

Natwar relieved

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relevant materials, including unverfied references in the report by Volcker regarding "involvement of Indian entities and individuals", said a press statement issued by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's advisor Sanjaya Baru.

The decision to appoint 79-year-old Dayal, a former under secretary general under former UN secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar, came amidst growing opposition demand for a probe by India's federal Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the Volcker report.

The Volcker report has accused more than 2,200 companies and prominent politicians across the world of colluding with Saddam's regime which extracted nearly 1.8 billion dollars in illegal surcharges and bribes from humanitarian Oil for Food programme.

Natwar Singh has denied any

wrongdoing and said the allegations in the Volcker report were aimed at discrediting the Congress Party which has had good ties with Saddam's Baath party until 2003 when US-led troops invaded Iraq and toppled the regime. Singh has also challenged Volcker's claim that the committee had sent notices to all those named in the report so that they could clarify their stand. "Neither I nor Congress Party ever received any communication," he said.

Talking to reporters on Sunday night, Natwar Singh said he was not guilty and he has the backing of a whole lot of people in the Congress Party.

According to the report, 139 companies had paid illegal oil surcharges to Iraq and 2253 firms gave Saddam regime kickbacks on humanitarian related goods supplied to Baghdad under the Oil for Food programme.

2 decades on, Saarc

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Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- was formally launched on December 8, 1985 in Dhaka aiming to promote peace, stability, amity and progress.

As per its charter, Saarc is to hold its summit annually but it held only 12 summits in 20 years. It missed eight summits on various grounds like military coup, security concern, natural disasters and above all mistrust among the member nations.

The performance of Saarc is still not up to expectation due to differences among the member states, and the regional body apparently remained hostage to certain issues in the region, largely due to discord between two nuclear powers -- India and Pakistan.

Despite having vast potential, Saarc is still to perform like the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) and other regional bodies.

In the last 12 summits, Saarc adopted declarations containing guidelines for poverty alleviation, economic integration, cooperation in the fields of science and technology, environment, information and communication, combating terrorism etc but there were no guidelines to implement those.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said that so many decisions adopted at the previous 12 Saarc summits were not implemented, "may be by default or by design".

He went on, "We must come out of the prison of our past mindset as mental impediment is stronger than real impediment."

South Asia's intra-regional trade is only 3-4 percent although it has a wide range of economic potentials and a 450-million-strong middle class, bigger than the population of the US and Canada combined or the European Union (EU).

The region is also endowed with immense geographical advantages, considerable natural and human resources and a large and vibrant market of middle class consumers capable of purchasing even luxury items.

But Saarc nations have not been able to create their own market within themselves till now, and achieve substantial progress towards economic integration of the region.

Meanwhile, trade among the EU

member states is 66 percent of their total trade volume and that among the Asean member nations is 28 percent.

In the current global scenario, the ensuing 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka is of special significance to Bangladesh on three counts -- it is being held on the eve of the third decade of the organisation, Bangladesh is the first country to host its summit for the third time and thus starts a new cycle.

Against the backdrop of current relationship between India and Pakistan, and urgency of economic integration of South Asian region, Saarc leaders in the past few months emphasised taking practical steps to deal with new challenges of natural disasters and terrorism.

While Bangladesh is poised to assume the next Saarc chair, the Dhaka summit will mark the beginning of third decade of the regional body with the member nations aspiring to see it as a decade of implementation.

Bangladesh officials said the summit is expected to give directions to make the organisation stride forward.

Dhaka will make a number of proposals including Saarc programme to deal with natural disasters. It feels every region should have preparedness programme to face calamities like tsunami, cyclone and earthquake.

The summit would focus on, among other issues, how to jointly tackle natural disasters and strengthen early warning system. Dhaka will underscore concerted efforts to eliminate terrorism from South Asia and the world as a whole.

Officials said the region needs to make great strides in the areas of poverty alleviation, intra-regional trade, attracting foreign direct investment, expanding communication and transport network, adopting an energy policy, investment in human resources development, quality education, stabilising population growth and eradicating illiteracy.

The Dhaka Summit is expected to provide a fresh impetus for regional cooperation with specific focus on implementation of previous commitments, agreements and plans of action adopted over the past two decades.

40,000 strong security

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Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Ansar, Coast Guard, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), President's Guard Regiment (PGR) and the SSF have been engaged to form the security net.

Army personnel were seen yesterday guarding Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC), the main summit venue, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, where Saarc leaders will stay during the summit, and International Conference Centre (ICC) inside the Prime Minister's Office.

Police and Rab also took positions at important points including minister's residential area and vacated the Suhrawardy Uddyan.

Terming the security measures as unprecedented, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said yesterday that the government has taken all necessary measures to ensure that the summit is held peacefully. "We're confident about it. Inshallah (by the grace of Allah), the summit will be held peacefully," he said.

Large contingents of security personnel had been deployed especially near the venues even before the full deployment began. When the full deployment began yesterday, law enforcers took positions at the BCFCC, ICC, National Mausoleum at Savar, former president Ziaur Rahman's grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Bangabhaban, Hotel Sheraton, Hotel Sonargaon, state guest houses Padma and Jamuna, and Zia International Airport (ZIA). They also took positions on the adjacent roads and rooftops of buildings around the venues. They set up close-circuit television cameras (CCTV) atop the buildings to maintain round-the-clock vigilance. They are also barring people from taking photographs of the venues.

The SSF took over the charge of security at ZIA in the early hours of yesterday where red carpet will be rolled out for Saarc leaders. Rab members and additional police forces

Saarc leaders

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in the capital. Parts of the letters are now being reproduced in the plaque.

Zia in 1980 wrote the letters to the then Sri Lankan president Julius Richard Jayawardhane, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, the Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Pakistani president Ziaul Haq, Nepalese king Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and King of Bhutan Jigme Sigmé Wangchuk to form a platform with seven South Asian nations for more intensified regional cooperation.

Following Zia's initiative and the cooperation of those leaders, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) was finally launched in 1985.

The Saarc set off formally through the First Saarc Summit on December 7-8 in Dhaka. President Ziaur Rahman however could not see his initiative translated into action as he was assassinated on May 30, 1981.

During the upcoming 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka, the Saarc heads of state after paying tribute to the martyred freedom fighters at Savar National Mausoleum are scheduled to visit Zia's graveyard and place wreaths on November 12.

President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Pakistani Prime Minister Shawkat Aziz, King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandarnaike, Prime Minister of Bhutan Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will unveil the plaque.

Zia's graveyard has recently been uplified into a complex and a bridge has also been installed over the Crescent Lake to facilitate visit to the complex.

The complex and its surroundings have been brought under tightened security measures on the occasion of the November 12 visit by South Asian leaders.

40 missing

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Aziz of the local police outpost in Kumiraghata.

No casualty was reported when the report was filed at 8:30 last night.

Police said most of the passengers are reported to have swam ashore or been rescued. But they could not tell the number of the passengers feared missing.

Senior officials

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programme the forthcoming Saarc summit through their two-day deliberations on 11 agenda of activities of the forum.

A foreign ministry spokesman said the two-day meeting of the Saarc Programming Committee will review and consider reports of various committees, calendar of activities and budget of the Saarc secretariat for 2006 in preparing recommendations for the standing committee of Saarc foreign secretaries to take necessary action.

Briefing reporters, Director General of External Publicity (DGEP) Zahirul Haque said the agenda include a review of the progress in implementation of Regional Integrated Programme of Action (RIPA), consideration of reports of the Governing Boards and budgets of the Saarc Regional Centres, report of the Saarc Coordination Group of Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, reports of the Saarc Audiovisual Exchange Committee, report of the Governing Board of South Asian Development Fund (SADF) and consideration of the common format of the Headquarters Agreement for the Regional Centres.

Reviewing the progress of activities under the Saarc-Japan Special Fund, facilitation of movement of people in the region and promotion of South Asian identity, consideration of the audit report of the secretariat and the Saarc-Japan Special Fund for 2004 and the budget for 2006 and renovation of the secretariat premises are also on the agenda.

Haque said the Programming Committee will also discuss other issues to be raised by the member states during the November 8-9 meeting at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The senior officials who arrived yesterday to set in motion the summit activities are Kesang Wangdi, head of Saarc and Bimstec Division of Bhutan, P K Kapur, joint secretary (Saarc) of India, Hira Bahadur Thapa, joint secretary of the foreign ministry of Nepal, Syed Ibne Abbas, director general (SA) of Pakistan, and Mrs Geetha De Silva, additional secretary (Political Affairs) of Sri Lanka.

Hussain Thoufeeq AL, assistant director of the foreign ministry of the Maldives, was scheduled to arrive at 11:00pm yesterday. At the meeting Bangladesh delegation will be led by M Fazlul Karim, director general (UN, NAM, Counter-Terrorism & ARF).

Director General (Saarc, Bimstec and ACD) M Ruhul Amin will chair the 26th session of the Programming Committee. Before the formal meeting beginning tomorrow at 9:30am, the officials will hold an hour-long informal parley among themselves.

In reply to a question Haque said Saarc leaders would arrive here between afternoon and midnight on November 11. Excepting Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, five other South Asian leaders will attend the summit along with their spouses.

To another question he said it is not yet confirmed whether President Chandrika would be able to attend the concluding session on November 13. But he hinted that she would complete all substantial work of the summit if she departed early.

Solidarity Day

FROM PAGE 1
mazar of president Ziaur Rahman in the capital.

The president and prime minister stood there in solemn silence and offered munajat. Ministers, lawmakers and BNP leaders were present.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar also placed wreaths at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman, and offered fateha.

As part of the day's programmes, ruling BNP and its allies and front organisations organised discussions, milad mahfil and cultural functions.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan addressed a discussion at the Mahanagar Natya Mancha organised by the party's Dhaka city unit.

He criticised the opposition parties for threatening to oust the government, saying the opposition is conspiring to topple a democratically elected government.

On the opposition's grand rally of November 22, Bhuiyan said success of such a rally does not mean people have no trust in the government. "We will gather more people than the opposition's rally."

A number of ministers and senior BNP leaders also spoke at the discussion.

Opposition leaders at a discussion organised by the JSD (Inu) said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government has been trying to conceal the truth and the real history of the civil-military revolution.

JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu said the High Court verdict against the Fifth Amendment has proved Ziaur Rahman had illegally occupied power.

He said the civil-military upsurge with the help of Colonel Taher in November 7, 1975 wanted to put an end to the military rule in the country. The National Revolution and Solidarity Day is shameful for the BNP supporters, he added.

He said the JSD and the general public as well as military wanted to form a national government, but Ziaur Rahman killed hundreds of military personnel to establish military rule.

He urged all to be united to oust the alliance government to form a national government with minimum common national programmes.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said another mass upsurge is needed to oust the alliance government and the fundamentalism from the country.

He said they would jointly resist the fundamentalist forces in the country. He also condemned the alliance government for their move to distort information and history of the revolution day.

JSD leaders Moyeen Uddin Khan Badal, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Shirin Akhter, Iqbal Hossain Khan and Mohammad Khaled also spoke.

JSD (Rob) in a separate discussion stressed the need to formulate a third political alliance to reform the state system.

Its General Secretary Abdul Malek Ratan said the country has fallen into deep crisis as Ziaur Rahman shunned the spirit of the November 7.

JSD leaders Nurul Amin Bhuiyan, Abul Khair Sazzad, Ataul Karim Farook also spoke on the occasion.

Amra Muktiyoddhar Santan (We are children of freedom fighters) organised a discussion at the central office of the AL to mark the day as "killing of freedom fighters".

AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Quader addressed the discussion as the chief guest, while it was also addressed by Dhaka city unit AL General Secretary Mofazzul Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Chairman of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha

BoI wants separate

FROM PAGE 16
The negotiators apprised the members of the steering committee of the tenor of the Tata talks and the necessity of enactment of a new law.

They informed the committee that the discussions with the Tata are going on in a right direction and some "significant progress" has been made.

Particularly, the government has agreed in principle to purchase about 550MW electricity from Tata's power plant. But the tariffs of electricity were yet to be settled.

"The tariff issue will be settled after enactment of the proposed new legal instrument," said the member of the negotiation team. He said the ministry concerned will initiate a move to frame the new rules.

The final round of negotiations between the government and the Tata Group started in the last week of September. The talks between the two sides remain suspended ahead of the Saarc summit and other occasions.

Executive Chairman of the BoI Mahmudur Rahman admitted to the move having been made by his investment-processing agency.

He said the government will frame the new law to deal with the multibillion-dollar investment proposals.

"Because, we think, if the negotiations between the government and the Tata Group are successfully completed and a deal is signed, more reputed foreign companies will be encouraged and come in the country with multibillion-dollar investment proposals," he said.

Tata has offered to invest about \$2.5 billion in the country to set up a 1000MW coal-fired power plant, a steel plant and a fertiliser factory. The development and operation of a coal-mine is also included in the Indian firm's business plan.

On the other hand, the Dhabi Group from the Gulf state has offered to invest \$2.0 billion in telecommunications, pharmaceutical and other sectors.

Sangsad Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, AL leaders Habibur Rahman Khan, Mukul Chowdhury, Quamrul Islam and Haji Muhammad Selim.

The discussants blamed the founder of BNP and late president Ziaur Rahman for killing military officers, who took part in the Liberation War.

The officers and staff members of Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi yesterday observed the National Revolution and Solidarity Day with due solemnity, reports our New Delhi Correspondent.

Their programme began with the hoisting of the national flag on the high commission premises in Chanakypuri followed by munajat for peace and progress of Bangladesh.

Messages of Bangladesh president and prime minister on the occasion were read out by Acting High Commissioner Masud bin Momen and Minister (Press) Anwarul Haq.

2 killed

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Their rivals led by Habibur Rahman of the village prevented them from constructing the well that resulted in a clash between the two rival groups.

During the clash Aminul and Jabbar were stabbed and died on the spot, while 10 others of both the groups sustained serious injuries. They are now undergoing treatment at Manikganj Sadar Hospital.

On information, police went to the spot and arrested three people from the spot. They are Renuka, 42, and her sons--Monwar and Nurul.

The members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) also visited the spot. Police have been deployed at the village.

Medical centres

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teams, each comprising seven members, will be on duty by turn.

Besides, emergency health services will be provided at eleven places, including Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

Twelve ambulances comprising two specialist physicians and one medical officer each will work for VVIP motorcade. Of them, seven ambulances will be deputed for heads of state or government while five for other foreign guests.

Two VVIP cabins, two operation theaters, one ICU bed, one CCU bed will be allocated each in the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSSMMU) Hospital and Ibrahim Cardiac Centre for ensuring emergency health services of the VVIP.

Blood of all groups have been stored after scanning. There is a liaison officer in each hospital. Adequate facilities for emergency health service have been ensured at the time of arrival and departure of the guests at Zia International Airport, National Memorial at Savar, Mazar of President Ziaur Rahman, Padma Guesthouse, Jamuna Guesthouse, Bangabhaban, International Conference Centre and Gazipur Brac Centre. Ambulance and medical teams will also be deployed in the areas.

Special facilities will also be available at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and National Heart Foundation during the summit.

A control room has been set up at the civil surgeon office for round the clock monitoring, said an official release.

Some other foreign companies, including US-based Global Volcan Energy and South Korean firm LUXON Global, have also signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the Board of Investment for investment in Bangladesh's power, energy and other sectors.

Threat to blow

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RD herself is on high alert and is keeping in constant touch with the staff over the phone as she is in Dhaka now on Eid vacation," she source added.

"However, nothing happened till yesterday. But we could not ignore the threat at a time when the country is going through such a series of threats and bombings."

Superintendent of Police (SP) Sheikh Md Maruf Hassan, however, expressed ignorance about the threat. "I am not aware of such an incident," he said.

Meanwhile, a group of tribal young men got onto the campus of TTC at about 1.00am Sunday and beat-up the night-guard, Mimingcha Indra Chakma. They tied him up before leaving the scene and threatened to kill the principal, Abdul Matin. "You will convey the message to your principal that he will be killed in seven days," the perpetrators told the night-guard.

Principal Abdul Matin informed the officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station about the incident and sought security.

Matin told The Daily Star yesterday that some unruly students living in the north side of the Raj Ban Bihar might have been behind the death threat. "Some students earlier asked me to let them copy during the Board Final Examinations of TTC, which is scheduled to begin on November 15. I told them to study hard so they don't have to copy. That might have angered them," said the principal.

OC closed for failure to maintain law and order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The officer-in-charge of Bhandaria Police Station in Pirojpur was closed on Sunday in the wake of a robbery spree and killing of a youth by robbers under his jurisdiction.

The district police administration closed OC Abdul Barek for his failure to maintain law and order, said a police officer asking not to be named.

Armed robbers on Tuesday night looted at least eight shops in Charaill Pole Hut and in Nadmulla village in Bhandaria.

A group of armed robbers attacked a number of shops and looted them in Kapali Hut More in Shilakati union the next night.

The robbers chopped a shop-keeper, Rafiqul Islam, and opened fire on villagers, who came to resist the robbery.

Mizanur Rahman, 29, a construction worker, was bullet-hit and rushed to Bhandaria Upazila Health Complex and then to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital where he died on Thursday night.

Locals said extortionists attacked and looted three shops and injured two people following a feud over VCD rental in Bhandaria Bazar on Saturday.

Shopkeepers observed a half-day strike in protest against the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the extortionists the same day.

Cops look

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The August 21 grenade attacks left 22 AL leaders and workers dead, including Ivy Rahman, and 200 others injured. AL chief Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped the attack.

Another accused Nure Alam said he used to cross over to India through Satkhira border and hand over Tk 1 to 2 lakh of extortion money to Mukul and Joy, two other charge-sheeted accused in the case, now staying in India.

Nure Alam was a charged-sheeted accused in Kuril arms and ammunition haul case, CID sources said, adding that he also admitted to having links with the killing of Jubo League leader Rahmat at a Mohakhali hospital on November 21, 2003 and in the killing of Rahmat's brother Moti a few months prior to that.

The CID on Saturday arrested four people including the three for their alleged involvement in the August 21 grenade attacks on an AL rally last year.

The three -- Shafiq, Rana and Nure Alam -- were taken on a seven-day remand on Sunday and are being quizzed by CID.

Pak PM's

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the school on November 12.

Reply to a query, Haque said the wife of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had expressed her desire to visit Gurudwara Nanak Shahi on Dhaka University campus before the second postponement of the summit in February.

3-day

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of more than 30 countries and agencies including World Bank, ADB and IMF are expected to take part in the discussions apart from the government representatives and the members of the civil society.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate and address the meeting at Hotel Sonargaon.

All the working sessions will be held at the National Economic Council (NEC) Auditorium in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

The agendas of the meeting include implementing the PRSP; the agenda for the next three years, Social Development; empowering the poor and the vulnerable, enhancing competitiveness for promoting trade, investment and private sector development, promoting good governance and aid harmonisation and aid effectiveness.

"The entire meeting will absolutely focus on the implementation of the mechanism of PRSP and how the donor agencies can support it best," says a press release of the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

Bangladesh will chair the forum in keeping with the principles of Paris Declaration that underlined ownership by the host country of the development programmes and coordination process, the press release added.

Criminals

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the left thigh and collapsed. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and was released yesterday morning.

One of his men fired back but could not stop the cab. Police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other law enforcers rushed to the spot but failed to trace the cab.

In Malibagh, alleged robber Faruk alias Hukka and up to eight of his accomplices made an attempt to rob a house.

As they tried to enter the house, landlord shot Faruk with his licensed gun, wounding him in the thighs and neck.

Faruk's cohorts rushed him to the DMCH, from where police picked up seven of them.

WB cancels health

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press release said.

The WB explains collusive practice as "a scheme or arrangement between two or more bidders, with or without the knowledge of the procuring agency, designed to establish bid prices at artificial level" and uses the term "non-competitive practice" in cases where bidders submit bids in complicity with each other to gain an unfair advantage.

The concerned three projects are: Municipal Services Project (MSP), Health and Population Programme Project (HPPP) and National Nutrition Programme (NNP).

The WB concludes that collusion had taken place among bidders in 12 contracts under the MSP and the HPPP, valued at Tk 4.8 crore. These findings are based on an independent procurement review undertaken by the international audit firm, SGS (Netherlands) which examined a number of contracts financed in these two projects.

The WB determined that its procurement guidelines had been clearly violated in eight work contracts for MSP and three work contracts for HPPP, implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

The WB also determined that its procurement guidelines were violated in a ninth MSP contract, implemented by Panchagarh Pourashava, through Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMDF).

The bidders quoted identical unit prices for most items of work, and most bids had identical handwriting, although these posed to have been submitted by different bidders.

Tornado hits Indiana

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Vanderburgh County, according to county officials.

Three area hospitals reported treating more than 220 people. At St. Mary's Medical Centre in Evansville, the closest hospital to the destruction, at least 30 were admitted with serious injuries, and twelve people were in critical condition. Deaconess Hospital in Evansville had at least 15 people in critical condition, officials there said.

"We've had severe damage," said Newburgh Assistant Fire Chief Chad Bennett. "Homes were totally devastated. There are a lot of people thankful to be alive today."

Officials said the death toll would likely climb as rescue workers picked through rubble in house-to-house searches and scoured farm lands. About 130 Indiana National Guard troops were called in to assist in recovery efforts and to help provide security and clean up debris.

At least two people were found dead in a soybean field in Warrick County, according to the Newburgh fire department.

The Eastbrooke mobile home park in Evansville was one of the places hardest hit when the storm struck well before dawn. Many homes there were reduced to twisted piles of metal that lay mixed with the remains of downed trees, smashed cars, and other debris.

In one trailer home, rescue workers found a young mother alive, but her husband and daughter dead and her two-year-old missing, said Eric Williams, chief deputy of the sheriff's department in Vanderburgh County.

Search