

Storm kills 10 in 2 Bhola upazilas

200 injured, over 1,000 houses damaged

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were killed and around 200 were injured as the year's first violent storm swept through Lalmonohar and Char Borhanuddin upazilas in Bhola on Thursday leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

The 10-minute long storm damaged no less than a thousand houses leaving hundreds of people homeless. Many trees in the local reserved forest were uprooted and a heavy hail shower following the storm completely destroyed the crops on the fields.

Reports received from different districts said the hailstorm on Thursday evening damaged irri, boro, maize and others crops.

Most of the dead are women and children, seven in Lalmonohar and three in Borhanuddin. The deaths were caused by falling roofs of the houses that were destroyed by the storm, crushing the victims. Local people said the number of casualties might rise. Many were injured in Tajmuddin upazila also but no death was reported from there till filing of this report yesterday evening.

Our Barisal correspondent

reported that a 10-minute long nor'wester accompanied by hail shower hit at least 20 villages of Lalmonohar and Borhanuddin upazilas around 8:00pm on Thursday, according to the local authorities and other local sources.

The most affected villages are Chatla, Char Lakshmi, Ramganj, Dholi Gour Nagar, Lord Harding, Kalma, Kunder Char, Veduria, Char Kalachand, Karimganj, Baouria, Char Mollaji, Chetal Kumarkhali, Kul Char, and Balur Char of Lalmonohar upazila, Kachia and Hassan Nagar of Borhanuddin.

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Villagers sit in despair amid the debris of their houses that were destroyed by Thursday night's severe storm at Lalmonohar, Bhola. The storm also lashed Char Borhanuddin, killing at least 10 in the two upazilas.

BSF kills two Bangladeshis

STAR REPORT

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead two Bangladeshi farmers near the frontier in Chapainawabganj and Kushtia districts on Thursday night.

The victims were identified as Mozammel Haque, 22, son of Abul Hossain of Kironganj village under Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj, and Fazlur Rahman, 36, son of Kiamat Ali of Jamalpur village under Daulatpur upazila of Kushtia.

BDR sources said the Indian border guards of Shukdepur camp in Malda district opened fire on Mozammel when he went to irrigate his paddy field near main pillar no 177 on Kironganj border at about 5:00pm. He died on the spot, according to the UNB.

Later, the BSF took away the body.

Confirming the incident, Lt Col Akhter Hossain, Commander of 39 Rifles Battalion said they sent a letter to the BSF demanding return of the body.

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Jubo Dal man dies in Rab custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader, who was in Rapid Action Battalion's (Rab) custody, allegedly died of a cardiac arrest minutes after Rab-11 personnel rushed him to Savar Health Complex Thursday night.

The dead was identified as Yaar Hossain, 25, son of late Abdul Gani of Tetail under Dhamrai Police Station in Dhaka. He was the vice-president of Jubo Dal's Balia union unit.

Rab-11 sources said Yaar was arrested around 11:00am Thursday at his village. Rab personnel also recovered a foreign-made firearm at his house.

Following Yaar's confessional statement, Rab personnel along with Yaar were going to Dhamrai in Dhaka to recover two hidden firearms, Rab sources claimed. Yaar became sick on the way and was rushed to Savar Health Complex where he died, they added.

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Over 21,000 chickens culled in 6 Savar, Gazipur farms

No symptoms of bird flu outside these two areas, says adviser



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Veterinary surgeons collecting infected chickens from a poultry farm at Latifpur in Kashimpur area, Savar. The army men later sealed off the farm.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 21,000 chickens of six poultry farms in Savar and Gazipur have been culled since the detection of bird flu virus at state-run Biman Poultry Complex.

Out of 42,423 fowls found to have contracted the avian influenza so far, 12,297 have died and been buried.

The authorities concerned yesterday announced a flurry of measures so that the disease cannot spread to other areas. Those include banning transport of poultry products from the affected areas, restricting movements around the infected farms, checking health conditions of the people directly involved in poultry farming, and strengthening the surveillance activities.

According to the fisheries and livestock ministry, 32,000 chickens of Biman Poultry, 1,800 of Bibi Ayesha Farm, 1,000 of Rahman Poultry, 600 of Monir Hossain, 1,023 of Bhuiyan and 6,000 of Happy Poultry Farm were detected to have come down with H5N1 subtype of the virus.

As of yesterday, the livestock department officials have visited at

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CG won't stay in power a day longer than necessary

Chief adviser tells Time magazine

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has said his caretaker government does not intend to stay in power "a day longer than necessary".

In an interview with Time magazine for its March 22 issue, he said the Election Commission (EC) has to decide when elections will be held. "Before that, there is a need to carry out fundamental reforms of the political party systems, including registration and accountability to their own constitutions, and accountability to the people in terms of what they do with the money they collect," he added.

Fakhruddin said the EC is also thinking about technical issues like a voter ID card to ensure that fraud is minimised, about transparent ballot boxes. All these reforms will take time.



Fakhruddin Ahmed

"We are committed to holding elections in the shortest possible period but there is a wide acceptance in the country that the time that it takes to carry out these fundamental reforms should really be allowed, and then you hold elections," he said. But he hastened

to add, "We do not intend to stay in power a day longer than necessary."

Responding to a question that those reforms could take years, the chief adviser retorted, "Years? Definitely no. [But] some of those [negative] conditions [need to] be removed once and for all, not just for the next election but for elections thereafter as well."

Asked about some people's notion that the establishment of his government as a military coup by stealth, Fakhruddin said, "Only a lack of understanding and appreciation of the situation in Bangladesh would provoke that kind of a comment."

"The conditions under which we came to power are constitutional, and the military in Bangladesh really respects the rule

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Neighbours should look at Delhi as well-wisher

Manmohan says

PTI, New Delhi

Ahead of next month's Saarc summit, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said his country desires to see its neighbours feel secure and confident that in New Delhi "they have a well-wisher".

"We see their prosperity as a guarantee of ours. We see their progress as reinforcing ours. And so must they," he said speaking at the India Today Conclave.

Singh said, the destiny of people of South Asia is interlinked and inter-dependent. "Our region must and can move forward through such a cooperative engagement," he said.

Noting that India would be hosting the Saarc summit within a fortnight, the prime minister said, "We must make better use of the opportunities the world offers us."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Tharanga, Silva prop up crumbling Sri Lanka

AFP, Port of Spain

Upul Tharanga and Chamara Silva hit solid half-centuries to help Sri Lanka post a competitive 254 for 6 in a World Cup Group B match against India here on Friday.

India bowled superbly for a major part of the innings before losing their way in the closing 10 overs which yielded 75 runs, thanks to Silva's 68-ball 59 for his third successive half-century.

Silva put on 83 for the fifth wicket off just 80 balls with Tillakaratne Dilshan (38), ensuring his team crossed the 250-mark.

India were 103 for 4 after 24 overs. Rahul Dravid was batting on

18 while Yuvraj Singh (3). Left-handed opener Tharanga top-scored with a fighting 64 for his sixth half-century, but was unable to dominate the disciplined pace-spin attack.

Searners Zaheer Khan (2-49), Munaf Patel (1-46) and Ajit Agarkar (1-33) all bowled tightly on a pitch which offered movement and bounce early in the innings.

India, needing a win in this game to boost their chances of qualifying for the next Super Eight stage, kept pressure on the Sri Lankan batsmen as they never allowed them to build a notable partnership till the closing overs.

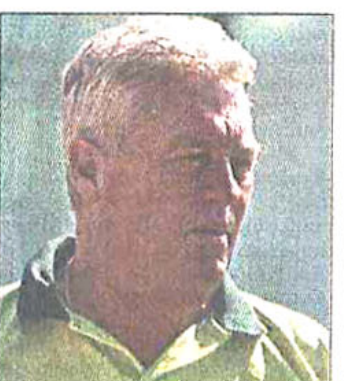
India skipper Rahul Dravid

elected to field after winning the toss and his new-ball bowlers did not let their captain down as both Zaheer and Agarkar exploited the conditions superbly.

Veteran Sanath Jayasuriya (6), who hammered a century in the previous game against Bangladesh, was the first to go when he top-edged a Zaheer delivery to be caught by Agarkar at the third-man boundary.

Tharanga kept his end intact with his sensible knock, but received little support as in-form skipper Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara fell cheaply to leave their team in a spot.

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Police confirm Woolmer murder

REUTERS, Bridgetown

A police revelation that one of the most famous figures in cricket was murdered has knocked the wind out of the World Cup ahead of its 11th day of competition on Friday.

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer, 58, was killed by strangulation, Jamaican police deputy commissioner Mark Shields told a news conference on Thursday in Kingston where the Briton had died four days earlier.

The news sent shock waves through cricket and completely overshadowed the action in the 32-year-old tournament.

Cricket has long since cast aside

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Rab seizes 10kg gold statue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members recovered a gold statue weighing 10 kg from a house in the town on Thursday night and arrested two smugglers.

The arrestees are Mohammad Ali, 32, son of Hazrat Ali, and Shahidul Islam, 33, son of late Mondir Ali.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-12 raided the house of Hazrat Ali on Fazlul Haque Road at around 8:00pm and arrested Hazrat and Shahidul. On their confessional statement, the Rab men seized the statue from the house.

Rab sources said the two were involved in statue smuggling for long.

Dangerous prank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The armed forces arrested a college student on Thursday for falsely identifying himself as an army officer and taking a vehicle and forces from Jatrabari Police Station with the fake identity.

Abdullah Al Farhad, 25, a final year student of a private law college in Dhanmondi, went to the duty officer's room at the Jatrabari PS around 3:00pm on Thursday and identified himself as a captain. He asked the duty officer to provide him with a vehicle and police force for some "government" job.

The duty officer phoned the officer-in-charge (OC) and

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Documents seized in Hawa Bhaban raid

STAR REPORT

The army-led joint forces raided BNP chairperson's Hawa Bhaban office in the capital's Banani area in the wee hours of yesterday morning and seized many letters, files of documents, computer hard disks, and compact disks (CDs) from there.

The forces also recovered a list of party activists who in 2004 took examinations for getting jobs as sub-inspectors (SI) in the police department. Names of six to nine SI candidates from each district were on the list, sources said. There is a widespread allegation against BNP that it gave appointments to the posts of SIs on political consideration all over the country during its

immediate past regime.

Police sources said a joint team of the army, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and police personnel entered Hawa Bhaban around 12:00am in presence of the building's caretakers and searched the place extensively for about six hours.

During the search the crack forces seized many letters, files of documents, five computer hard disks and 20 CDs.

The forces checked some of the CDs and found that those contain movies while they have yet to check the hard disks.

After the raid had ended at 6:00am the forces handed over a list of the seized items to the employees of Hawa Bhaban.

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Two killed in 'shootouts' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two alleged criminals were killed during "shootouts" with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Dhaka and Shariatpur yesterday.

Rab-4 claimed that Shameem alias 'Negro' Shameem, close associate of top criminals Taj and Abbas alias 'Killer' Abbas, was killed during a "shootout" between Shameem's cohorts and Rab personnel at Mirpur-13 in the capital at around 2:15am.

But family sources said Rab arrested Shameem on Thursday from his Adabar house.

The law enforcers said Shameem was wanted in eight cases, including one for murder,

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PHOTO: STAR

About 500 people joined the 100-kilometre walkathon on the world's longest beach yesterday. The three-day walk that started from Teknaf will end at Cox's Bazar tomorrow. (Story on page 20).

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