

Hailstorm damages crops on vast areas in northern dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Hailstorm hit several northern districts on Wednesday afternoon killing at least one person and damaging crops including vegetables on vast areas.

The storm lashed Dinajpur district on Wednesday afternoon killing one person and injuring at least seven others in different upazilas, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Habibar Rahman, 60, of Narabari village in Biral upazila.

The 10-15 minute storm also flattened wheat and other crops on about 7,400 hectares, according to the district DAE official.

Sekendar Ali, deputy director of DAE said mustard, vegetables and wheat were badly hit at Biral, Shetabganj, Chirirbandar, Parbatipur and Dinajpur Sadar upazilas.

Besides, a few trees were uprooted while over a hundred mud houses damaged.

In Nilphamari, winter vegetables and tobacco on about 350 hectares were damaged as a storm accompanied with hails lashed at least 12 unions of Sadar, Damar and Jaldhaka upazilas on Wednesday.

Farmers and DAE sources said severe storms along with heavy hails were reported from Chaora Barogachha, Gogram, Khoksha Bari, Palashmari and Tupamari unions of Sadar upazila, Harin Chara, Sonarai, Jorabari and Bhogdabari of Damar upazila and Golmunda, Kaimari, Jaldhaka municipality of Jaldhaka upazila, reports our correspondent.

The storm continued for about half an hour and damaged mustard, wheat, cabbage, tomato, peeper, eggplant and other crops. The

hails also damaged a huge area of tobacco fields in the affected villages.

The storm lashed three upazilas in Gaibandha district damaging huge crops and over 50 dwelling houses, reports our correspondent.

The affected upazilas are Sundarganj, Sadullapur and Gaibandha Sadar. Untimely rainfall also damaged huge stacks of bricks kept for baking at the brickfields in those upazilas.

A severe hailstorm also hit many villages in different upazilas of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts on Wednesday afternoon, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

Several hundred houses, scores of educational institutions and wheat, maize, mustard, green chili, vegetables, watermelon and pulse on over 20,000 hectares were badly damaged in those districts, DAE sources said.

In Thakurgaon, rainfall followed by a severe hailstorm lashed different villages under Ranishankoil, Haripur, Baliadangi and Sadar upazilas for 15 minutes. Besides crops, it badly damaged several hundred earthen and thatched houses.

The storm also uprooted electric poles and fruit bearing trees. Power supply remained suspended for several hours.

As many as 70 farmers, who were working in the fields, were injured, sources said.

In Panchagarh, moderate rain since morning turned into a hailstorm in the afternoon.

Moments before the hailstorm the sky in the whole area turned dark suddenly.

Several hundred houses and crops on at least 4,000 hectares were badly damaged in Atwary, Boda, Panchagarh Sadar upazilas.



PHOTO: STAR

A house at Mazadanga village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila lies ravaged, below, a field at Rajagaon in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila gets covered with ice balls as hailstorm wreaked havoc in vast areas of the northern region 'on Wednesday afternoon.

Urea sale comes to halt

Farmers, dealers both refuse to take BCIC fertiliser in Gaibandha

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Farmers of Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha district have refused to purchase 'solidified, discoloured and sand-mixed' urea from dealers of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), driving the latter to stop receiving its delivery from BCIC buffer stock godowns in the district.

Following complaints from farmers, Sundarganj upazila nirbahi officer has also ordered dealers to stop selling such fertiliser until further order.

"The urea fertiliser imported from China was found in torn out bags during transshipment at Chittagong and Mongla ports. The transport agencies also supplied those torn out sacks to the buffer stock and a good amount of the fertiliser fell to the ground during loading and unloading," said

Mahbub Alam Ripon, secretary of district fertiliser dealers' association.

One lakh 14 thousand 985 hectares of land have been brought under boro farming in Gaibandha district in the current season, said sources at the agriculture office.

The department concerned has allocated 14,470 tonnes of urea fertiliser for February and the total amount earlier reached the district buffer stock godowns.

The department has already supplied 7,900 tonnes of urea among 102 dealers in Gaibandha district. Over 3,000 tonnes of the fertiliser is imported from China.

Contained in torn out bags, the imported fertiliser got damaged and lost natural colour during its stay in godowns for a few months, said an official of the buffer stock.

"We are facing much trouble as farmers refused to take it on reasonable

grounds," said a dealer of Sundarganj upazila preferring anonymity.

Due to the situation, the fertiliser dealers have stopped taking delivery of allocated fertiliser from the buffer stock.

"We are no longer receiving fertiliser in torn out bags from transport agencies and asked labourers not to repackage fertiliser that was kept on the ground for long," said Haider Ali Khan, in-charge of the district buffer stock.

Gaibandha deputy commissioner also visited the buffer stock godowns and asked the officials and employees not to sell 'repacked and solidified' fertiliser.

Sundarganj upazila parishad Chairman Wahiduzzaman Sarker on Tuesday seized 500 bags of date expired urea fertiliser from a godown of Tomal Chandra Saha, a dealer of BCIC at Shovaganj Bazar.



PHOTO: STAR

Repacked urea, meant for distribution among dealers of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, is kept on the premises of its Gaibandha godown. Inset, a large amount of damaged and discoloured fertiliser lies on the floor of a godown.

SNIPPETS

Ward Councillor jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A court on Wednesday fined a councillor of the Sylhet City Corporation Tk 6 lakh and awarded him one year's simple imprisonment in a case filed for cheque dishonour. Joint district judge-III of Sylhet Sheikh Ashrafur Rahman pronounced the judgment. As AZM Abdullah, a trader of the city filed case against the SCC councillor of ward 14, a lower court in Sylhet in 2009 granted bail to Abdur Rahman Mihad on condition of immediate payment of the claimed amount of Tk 3 lakh. But getting the bail the councillor neither complied with the court decision nor appeared in the court.

Jamaat leader murdered

UNB, Comilla

A local Jamaat leader was hacked to death by criminals at Chhoto Dhushia village in Brahmanpara upazila on Wednesday night. The deceased was identified as Haji Nurul Haque, 60, of Sabujpara village. He was the executive committee member of Brahmanpara upazila unit of Jamaat-e-Islami. Police and locals said, a gang hacked Nurul Haque indiscriminately leaving him dead on the spot while he was returning home through Chhoto Dhushia village after saying prayers at the upazila town mosque.

Rab man found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police yesterday recovered the body of a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) member from an abandoned railway line at Rahimabad village under Sadar upazila. Deceased Biplob Kumar Dey, 39, son of Barindra Nath Dey of Kodla village of the same upazila was an assistant sub-inspector of police. Police also recovered a bottle of insecticide from near his body and a stamp paper from his pocket. Major Sabbir Hossain of Rab-8 said, Biplob took ten days leave to go to his village home a few days ago. But Biplob's family members claimed that after the last Durga puja he never came to meet them. Sub-inspector Abu Siddik of Bagerhat model police said, after primary investigation, police suspect that Biplob might have committed suicide due to family feud.

Brick kiln worker killed

UNB, Noakhali

A young brick kiln worker was found dead at Ganasa in Senbag upazila on Wednesday morning. On information, police recovered the body of Mohammad Ali, 18, worker of Rupsha Brickfield, and sent it to the district general hospital morgue for autopsy. Locals said Ali, son of Sattar Ahmed Mia of Kamolganj upazila of Laxmipur district, was stabbed to death by other fellow workers following altercation over gambling at the brickfield on Tuesday night.

Four Hizb-ut Tawhid activists arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested four activists of the Islamist organisation Hizb-ut Tawhid from Bogra Road area of the city on Wednesday.

The arrestees were identified as Sumon Mallik, 25, son of Kanchan Mallik of Gausia Road Chandu Market in Rupatali area and Shahriar Aziz, 22, son of Faizul Kabir of Baptist Mission of Banglabazar in the city, Aminul Huq, 30, son of Shahjahan Fakir of

Khalihata under Uzirpur upazila and Mansur Hossain, 38, son of Fazlul Huq Mollah of Shahzira under Gournadi upazila and resident of Gausia Road Chandu Market area.

Captain Rakib, media spokesman of Rab-8 said a patrol team of the elite force arrested the four Hizb-ut Tawhid activists from Opso-Saline intersection of Bogra Road at about 2:00am Wednesday while they were trying to spread the outfit's ideology. Jihadi books, compact

discs (CDs), posters, leaflets, calendar, microphone and loudspeaker were seized from the possessions of the arrestees. After interrogation, they were handed over to police.

Officer in-charge (OC) of Kotwali police station said the arrestees were sent to jail after they were produced before the court.

The arrestees, claiming themselves innocent, said they were the followers of the outfit's founder Bayzid Khan Ponni, of Karotia under Tangail district.

GANGWAY COLLAPSES DUE TO OVERLOADING

Tourists fall into Naf, 30 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 100 tourists fell into the Naf River and 30 of them received injuries when a wooden gangway collapsed at Damdamia ghat (terminal) in Teknaf upazila on Wednesday.

Police and local people said at least 1,000 tourists gathered at the ghat to board the ship, Eagle-1. Though the ship has a capacity of carrying 320 people to St Martin's Island, the ship authorities allowed 600 tourists to board the ship, they added.

On information, Khokon Kanti Saha, executive magistrate and also the assistant commissioner (land), and Abul Hasem, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, rushed to the spot.

As they were trying to offload additional passengers from the ship, suddenly, a

portion of the gangway with at least 100 people on it collapsed into the river. Many of them lost their mobile phones, cameras, wristwatches, money and other valuable documents.

Hearing the news upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) rushed to the spot and rescued the tourists with the help of BGB personnel and coastguards.

Of the injured, AC (land) Khokon Kanti Saha, Momtaj Begum, Sanaullah, Faridul Islam, Sitara Yesmin, Saimum, Azizul Haq, Anwar and Bilkis were admitted to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex while the rest given first aid at the hospital.

The AC (land) was later shifted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. The authorities concerned fined Eagle-1 Tk 50,000 for allowing passengers to board the ship beyond its capacity.

Victim of blind rage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A woman killed her three-month-old baby over feud with her husband at their Purbo Mazampur residence in the town on Wednesday.

Police arrested the killer mother, Itiara.

Itiara was married to Abdus Samad, assistant executive officer of Janata Bank Kushtia Zonal Office, one year ago, police and family sources said.

Before the marriage, both Samad and Itiara had separate conjugal life and later got divorced.

Itiara gave birth to a male child three months ago.

Police said they rushed to the house after a phone call by Samad that his wife killed

his kid by slitting the throat at his residence.

The couple often engaged in altercation over their previous lives and abused each other, family sources said.

"Recently Samad claimed that the baby born to Itiara was not by him. This angered Itiara," a relative of Itiara told this correspondent in the town yesterday.

"My wife called me over mobile just after committing the murder," Samad said.

"Itiara unhesitatingly admitted to the killing of her son by herself. We will investigate the matter. Police will ask for Itiara's remand," said Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP-Circle) Abdul Halim.



RU observes 'Zoha Day' today

RU CORRESPONDENT

Commemorating the 42nd anniversary of martyrdom of Dr Shamsuzzoha, the Rajshahi University (RU) authorities will observe 'Zoha Day' today.

On this day in 1969, Dr Shamsuzzoha was shot dead by Pakistani military junta in front of the RU main gate as he rushed there to protect the students marching towards the town violating Section 144.

Zoha was the RU proctor and a teacher of the chemistry department. His death sparked violent protests across the then East Pakistan, leading to the fall of Ayub regime.

To mark the day, the RU authorities will hoist black flag atop all dormitories, administrative and academic buildings, place wreaths at Zoha's grave and offer special prayers and hold doa mehil at central mosque.

Progressive Teachers' Society (PTS), teachers' and officers' associations, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Rajshahi University Journalists' Association (RuJa) and different socio-cultural organisations will hold discussions and offer special prayers.

Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall will also arrange a discussion at Kazi Nazrul Islam auditorium to mark the day. RU chemistry department will bring out a silent procession on the campus. The department in association with the university authorities will also organise Zoha memorial lecture at the auditorium.

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