



SOUTH ASIA DISASTER NEWS

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WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

SUMMARY

The highlights of the disaster related news from the SAARC member countries during the week are given below.

In Afghanistan a moderate earthquake took place in the Hindu Kush mountain range but there were no injuries or damage. The magnitude of the earthquake was 5.7 on Richter scale. The epicentre was on the Afghan side of the Hindu Kush mountain range. The remote location of the earthquake saved the country from major damage.

In Bangladesh over 10,000 families of 18 villages in Sutarkhali and Kamarkhola unions under Dakope upazila of Khulna district have been rendered homeless due to flooding caused by embankment collapse. Vast tracts of croplands have also gone under knee-deep water as two newly constructed embankments on both sides of Nalian River of Dakope upazila collapsed under the pressure of strong currents.

In Bhutan the victims of the February 28 Paro Jangsa fire were granted soelra. The 13 families who became homeless received Nu 15,000 each and essentials like blankets and clothing as semso and soelra. The school going children also received a set each of school notebooks, bags and uniforms. The house owners received 100 CGI roofs each.

In the Kerala state of India the government has sanctioned Rs.15 crore for measures to mitigate the impact of the dry spell. Government had directed district collectors to take urgent steps to supply drinking water in drought affected areas. With the funds sanctioned by the government, each district would be able to take up repair of borewells and motor pumps.

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), an umbrella organisation of all the indigenous nationalities of the country, has recently revealed its 'position paper' on climate change calling for a substantial reduction in the emission of CO₂ due to deforestation. They have demanded that the government act as per the UN Declarations on Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) while formulating policy, plan and programmes on climate change.

In Pakistan experts fear that the landslide-affected people of Atta Abad, Hunza may suffer losses due to a potential outburst of an artificial lake formed as a result of a massive landslide in Hunza River. Referring to the artificial lake, an expert from the Geological Survey of Pakistan warned that 95 percent of such artificial lakes usually burst and there are high chances of Atta Abad Lake to finally break, which may cause damages and losses to a number of local residents.

In Sri Lanka within the first two months of this year, the number of Dengue cases in the country had risen to 8,075 while the death toll had reached a startling fifty by the end of February.

Afghanistan



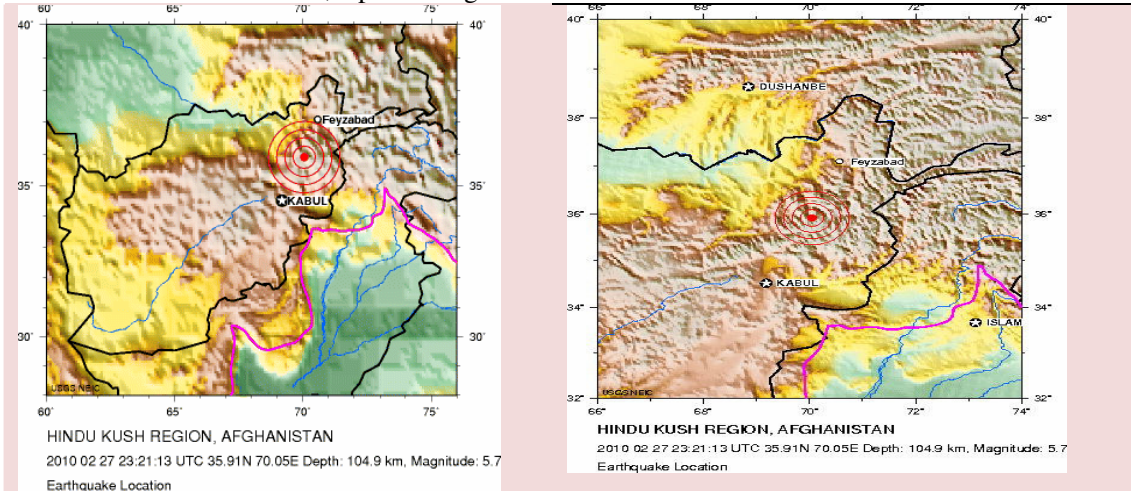
Preliminary Earthquake Report

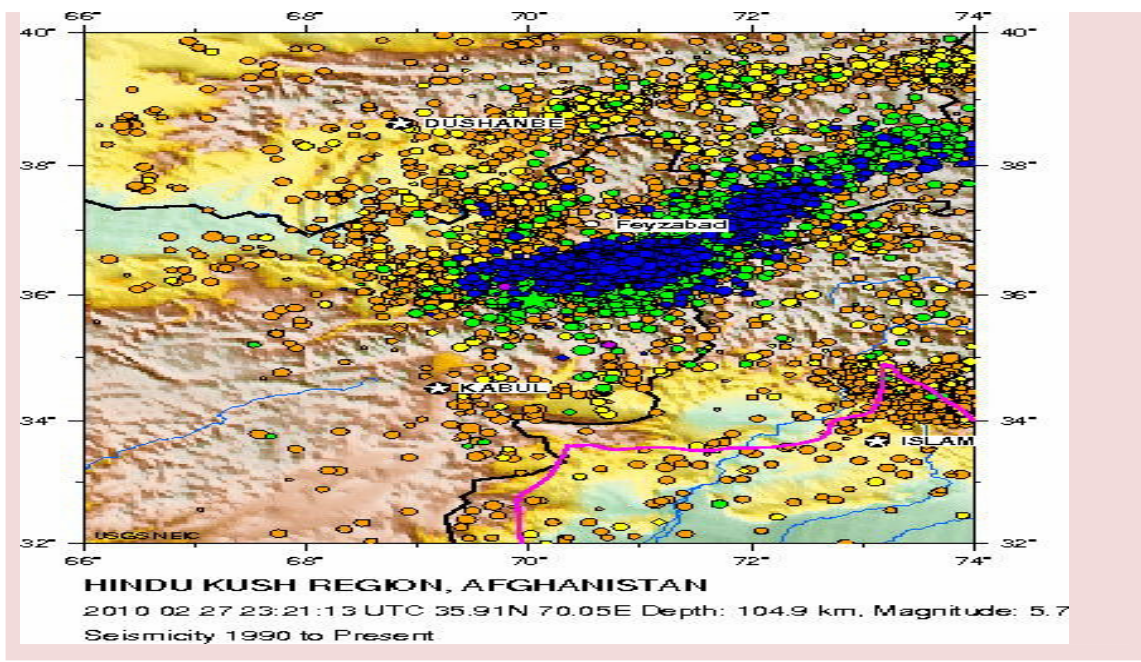
Source: USGS

Date- 27 February 2010

Magnitude 5.7 HINDU KUSH REGION, AFGHANISTAN, Saturday February 27, 2010, at 23:21:13 UTC,

Magnitude 5.7
Date-Time Saturday, February 27, 2010 at 23:21:13 (UTC) - Coordinated Universal Time
Sunday, February 28, 2010 at 03:51:13 AM local time at epicenter Time of Earthquake in other Time Zones
Location 35.91N 70.05E
Depth 104.9 kilometers
Region HINDU KUSH REGION, AFGHANISTAN
Distances 140 km (85 miles) SSW of Feyzabad, Afghanistan 170 km (105 miles) NNW of Jalalabad, Afghanistan 175 km (105 miles) W of Chitral, Pakistan 175 km (110 miles) NNE of KABUL, Afghanistan
Location Uncertainty Error estimate: horizontal +/- 14.6 km; depth +/- 8.6 km
Parameters Nst=163, Nph=163, Dmin=177.8 km, Rmss=1.17 sec, Erho=14.6 km, Erzz=8.6 km, Gp=-1.0 degrees





Moderate earthquake jolts Pakistan, Afghanistan

Source-AFP,
Date-01 March 2010 (Kabul)



A moderate earthquake jolted parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, but there were no reports of injuries or damage, officials said. — File Photo (Dawn)

A moderate earthquake deep in the Hindu Kush mountain range has jolted parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, but there were no reports of injuries or damage, officials said. A Pakistani official described a "high-intensity" quake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale, while the US Geological Survey - which monitors earthquakes around the world - reported a 5.7 magnitude quake in the area.

The epicentre was on the Afghan side of the Hindu Kush mountain range, and Pakistan's chief meteorologist Riaz Khan said the remote location of the earthquake saved both countries from major damage.

Tremors were felt at 4:21am (local time) in north-western Pakistan, with frightened residents of regional capital Peshawar waking up and spilling onto the streets as the ground shook beneath them, an AFP reporter said. "It was a high intensity major earthquake which lasted for several seconds," Mr Khan said. "The fault line was in an unpopulated area and fortunately we have no reports of any type of damage."

The US Geological Survey said the quake struck 175 kilometres north-east of the Afghan capital Kabul. The epicentre was about 144 kilometres west of Pakistan's Chitral district, Mr Khan said. A 7.6 magnitude earthquake on October 8, 2005, killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million homeless, mainly in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and parts of the country's North West Frontier Province.

In Brief: Major tree-planting drive in Afghanistan

Source- (IRIN) KABUL,

Date- 02 March 2010



Photo: Jawad Jalili/UNAMA

Tree planting is expected to tackle air pollution and desertification

Up to 25 million tree seedlings will be planted in Afghanistan this year by the government, NGOs and private entities to combat soil erosion and desertification, and help improve air quality in urban environments, says the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). Funding for the project is from various government departments and NGOs, including the US Agency for International Development.

The seedlings would be planted mostly in and around urban areas. Air pollution hastens the deaths of over 3,000 people in Kabul every year, says the Health Ministry.

“We must revitalize forests and expand green areas because they are essential for the future of our country,” MAIL spokesman Abdul Majid Qarar told IRIN, adding that three million seedlings

would be planted by MAIL, but warned that they had to reckon on 45-50 percent of them dying due to lack of water or care. Afghanistan has lost up to 80 percent of its forests in the past three decades, according to the government.

Seasonal floods warning

Source-IRIN KABUL,

Date-05 March 2010



Warmer temperatures and rain are expected to melt snow over the coming weeks and cause flooding (file photo)

Rain and warmer temperatures are expected to melt snow and cause floods in parts of Afghanistan over the coming weeks, government officials and experts warn. “We are very concerned about severe floods this year due to warmer weather and other environmental reasons,” Abdul Matin Edrak, director of the Afghanistan Disasters Management Authority (ANDMA), told IRIN on 3 March.

The country is vulnerable to seasonal floods and other natural disasters but has few disaster management resources, aid workers say.

Natural disasters seriously affect over 400,000 Afghans every year, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Last year about 300,000 individuals were affected by floods alone,” said Edrak.

Snow packs are lighter this year due to reduced snowfall this winter, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS-Net), an affiliate of the US Agency for International Development, said in its weekly weather update (*enclosed*) on 24 February, though rapid warming can cause floods regardless of the thickness of snow cover. “If heavy rainfall occurs in areas with a deep snow pack, the risk for localized flooding would increase,” it noted.

Led by the second vice-president, Karim Khalili, the country’s emergency commission on 3 March discussed ways to mitigate the impact of floods. “The government has very limited resources for disaster management and mitigation so we mostly rely on UN assistance and support,” said Edrak, adding that 85 percent of post-disaster aid often comes from UN agencies.

NATO-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams provide evacuation and assistance services in emergencies such as during the Salang avalanche evacuation in February. Members of parliament often criticize the government for failing to create a functioning disaster management institution, and are critical of the president’s ad hoc cash assistance to natural disaster victims. “The government must build systems and institutions which should prevent disaster-related casualties,” said Mir Ahmad Joyenda from the lower house. He said the government must end its dependence on international aid agencies in disaster management.

Affect on livelihoods

Flash floods often destroy agricultural land, trees and livestock - the main sources of income for most of the rural population. Whilst food and non-food aid can meet the immediate needs of flood-affected

communities, long-term flood-resistance and alleviation remedies are equally important, said Majid Qarar, spokesperson of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). He said MAIL needs US\$4 billion to revive and develop irrigation systems countrywide - something that would also reduce the risk of frequent flooding affecting vulnerable communities. The outgoing special representative of the UN Secretary-General, Kai Eide, has identified agriculture as a critical development sector and asked donors to channel more funds to it.

Floods destroy 200 houses

**Source-The Frontier Post,
Date-07 March 2010, KUNDUZ (AIP)**

Heavy floods have destroyed approximately 200 houses and killed dozens of livestock in the northern Baghlan province, an official said Friday (05/03/2010). Haqmal, spokesman Baghlan province, told Afghan Islamic Press that the heavy floods hit different areas of Central Baghlan district in the wee hours of Friday, destroying around 200 houses and killing over 200 livestock. He said the heavy floods also eroded hundreds of acre of farmland and destroyed crops.

Bangladesh



Fire at Bihari camp: 65 houses gutted

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date-01 March 2010, Staff Correspondent**

A fire gutted at least 65 shanties and 12 shops at a camp of Urdu-speaking people in the city's Pallabi area on Saturday (27/02/2010).

After around an hour's effort, 15 firefighting units put out the blaze at the Taltola Bihari camp at around 8:45pm, Abdur Rashid, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star. The cause of the fire, which started at 7:15pm, could not yet be known. Witnesses said the camp-dwellers could not save their belongings as the fire spread fast. At least 12 shops of electrical goods and cellphone outlets were reduced to ashes, but the extent of damage could not be estimated immediately. Meanwhile, locals caught a young man named Hasan, aged around 26, and handed him over to police, suspecting that he might have a hand in the fire. Quoting witnesses, Pallabi police told The Daily Star that Hasan, who lives nearby, had threatened to set the shanties on fire following a scuffle with a group of youths at the camp.



A woman sits helpless in midst of debris from a fire that broke out Saturday evening at a camp of stranded Pakistanis in the capital's Mirpur. The blaze burnt down at least 65 shanties and 12 shops. Photo: Anisur Rahman

Carpet factory, 200 shanties gutted in Chittagong

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date- 01 March 2010, Star National Desk**

Finished carpets worth Tk five lakh were gutted in a fire at a state-owned carpet factory in Chittagong yesterday while over 200 tin-shed houses and six shops were reduced to ashes in Bakolia area on Saturday (27/02/2010).

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong quoting sources said the fire originating from electric short circuit broke out at a tin-shed godown of Dhaka-Baghdad Carpet Factory Limited at around 9:20am. Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation Limited owns the factory, said the sources. Six fire fighting units from two fire stations of the city rushed to the spot and doused the blaze at around 11:45am. At Bakolia, more than 200 tin-shed houses, six shops and property worth around Tk 20 lakh were gutted on Saturday afternoon. Fire Service and Civil Defence sources said the fire broke out at a house of Bakolia Bastuhara Bahumukhi Samabay Samity colony at around 12:15pm and soon engulfed the whole area rendering over 1,000 people homeless. Thirteen fire fighting units from different fire stations of the city rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire that originated from an earthen oven after a four-hour battle, said Chittagong Fire Service and Civil Defence assistant director Nurul Haque. Two firemen-Ujjawal Barua and Jahangir Alam- were injured while fighting fire, he informed. Damages in the fire were estimated at Tk 20 lakh, he added. In Sherpur district, a fierce fire gutted at least 22 shops at Panchgaon Bazaar in Nalitabari upazila on Saturday night. UNB quoting fire brigade sources said, the fire originated from an electric short circuit at Shamsul Haque Member's grocery shop at around 11:30 pm and soon engulfed 21 other adjacent shops. The affected shop owners claimed that the losses caused from fire could go upto Tk 30 lakh. In Sirajganj, a mother and her four-month-old daughter were burnt alive in a devastating fire at Chhongachha village early Wednesday. Earlier, a cotton godown and at least 32 shops were gutted in Thakurgaon, Chittagong and Netrakona on Monday and Sunday last. The victims of Sirajganj fire were identified as Sokhiron Begum, 30, wife of Nazrul Islam of Chhongachha village and Sokhiron's four-month-old daughter Subarna Khatun, reports our correspondent. Police, fire fighters and locals said the incident took place at around 1:30am when the victims were sleeping in their bedroom.



A fire guts over two hundred shanties and six shops at Bastuhara Colony in Bakolia of Chittagong city yesterday. Photo: STAR

Dam collapse wreaks havoc in Khulna

**Source-New Age, Bdnews24.com . Khulna
Date-02 March 2010,**

A massive portion of a river embankment at Khulna's Dakope upazila collapsed Monday, flooding 18 villages. Approximately two thousand families have been affected by the flooding. Upazila chairman Abul Hossain said, 'Nearly 25 square miles have been flooded. Water has risen to knee high in the flooded homes. Other than this, 50-60 ponds and fisheries have overflowed.' Anwar Hossain, deputy assistant engineer of Khulna Water Development Board, said a 650-metre portion of the embankment collapsed at Sutarkhali village of Sutarkhali union due to strong currents of the River Shibsra. 'Due to the full moon, a heightened tide of 4-5 feet above normal levels caused strong currents to breach the embankment,' he said. Repairs are ongoing, he added. Upazila chairman Abul Hossain blamed poor upkeep of the embankment for the breach. The embankment caved in to pressure of water during the tide due to long lack of maintenance,' he said. The flooded villages are Nalian, Sutarkhali, Nalian Maddhyapara, Baintala, Gunari, Madhyam Gunari, Kalabogi, Uttarpara, Dakkhin Nalian, Purbogunari, Katabunia, Keuratala, Mazhipara, Golbunia, Jaliakhali, Bhittebhanga, Srinagar and Telirkona.

Regional cooperation vital to eliminate poverty: Says Indian journalist MJ Akbar

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date-03 March 2010, Staff Correspondent**

Regional cooperation is vital to eliminate poverty from the South Asian nations, said veteran Indian journalist and noted author MJ Akbar yesterday. "If poverty cannot be eliminated from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan in the next 30 to 40 years, then we are failed," said Akbar, editor of Delhi-based The Sunday Guardian and chairman of Covert Magazine. He said this while talking to The Daily

Star on the sidelines of the 13th convocation of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) 2009 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city. "Poverty elimination will be more difficult without regional cooperation. That is why regional cooperation is vital," said Akbar, adding: "Don't forget... we work for equals... not that India is big and you are small. That does not matter. If equality is the foundation, the relationship will right go on and on."

There should be more shared economic development among the South Asian nations, he said. "Only sentiments don't work. You have to see practical benefits." Stating that the India-Bangladesh relationship got a new strength with the recent prime minister-level summit, the veteran journalist said the close rapport between the two countries needs to be maintained to gain better results. As the convocation speaker, Akbar said poverty on this part of the world is at shameful level, which is regrettable. "I sometimes think why the poor allow the cars to ply on the streets, what do we give them?" Calling on the IUB graduates not to forget the disadvantaged groups in society, Akbar, also a former member of the parliament, said education is not an exercise of selfishness, but of sharing in capabilities to contribute to equitable development.

It is not education if someone being a graduate forgets the values and the disadvantaged groups, he told the graduating students. Improved quality of politics, gender equality and secularism are the other elements the states must have to be modern, Akbar added. IUB Vice Chancellor Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury said the university prepares not only dynamic professionals, but imparts the values of life as well as the society. The VC called on the graduates to contribute to social development. A total of 660 graduates were conferred degrees on the occasion. Naomi Ahmed was selected as a valedictorian while Lamyea Binte Ali, Sharmin Mahbub, Md Azmal Hossain and SM Kaiser Ali received chancellor's gold medals for their outstanding academic results. IUB Pro-VC Prof Omar Rahman, Governing Council Chairman Towhid Samad and Chairman of Education, Science, Technology and Cultural Development Trust Abdul Hafiz Chowdhury also spoke.



MJ Akbar, editor of Delhi-based *The Sunday Guardian* and chairman of *Covert Magazine*, speaks at the 13th convocation of Independent University, Bangladesh at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Photo: STAR

18 villages flooded as embankment in Khulna collapses

Source-The Daily Star,

Date- 03 March 2010, Staff Correspondent, Khulna

Over 10,000 families of 18 villages in Sutarkhali and Kamarkhola unions under Dakope upazila of Khulna district have been rendered homeless due to flooding caused by embankment collapse on Monday and early yesterday. Vast tracts of croplands have also gone under knee-deep water as two newly constructed embankments on both sides of Nalian River of Dakope upazila collapsed under the pressure of strong currents of Nalian and Shibsha rivers. Seventy to 80 ponds and shrimp enclosures have overflowed, said Dakope upazila parishad Chairman Sheikh Abul Hossain. Water Development Board (WDB) authorities did not use materials properly as required for sustaining them, the upazila chairman said. Lack of proper monitoring and maintenance by WDB also made the newly constructed embankments vulnerable to collapse by high tides, said UNO Kazi Atiur Rahman. The homeless people are staying on open spaces of other embankments and high places. The affected 18 villages of the unions are Nalian, Baintala, Gunari, Madhayam Gunari, Kalabogi, Uttarpara, Dakkhin Nalian, Purbo Gunari, Katabunia, Keorhatala, Majhipara, Golbunia, Jaliakhali, Bhitabhanga, Srinagar, Sutarkhali, Nalian Madhyapara and Telirkona. Breaches developed in the embankments as furious tides rose up to 6 to 7 feet higher than normal levels, said Engineer Anowar Hossain of Water Development Board (WDB). The government had allocated Tk 12 crore for reconstruction of 21-kilometre-long 34 embankments and ten closures in Kamarkhola and Sutarkhali unions that were badly hit by cyclonic storm Aila on May 25 last year, he said. Contractors who won the bid for reconstruction of embankments started their works on February 13 and it completed at the end of the month. Expressing ignorance about whether contractors did their works properly as specified in the tender schedule, engineer Anowar Hossain said, "I cannot say right at this moment why embankments developed breaches so soon and collapsed afterwards." "The government must give special attention to Aila-hit Dakope that largely contributes to shrimp production and revenue earnings from forest

resources. All possible steps must be taken on top priority basis to save the upazila from devastation by frequent natural calamities and vagaries of nature," Upazila Chairman Abul Hossain said. Food Minister Abdur Razzak is scheduled to visit Dakope upazila today, officials said.

Another embankment collapses in Khulna-600 more families in 8 villages homeless

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date- 05 March 2010,**

Erosion by River Dhaki damaged one more embankment at Jainagar village of Kamarkhola union under Dakope upazila of Khulna district on Wednesday (03/03/2010), rendering at least 600 families of eight villages homeless.

The embankment constructed by Water Development Board (WDB) last month collapsed at 5:30pm on Wednesday when Food Minister Abdur Razzak was visiting Aila-affected Dakope upazila to distribute VGF rice. Earlier on Monday night and Tuesday morning, two other embankments in Sutarkhali and Kamarkhola unions under Dakope upazila collapsed, flooding 18 villages. Around 10,600 families have become homeless as 26 villages of Dakope upazila are flooded due to collapse of three newly constructed embankments in last 72 hours. Several thousand people including men, women and children have taken shelter on any available places that are yet to be flooded. The eight villages affected by Wednesday's flooding are Jainagar, Rajnagar, Jelakhali, Channir Chawk, Parjoinar, Shibnagar, Fakirdanga and Srinagar. WDB Engineer



A hapless family, boarded onto a boat with belongings, starts an unsure journey for shelter after their home was flooded following collapse of an embankment at Joynagar in Dakope upazila of Khulna district on Wednesday. Photo: STAR

Anowar Hossain, who supervised construction of the embankments last month, said breaches developed in the three embankments as furious tides of Dhaki River rose up to five to six feet higher than normal levels. Dakope UNO Kazi Atiur Rahman and upazila Chairman Sheikh Abul Hossain insisted on their earlier allegation that there were flaws in construction work of embankments as materials specified in the tender schedule were not used. WDB Engineer Anowar Hossain was responsible to monitor whether the contractors concerned followed the terms and conditions of tender schedule, they said. Shukjan Bibi, 60, wife of fisherman Shawrup Sarder, was washed away at 3:30pm on Wednesday at Kalabogi village under Dakope upazila as Shibsha River suddenly devoured part of a newly constructed embankment on which she was walking. The government has allocated Tk 2 crore 50 lakh under cash-for-work programme for Aila-affected Dakope upazila, Food Minister Abdur Razzak said while visiting the flooded villages on Wednesday. The government will continue to provide farmers with food assistance as long as they need it, he said.

International Earthquake Symposium- Building code to be updated

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date- 06 March 2010, Staff Correspondent**

The government has taken an initiative to update the building code considering the fact that the country runs the risks of large-scale earthquakes, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque said yesterday. "It is regretting that the building code is not adequately followed. However, we are trying to ensure strict enforcement of it. Besides, we are updating the building code," he said at the inaugural session of a two-day symposium. Bangladesh Earthquake Society (BES) and the Department of Civil Engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) jointly organised the Third International Earthquake Symposium at the latter's auditorium. The government is also framing a disaster management law, draft of which will be tabled in the next session of parliament, he said. Quoting the data of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, Razzaque said the country experienced 115 mild earthquakes only in three years and the epicentre of 37 tremors was inside the country. Referring to the preparations to

reduce the damage, the minister said equipment worth Tk 30 crore have been procured and handed over to the Armed Forces and Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence. Purchase of more equipment is under process, he said, adding that the process of training 62,000 volunteers in three years is going on. Damages could be minimised with good preparations and that is the only thing that the government could do, he said, adding that the recent earthquake in Chile was much stronger than that of Haiti, but the damage in Chile were less because of their better preparations. BES President Prof Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury said Dhaka will witness major damage if any large-scale earthquake takes place. The Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) has done a good study on earthquake, he said. The preparation plan that the CDMP has designed for different ministries must be followed vigorously, he added. Buet Vice Chancellor Prof Dr AMM Safiullah, Pro Vice Chancellor Prof Dr M Habibur Rahman, BES Secretary General Prof Dr Munaz A Noor and organising committee chairman Prof Dr TM Al-Hussaini also spoke. Experts from India, Japan, the USA, China, Malaysia and Taiwan are taking part in the symposium.

5000 marooned as dike collapses in Satkhira

**Source-The Daily Star,
Date-07 March 2010, Our Correspondent, Satkhira**

Two villages in Sreeula union under Assassuni upazila were inundated as the embankment on the river Kholpetua at Puijala point collapsed on March 2.

At least 22 feet of the dike went into the river due to heavy pressure of water following high tide. Over 5,000 people of south Puijala and north Puijala villages have been marooned while a large number of people have taken shelter on high lands in the areas. As the authorities are yet to take steps to repair the breached embankment, villagers have joined hands to repair it to save the area from further flooding. Villagers also formed a human chain on Friday demanding repair of the dike at Puijala and other risky points. They said about 20 kilometer area of the embankment under polder no 4 of the water development board (WDB) run the risk of collapse any moment. At least 50 villages may go under water in case of the disaster, they feared. Sreeula union perished UP Chairman Abu Hena Shakil said fearing collapse of the embankment, some people of the area have already left the area for safer places. Standing aman crops on 400 acres of land have been submerged and at least 50 shrimp enclosures in the area washed away due to the dike collapse, he said.



Locals trying to repair the breached portion of the embankment on Kholpetua River at Puijala in Sreeula union of Assassuni upazila under Satkhira district yesterday as the breach left about 5,000 people marooned in adjacent areas. Photo: STAR



Bhutan

Bhutan's first big summit

**Source: Kuensel Newspaper
Date: 03. March 2010**

The date is drawing nigh for Bhutan's next major event – the hosting of the 16th SAARC summit scheduled for April end. As Bhutan is hosting a regional event of such scale for the first time, there are feelings of excitement and concern on how it will turn out. Every citizen is hoping for the best. The government held an extensive and detailed meeting on Monday to take stock of the progress in the preparations for the summit. For some members of the media present for some time at the meeting, it was a revelation of sorts on the kind of preparations needed. With seven heads of governments or states to be in the capital, getting ready extends from protocol and security to accommodation, among many other

things. It is also clear why Bhutan has not been in a position to host the summit in the past, even though the SAARC building behind Trashichhodzong was built in the early '90s with the idea of doing just that. The SAARC building will, in April, serve as one of the venues for the Summit, the ministerial enclave in Mothithang will accommodate the heads of states, taking a big load off the organisers. Apart from other constraints such as security, infrastructure may have been the major obstacle to be able to host the summit in the past. This still remains today. With close to 450 delegates and 150 journalists to attend the summit meetings, tourist standard hotel rooms in the capital have been booked to the brim. Another hundred or so senior journalists from the region are expected to attend the SAARC journalist summit held parallel to the summit. This has already created a headache for the organizers, who are now looking to Paro for standard accommodation. If less than a thousand people converging on the capital in a span of few days can create an accommodation crisis, what of the plan to increase annual tourist arrivals to 100,000 by 2012? Today the government has major plans to make Bhutan the hub of this and the hub of that, yet we do not even have conference facilities to host 1,000 people together at a time. There was several years ago a proposal to build one but the erstwhile parliament for some reason shot it down. The organisers are committed to ensure that the 16th SAARC summit and Bhutan's first will be a success. And it is sure to offer many lessons for everyone involved as Bhutan continues to think big.

Fire victims receive soelra

Source: Kuensel Newspaper

Date: 04. March.2010



Paro Jangsa HRH Ashi Dechen Yangzom Wangchuck at the site of the fire.

Her Royal Highness Princess Dechen Yangzom Wangchuck, on His Majesty's command, yesterday met with and granted soelra to the victims of the February 28 Paro Jangsa fire, which left 13 families homeless. The families received Nu 15,000 each and essentials like blankets and clothing as semso and soelra. The school going children also received a set each of school notebooks, bags and uniforms. The house owners received 100 CGI roofs each. Her Royal Highness also granted lunch to the fire-affected house owners and family members. Meanwhile, the 13 families in Jangsa village near Paro town have moved in with friends and relatives after fire that burnt down three houses. The fire had completely gutted two bungalows, where five families lost all their belongings in the blaze. A three-storied building was also damaged, but residents managed to salvage some belongings. The cause of the fire, which left 47 people, including 11 school children homeless, remains unknown. Eyewitnesses said that the fire started around 10:30 am from one of the wooden bungalows. The fire then spread to the other bungalow and the building in the same compound after LPG gas cylinders blasted. There were no casualties. Two fire fighting engines and a civil aviation fire fighting engine arrived at the spot but could control the fire only at around 12.15 pm, about two hours later. I had taken my two children and my wife to visit Hungrel dzong that day. We'd just reached there when my neighbour called me saying my house was on fire," said a 34-year old teacher, Gyem Gyeltshen, who was staying in the three-storied building. "I lost almost everything by the time I reached the scene, but I'm glad that my family is unhurt." Gyem Gyeltshen is temporarily living with his relatives in another gewog. Five families, who lost everything, were given food supplies for 10-days and emergency relief kits by the disaster management department. Eight families, whose homes were partially damaged, were also given relief kits. 87-year old Sangay, who owns one of the bungalows, said that he had gone to the Sunday vegetable market with his wife. When he returned, his house was covered in flames. "I couldn't salvage anything," he said, adding that he and his wife have found temporary shelter

in the partially destroyed three-storied building. The victims said that they were very grateful to His Majesty and Her Royal Highness for the relief items and semso. Dzongkhag officials said that only one of the two bungalows has rural insurance scheme, while the three-storied building has commercial insurance.



Relief scheme for endosulfan victims

Source: The Hindu

Date: 01. March.2010

Yeddyurappa announces Rs. 25 lakh for a rehabilitation centre in Koddada



Providing relief: Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa distributing cheques to the victims of endosulfan at Koddada village near Belthangady on Sunday. Dharmadhikari of Srikrishetra Dharmasthala D. Veerandra Heggade is seen.

MANGALORE: “I came to know the devastating impact of aerial spraying of endosulfan on your lives only after visiting you,” Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa told people of Koddada, about 80 km from here, on Sunday. In what was termed a “victory of democracy, albeit belated”, the Chief Minister made a special visit to the village to symbolically launch the grant of compensation of Rs. 50,000 and monthly assistance to 232 people from 211 families. The Chief Minister also announced a grant of Rs. 25 lakh “within a week” for opening a rehabilitation centre in the village for the victims. Mr. Yeddyurappa said that when the former Minister Shobha Karandlaje, who hailed from Dakshina Kannada, raised the issue in the Assembly, nobody understood the gravity of the situation. Asserting that he was launching the scheme with a heavy heart, the Chief Minister said he realised that the Government should ensure that such a situation did not recur. He said the Government would take a decision on the demand to ban endosulfan in the State in consultation with experts. “This is an example of how pesticides sprayed to protect crops can lead to diseases and paralyse people,” he added. As many as 103 people with disability, ranging from 40 to 75 per cent, received compensation of Rs. 50,000 and monthly assistance of Rs. 400 each, and 128 with disability of more than 75 per cent received a compensation of Rs. 50,000 and monthly assistance of Rs. 1,000 each. Referring to a report submitted in 2004 which stated that the victims suffered from infertility, repeated abortion, cancer, deafness, and blindness, the Chief Minister said no action had been taken by the previous governments. He said that he had set aside rules regarding family income that rendered several families ineligible for compensation. The “special situation” of endosulfan victims needed relaxation of norms, he said. The Chief Minister directed Deputy Commissioner V. Ponnuraj to recommend proper compensation to those suffering from cancer and other ailments “setting aside rules and regulations” so that the Government could announce assistance to them with effect from March 1. He announced a special grant of Rs. 2 crore each to Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts to mitigate the problems in drinking water supply, Rs. 10 lakh to Srirama Seva Trust of Koddada and Rs. 2 lakh to Juma Masjid of Koddada village.

Felicitated

Mr. Yeddyurappa felicitated Sridhar Gowda, who is visually challenged, who has been fighting for the cause of endosulfan victims. Dharmadhikari of Srikrishetra Dharmasthala D. Veerendra Heggade, who hailed the Government gesture as a victory of democracy, offered to run the proposed rehabilitation centre for endosulfan victims on behalf of the temple administration. Ms. Karandlaje said endosulfan was banned in 60 countries and blamed the lobby of the company manufacturing it for “dumping” it in India. A pre-university college student and two other victims of endosulfan died in the past few weeks at Kokkada, she added. The Deputy Commissioner said that endosulfan was sprayed in the village 25 years ago. District in-charge Minister J. Krishna Palemar sought formation of a special team to evaluate the impact of the pesticide on the people of the village. A compensation of Rs. 50,000 was inadequate, he said.

Avalanche warning issued in Kashmir

Source: The Hindu

Date: 02. . March.2010

SRINAGAR: The authorities on Monday issued a warning of moderate to high-danger avalanches in several parts of Kashmir, as the State witnessed a fresh spell of snowfall and rains. The warning — issued jointly by the Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment and the government’s Disaster Management Cell — said high-danger avalanches could occur at Keran and Furkin top in Kupwara district. Moderate avalanches could occur at Razdan top, Z-Gali, Dhudi, S.M. Hill, Machhil, Gurez, Niru, Buduab, Sonamarg, Gaganger, Drass, Bhimbat, Kaksar and Minamarg.

Five more bodies retrieved from debris

Source: The Hindu

Date: 02. March.2010



work goes on: Rescue teams retrieving bodies of victims at Chimakurthi granite company on Monday.

ONGOLE: The rescue teams today retrieved five more bodies from the debris at Hamsa granite company of Chimakurthi and with this the total number of bodies recovered went up to 12. As the company gave the names of two more workers missing, the rescue teams would continue their operations tomorrow. Superintendent of Police (Admn) said that they could identify four of the five bodies recovered today – they were Kamatam Nageswara Rao (35), slotter operator from Khammam, Yelagala Saidulu (36), helper from Guntur, Bachu Seenu (30), compressor operator Y. Yesubabu (19) of Palacole. As the face of the fifth body was crushed, it became difficult to identify the victim. Police came to know that 16 persons were working in the mine when the mishap occurred at 7 p.m. on Thursday. While two persons escaped with injuries, two bodies were recovered on the same day. The officials recovered third body on Friday night and fourth body on Saturday night. As many as 25 experts came from Singareni coal mines for rescue operations and began the search operations using six machines from Saturday. They recovered seven bodies till yesterday and five bodies today, taking the total number of bodies retrieved from debris to 12. Mr. Satyanarayana said that the men and machine working at the site were buried under either small boulders or loose earth even before the huge boulder measuring 1000 cubic meters fell down from a

height of 70-80 feet. The last two victims are also believed to have been trapped under the debris and could be recovered by tomorrow. Mr Satyanarayana said that they have arrested manager Alla Balakrishna Reddy (70) and assistant safety manager M. Srinivasa Babu (39) and took into custody the general manager of Hamsa minerals and exports company – Chandrasekhara Reddy. Efforts are being made to arrest the owners who are abroad.

2 pilots killed in Hyderabad air crash

Source: The Hindu

Date: 03.March.2010



Rescue work is underway at the building where a Naval aircraft crashed during an air show in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

An Indian Navy plane performing aerobatics at an air show crashed into a two-storeyed residential building in a crowded area on Wednesday killing its two pilots and injuring two persons on the ground. The Navy has grounded the entire fleet of 20 Kiran trainer aircraft following the crash, a Navy statement said. The Kiran MK II trainer — part of the four-plane ‘Sagar Pawan’ aerobatic team — failed to pull up from a dive, went out of control into a spiral and hit the building as the planes were breaking away from the formation and going in different directions in a tragic start to airshow India Aviation 2010. The Navy statement said besides Commander S.K. Maurya and Lt Commander Rahul Nair, one unidentified civilian has died. Two civilians were injured, police said.

Eyewitnesses said the plane suddenly plummeted, followed by a loud explosion and a huge mushroom shaped cloud of smoke. The crash occurred within 15 minutes of the start of the show. They said the plane crashed into a mobile phone tower atop the building bringing down the tower and the water tank. “It was spiralling and then it crashed”, said Loth Mallaiah, who lives on the ground floor of the building which was severely damaged. Navy Chief Admiral Nirmal Verma said the pilots could not eject. Some eyewitnesses however reported seeing one pilot trying to jump out. “The aircraft went out of control. But the cause of the crash was not immediately known,” Admiral Verma told reporters in shortly after the crash at New Bowenpally area, about four kms from the Old Begumpet Airport. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered into the incident, he said. “The possibility (of not ejecting) is either timewise there was a problem or they (the pilots) were making all efforts to ensure that damage is minimised to any civil area.” The week-long event will continue as scheduled, Civil Aviation minister Praful Patel said.

Rs.15 crore sanctioned for drought relief-Kerala

Source: The Hindu

Date: 03.March.2010

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The government has sanctioned Rs.15 crore for measures to mitigate the impact of the dry spell, Revenue Minister K.P. Rajendran told the Assembly on Tuesday. Replying to a submission by Raju Abraham (CPI-M), Mr. Rajendran said the government had directed district collectors to take urgent steps to supply drinking water in drought affected areas. With the funds sanctioned by the government, each district would be able to take up repair of borewells and motor pumps. The district

authorities had also been told to go in for extension of existing pipelines where necessary, Mr. Rajendran said.

29 foot bridges

Mr. Rajendran told A.P. Anil Kumar (Congress) that the government had decided to construct 29 foot bridges across rivers in different parts of the State. The foot bridges would be constructed at places where a large number of children and the elderly were dependent on ferries to cross the rivers. A survey conducted by the government through

the Education and the Revenue departments had shown that the State needed such bridges at 495 points. The decision to construct 29 bridges in the most essential places was on account of paucity of funds, he said.

Thirteen killed, 33 injured in Rajasthan road mishap

Source: DD News

Date: 03. March.2010

Thirteen passengers, including six women and a child have been killed and 33 others injured on Tuesday when a Rajasthan Roadways bus in which they were travelling collided head-on with a truck in Tonk district. The injured have been hospitalised in Tonk and Kota hospitals where condition of 20 of them is stated to be critical, police said. The mishap occurred near Deoli in the district, 162 km from Jaipur, in the afternoon when the bus was on its way from Kota to Jaipur. Victims were rushed to a nearby hospital where eight persons were declared brought dead while five others succumbed to injuries.

Shortage of water to hit Rabi crop yield- Andhra Pradesh

Source: The Hindu

Date: 04. March.2010

No contingency plans made to overcome the situation.



Bleak scenario: A farmer in Gandepalli Mandal looking at dried paddy crop in field.

Rajahmundry: This year Rabi crop yield is likely to come down by 15 to 20 percent when compared to last year due to shortage of water and reduction in extent of crop area. Irrigation officials also admitted that severe shortage of water may cause dent in the yield. The drawls from Sileru Reservoir had already come down and groundwater levels are showing depletion in dry land areas. The district administration and Irrigation

officials did not make any contingency plans to save the Rabi Crop. When contacted, Mr. Pratap Babu, Superintendent Engineer of Irrigation department, said they were releasing water to 3.35 lakh acres in Western (1.61 lakh acres) and Central and Eastern Deltas (1.74 acres). He said that there would not be any shortage of water and expressed confidence that they would be able to maintain the present situation till the end of Rabi season i.e April 15. But, the ground realities in East Godavari district are different. Last

year, 10.30 lakh acres were sown during Rabi in three delta areas whereas this time the crop area has come down to just 3.35 lakh acres. Out of which, in East Godavari this time the Irrigation department has permitted only 1.61 lakh acres in Rabi and another 15,000 acres under borewells in dry land areas like Seethanagaram, Gandepalli, Jaggampeta, Tuni and Peddapuram. According to Ground Water Department sources, ground water table plummeted from 7.104 meters last year to 8.023 meters this year. In upland areas, it has gone down from 12.41 to 14.33 meters. "Last year we achieved an average of 35 quintals of paddy per acre and this year we are expecting not more than 30 quintals," said Rambabu, farmer from Vadisaleru. "The administration had forecast worst situation for Rabi season last year and released Rs.7 crores for contingency plan. But this year, no action plan has been announced till now," said Meesala Satyanarayana, CPI leader.

Temple stampedes claimed 700 lives in 8 years

Source: the Times of India

Date: 04. March.2010

NEW DELHI: Stampedes at temples and other religious places in India have claimed nearly 700 lives in the past eight years. At least 63 people were killed and 15 injured today when a gate at Kripalu Maharaj's ashram at Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh collapsed during distribution of food on the occasion of a ritual, for which nearly 10,000 people had converged. On September 30, 2008, nearly 150 devotees were killed and over 60 injured in a stampede at Chamunda Devi temple in Rajasthan's Jodhpur city. The incident took place when there was a rumour of a bomb going off. More than 10,000 people had turned up at the famous temple for a darshan of the Hindu goddess. Such a tragedy at the Hindu temple of Naina Devi in Himachal Pradesh on August 3, 2008 had claimed nearly 150 people, mainly women and children, and injured about 230. On March 27 that year, at least eight people were trampled to death and 10 seriously injured in a stampede at a temple in remote Karila village in Madhya Pradesh. The stampede at Mandhar Devi temple in Maharashtra in January 2005 when some people fell down on the steps made slippery by devotees breaking coconuts claimed 300 lives. Among other stampedes, at least six people were killed and 12 injured in July 2008 during the annual Jagannath Yatra in Puri, Orissa. In January 2008, five people were killed at Durga Malleswara temple in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. In October 2007, 11 killed in such a tragedy at Pawagah in Gujarat while in November 2006, four elderly people crushed to death during a stampede at Jagannath Puri, Orissa. Nealy 40 pilgrims killed, 125 injured in a stampede at Kumbh Mela in Nasik in August 2003.

Major fire breaks out in Kolkata tannery

Source: The Hindu

Date: 05. March.2010

A major fire broke out in a tannery and spread swiftly to an adjacent slum close to a five star hotel and Science City, an educational park, on the eastern fringes of the metropolis on Friday. Eighteen fire engines were fighting the blaze which had the possibility of spreading to Science City where water was being sprayed, fire brigade officials said. The fire resulted in a massive traffic jam on the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass which passes through Tangra area. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

Women, children among 63 killed in stampede in Uttar Pradesh

Source: The Hindu

Date: 05. March.2010

Portion of entrance gate at Mangarh ashram collapses

Sixty-three people, all women and children, were killed and 64 injured in a stampede at an ashram at Mangarh in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh on Thursday. The incident occurred when a portion of the entrance gate collapsed under the pressure of the surging crowd that thronged the ashram belonging to Kripalu Maharaj to collect food and utensils. The dead included 37 children and 26 women. An official spokesman put the death toll at 61. The function at the ashram, located 80 km from the district headquarters of Pratapgarh and about 200 km from here, was held to commemorate the death anniversary of Kripalu Maharaj's wife. High-level probe Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati ordered a high-level

inquiry into the incident. The probe would be conducted by the Divisional Commissioner of Allahabad. He was asked to submit his preliminary report within 24 hours after which the amount of compensation for the victims would be fixed. Ms. Mayawati also sent PWD and Excise Minister Naseemuddin Siddiqui and Panchayati Raj Minister Swami Prasad Maurya to Mangarh to supervise relief operations and treatment of people. Cabinet Secretary Shashank Shekhar Singh told reporters here that the incident occurred around noon. The programme was to have begun at 2.30 p.m., but started earlier as the crowd entered the premises. A portion of the entrance gate was opened, but the structure collapsed under the pressure mounted by the crowd. The dead were either crushed under the debris of the gate or killed in the ensuing stampede. He said the injured were shifted to hospitals in Pratapgarh and Allahabad, and 39 of them were discharged after first aid. Two were referred to the Sarojini Naidu Medical College Hospital in Allahabad with serious injuries. A team of doctors rushed to the site and ambulances from Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Allahabad were kept ready to take the injured to the hospital.

India pledges \$5 million for Chile earthquake relief

Source: The Times of India

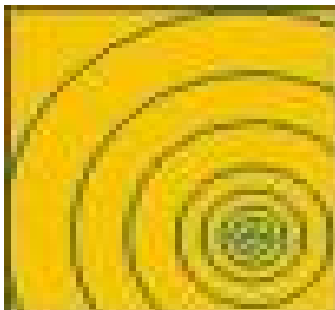
Date: 05. March.2010

NEW DELHI: Condoling the loss of lives in the earthquake that hit Chile last weekend Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Friday pledged \$5 million towards relief and rehabilitation measures. "It is with profound sadness that I have learnt of the massive earthquake that hit Chile causing immense loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure across the country," Manmohan Singh said in a letter to President Michelle Bachelet. "On behalf of the government and people of India, I would like to express deep sympathy and condolences to the people of Chile on this great tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers are with the members of the bereaved families." The toll from the earthquake that devastated areas of central and southern Chile stood at 799, according to the latest figures released by the National Emergency Office, or Onemi. Most of the fatalities occurred in the coastal region of Maule, where at least 587 people died.

Magnitude 6.5 earthquakes shake Indonesian Sumatra

Source: DD News

Date: 06. March.2010



A magnitude-6.5 undersea earthquake shook the western shore of Indonesia's Sumatra island on Friday, causing panic but no casualties or damage, an official said. The quake struck late at night 74 miles (119 kilometers) southeast of Pagai Selatan, an island off the western coast of Sumatra, Indonesian Meteorology and Geophysics Agency official Gian Ginanjar said. The quake struck 6 miles (10 kilometers) beneath the Indian Ocean bed. There was no tsunami potential, he said. Indonesia rests on a series of fault lines that make the sprawling archipelago nation one of the most earthquake-prone.

Three killed, 25 hurt in accident

Source: The Hindu

Date: 06. March.2010

BERHAMPUR: Three persons died and 25 others were seriously injured when a bus fell from the ghat road near Gajalbadi in Sorada block of Ganjam district on Friday afternoon. The bus was travelling from Baliguda in Kandhamal district to Berhampur. It lost balance and fell into a ditch of over 40 feet depth from the Gajalbadi ghat road. Administrative officials, police and fire brigade reached the spot for rescue work. The injured persons were taken to the Daringbadi hospital in Kandhamal district. The condition of eight of them was reported to be serious.

11 buried alive in building collapse

Source: The Hindu

Date: 06. March.2010



The body of a labourer being taken out from the debris of a four-storey, under-construction building in Hyderabad on Friday.

HYDERABAD: Ten labourers and a two-year-old boy were buried alive under the debris after a five-floor building under construction collapsed here on the bustling Narayanguda main road on Friday. Among the victims were four women. Police, fire-service personnel and locals managed to rescue two labourers trapped under the debris using poclains and cranes, but the thousands of people thronging the area delayed rescue operations. Nearly 15 labourers were working on the fifth floor when the building caved in around 2.30 p.m. Anxious parents of the students of Brilliant Grammar School, adjacent to the building, rushed to the spot. Fortunately, the school building developed only minor cracks on one side and no one was injured. Originally, it was a building of the erstwhile City Improvement Board Quarters. A builder had taken it for development and constructed five floors. "Having completed the slab work, walls were being constructed. It appears improper curing of walls weakened the structure leading to the building's collapse," Narayanguda Inspector G. Jogaiah said. As the rubble fell on the road between the collapsed building and the abutting fly-over, manoeuvring of cranes and earthmovers became difficult. It took more than two hours to clear the huge concrete block that fell on top of the debris under which most of the labourers were trapped. Home Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy instructed the police to arrest the builder immediately after inspecting the spot. Three GHMC officials were also suspended.



Stage of the "Alimas Carnival" area set on fire

Source-Miadhu News,

Date- 04 March 2010

A large part of the stage at the Alimas Carnival area was set on fire yesterday afternoon, Police reports. No one was injured in the incident. MNDF Fire and Rescue department had rushed to the scene and controlled the fire immediately. Onlookers at the scene also said that it looked like the fire was set out.

However, Police said that they were investigating the incident but refused to state the reason why fire broke out.

Fifty-two year old dies in a road accident

**Source-Miadhu News,
Date-04 March 2010**

A 52 year old woman had died when a passing motorbike collided with her when she was crossing the road in the junction of Buruzu Magu and Koimalaa Hingun around 0915 hrs yesterday morning. The women died around 1100 hrs yesterday morning at the IGMH when she was being treated. She was also accompanied by her grandchild when the incident happened and the 8 year old child was also injured in the incident. The motorist is in the police custody and the accident is being investigated according to Police.



Fire breakers to fight forest fire

**Source: - My Republica.Com, Surunga
Date: - 4 March2010**

SURUNGA, March 4: The Kankai community forest at Surunga in Jhapa district has constructed fire-breaker pits and path around the forest area for preventing bush fire following an upsurge in wild fires in the forest area. An eight-kilometer-long pit and path has been constructed around the forest at a total cost of Rs. 320,000. The forest users' committee dug the pit and the path around the forest to stop the bush fire from spreading.

USAID delivers food aid worth \$5m to Nepal

**Source: - The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu
Date: - 5 March 2010**

KATHMANDU: As per its commitment made in July last year, the United States delivered the final shipment in food assistance worth US\$ 5 million for the UN World Food Programme's (WFP) operations in Nepal, said the US Embassy in Kathmandu in press statement on Thursday. The food, which was provided through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), would be used to support the livelihoods of both conflict and drought-affected people across eight districts of Nepal, the statement said, adding that the food had arrived in batches over the last six months, with the last consignment arriving in February.

Relating the food assistance to the United States' long-standing commitment to the welfare of the rural food-deprived Nepali people, the USAID Director Dr Kevin A. Rushing said, 'The 5 million dollars in assistance provided more than 3,500 tons of basic food staples, including rice and peas to Nepal's vulnerable poor, through the World Food Programme.'

With the latest commitment, the USAID contribution has remained worth US \$12.7 million over the past year to WFP in Nepal and plans to extend the assistance to the Bhutanese refugees concentrated in the Eastern Nepal, the statement said.

Expressing his thankfulness to the timely contribution and continued support from the USAID, Richard Ragan, the WFP Country Representative, said, "This support has been extremely critical in meeting the needs of more than 450,000 people,' adding 'however Nepal still requires additional assistance especially because of the growing number of hungry people in the country.'"

The 2008/2009 winter drought, among the worst in the country's history, destroyed crops across Nepal and placed 2 million people at a high risk of food insecurity.

NEFIN on climate change

Source: - The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu

Date: - 5 March 2010

KATHMANDU: Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), an umbrella organisation of all the indigenous nationalities of the country, has recently revealed its 'position paper' on climate change calling for a substantial reduction in the emission of Co2 due to deforestation.

They have demanded that the government act as per the UN Declarations on Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) while formulating policy, plan and programmes on climate change. "The government should respect the right to self-determination while formulating such policies and plans," NEFIN states in its position paper. The paper outlined that the indigenous nationalities should be informed and their consent taken before formulating plans and programmes on climate change.

3,000 throng ICIMOD climate change event

Source: - The Himalayan Times, Lalitpur

Date: - 7 March 2010

LALITPUR: Welcoming its partners, development communities and the public at large, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) organised the second part of its two-day ICIMOD Nepal Day 2010 event at its headquarters in Khumaltar, Lalitpur on Saturday.

Issuing a press statement on Friday, the knowledge development agency said more than 3000 people participated in the event following a workshop that took place the day before.

The event, the participants of which were mostly journalists, university students, conservationists and environment enthusiasts, started with a media briefing on the major issues of glaciers and climate change followed by award distribution ceremony for the ICIMOD competition for journalists held last year.

The visitors were fascinated to learn about mountain people's ways of life and get information on climate change and its effects on water and glacier, biodiversity, mountain landscape and remote sensing and GIS images, among others, the statement said.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China , India , Myanmar , Nepal , and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Govt provides Rs. 150m for Koshi victims

Source: - Kantipur News, Itahari

Date: - 7 March 10

ITAHARI, Mar 07 - The government has released additional Rs. 150 million on Sunday for Koshi flood victims after a long time. According to the Sunsari District Police Administration, the fund has been released under the second installment of the total committed fund of Rs. 1.60 billion. Earlier, the government had provided Rs. 180 million under the first installment for the construction of houses and carry out repair works for the flood victims at Sripur, Haripur and Paschim Kusaha. Meanwhile, Land has been bought in Haripur area to build residential centers for 1,442 flood victims with the financial assistance from the donors.



Another disaster threatens Hunza inhabitants

Source: - Daily Times, Islamabad

Date: - 3 March 2010

ISLAMABAD: Experts fear that the landslide-affected people of Atta Abad, Hunza may suffer losses due

to a potential outburst of an artificial lake formed as a result of a massive landslide in Hunza River. These concerns were brought forward during a conference organised by Sungi Development Foundation and Gilgit-Baltistan Human Rights Advocacy Network (HRAN) at the National Press Club to understand and disseminate the correct picture of the natural disaster that hit and killed at least 13 persons in Atta Abad. Referring to the artificial lake, an expert from the Geological Survey of Pakistan warned that 95 percent of such artificial lakes usually burst and there are high chances of Atta Abad Lake to finally break, which may cause damages and losses to a number of local residents. National Disaster Management Authority's Relief & Recovery Director Idrees Mehsud, informed participants that some 20,000 people got stranded in upper Hunza whereas 1,652 are currently displaced. Representative of local communities demanded that the government should declare Atta Abad a calamity-hit area and take immediate and appropriate measures for saving their lives and properties from further devastation, which could come under threat by the outburst of the artificial lake.

100,000 mine workers face hazardous conditions

Source: - Daily Times, Islamabad

Date: - 3 March 2010

ISLAMABAD: Around 100,000 miners working in marble and granite mines in NWFP and Balochistan face extreme hazards due to inadequate and unscientific means of mining. This disclosure was made by Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC) Chairman Ahsanullah Khan on Tuesday at a seminar organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). "Explosives, unscientific mining and improper waste disposal also cause land degradation, stagnant pools, flooding and other environmental hazards," Ahsanullah said. One-UN DRM Programme National Project Manager Tariq Rafique said an in-depth policy review was needed to introduce reforms for disaster risk reduction in the industrial sector to cope with hazardous conditions in mines and industrial areas.

4 die, 13 injured in road mishap

Source: - The Post, Mansehra

Date: - 5 March 2010

MANSEHRA: Four persons including a woman died while 13 others sustained injuries in a collision between a bus and a passenger van at Kotli Payeen here on Thursday. According to details, the incident took place in the jurisdiction of Baffa police station when the bus namely Akbar coach, travelling from Thaa kot to Karachi, collided with a passenger van going from Mansehra to Battagram leaving four dead including the driver of the van. Police and locals reached the site immediately and shifted the injured persons to King Abdullah hospital where two injured were reported to be in critical position.

Fire injures five of a family

Source: - The Post, Sargodha

Date: - 5 March 2010

SARGODHA: A fire in a house due to gas leakage severely injured five members of the family. According to family sources, a house in Old civil lines Thursday caught fire due to leakage of gas and the blaze injured five persons including Rubina, children Asif, Aqib, Sidra and Saba. All were admitted to burn unit at DHQ hospital Sargodha. Their condition was stated to be critical.

PMRC launches online protocol for snakebite management

Source: - Daily Times, Karachi

Date: - 5 March 2010

KARACHI: Pakistan Medical Research Council (PMRC) here on Thursday launched the first ever Asia and Africa-specific snakebite management protocol to help avert 50,000 preventable deaths annually. PMRC Director Dr Huma Quraishi addressing a press conference said doctors could freely download the

guidelines available online at www.pmr.org.pk. She on the occasion expressed her gratitude to Dr. Ian Simpson, a British researcher and expert for helping in development of the protocol.

Poor sewerage system floods town

Source: - The Post, Hazro

Date: - 5 March 2010

HAZRO: The whole city is presenting a view of old flooded town due to poor sewerage system. According to details, Bank Road, Main Bazaar, Police Station Road and Retla Mandi localities are flooded like ponds and residents are seen busy throwing out water out of their homes. While the business activities remain closed as well. People demanded from the high ups to take immediate notice as some times Contaminated water tends to enter the houses causing pollution.

Earthquake felt in Ziarat

Source: - The Frontier Post, Quetta

Date: - 7 March 2010

QUETTA (PPI): A minor intensity earthquake was felt in Ziarat Friday afternoon. According to details, a minor earthquake measuring 2.2 on Richter Scale was felt in Ziarat at 0615 pm today. Earlier an earthquake of 3.7 magnitude was also recorded at 0901 pm Thursday night with its epicenter near Ziarat. There was no report of any damage.



Nearly 8,000 dengue cases reported in two months

Source: - Daily News, Colombo

Date: - 3 March 2010

Sri Lanka has reported 8,000 dengue cases within the first two months of this year and the highest number of cases were reported from the Jaffna district. This is an increase of 2,227 dengue cases reported during the corresponding period last year. An Epidemiological Department official told the Daily News that 46 deaths were reported in hospitals around the country due to dengue epidemic and this trend needs to be arrested by making the public aware on the epidemic. He said the dengue epidemic is now spreading from urban areas to villages and this has caused an increase in the death toll. "We have reported dengue cases mainly from Colombo, Galle, Kandy and Gampaha and this situation has now changed. He added that they have reported dengue cases from rural villages and the rural folk should effectively be educated over the disease, if we are to completely eradicate this epidemic. He appealed to the public to keep their environment clean and remove the mosquito breeding places to curb the dengue menace.

Dengue deaths top 50 in two months

Source: - The Island, Colombo

Date: - 4 March 2010

Within the first two months of this year, the number of Dengue cases in the country had risen to 8,075 while the death toll had reached a startling fifty by the end of February. The highest number of cases and the number of deaths had been reported from the Jaffna District (1,557 cases and eight deaths) The Chief of the Epidemiology Unit, Dr. Paba Palihawadana, when contacted yesterday (03), said the numbers were

comparatively higher than the numbers reported to the Unit last year. The total number of cases had reached a startling thirty thousand by the end of 2009. Giving a break down on the number of dengue cases, the Unit's website stated said Colombo had 954 cases and seven deaths, Gampaha (1009 cases and six deaths), Baticaloa (497 and five deaths), Anuradhapura (484 cases), Trincomallee (cases 430 cases), Puttalam (363), Kandy (321) and Kalmunai (277 cases and one death). The spokesman for the Health Ministry said that a technical committee had been appointed by the Acting Health Secretary, Dr. Nihal Jayatilake on Tuesday (02) headed by Deputy Director General (Public Health), Dr. Palitha Mahipala to tackle the entire process of the purchase of the bacteria. The members comprise representatives from the Epidemiology Unit, Entomology Assistants and the Dengue Control Programme. He said that Dr. Mahipala had been in touch with the Cuban Ambassador on Monday (01) to accelerate the process from the Cuban end. He said that Sri Lanka planned to go ahead with importing thirty thousand litres of Bti to control the dengue situation in the country. The Pilot project is to be held in Akurana, Kandy Municipal Council area and Gampola. Meanwhile former Badulla District Opposition MP, Lakshman Seneviratne, said that the responsibility of fighting dengue did not lie solely on the shoulder of the Health Minister but on the entire health sector. Starting from the Health Ministry the responsibility lies with the government and the local governments," he said.

Task force to control dengue epidemic in Sri Lanka

Source: - Colombo Page, Colombo

Date: - 5 March 2010



Colombo: Sri Lanka Minister of Healthcare and Nutrition Nimal Sripala de Silva today received the Cabinet's approval to appoint members for a National Task Force to control the fast spreading dengue epidemic in the country. The Task Force is aimed at strengthening the inter-sectoral co-ordination and social mobilization at National Level. Alarmed by the increasing rate of the mosquito-borne disease, the Ministry has taken measures to educate the public and control the breeding grounds of the dengue mosquito. According to the health authorities getting the country to eliminate and destroy dengue mosquito breeding places is the most effective measure for dengue control. Unplanned urbanization, lack of infrastructure improvement and poor waste management systems are some factors that have contributed to abundant man-made mosquito breeding places which has resulted in outbreaks of dengue fever in an unprecedented manner. Since there are many stakeholder and partners responsible for keeping the environment free from dengue mosquito breeding places, the Ministry says it has planned to establish a National Task Force with the aim of promoting environmental management through the collaboration of relevant ministries, departments and organizations. The Epidemiology Unit of the Health Ministry data shows the number of cases have rapidly risen to 8,652 cases and 46 deaths so far this year, 4,608 in January and 4,044 in February. Sri Lanka experienced the largest epidemic of dengue fever in the history with 34,896 patient and 345 deaths reported in year 2009. However, this year the numbers may be much higher if the present rate of the epidemic continues. In 2009 only 2,227 cases have been reported during the first two months of the year. The Ministry says the disease, though prevalent in Sri Lanka since 1962, was mostly concentrated in urban areas but now has spread to semi-urban and rural areas and become a significant public health problem in the country.

Solution for waste management

Source: - Daily Mirror, Colombo

Date: - 5 March 2010

COLOMBO: Bringing a sustainable solution to the longstanding waste management crisis of Colombo, the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) announced plans for a new composting plant and a sanitary land fill to be built in Muthurajawela, which would be steered under the 'Pilisar' project. The 'Pilisar' project was initiated in 2008 under the guidance of the Environment and Natural Resources Minister Champika Ranawaka to streamline the solid waste management system of Sri Lanka and to introduce projects which supported the cause. The new composting plant and sanitary land fill is a similar project initiated by the Pilisar project. Speaking at the press briefing held Thursday, Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka said that the unmanageable waste crisis of Colombo is a result of ignorance and reckless

attitude shown towards the matter by the municipal councils that were in power. “However we do not wish to wash our hands off the matter by simply putting the blame on the CMC. We have the power to even resort to legal action against the manner in which they have treated this issue. However, instead of blaming it on various groups, we are working together providing our fullest support to introduce an umbrella of sustainable solutions for the issue,” he added. The Minister asserted that before the expiry of another three months the bids for tenders will be closed and the construction work of the project will be implemented. The proposed site in Muthurajawela which is nearly 43 acres in extent has been provided to the CEA by the Land Reclamation and Development Corporation. “The land is marshy. Therefore we will have to fill the land with sand first and then commence the operations of setting up the plant,” explained Pilisaruru Project Director Dr. Mahesh Jayaweera. According to Dr. Jayaweera this project will serve as a dumping site for the garbage which is collected from Colombo and other surrounding areas, only on an emergency basis. “This site can hold up to 300 tons of garbage per day. Only waste that falls under the category of ‘municipal solid waste’ will be accepted for dumping at the site,” he said adding that hazardous waste such as chemical waste will not be processed at the proposed Muthurajawela compost plant. “Once the garbage is brought to the site, they would first go through a sorting process,” said Dr. Jayaweera. The garbage would be sorted into four categories such as inert material, bio degradable, non-biodegradable and recyclable. “Afterwards, the sorted garbage would be accordingly processed.” The inert material such as soil will be used as landfill while the bio degradable waste would be turned into compost. “The recyclable material would be recycled under suitable methods,” he added and mentioned that they are planning to get the private sector involved in this process too. The waste at the compost plant will be processed under the ‘Windraw Aerobic Compost System’ which the ‘Pilisaru project’ has introduced at many such compost plants set up country wide including Madirigiriya and Anuradhapura. Under the initial plan, the compost site is planned to serve for ten years. Its maximum height is calculated to be approximately 20 metres. “The site would hold up to 180 metric tons per day,” said Dr. Jayaweera adding that for the first time in Sri Lanka this compost plant would be constructed with the liner system which results in enhancing the productivity of the site. “We are determined not to pollute the surrounding areas as a result of this plant. Accordingly, we would also follow measures such as vehicle cleaning. Also, the dumped garbage would be covered with soil daily in order to prevent creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes and flies,” he said. The entire project is supposed to cost nearly Rs. 6 million and the work is estimated to be completed in two years. Dr. Jayaweera also pointed out that nearly 100 employment opportunities would be generated for the internal operations of the project alone. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation plans for the Bloemendhal garbage dump were also announced yesterday. “The main plans include making beneficial use of the remaining garbage in the site, aesthetically improving the location as well as completing the rehabilitation and minimizing and preventing the emission of leachate and gas,” added Dr. Jayaweera. The garbage dump at Bloemendhal is nearly 16 acres in extent and it is estimated that it holds nearly 2 million tons of garbage currently. The maximum height of the garbage mound is 30 metres at present. Last year, the Supreme Court ordered a suspension to dumping garbage on the landfill due to protests by local residents concerned about health issues and at present the waste collected from Colombo is being dumped at the Karadiyana dumping site. “The garbage that is collected in the city of Colombo is not generated solely through means of the people residing in the city. Nearly 0.6 million outsiders contribute to the daily generation of waste in the city. Therefore a total number of 1.3 million individuals contribute to the generation of garbage in the city daily,” said the Municipal Commissioner Mrs. Badrani Jayawardena. “We hope that this project will help provide a long lasting solution to this prevalent waste management issue.” Several rehabilitation options such as the eco-park concept, green park concept and constructing a container yard are also being currently evaluated by the CEA.

WHO records increase in non-communicable diseases

Source: - The Island, Colombo

Date: - 5 March 2010

WHO Resident Representative, Firdosi Rustam Mehta said the number of people suffering from non-communicable diseases had increased in hospitals in recent times. He was addressing the stakeholders meeting of the Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (HEART) project of the Colombo Municipal Council in collaboration with the WHO yesterday (04). Many suffer from non-communicable diseases such as ischemic heart disease or were accident victims suffering from trauma. He warned that by

2030 every six out of ten people would live in urban cities. This would place a demand for more urban health, socio and economic facilities. Last year Sri Lanka witnessed a severe outbreak of dengue in which many of the areas affected were urban; Colombo and Gampaha topped the list. However with the beginning of this year dengue has taken a toll in rural areas - moving up north. CMC Chief Administrator, Omar Kamil said that fifty percent of voters were those who belong to the urban poor. Politicians are aware that these are the people who usually exercise their franchise where as the upper middle class and the affluent either cast their vote or don't care enough to use their franchise. However the urban poor are forgotten once the elections are over, he said. Chief Medical Officer of the Public Health Department CMC, Dr. Pradeep Kariyawasam explained their initial findings. He said that in most of the city the proportion of measles coverage was inadequate. The population density was also higher than in any other part of the country, he said. The literacy rate in the North of Colombo was worse than the average national level. However the percentage of government spending allocations to health had surpassed the national goal in Colombo North, Central, and West. However Colombo East was still below the average national level in government spending allocated to health. A representative for Sarvodya an NGO which was one of the Projects stakeholders stated that he was not prepared to waste his time by taking part in group discussions. Recollecting a past occasion he said the PHD Chief and several other medical stakeholders had decided to initiate an emergency rescue service to assist city dwellers whenever they required emergency medical attention. However the programme barely got off the ground it was merely loads of talk and no action. This too would be just discussions and minutes set on paper and nothing concrete would be done to uplift lives of city dwellers, he said.

Garbage-free Colombo in three months

Source: - Daily News, Colombo

Date: - 6 March 2010

COLOMBO: The garbage problem in Colombo will be solved within the next three months. A joint action is being taken in this direction by the CMC, Provincial Garbage Management Project, UDA, Environment Ministry and the CEA's Pilisaru project, Environment and Natural Resources Minister and Colombo District UPFA candidate Patali Champika Ranawaka said. The Minister made this assurance at a press conference at Kerawalapitiya recently. The Minister said 600 tons of garbage is collected in Colombo daily. The garbage dumping grounds in Colombo had exceeded their capacity. Now a 43 acre site in Muthurajawela has been released for solving the Colombo garbage problem. Earlier it could not be released due to security reasons. Ranawaka said a land had not been provided to dump Colombo's garbage for the past 30 years. As such present dumping grounds like Kadirayana had been completely devastated. Garbage would not be dumped at Kolonnawa any more as the dumping grounds was earmarked for rehabilitation. Dumping at Kadirayana too would be stopped shortly. Dumped at Bloemendhal too had been stopped six months ago. Ranawaka said a garbage management site would be set up at Muthurajawela. The Ministry had received 15 to 20 project proposals from the private sector.

The successful bidder whether it was the private or the public sector would have to implement the project according to the specifications made by a professional team led by Dr. Mahesh Jayaweera of the Katubedda University. The Minister said the Colombo Municipal Council had become helpless over the garbage problem in the city. The reason had been the lack of a proper site and a suitable program of work.