

# Fogs wreak havoc in N India

## 10 killed as trains collide, flights delayed, power grid trips

ANI, AFP, PTI, Kanpur/Lucknow

Dense fogs wreaked havoc last morning in North India as five trains collided in three separate incidents, the northern grid tripped and flights were delayed or diverted.

At least 10 people were killed and dozens injured in three separate accidents involving trains in the fog-bound northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, police and railway officials said.

In the first accident, an inter-city express ramed into the back of a stationary passenger train near the town of Sarai Bhopat, 250km southwest of the state capital Lucknow.

Additional police director general Brij Lal said 10 passengers were injured including three whose condition doctors described as "grave."

Ten people were killed in the second accident 45 minutes later when two other express trains collided in similar fashion, around 80km southwest of Lucknow, Lal said.

Three of those killed were women, rail officials at the accident site said.

Senior railways official MN Srivastava said the impact in both train collisions had been minimised by the fact that the trains were travelling at low speeds because of the dense fog.

In a third accident, a passenger train slammed into a tractor at an unmanned rail crossing, officer Lal said, adding that three people on the tractor were injured in the mishap, near Allahabad city, also in Uttar Pradesh.

There were no injuries to passengers on the train, he said.

Visibility at the three accident sites was down to around 30 metres (100 feet).

The string of accidents threw train services into disarray across India, rail officials said in New Delhi.

### Power grid trips

The power failure caused a power blackout in many parts of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu

and Kashmir and Chandigarh and seriously hitting trains and flights.

Electricity supply was restored within a few hours in most parts of Punjab and Haryana, the two states where train traffic was the worst affected.

The tripping in the northern grid took place at 3.02 am.

"The snag developed due to thick fog over Punjab and Haryana," Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) chairman H S Brar said. Hectic work was on to restore power supply in all the states.

Power supply had been restored in 60 per cent of the areas, Brar said.

The tripping of the grid severely affected power-driven trains.

In Ambala, 15 trains got delayed by one to three hours. In total, over 50 trains were affected in Ambala, Ferozpur and Delhi divisions, he said.

The railway authorities deployed diesel engines to overcome the crisis.

### Flights affected

Hundreds of air and rail passengers were stranded in the bitterly cold

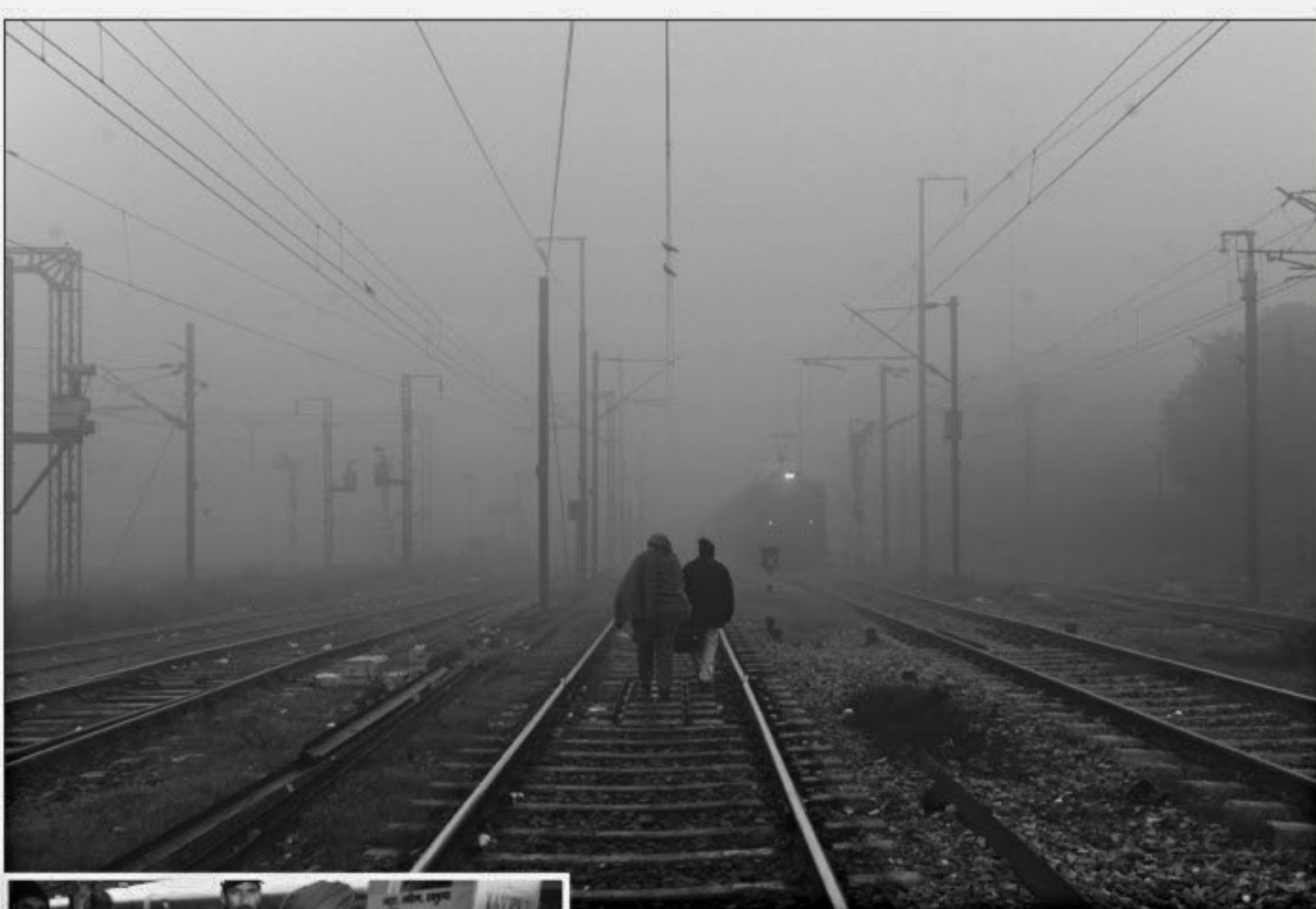
national capital on Saturday as dense fog led to numerous flight cancellations and train delays.

A fault in the instrument landing system at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport owing to heavy fog further added to the woes of people.

The visibility dropped to zero metres in the city early on Saturday and continued to remain below 50 metres at 10 am.

Over three dozen domestic flights and a dozen international flights were delayed for hours and many were cancelled. The runway visibility at the IGI airport was below 125 metres, as opposed to the minimum 150 metres required for a flight to take off.

"All flight operations to and from Delhi have been affected due to dense fog and the snag in the Runway Visual Range (RVR) instrument located on the main runway. Many international and domestic flights coming to Delhi have been diverted," said an airport official.



Men walk on rail tracks in dense fog in New Delhi yesterday as passengers, who were travelling on the Prayagraj Express, react on their arrival at the railway station in Allahabad after train accident (inset). At least 10 people were killed when five express trains collided in separate incidents in the fog-bound northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Jailed Ulfa leaders could be freed for peace talks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Guwahati

Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi Friday hinted at releasing jailed leaders of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) for peace talks, but wanted a formal communication from the outfit expressing their desire for negotiations with the government.

"I can only say that if peace talks are held it will be held with full dignity and honour. I don't want to spell out anything further now," the chief minister told journalists when asked about possibilities of

freeing the top jailed Ulfa leaders for the negotiations.

Seven top Ulfa leaders are currently in various jails, six of them in Guwahati - outfit's chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa, vice chairman Pradeep Gogoi, self-styled foreign secretary Sasha Choudhury, finance secretary Chitrabon Hazarika, publicity chief Mithinga Daimary, cultural secretary Pranati Deka, and Ulfa political ideologue Bhimkanta Buragohain.

The chief minister also hinted that there were positive signals for peace talks from the jailed Ulfa leadership.

"I wouldn't say there has

been a breakthrough, but there are some positive signals coming in," Gogoi said.

The chief minister, however, said Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah was adopting a belligerent posture and was remaining elusive so far.

"We also want Paresh Baruah for talks, but if he does not come then we still can hold talks," Gogoi said.

On the political front, the chief minister said state elections would be held as scheduled in early 2011 and there were no plans to seek early polls.

# Manmohan is 'Chic Sikh' of 2009

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Chandigarh

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been named the 'Chic Sikh' of 2009 by popular online Sikh magazine sikhchic.com.

Two others sharing the honour are Delhi lawyer Harvinder Singh Phoolka, who has crusaded for the rights of the 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims, and former bureaucrat Saran Singh of 'The Sikh Review'.

The three were selected after a two-month write-in by sikhchic's worldwide readership," sikhchic.com editor T. Sher Singh, who is based in Toronto, told IANS.

The prime minister has been chosen not only for his international image but also for achieving the distinction of becoming prime minister for the second consecutive time.

# Female feet getting larger

ANI, London

Women in the UK seem to be stepping out of their shoe sizes with the average going up from a five to a six in the last five years, experts have observed.

According to research carried out by Debenhams, sales of ladies' size nine jumped by 23 per cent, while sales of size sixes leaped by 17 per cent in 2009.

"Big shoes, especially heeled styles, have to be made much stronger with sturdier load-bearing points, able to cope with greater levels of stress and wear," the Telegraph quoted Ed Watson, from the department store chain, as saying.

"In the past, these shoe sizes would have only been available bespoke, but today's women with larger feet want to wear the designer styles which we stock rather than frumpy specially made ones," Watson added.

Michael Paynton, British Chiropody and Podiatry Association chairman, further told The Daily Mail: "I have been in practice 42 years and in that time standard foot sizes have changed dramatically. At one time it would have been difficult for a woman to get a size 6 shoe. Now that is the norm."

"It's part of the process of evolution, as generally people are getting bigger and taller. We are seeing it clinically in both men and women as modern diets and lifestyle change.

# Pak bomb attack a warning to anti-Taliban tribes

AP, AFP, Shah Hasan Khel

A suicide car bombing that killed 93 people on a volleyball field sent a bloody New Year's warning to Pakistanis who have formed militias to fend off Taliban insurgents in the northwestern region near the Afghan border.

The attack on the outskirts of Lakki Marwat city was one of the deadliest in recent Pakistani history. As local tribesmen prepared for funerals Saturday, rescuers searched rubble for more bodies, and many in the area were too terrified to speculate who staged the assault.

The suicide bomber detonated some 550 pounds (250 kilograms) of high-intensity explosives on the crowded field in Shah Hasan Khel village during a volleyball tournament held Friday near a meeting of anti-Taliban elders. The elders, who had helped set up an anti-Taliban militia in the area, were probably the actual target, police said.

Lakki Marwat district is near South Waziristan, a tribal region where the army has been battling the Pakistani Taliban since October.

The military operation was undertaken with the backing

of the US, which is eager for Pakistan to free its tribal belt of militants believed to be involved in attacks on Western troops in Afghanistan. The offensive has provoked apparent reprisal attacks that had already killed more than 500 people in Pakistan before Friday's blast.

Militants have struck all across the nuclear-armed country, and they appear increasingly willing to hit groups beyond security forces. No group claimed responsibility for Friday's blast, but that is not uncommon when many civilians are killed.



PHOTO: AFP

A Pakistani paramilitary soldier stands guard yesterday as local residents search for victims amid rubble a day after a suicide car bomb attack in the village of Shah Hasan Khan in Bannu district, bordering the Taliban stronghold of South Waziristan.



PHOTO: AFP

An Afghan member of parliament (MP) drops her vote into a ballot box during voting on President Hamid Karzai's cabinet nominees at Afghanistan's parliament in Kabul yesterday.

# Afghan parliament rejects 5 Karzai cabinet nominees

## Bomb kills 5 more civilians

AFP, Kabul/Herat

Afghanistan's parliament rejected five of President Hamid Karzai's nominees for cabinet posts as a vote count continued on Saturday to finally form a government.

State television showed the laborious vote count live, following a secret ballot of the more than 200 parliamentarians to approve the 24 nominees to the Afghan cabinet.

After counting votes for ten nominees, only five had been approved.

The five nominees rejected during early counting included Ismail Khan, a warlord who had been nominated as water and energy minister, a powerful post seen by many observers as a reward for supporting Karzai's re-election.

The others rejected were the nominees for justice minister, Sawar Danish, higher education, Ubaidullah Abuid, religious affairs, Inayatullah Baligh and public works, Mirza Hussain

Abdulalahi.

Parliamentary spokesman Hasib Noori said the vote counting would continue until it was completed.

Approved were the portfolios for education, interior, defence, finance and culture, television footage showed.

The five ministers to win approval, less than half way through the counting process, had already received the nod from Karzai's international backers, including the United States and Nato allies.

Together the United States and Nato deploy more than 100,000 troops to Afghanistan, helping keep Karzai in power as they battle a virulent Taliban insurgency.

Around 40,000 extra troops will arrive over the course of this year, backed by thousands of civilians, as part of a new strategy to turn the tide away from the battlefield and towards development and aid.

Meanwhile, five civilians were killed and six wounded when their pick-up truck detonated an improvised

explosive device in southwestern Afghanistan, the governor of Nimroz province told AFP yesterday.

The attack was carried out by the Taliban in the district of Bakwan, Farah province, said governor Ghulam Dastagir Azad, whose province borders Farah.

The area where the attack took place is on the border between Farah and Nimroz, he said. Both provinces are under Taliban influence.

He said the blast occurred as the victims tried to travel to a market "regularly targeted by Taliban racketeering".

Civilians have become the main victims of the Afghan war. In the first 10 months of 2009, 2,038 civilians were killed in the conflict, 10 per cent more than over the same period in the previous year, according to the United Nations mission in Afghanistan.

Nearly 70 per cent of those killed died in attacks carried out by the insurgents, according to the UN.

# Most Indo-Pak nationals want peace

ANI, Islamabad

Despite the continuous hostility between the two countries, a majority of the billion and a half people of India and Pakistan want to live as peaceful and friendly neighbours, recent opinion surveys conducted by the Jang Group and the Times of India Group in Pakistan and India have revealed.

According to the polls, people in the two neighbouring countries want to share the same humane goals like any other civilised polity; economic prosperity for all, education for the youth, health for the needy, absence of violence and elimination of existential threats.

In Pakistan, 72 per cent of the respondents desired 'peaceful and friendly' relations with India" whereas 60 per cent Indians were hopeful of such an eventuality. The News reports.

# No Pakistani visa for any Balckwater official: Malik

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik has denied the presence of controversial private US security firm, Blackwater, in Pakistan, adding that none of the firm's officials have been given Pakistani visas.

Malik also rebuffed reports about any deal between the Blackwater and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).

Speaking to the business community at the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Malik said no such agency named Blackwater is working in the country.

He reiterated that the militants were receiving support from foreign countries, and that they aim to divide and create a rift among the people of the country.



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\*subject to change

CLOSING DATE: 31 JANUARY 2009

# Idea Cup 2009 Tri-Nation Cricket Series time schedule and ticket availability

Date	Match	Venue	Ticket/Price			
			Gallery	Special Enclosure	Club House	VIP Grand Stand
04-01-10 (Monday)	Bangladesh vs. Sri Lanka	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
05-01-10 (Tuesday)	Sri Lanka vs. India	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
07-01-10 (Thursday)	Bangladesh vs. India	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
08-01-10 (Friday)	Bangladesh vs. Sri Lanka	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
10-01-10 (Sunday)	Sri Lanka vs. India	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
11-01-10 (Monday)	Bangladesh vs. India	Mirpur Stadium	200	400	500	2000
13-01-10 (Wednesday)	Final	Mirpur Stadium	300	500	600	2500

Note: Tickets for matches scheduled on 4, 5 and 7 January will be available from 2 January; tickets for 8, 10 and 11 January will be available from 5 January and tickets for the final match on 13 January will be available from 9 January. The number of tickets are limited. Tickets will be available at the locations listed below till the day before the match (Grameenphone service hour: 9 AM to 7 PM). And tickets will be available at the cricket stadium on the day of the match.

All the remaining Grameenphone Centers not mentioned in the list below will provide reservation letters in place of match tickets. These letters can be used to collect the booked tickets the day before the match or on the match day within 12 PM from Mirpur Grameenphone Center (Rabul Plaza, Plot # shee-1/kha, Section-1, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216). Reservation letters must be collected at least two days prior to the match. For example, reservation letter for a match on 4th must be collected by the 2nd of that month. Tickets can be collected the day following the reservation.

Tickets are available from the following Grameenphone Centers

• GPC Dhanmondi: House# 38/2, Road # 16 (new), 27(old), Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka • GPC Farmgate: 71, Kazirul Islam Avenue, Farmgate, Dhaka-1000 • GPC Gulshan: Delvistaa Tower, Plot #1/A, Road # 113, Gulshan -2, Dhaka - 1212 • GPC Mirpur: Rabul Plaza, Plot # shee-1/kha, Section-1, Mirpur, Dhaka-1216 • GPC Motijheel: City Center Building, 1st Floor Plot # 5/A, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 • GPCF Hatirpul: 130 Nahar Plaza, Bir Uttam C.R. Datta Road, Hatirpul, Dhaka • GPCF Jatrabari: Shop # 12,138,14, Shamulullah Plaza, 40/2, Shohid Faruk Road, Jatrabari, Dhaka - 1204 • GPCF Malibagh: 16, DIT Road, Malibagh Chowdhury para, Malibagh, Dhaka • GPCF Mirpur 10: 5-10, Shohid Tajuddin Ahammed Showroni Road Mohakhali, Dhaka 1208. • GPCF Narayanganj: Hazil Ibrahim Khalil Super Market, Chittagong road, Siddirgonj, Narayanganj • GPCF Nodda: 43, Nodda Bus Stand, Biswa Road • GPCF North Tower Uttara: Shop # 02, 107, North Tower, Myhmensingh road, Uttara, Dhaka - 1230 • GPCF Polton: Shop # 8 & 9, Ground floor, Ibrahim mansion, 11, Purana Polton, Dhaka-1000 • GPCF Rifles Square: Grameen Phone Center, Shop: 246-248 & 258-259, 2nd Floor, East Block, Rifles Square Complex, Dhanmondi, Dhaka • GPCF Shamoly: 27/1, Mirpur Road, Mohammadpur, Shyamoly, Dhaka

\*Based on sufficient number of tickets. Conditions apply

