

8 more dead in twisters

STAR REPORT

Eight more people were reported killed and at least 35 injured as a nor'wester lashed over the south-eastern districts of the country Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, felling trees and houses, snapping power and telephone lines and damaging crops.

Our Magura correspondent reports that three people were killed and 35 injured in Maheshpur, Harinakundu and Kaliganj upazilas of Jhenidah district.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nurul Karim Mazumder said that Kushai Mandal, 80, of Lebutala

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Kyrgyz president flees country

AFP, Bishkek

Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev was reported to have fled the country yesterday after thousands of opposition protesters stormed the seat of power in a potent demonstration of street force.

Russia's Interfax news agency, citing unnamed sources, reported that Akayev was flying by helicopter with his family to neighbouring Kazakhstan.

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Prayer Timing		
March 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Grisly tales of fortune seekers

MORSHED ALI KHAN
and RAFIQ HASAN

During their intercontinental journey to Mali, the group of recently returned Bangladeshi workers never faced any questions from immigration officials, suggesting that the network of brokers involved in their illegal passage has powerful connections in many countries of the world.

The journey to Italy began on

March 25 of last year, after each victim paid between Tk 5 lakh and 7 lakh to the brokers before boarding a plane. They each carried over US \$2,000.

A number of returnees, including Sohrab Hossain Rana, Nazrul Islam and Samor Kar, yesterday submitted their statements to the Special Branch, the investigator of the matter, describing in horrific details the year-long ordeal they spent

during a thwarted journey to Italy through the Sahara desert.

Their descriptions have helped illuminate the otherwise shadowy figure of their broker, Roman, who they say threatened them with dire consequences if they revealed his name. They went on to say that Roman is a very powerful man whose connections in the underground world of human trafficking

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Centurion Inzy

REUTERS, Bangalore

Captain Inzamamul Haq scored a flawless unbeaten 184 in his 100th Test and Younis Khan added 127 not out as Pakistan took control on the first day of the third and final match on Thursday.

The pair, coming together at seven for two, shared an unbroken 316-run partnership for the third

wicket, the highest by Pakistan in India, as the visitors closed on 323 without further loss.

Inzamam became only the fifth player to score a century in his 100th Test, joining an elite club containing England's Colin Cowdrey and Alec Stewart, Gordon Greenidge of West Indies and Pakistan's Javed Miandad.

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RAB ROBBERY

Hunt on for three

Govt embarrassed, says Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) men could not yet arrest three others of the six, who robbed a cattle trader of Tk 7.8 lakh in city's Mirpur area on Wednesday.

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Reporter's jail sentence curbs press freedom

Says media watchdog

AFP, Dhaka

International media watchdog Reporters Without Borders said it was concerned that a jail sentence

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Touts make ME jobs costlier for women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fraudulent practices of manpower recruiting agencies and brokers have raised the cost of women workers' migration to the Middle East countries to 60-70 thousand taka each from the government-fixed Tk 10,000, speakers said at a discussion in the city yesterday.

The regulation on women migration framed in 2003 fixed this amount to cover all arrangements for one, they pointed out.

Officials of recruiting agencies

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RUPALI BANK

Privatisation process starts next week

STAR REPORT

The finance ministry has assigned the Privatisation Commission to initiate the privatisation process of Rupali Bank within the next week, when a mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that has been advocating the issue will arrive here.

Sources said the commission next week would publish an information of memorandum (IoM) inviting interested buyers of the bank.

The finance ministry letter to the commission containing the directive also described what steps the government has already taken to privatise the bank that has 493 branches across the country.

"The ministry told the commission to take help from the government's Taskforce on NCB [nationalised commercial bank] Reforms for information and other support," said a source.

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IMF starts annual economic evaluation

Makes 50 queries to govt

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As part of its annual evaluation of Bangladesh's economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is seeking the government's answers to 50 different questions including some on its gas export policy and its assessment of the impacts of the recent floods, oil price hike and MFA-quota phase-out.

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