



INDIAN TUNNEL COLLAPSE

All 41 workers rescued after 17 days

REUTERS, *Silkyara*

Rescuers yesterday pulled out all 41 workers trapped for 17 days inside a collapsed tunnel in the Himalayas after drilling through the debris of rock, concrete and earth to reach them, triggering jubilation across India.

The evacuation of the men -- low-wage workers from some of India's poorest states -- began more than six hours after rescuers broke through the debris in the tunnel in Uttarakhand state, which caved in on November 12.

They were pulled out on wheeled stretchers through a 90 cm (3 feet) wide steel pipe, with the entire process being completed in about an hour.

"Their condition is first-class and absolutely fine ... just like yours or mine. There is no tension about their health," said Wakil Hassan, a rescue team leader.

The first to be evacuated, a short man wearing a dark grey winter jacket and a yellow hard hat, was garlanded with marigold flowers and welcomed in traditional Indian style inside the tunnel by state chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and federal deputy highways minister VK Singh.

Some walked out smiling and were hugged by Dhami, while others made gestures of thanks with clasped hands or sought blessings by touching his feet. All were garlanded and also presented with a white fabric stole by

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Indian officials greet one of the rescued workers at the collapsed tunnel site in Uttarkashi in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

57 BNP men get different terms in two cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

As many as 57 leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in two cases filed in the capital over political violence.

The cases were lodged in October 2013 and September 2018 on charges of hurling crude bombs, vandalising vehicles, and assaulting law enforcers and preventing them from performing their duties.

In a case, 19 BNP leaders and activists, including Ishaq Ali Sarkar, the organising secretary of Jubo Dal, and Md Mohon, a former ward councillor of a Dhaka city corporation, were jailed for six months over political violence in the capital's Bangshal in October 2013.

During the trial, nine prosecution witnesses testified before the court.

Ishaq's brother Yakub Sarkar and 32 others were acquitted as the charges against them were not proven.

Sultan Sohag Uddin, the Dhaka additional chief metropolitan magistrate, handed down the sentence.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 3,000 each, in default of which they will have to serve an extra month in prison.

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Another 'staged polls' in the offing

Speakers tell discussion, fear country may slide deeper into crises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will see another "staged election", which will ultimately deepen the country's political, economic and social crises, speakers said at an event yesterday.

No government since independence could prove itself capable of conducting free and fair polls, they said at a discussion titled "Another Staged Election: Citizen's Anxiety", organised by Basic Rights Protection Committee, a citizen's platform, at DrikPath Bhaban.

Senior jurist Shahdeen Malik said the government is trying to deal with the public protests using the "Assad Model".

"After the Arab Spring, many heads of the states resigned and left countries, but in Syria, President Assad deployed an army against the people.

"Now around 60 lakh Syrians have become refugees," he said, adding that the ruling party here is adopting the model as the BGB, who are supposed to guard the border, are now patrolling the cities.

"If you use the forces without following any rules and regulations to safeguard your [ruling party] interests, then how is it fair?"

Professor Asif Nazrul, of Dhaka University's law department, said the government is using all the state

institutes, including police, Rab, BGB, and the courts in its favour.

After October 28, around 15,600 BNP members were arrested and many saw their houses attacked in the presence of police, he said.

"After one-sided elections, people lose trust in the government as there is no transparency and accountability. After the 2014 and 2018 polls, the state machinery became more submissive to the government. It [such an election] increases injustice, embezzlement, money laundering, disappearances and foreign pressure.

"This time, the government appears even more reckless and arrogant."

Economist Anu Muhammad said if the government believes it is popular for its development credentials, it should let the election be free, fair and competitive to prove its popularity.

"And if they believe that they have looted banks, oppressed the people, laundered money, and robbed the democratic rights of people through the DSA, they need to apologise to the people and conduct a free election.

"In both cases, there is no alternative to free and fair polls. Without going on this path, they [the ruling party] are trying to conduct another selection

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Raushan, son won't join polls with GM Quader at JP helm

RASHIDUL HASAN

The rift between GM Quader and Raushan Ershad, the two most known leaders of the Jatiya Party, has put the parliament's main opposition in serious trouble.

Leader of the opposition and JP chief patron Raushan Ershad and her son Rahgir Almahe Ershad MP yesterday said they would not participate in the January 7 election under the leadership of party Chairman GM Quader.

The main reason behind the conflict is that both leaders want their chosen individuals to get the party's nomination to run for parliament.

Several JP leaders loyal to Raushan say they fear the party may split for the fifth time if the stalemate persists.

JP on Monday released a list of 287 nominees. The list does not contain the name of Raushan. Besides, the party had not nominated anyone from Mymensingh-4, the constituency of Raushan.

The JP announced that GM Quader will vie for two constituencies, one of which is Rangpur-3, where Rahgir, better known as Saad Ershad, is the incumbent.

Rangpur-3 was also the constituency of the late JP founder HM Ershad.

As per the list of nominees, Quader's cousin HM Shahriar Asif got nomination to run from Rangpur-1, from where JP Chief Whip Moshir Rahman Ranga, who is close to Raushan, is a present MP.

Raushan and any other JP leader close to her have been outraged by the nominees' list, sources said.

Saad yesterday told this correspondent that GM Quader had humiliated his late father Ershad and his mother



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Efforts on to extend Gaza truce

Israel says ceasefire extension depends on hostage release

REUTERS, *Gaza*

Israeli forces and Hamas fighters held their fire yesterday beyond the original deadline of a truce, extended at the last minute by at least two days to let more hostages go free.

With both sides expressing hope of further extensions, mediator Qatar hosted the spy chiefs from Israel's Mossad and the US CIA at a meeting to "build on progress", a source briefed on the visits told Reuters.

A single column of black smoke could be seen rising above the obliterated wasteland of the northern Gaza war zone from across the fence in Israel, but for a fifth day there was no sign of jets in the sky or rumble of explosions.

Both sides reported some Israeli tank fire in the Sheikh Radwan district of Gaza City in the morning, but there were no reports of casualties. Israel said its troops had been approached and fired a warning shot.

Previously during the truce, Hamas fighters released 50 Israeli women and children, some of them toddlers, from among the 240 hostages. In return, Israel released 150 Palestinian detainees from its jails, all women and teenagers.

Hamas also released 19 foreign hostages, mainly Thai farmworkers, under separate deals parallel to the truce agreement.

Israel has said the truce could be

prolonged as long as Hamas continues to release at least 10 hostages per day. But with fewer women and children left in captivity, keeping the guns quiet beyond today could require negotiating to free at least some Israeli men for the first time.

"We hope the occupation (Israel) abides (by the agreement) in the next two days because we are seeking a new agreement, besides women and children, whereby other categories that we have that we can swap," Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya told Al Jazeera late on Monday.

Qatar hosts chiefs of CIA, Mossad to 'build on progress'

Israeli security cabinet minister Gideon Saar told Army Radio that the two-day extension had been agreed under the terms of the original offer, and Israel remained willing to extend the truce further if more hostages were released.

Qatar's foreign ministry said it was now trying to secure a further extension based on Hamas releasing more hostages.

The truce brought the first respite to the Gaza Strip in seven weeks, during which Israel had bombed swathes of the territory into a desolate moonscape.

BNP man kept in fetters, handcuffs while being treated

He earlier had a heart attack



STAR REPORT

A Jubo Dal leader who had a heart attack in jail was treated at a hospital in the capital earlier this month while in bar fetters and handcuffs.

Aminur Rahman Madhu, also an assistant professor at Ahmedabad Degree College in Jashore, was arrested on November 2 on charges of planning an act of sabotage.

Photos of him lying on the floor in handcuffs and chains went viral on social media.

A day after his arrest, a court sent him to Jashore Central Jail, said his family members.

On November 12, Madhu, who has been a heart patient since 2013, suffered a cardiac arrest and

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Bangladesh opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy cuts one during his 86-run knock against New Zealand on the first day of the first Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Joy's 86 was the highest score for the hosts, who three away the advantage of winning the toss with some rash strokes as they ended the day on 310 for nine.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Nasa's 'Message in a Bottle' will send your name into space

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa is offering people the chance to send their names billions of kilometres into space aboard its next mission to Jupiter.

The 'Message in a Bottle' initiative will see people's names engraved on the Europa Clipper spacecraft, with members of the public urged to submit their names for free before the end of 2023.

Also engraved on the Europa Clipper is a poem by US Poet Laureate Ada Limón, titled 'In Praise of Mystery: A Poem for Europa'.

The poem was presented at the Library of Congress earlier this year when Nasa's campaign was first unveiled.

"Writing this poem was one of the greatest honours of my life, but also one of the most difficult tasks I've ever been assigned," Limón said.

"Eventually, what made the poem come together was realising that in pointing toward other planets, stars and moons, we are also recognising the enormous gift that is our planet Earth. To point outward is also to point inward."

The mission is set to launch in October 2024, reaching Jupiter orbit 1.8 billion miles away in 2030. It will aim to investigate whether the ocean beneath the icy crust of Europa can harbour life.