills and risk of landslides in Cox's Bazar prompted the authorities to choose

questioning the idea of relocation to Bhasan Char, saying it is a lowlying isolated island and has risks of flooding, but at a point last year agreed to send a technical team to assess the condition and requested the government to allow the visit before relocation. In a statement on Wednesday, the

UN said it has limited information on the relocation exercise and has not been involved in the preparation process. It said it is ready for the visit by a technical team and for consultation with the government. The UN also said any relocation should be voluntary and all protection measures must be in place.

Officials involved in preparing the housing project said it has 120 cluster villages that are capable of accommodating one lakh Rohingyas and there are livelihood options including fishing and livestock rearing.

feet above the ground with concrete blocks. The entire housing site is protected by a 13km-long flood embankment. There are also 120 cyclone shelters, which are planned to be used as schools, medical centres and community centres.

and see" visit by a group of Rohingyas in September this year. The visitors later told journalists that the facilities there were far better than those at the camps, but they felt that they wouldn't be able to see many of their relatives after moving there.

"The relocation of Rohingyas to Bhasan Char is happening on a voluntary basis," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told The Daily Star yesterday, trashing the rights groups' statements that some of the Rohingyas were coerced into going there.

Responding to the UN statement, he said a technical team may visit Bhasan Char at any favourable time.

"They should first go to Rakhine and see how prepared it is for Rohingya repatriation," Momen said, expressing frustration over the fact that not a single Rohingya returned to Myanmar in over three years.

Rohingyas refused to return to Rakhine despite two attempts in the last three years, saying there were no guarantee of citizenship, safety and basic rights in Rakhine although Myanmar had signed a MoU with UNDP and UN Refugee Agency for creating conditions for repatriation.

Rights groups said the situation in Rakhine has not improved, rather deteriorated amid increasing conflicts between Arakan Army and Myanmar Army in recent months, though Myanmar faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court has begun an investigation into the human rights violation of the Rohingyas.

Foreign Minister Momen said the actual pressure from the international community should be on Myanmar for creating conditions for repatriation, not on Bangladesh that has been bearing the brunt of the crisis for decades.

Rights activist Noor Khan Liton said, "Relocation to Bhasan Char Representatives from at least 22 without UN involvement brings the local NGOs also visited Bhasan Char question: Who will feed them and last week. They lauded the project, but manage them in Bhasan Char? Can added that they were unsure how the the Bangladesh government alone do

Two sent to jail for rape

STAR REPORT

Two local courts in Sirajganj and Gazipur yesterday sent two arrestees to jail over the rape of a schoolgirl and a woman respectively.

The accused in Sirajganj is Yusuf Ali, 18, a resident of Porjana village in Shahjadpur upazila. He landed in jail in a rape case filed by the girl's father.

Quoting the case statement, police said the girl, 14, was returning home from school in the same village on a day about a month ago. Yusuf, along with his two associates, intercepted the girl and forcibly took her to a nearby jungle where he raped her.

One of Yusuf's associates filmed the incident. Yusuf threatened the girl that he would release the footage on social media if she disclosed the matter.

Neither the girl nor her family filed any complaint with the police until Wednesday, said Shahed Mahamud Khan, officer-in-charge of Shahjadpur Police Station.

The accused again attempted to rape her in Porjana village on Wednesday. At one stage, locals caught Yusuf and later handed him to police. However, his two associates managed

At night, the victim's father filed the case with Shahjadpur Police Station accusing Yusuf and his two associates. The two other accused are on the

The victim was sent to Sirajganj General Hospital for medical tests, said the OC.

In Gazipur, a woman filed a case with Gazipur Metropolitan Sadar Police Station yesterday accusing one Md Abu Hanif of raping her several times while promising to get her a job, said police.

The case was filed a day after the Rab detained Hanif in Rajendrapur.

Quoting the 23-year-old victim rom Gazipur Sadar upazila, Rab officials said she became acquainted with Hanif about seven months ago.

Hanif, a mechanic at a motor garage in Gazipur city's Itahata area, developed a friendship with the woman. At one stage, the accused raped her.

He also warned the woman that he would not get her a job if she disclosed the matter.

The accused later raped her several times. The woman then realised that Hanif was abusing her on the false promise of a job.

The victim lodged a verbal complaint with Rab on Tuesday.

The following day, Rab detained Hanif in Gazipur. He was handed to police yesterday, said Rab Company Commander Abdullah Al Mamun.

Georgia official says Trump rhetoric fueling threats

AFP, Washington

A senior Republican official in the US state of Georgia said Wednesday that President Donald Trump's unfounded claims of election fraud were fueling threats against poll workers.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger was the second state official in as many days to urge Trump to tone down his rhetoric.

Trump has repeatedly alleged there was election fraud in Georgia but has presented no evidence to back up his claim, and a recount confirmed that President-elect Joe Biden won the southern state by some 10,000 votes.

Incidents of 71

FROM PAGE 1

called on her at the Gono Bhaban.

Referring to the volumes of the book titled "Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", Hasina said all can learn many historical facts from 1948 to 1971 rom the books.

Noting that the book "Unfinished Memoirs" (Urdu version) written by Bangabandhu is one of the best sellers in Pakistan, she said it is also well read in Pakistan apart from other countries.

The PM extended greetings to her Pakistan counterpart Imran Khan when the envoy conveyed the premier's good wishes to her.

The high commissioner said the Pakistani PM advised them to learn about the development miracle of

Bangladesh. Mentioning that different bilateral and regional forums have remained

inactive, he sought help from Hasina to activate foreign office consultations between the two countries.

The PM said there was no bar to continuing activities regularly. Imran Ahmed said Pakistan wants

to boost relations with Bangladesh without any obstruction. Referring to Bangladesh's foreign policy "Friendship to all, malice to

none", the PM said she believes in regional cooperation. The Pakistan envoy lauded Hasina

for her statesmanship in the global The PM welcomed the high

commissioner and assured him of all cooperation. PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad

Kaikaus and Military Secretary Maj Gen Naqib Ahmed Chowdhury were

Member of a mobile court of Dhaka district administration signs a receipt after a youth was fined for not wearing mask in the capital's Zero Point area in Gulistan yesterday. The mobile court was operating to raise PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN awareness on heath rules to curb the spread of novel coronavirus.

"No one has forced me to go to

relocation process told The Daily Star that the first convoy of 10 buses with Rohingyas left for Chattogram at 11:30am and the second convoy of another 10 buses left at 12:45pm. Later in the afternoon, 18 more buses

Rohingyas to Bhasan Char.

Rohingyas were taken to Chattogram by buses. From there, they were scheduled to be taken to Bhashan Rohingyas would be in the first batch.

of Rohingyas and drug trafficking has become a matter of concern, said a the temporary housing site at Bhasan

UN and rights groups have been

The houses have been built four

The government arranged a "go

critically ill people could be treated it? We don't have the answers.'

More stimulus to offset Covid shock

disbursed soon," Rouf said at the Besides, the Tk 20,000-crore stimulus package titled "Working Capital Loan to SME and Cottage

"The remaining amount will be

Industries" saw disbursement of 41 percent of the amount as loans. "While disbursing loans, we are facing problems and non-cooperation from some of the banks and there are allegations that they are not providing

loans to real borrower," mentioned the finance secretary. Finance Division data also shows

no money was disbursed under the Tk 2000-crore Credit Risk Sharing Scheme for the SME sector.

"The government has plans to expand this guarantee scheme further with support of development partners. We are also having discussions with development partners to expand this facility," Rouf noted.

The government rolled out another stimulus package to provide Tk 2,500 as cash assistance to each of the 50 lakh households that are not covered under any social protection

Rouf said they could not provide the assistance to all the households because of a number of problems.

"We could provide money to around 35 lakh households. We have a large database now. If there is a second wave of Covid, we will be able to instantly transfer money to these households.

Replying to a query, the secretary said the government plans to create funds for the SME Foundations and the BSCIC. "We are working on the issue." He further said the government

has a plan to make public the lists of beneficiaries of the stimulus About disbursement in stimulus packages, Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir said, "It will cross 90

percent by December as a result of

World Bank and the government will provide the money. The BB governor also refuted the

Manmohan Parkash, ADB country director for Bangladesh, said they are working on a new programme

Of the amount, \$500 million will be for resource mobilisation and SME financing, and the rest for health and

social protection, he said.

"If we can use technology to lrive some of the middlemen out of business, we can help the farmers get better value for what they produce,"

(SME) Foundation chairman Masudur Rahman stimulus package for cottage, micro, small and medium enterprise (CMSME) is not enough. He said that banks are giving loans to CMSMEs that can comply stringent rules including collateral facilities, most of CMSME cannot give collateral

comprehensive, timely and prompt.

FBCCI president Sheikh Fazle Fahim said they firmly believe that there is no alternative to full implementation of the stimulus packages for economic recovery during this pandemic and beyond.

largely unguarded hilly borders with He shared his story of joining the India's Mizoram and Myanmar's Chin Mathew went to attend a PCJSS

active in these border areas, they said. "The Marma Liberation Party has

According to officials of law

the wrong path and wants to return to

Destruction of forests and hills and risk of landslides in Cox's Bazar prompted the authorities to choose the temporary housing site on the island, which is around 37 miles off the coast of Bay of Bengal.

UN and aid agencies were opposing the relocation plan, saying the island was flood-prone and could get submerged during tidal surges. Bangladesh officials, however, said the houses have been built four feet above the ground with concrete blocks and the entire housing site is protected by

a 13km-long flood embankment. On Wednesday, the UN in a statement said it was still waiting for the government to allow its technical team to visit the island and assess the feasibility of the Bhasan Char project. farming, that they would have better

In a statement yesterday, Human Rights Watch said the Bangladesh government should commit to a transparent relocation process, fully informed consent of transferred refugees, freedom of movement on and off the island, and heed the UN call for a prior independent technical

and protection assessment. Bangladesh government is actively reneging on its promise to the UN not to relocate any refugees to Bhasan Char island until humanitarian experts give a green light," said Brad Adams, Asia director

of HRW, in the statement. "If the government were genuinely confident in the habitability of the island, they would be transparent and not hastily circumvent UN technical assessments."

Though the government claims

that any relocation will be voluntary,

Human Rights Watch said it has

recently spoke with 12 families who

said their names were on the list for

the relocation, but that they had not

Some refugees on the list have fled out of fear of forced relocation.

"Donor governments engaged in the Rohingya crisis response such as the US, UK, Japan, Australia, and Canada should take a clear stand against this rash move to relocate Rohingyas to Bhasan Char," Adams

"Decisions to move after the completion of technical assessments need to be voluntary and fully In the statement, the HRW also said some refugees said that they willingly volunteered to go to Bhasan Char because they were told by the

majhis and CiC volunteers that they

would be able to choose livelihood

opportunities, such as fishing or

access to health facilities, and that their children would get education. South International's Campaigner Saad Hammadi has said the relocation of so many Rohingya refugees to a remote island, which is still off limits to everyone, including rights groups and journalists without

concerns about independent human rights monitoring. "Bangladesh and other members of the international community have a critical role not only in protecting the rights of the Rohingya people but also in ensuring their full and meaningful participation in decisions that affect

prior permission, poses grave

them," Amnesty International said. Fortify Rights said articles 9 and 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bangladesh is a state party, protects the rights to liberty and freedom of movement, respectively. These rights apply equally to refugees, who should never be detained solely on the basis

willingly volunteered to relocate. of their immigration status, it added. Charges pressed

FROM PAGE 1 In the charge sheet, the police stated that the victim and her husband were forcefully taken into the hostel by the accused while the couple

came to the college area to travel that evening. Later the accused asked for Tk 50,000 as ransom and being denied, they raped the victim after tying her husband, snatched her gold jewellery

and mugged Tk 2,000. Victim's husband filed a case with Shahporan Police Station that night accusing six named and three to four unnamed

Police later arrested all six named

accused along with two others and these eight are accused in the charge Earlier, all eight accused confessed

their crimes before the court under

section 164 of penal code. On November 30, the DNA reports of the accused were sent to the investigation officer via the Sylhet court where their involvement was

proved. Meanwhile, the police that night recovered several arms from a hostel room which was occupied by the prime accused Saifur Rahman. A case was filed accusing Saifur Rahman by police that night.

In the arms case, police also pressed charge sheet to the court along with gang-rape case charge sheet.

The investigation officer Indranil

Bhattacharya accused Saifur Rahman and Shah Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman Rony in the charge sheet. Meanwhile, three probe bodies -- one judicial probe body, one of

education ministry and another of

the college -- were formed and all of

them submitted their reports to the authorities. Moreover, National University suspended studentship of Saifur, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Rony, Mahfuzur Rahman Masum and Rabiul Hasan

and cancelled their certificate. The MC College authorities also

suspended them from the college. All eight accused are Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists, but were not in any posts as there are no BCL committees at the college, Sylhet city and district.

Sarker, former youth and sports affairs secretary of Sylhet district Awami Ranjit Sarker, however, earlier denied of having any fraction of BCL

justice for the accused.

They all are member of one fraction

of BCL that follows Advocate Ranjit Another Scheme for Farmers and Small Traders", involving Tk 3,000 crore was announced to support lowincome professionals and small and marginalised traders. But only 32 under his influence and demanded

till November.

Top government officials at the programme blamed "non-cooperation of many banks and a huge number of targeted beneficiaries" for the slow

progress in implementation of the vital stimulus packages. "There are some faults but broadly we have been successful in implementing the stimulus packages,"

said Planning Minister MA Mannan. He asked the officials concerned to take steps so that all banks cooperate in the implementation of the stimulus packages.

return. We should spend money in such way that we get the highest return. "Spend money but spend it wisely,"

"We spend money, but on many

occasions, we do not get the desired

said the minister. Finance Secretary Abdur Rouf Talukder made the key presentation detailing the status of the six stimulus packages for employment creation

and revitalisation of rural economy. According to the Finance Division data, the Tk 3,200 crore package titled "Credit Expansion for Employment Creation Through 5 State-owned Financial Institutions" was aimed at supporting smallscale businesses with the core objective of employment generation. Till November, Tk 428 crore was

"We are now in talks with the ADB for additional financing for these five state-owned enterprises," said Rouf.

disbursed under the scheme.

Another Tk 5,000-crore package titled "Agriculture Refinance Scheme" was rolled out with an aim of boosting food production and ensuring food security. Till November, 51 percent of the amount was given as loans to 105,427 farmers and agricultural "Refinance

package,

percent of the money was disbursed

some steps we have taken." He said the government has a plan

to expand the credit risk scheme to Tk 5,000 crore from Tk 2,000 crore. "The

claims that banks are giving priority to medium enterprises in providing

involving \$1 billion for Bangladesh for tackling the pandemic.

"The government, the private sector and development partners -- if we work together, we will not only overcome this (Covid-19) challenge, but also can convert this challenge into an opportunity.

he noted. Small and Medium Enterprise

so they remain out of the scheme. Referring to the stimulus packages, Commission Member Shamsul Alam said those were

Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said rejuvenation of the rural economy is important. The future of Bangladesh and inclusive economic growth hinge on rural jobs and well-paid jobs.