

# 72 hurt, 900 houses damaged as storms lash 4 districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Storms injured at least 72 people and damaged over 900 dwelling houses in Chapainawabganj, Brahmanbaria, Natore and Gaibandha districts yesterday and on Wednesday night.

At least 15-people were injured and over 400 thatched houses damaged as a storm lashed five unions in Gomostapur upazila of Chapainawabganj, reports our correspondent.

The 15 minute storm hit Gomostapur, Choudala, Boalia, Nandipur, Alinagar and Rahonpur areas at about 9.00pm, destroying at least 400 dwelling houses, five educational institutions, and uprooting more than 300 big trees and a few electric poles. It also extensively damaged standing crops and vegetables, said locals and upazila nirbahi officer Sajjadul Hasan.

A huge amount of mangoes fell from the trees in five unions and the municipal areas of the upazila. Fifteen people injured in house collapse were rushed to the local health complex.

Power supply remained cut off in Gomostapur upazila following the storm. Power Development Board workers are trying to resume power supply till filing the report at 4.00pm yesterday.

However, the actual amount of loss could not be ascertained as the officials concerned are yet to get all information

from field levels, said Gomostapur upazila nirbahi officer.

In Gaibandha, a storm early yesterday razed to ground at least 150 dwelling houses in three unions of Gobindaganj upazila, according to our correspondent.

During the storm that lasted for half an hour, at least 25 people including children and women were injured as houses collapsed and broken tree branches fell on them.

Five of them were rushed to Gobindaganj Health Complex in serious condition.

Over 150 dwelling houses were razed to the ground while tin-made roofs of many others including a few educational institutions blown away.

Occasional hails along with heavy rain ravaged jute plants on vast tract in Talukkanapur, Darbastha and Rakhali Buruj unions.

Contacted, upazila agriculture officer to this correspondent that they are yet to get the exact picture of crop damage by storm.

Power supply remained cut off in the storm-hit areas as 33 KV power transmission line of Rural Electrification Board snapped at different points.

Our correspondent in Brahmanbaria reports: At least 25 people were injured, 150 thatched houses damaged and 400 trees uprooted as a storm swept over

Daulatpur village under Dharmandal union on Nasirnagar upazila yesterday.

Dharmandal union chairman Bahar Uddin told this correspondent that the storm lasted for about 2-3 minutes leaving a trail of devastation.

Of the injured, Kaium, 40, his wife, 30, Abid, 30, Joykus, 4, Naznin, 7, Naju, 5, and Raihan, 5, were admitted to Nasirnagar upazila health complex in critical condition.

Contacted, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md. Abdul Mannan told this correspondent that he has sent a team led by Nasirnagar upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) to the spot to assess the damage with a view to extending necessary help to the victims.

A correspondent in Natore adds: At least seven people were injured and around 300 houses damaged by a nor'wester that lashed two upazilas on Wednesday night.

Locals said, the storm that swept over six unions of Singra upazila damaged 300 houses, uprooted scores of trees and left five people injured.

Meanwhile, at least 20 houses were damaged and two people were injured in six villages of Bagatipara upazila at the same time.

Power supply across the affected areas remained suspended due to uprooting of electric poles.



PHOTO: STAR

Workers continue digging around the large trees beside the main road of Faridpur town as the contractor, employed by Roads and Highways Department, continues work to remove the trees.

## Protests fall on deaf ears

Bhucprint for felling roadside trees unchanged as workers continue to remove earth

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Work to remove old trees beside the main road in Faridpur town is going on in full swing despite protests from nature lovers as well as people from all walks of life.

Workers of a contractor employed by the Roads and Highways Development (RHD) yesterday removed large chunks of earth from the bottom of about 50 large old trees on both sides of about half-kilometre road in Police Lines area, cut main roots of the trees and filled the ditches with sand.

The act has been done as per a plan to cause death of the trees within a month or two when they can be removed automatically, locals said.

The protesters yesterday launched a two-day signature campaign in the town urging not to fell the roadside trees as it

will ruin greenery of the town.

After the signature campaign, the protesters will file a suit with the court against RHD authorities in Faridpur as the tree roots were cut under the supervision of a contractor employed by the RHD, source said.

Earlier on Wednesday night, a team of representatives from different sections of people met Faridpur Deputy Commissioner Helaluddin Ahmed and submitted a memorandum suggesting stoppage of indiscriminate tree felling in the name of extending roads.

Prof Altaf Hossain, convener of Sachetan Nagorik committee, freedom fighter Abul Fayez Shah Newaz, Md Alauddin, cultural officer of Faridpur Shilpakala Academy, Mujibur Rahman, member of Nishorgo Sangsad, Azharul Islam, director of Faridpur Development

Agency, advocate Shipra Goswami, coordinator of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Asma Akter Mukta, executive director of RACINE, playwright Munshi Mohammad Ali Rumi, Rafikuzzaman Layek, secretary of district unit of Communist Party of Bangladesh, were in the team.

The deputy commissioner assured them that he will investigate whether the roots of old trees were cut without the approval of authorities concerned or without any auction.

Asked about the matter, RHD Executive Engineer SM Shafiqul Alam yesterday told this correspondent, "Workers employed by contractor Mir Akter Hossain mistakenly cut the roots of several trees. We were totally unaware of it. We have warned the contractor not to fell any tree."

## CUT IN THIS YEAR'S BORO PRODUCTION COST Farmers happy, sharecroppers still incur loss in north

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

This year's boro production cost in the northern region sees a decrease of Tk 3.00 to Tk 4.00 per kg compared to that of last year as favourable weather and the government's diesel subsidy, electricity rebate and drastic cut in fertiliser price helped boost production.

As per assessment of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district, a farmer having own land and irrigation pumps had to spend Tk 12.50 for producing a kg of boro paddy this year while the cost for sharecroppers or contract farmers stood at Tk 18.50.

In last year, the two types of farmers had to spend on an average Tk 16.50 and Tk 21.50 respectively.

As rice is selling at Tk 13.33 -- Tk 14.66 a kg in different markets in the district, farmers having own land and irrigation pumps are now able to make profit but a large number of sharecroppers are still incurring losses.

The production cost for boro paddy includes cost for seeds, fertiliser, pesticide, labour, diesel or electricity, tilling, interest on money borrowed to bear cultivation costs and others.

Diesel or electricity cost of pump owner farmers is half of that of the sharecroppers or contract growers. Landowner farmers do not have to pay anything for

land fare.

The sharecroppers or contract growers have to face higher production cost as they have to pay share of harvested paddy or contract money of Tk 6000/ per acre to land owners and pay Tk 8000/ or Tk 5000/ to diesel or power run pump owners for irrigation charge in addition to other usual cost.

"Decrease in boro production cost by Tk 3.00 or Tk 4.00 has been possible this year as the government greatly reduced price of fertiliser and gave subsidy in diesel. Favourable weather also helped increase of production and it led to further decrease in average production cost, he added. Decrease in production cost is almost the same in eight districts of the region," said AFM Mokbul Hossain Noori, deputy director (DD) of DAE in the district.

Farmers and DAE sources said that this year fertiliser cost for an acre (100 decimal) of land is reduced to Tk 3,740 this year which was Tk 4,700 last year. Moreover, 1.5 lakh small and marginal farmers and sharecroppers received Tk 800--Tk 1000 as diesel subsidy, they said. Power pump owners also get 20% rebate against electricity charge for irrigation.

This year's favourable weather also helped boro farmers including sharecroppers to get bumper harvest as they are getting average 2.23 tonne of paddy in

an acre and it led to further decrease in their production cost. Last year's production was about 2.00 tonne per acre, said sources.

Farmers Mizanur Rahman of Itakhola village of Sadar upazila, Ramzan Ali of Gayabari village of Dimla upazila and many others said that boro farmers are more or less happy this year as they have made profit after incurring losses for many years.

During visit to different paddy markets of the district like Mirganj, Tengonmari, Shakhmachha Haat and Dhela Peer Hat, this correspondent found that presently a bag of boro paddy weighing 75 kg is selling at

Tk 1000--Tk 1100, depending on dryness. And so, farmers are getting Tk 13.33--Tk 14.66 for a kg.

Accordingly, the landowner farmers are now able to make a profit of Tk 2.16 per kg while the sharecroppers are still incurring loss.

Raquibul Alam Chowdhury, president of the district rice mill owners association, said the price of paddy is likely to rise as the food department will start large-scale purchase of boro rice and paddy soon. The government's purchase rate for a kg of paddy is Tk 17.00 and that of rice is Tk 25.00.

But even the government rate will not be enough to make up loss of the sharecroppers, said the growers.



Chhatra League men ransack the office of district BNP and set fire to a motorbike in front of the office during their clashes with Chhatra Dal activists in Thakurgaon town Wednesday night.



PHOTO: STAR

## Extortionist killed in mob beating

UNB, Chuadanga

An extortionist was killed in a mob beating at Chandpur village in Sadar upazila on Tuesday evening.

Deceased Thandu was son of late Mojibur Rahman of Nagda village in Alamdanga upazila.

Witnesses and police said, Thandu along with his cohorts came to betel leaf trader Abu Taleb of the village at 7:30 pm and demanded Tk 1 lakh illegal toll.

Hearing Taleb's cry for help, locals rushed to the spot and caught Thandu after a hot chase. They gave him a good thrashing, leaving him seriously injured.

On information, police rescued Thandu and took him to Sadar hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Police said Thandu was a listed criminal and wanted in a number of cases.

In Kushtia, police recovered the body of a village watchman from the bank of the river Padma at Borkapara village in Daulatpur upazila early Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Babu Ali Chaukider, 40, son of Surat Ali Chaukider of the village.

## WEDNESDAY'S THAKURGAON INCIDENT BCL goes on rampage in town: 6 JCD men held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists on Wednesday night attacked BNP office, ransacked some business establishments and set fire to a motorbike following an attack on them by JCD men in the afternoon.

Police and witnesses said the JCD attack was a sequel to an incident occurred at Thakurgaon Government College where JCD activist Mohsin was assaulted by BCL activists in the morning.

Mohsin went to the college to take back his mobile set that was taken away by BCL activist Ashik and his associates at Collegepara in the town on Tuesday. At one stage of altercation, Ashik and his party colleagues beat him up.

Ashik and his associates took away Mohsin's mobile set as he along with his girlfriend went to Collegepara on Tuesday evening. Ashik stalked Mohsin's girlfriend and also hurled abuse at him.

In retaliation for the attack on Mohsin on the college campus, JCD activists

equipped with sharp weapons swooped on BCL activists with sharp weapons at Thakurgaon football ground at around 4:00pm on Wednesday, leaving 10 people injured.

Of the injured, BCL men Shohag, 25, Murad, 18, Minhaz, 22, Rony, 22, Milon, 22, and Kayes, 22, were admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Protesting the attack, BCL held a protest meeting at Thakurgaon Intersection at around 8:00pm and then went to District Awami League office. At around 10:00pm, the

BCL men attacked the district BNP office, damaged the portraits of Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman and ransacked some business establishments belonging to BNP men.

JCD and BNP men also launched a counter-attack, leading to a clash. Police fired at least 40 tear gas shell and rubber bullets to disperse the clashing groups and bought the situation under control at around 11:30pm.

Later, they raided Fakirpara and Hajipara areas in the town and arrested six JCD activists.

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## Caricatures on Shibir torched at night

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Despite heavy security measures, unidentified people on Wednesday night burned three caricatures, criticising the activities of Shibir on Rajshahi University campus.

Bangladesh leaders and activists blamed the Shibir for torching the caricatures that they had earlier placed in front of the administration building, library, and Ismail Hossain Siraji building.

They also took out an anti-Shibir procession on the campus in the morning and caught a Shibir man named Anwar Hossain on his arrival at RU rail station from Thakurgaon by a train. The BCL men later handed Anwar, a second student of Arabic department, over to the police.

BCL sources and night guards said at least 12 people, equipped with hocky sticks and iron rods, entered the campus riding motorcycles from western side of Paris

Road at around 11:30pm and set fire to the caricatures.

While leaving the campus, the intruders found Jubo League leader Amanullah Khokon, Motihar Sainik League Organising Secretary Rashed Khan Bipu and former RU BCL joint secretary Azim Bin Kamal Ujjil on the mass graveroad.

Ujjal and Khokon told this correspondent that the motorcycle riders hurled hand bomb at them, leaving Bipu injured. Bipu took treatment at a private clinic, they added.

RU BCL General Secretary Majedul Islam Apu held Shibir for the incident and demanded their security on the campus. Police officials said, "Eight CCTV cameras and some 300 policemen are there. So, it is not possible for anyone to commit such crime on the campus, dodging security measures".

Abul Khair, Officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station said they are investigating the incident.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers bring newly harvested boro paddy to Dhela Peer market in Nilphamari district as the growers eye profit due to decreased production cost this year.