

4 killed as nor'westers hit Tangail, Sirajganj



People sifting through ruins of a tore down house (left) and a family under the open sky after Friday's nor'wester in Bhuapur in Tangail. PHOTO: STAR

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Four people were killed and about 200 injure when nor'westers battered several villages in Tangail and Sirajganj districts Friday evening.

Two of them were killed in Tangail in house collapse and the rest two in Sirajganj by lightning.

Our Tangail Correspondent reports: A nor'wester swept over 10 villages in Govindashi and Aloa unions in Bhuapur upazila Friday evening, leaving two people killed and about 100 including women and children injured.

The dead were identified as Alamgir Hossen, 40, of Rautbari village and Abul Hossen, 70, of Sthalkashi village. They were killed in house collapse.

Thirty-seven of the injured were admitted to Bhuapur Upazila Health Complex and 34 to Tangail General Hospital.

Police and locals said the storm

that lasted about half an hour from 7 pm razed to the ground over 600 houses and badly damaged two schools—Konabari High School and Bhalkutia Primary School.

The worst affected villages are Bhalkutia, Kastapara, Konabari, Ruhulee, Sthalkashi, and Rautbari in Govindashi union and Charnikla, Barkatpur, Birchakra and Niklakhod in Aloa union.

Power supply was snapped as a large number of trees and electric poles were uprooted.

On information, lawmaker from the area and Deputy Minister for Information Abdus Salam Pintu rushed there, supervised the rescue operation and sent the injured people to hospitals.

He also distributed dry food, shares and lungis among the affected people.

The Red Crescent Society in Tangail also distributed relief materials.

Local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) officials said IRRI-Boro paddy on at least 1000 acres, almost ready for harvest, have been damaged by the tornado.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent reports: Two people were killed and at least 100 injured when a nor'wester hit parts of Ullapara and Kazipur upazilas of the district Friday evening.

Hasmata Ali, 32 and Jel Haque Ali, 48, of Moheshakula village in Ullapara upazila were killed in lightning during the nor'wester. They were returning home from market, police and locals said.

The storm that also blew over parts of Kazipur upazila injure about 100 people including women and children.

At least 50 of the injured are being treated at Kazipur Health Complex and Sirajganj Sadar Hospital, sources in the hospitals said yesterday afternoon. Some

others were shifted to clinics in Sirajganj town for better treatment, they said. At least 400 houses and were tore down and many trees uprooted by the tornado.

The worst affected villages Kunkunia, Dhekuria, Salaura, Shunogachha, Meghai, Alampur, Char Natipara, Simuldair, Shyampur, Chalita Danga, Muslimpara, Charpara. Khudbandhi and Singra Bari.

This correspondent during a visit to the areas saw affected people under the open sky. They said they did not get any help from any quarter.

State Minister of Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, Sirajganj Deputy Commissioner Aminul Bari Chowdhury and Police Superintendent Shahadat Hossain visited the affected villages Friday night.

SUICIDE AFTER WIFE'S RAPE

Police file case against Khulna BNP leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sub Inspector Fakhruzzaman yesterday lodged an FIR with Sonadanga thana accusing advocate Mehedi Insar for 'compelling' a rickshawpuller to commit suicide on Thursday night.

The dejected rickshawpuller took poison and killed himself after his wife was raped allegedly by the lawyer, who is also a leader of Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangshkritik Dal, cultural front of ruling BNP.

OC Mosharaf Hossain told this correspondent that the young wife of the rickshawpuller was raped several times by the lawyer in last one year.

On March 28, the woman filed a case against Mehedi under the Women and Children Repression Act, accusing him of raping her with help of two others.

The women is now being provided with legal assistance by Bangladesh Human Rights Commission.

Advocate Mehedi of Naba Palli in the city is yet to be arrested.

700 smuggled chicks burnt in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least 700 chicks, allegedly smuggled from across the border were burnt in front of Sakhipur police station Friday evening.

Acting on a tip-off, police led by Sakhipur Upazila Animal Resources Officer Dr Afazuddin Upazila Animal raided two poultry farms at Taktarchala and Gargovindapur villages and seized 700 chicks, allegedly smuggled from across the border.

Sakhipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Mokabbir Hossen, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sakhipur Police Station Mohammad Younis Ali, and President of Sakhipur Upazila Poultry Firm Owners Association Ariful Haque Badsha were present at this time.

Kawmi Jute Mills facing closure again for jute

The stock may keep it running for three days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Kawmi Jute Mills, the largest state owned jute mill in the northern region, is facing closure again due to crisis of raw jute.

The raw jute stock may keep the mill running hardly for three days, sources at the mill said yesterday.

Over 76,000 quintals of jute are needed to keep the mill running till June this year. But only 43,000 quintals were bought three months ago, which is nearly exhausted.

About 3960 workers and employees are now fearing lay-off of the mill as it has no money to buy jute. They are passing hard days due to non-payment of wages for 27 weeks, the sources said.

The mill is limping with an accumulated loss of about Tk 70 crore and a heavy burden of bank loans and debts, they said.

Besides lack of running capital, the old mill needs spares and other

materials, which are not being supplied for long despite repeated requests to higher authorities in Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), the sources said.

Production is interrupted at times when old spindles grind to a halt. They need to be repaired but that can not be done due to lack of spares.

The mill was reopened in January following demonstrations by workers and employees, who, under the banner of an 'action committee', had held rallies, brought out processions and submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through Sirajganj Deputy Commissioner.

The fear of closure of the mill again, allegedly due to negligence by authorities, has created discontent among its staff and local people.

Talking to this correspondent, some of the employees said they

are preparing for tougher agitation if the mill stops production due to lack of raw jute.

The mill with 533 weaving machines was set up on 75 acres of land in Raipur in Sirajganj town in 1961. It started operation with about 7,000 workers and employees.

As over 200 weaving machines are closed for long, the staff came down to 18,00 permanent workers, 2,125 temporary workers and 40 others employees. They are now counting days when they will be out of job, some workers said, blaming the government for this.

A total of 243 workers and employees were retrenched earlier through 'golden handshake' but their arrears have not yet been paid, they alleged.

When contacted, the deputy general manager of the mill declined to talk to this correspondent on the present situation there.

Alleged attempt to grab land by Jamaat leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Twelve people were injured, four of them seriously, as criminals hired by land grabbers attacked residents at Ramnathpur village in Paikgachha upazila in Khulna early morning Saturday.

Paikgachha upazila Jamaat-Islami activists Abdur Rashid, Abdul Gaffar, Union Parishad member Lucky, Belayet and Abdus Samad hired the attackers to grab land, victims and eyewitnesses alleged.

Forty landless families, mostly fishermen, are living in a cluster of

thatched houses on six acres of government land in Ramnathpur village on the bank of river Kopotaksha with permission from appropriate authorities, said Santosh Gayeen, one of the victims.

Nearly 100 men armed with clubs, sharp weapons and iron rods came on board three trawlers and launched the attack when the fishermen families were asleep.

The attackers destroyed eighty percent of the thatched huts, said one of the victims injured in the attack.

Later police went to the village, which is about eight kilometres from Paikgachha Police Station.

Four of the seriously injured persons—Jabbar, 50, Ranjan, 40, his wife Arati, 30, and Mohon, 40—are now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital while eight others were admitted to Paikgachha Upazila Health Complex.

It is not such a big incident that needs deployment of extra forces at Ramnathpur, said Officer-in-Charge Enamul Huq of Paikgachha Police Station when contacted.

3.5X3

Hartal in Rajshahi city today for gas

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi Babosai Oyko Parisad, a trader's body, called a day-long strike in Rajshahi city today demanding supply of pipeline gas. Rajshahi Awami League has extended support to the hartal call.

Pro-hartal activists, joined by people brought out a bog procession in the city yesterday evening and held a rally at Saheb Bazaar zero point. President of the Babosai Oyko Parisad Mosherraf Hossain, its general secretary Farid Mahmud Hasan addressed the rally.

They called upon the people of

Rajshahi to observe hartal to press the demand.

They said the government did not take any step to supply gas to Rajshahi despite public announcements six times.

Different professional bodies observed a two-day hartal in the city last year on the same demand.

Another organisation—Rajshahi Gas Andalan Parisadhas also called a day-long hartal in Rajshahi on April 17 if a dateline for gas supply is not announced by April 16.

'Corruption' by Polli Biddyut in Nilphamari

Farmers forced to buy irrigation machines of a company

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The subscribers of Nilphamari Polli Biddyut Samity in Domar upazila have brought an allegation of wide-spread corruption against the Samity officials.

They alleged that nobody got power from the Samity if he failed to buy Mindong Pump, an inferior quality locally assembled irrigation pumps. They also alleged that a certain pump trader had secret understanding with the Samity officials.

Three farmers at Jorabari village, Nurul Islam, Rashidul Islam and Shahidul Islam alleged that their prayer for power was not granted previously for purchasing Pedrolo Pump of Italy and Winter Pump of China. They alleged that the Samity officials told them categorically to purchase Mindong Pump from a certain trader for power connection.

The farmers said that they got power connection within two days of submission of receipts of purchasing Mindong Pump from Monsurur Rahman of Monsurur Engineering Works in Domar town.

Other farmers, Anwarul Islam, Nonigopal Roy, Biswanath Barmdu of Dolapara village told that the Samity gave power connection to about 500 villagers who purchased Mindong pumps.

Making best use of the situa-

tion, the aforesaid trader is doing a brisk business. He is allegedly compelling the farmers to buy 3 Horse Power (HP), 4 HP and 5 HP Mindong pumps at the rate of Tk 14,500, Tk 19,500 and Tk 21,500 respectively whereas irrigation pumps of other brands are being sold at almost half the price.

Some others alleged that paid additional Tk 500 as bribe to a certain wiring inspector, Tk 600 to a certain lineman and Tk 400 to a certain electrician after paying the required official fees.

When contacted, Monsur Rahman said he has to purchase motor, pump and spare parts from market to assemble those for sell. He sells 3 HP pump at Tk 10,000, 4 HP pump at Tk 12,000 and 5 HP pump at Tk 14,000 respectively. He had sold about 100 irrigation pumps to farmers in Domar and Dimla upazilas, he said.

However, he admitted that he was not an authorised dealer of Mindong Pump of China.

On contact, Nilphamari Polli Biddyut Samity assistant general manager (AGM) Mainuddin refuted the allegation of doing favour to a certain trader. He further said that in the on-going IRRI-Boro season, 900 irrigation pump owners got power connection. Of them about 200 pump owners possessed Mindong pumps, he said.

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