

Nor'wester lashes 9 districts

Eight killed by lightning, 50 hurt, houses, crops damaged

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Eight people were killed by lightning and 50 others injured during nor'wester that lashed nine districts yesterday and on Tuesday night.

Over 1,200 dwelling houses, educational institutions and business establishments were damaged and a good number of trees were uprooted in the affected districts, report our correspondents.

The storm-hit districts are Khulna, Satkhira, Chittagong, Pirojpur, Natore, Bhola, Noakhali, Bagerhat, Patuakhali, Barisal, Kishoreganj and Joypurhat.

In Khulna, storm accompanied by hail and rain damaged over 50 houses and Irri-boro paddy in Koyra, Dakope and Paikgaccha upazilas on Tuesday night.

In Satkhira, Two people were killed and three others injured as lightning struck them during storm at Amadi Kheyaghat under Ashashuni upazila upazila on Tuesday night.

The dead were identified as Monsur Molla, 55, of Kakbasia village, and Nasir Uddin Gazi, 30, of Kapsanda village in the upazila.

In Chittagong, two people were killed and four others were injured by lightning during the storm that lashed Hathazari and Banshkali upazilas of the district.



Nor'wester razes over 1,200 houses, educational institutions and business establishments to the ground in nine districts of the country on Tuesday night. Photos show a storm-ravaged house at Mitradanga village in Morrelganj upazila of Bagerhat, right, Sharikkhali High School in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

'TAUBA' TO 16 AL SUPPORTERS 15 Jamaat, BNP men charge sheeted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Charges have been pressed against 15 Jamaat and BNP men for forcibly administering 'tauba' (oath of penance) to 16 people for supporting Awami League in Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat district.

Inspector (investigation) Nur Hossain Khandakar of Panchbibi Police Station submitted the charge sheet against the accused to the Judicial Magistrate's Court, Joypurhat, on Tuesday afternoon.

Jamaat men caught 16 people of Bharahuta village on March 3 and confined them to local Jame Mosque.

Moiz Uddin, an imam of another mosque of the same area, administered the oath to the 16 AL supporters at the mosque at around 11:30am on March 4 when local Jamaat leader Zafir Uddin and BNP activist Abdul Khaleque were present. Zafir is locally known as

Razakar.

"We've become non-Muslim by supporting the Awami League. We're now promising to be with Jamaat to become Muslim again. Those who support the Awami League are Jews and if we breach this oath, we will become non-Muslim again. Ameen," the 16 men, aged between 22 and 45, said after the imam.

Being informed by some locals, Police Superintendent Hamidul Alam of Joypurhat, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rafiqul Islam, and Officer-in-Charge Ahsanul Haque visited the village on March 6.

Police filed a case with Panchbibi Police Station the same day (March 6), accusing 15 Jamaat and BNP men of forcing the AL supporters to take the oath. Of the accused, 11 were arrested by March 21 from different areas of Khetlal upazila under the district, while the rest are still at large.

Jubo Dal man cuts scrotum for toll

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmonirhat*

Extortionists allegedly led by a local Jubo Dal leader roughed up and cut the scrotum of a tobacco grower at bordering Durgapur village of Aditmari upazila under the district yesterday morning.

The victim, Solaiman Ali, 46, of Durgapur village was admitted to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital with critical injuries and later referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Mithu Pramanik, former convener of Durgapur union unit of Jubo Dal, and his six or seven accomplices called Solaiman out of his home and took him about half a kilometre away at around 6:30am today [Wednesday]. They tied him to a roadside tree, beat him mercilessly and cut the scrotum, Mosabberul Islam, officer in charge (OC) of Aditmari police station quoted the family members as saying.

"Mithu Pramanik and his gang had demanded Tk 30 thousand as

toll money, saying that they would arrange selling Solaiman's produce to a tobacco company at fair price. Solaiman did not agree to their demand and directly sold his tobacco to the company two days ago," the OC said.

"Critically injured due to beating and cut in the scrotum, Solaiman Ali was given primary treatment here and then referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital at noon. It will not be possible to save his life without high quality treatment," said Dr Tapon Kumar Ray, resident medical officer of Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital.

After the brutal incident, police rushed to the spot but could not arrest the criminals as they went into hiding.

Family members were preparing to file a case accusing Mithu Pramanik, 32, son of late Abdul Mazid Pramanik of Durgapur village, and seven of his accomplices with Aditmari police station.



PHOTO: STAR

Nature activists and journalists rescue some sparrows that had been caught by unscrupulous locals in Barisal city after Tuesday night's nor'wester left the birds injured.

Savage act of feasting on storm-injured birds

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

A large number of birds, left injured by Tuesday night's nor'wester, fell prey to the savagery of a section of greedy and utterly callous people who caught and slaughtered the graceful creatures for eating.

Hundreds of birds including sparrows, waterfowls, cranes, storks, and herons lay prostrate on the premises of Barisal Telegraph Office as a nor'wester accompanied by downpour and thunderstorm battered the area for about half an hour from about 7:45pm on Tuesday.

With a good number of trees, the large compound of Barisal Telegraph Office, now with very little function, serves as a birds' sanctuary in the city.

After the storm, a large number of locals rushed to the spot, entered the office premises through the open gate and engaged in collecting the birds, mostly injured or senseless.

Informed about the brutality on the helpless birds, environment activists, nature lovers and journalists rushed to the spot yesterday morning and did what they could to save the remaining alive birds there.

They rescued and freed to nature a good number of birds.

Strangely though, no official and staff except a night guard were found at the office during the journalists' visit there a couple of times till 2:00pm yesterday.

The activists and the newsmen also saw locals holding bowls full of huge meat of slaughtered birds while many women in the area busied



PHOTO: STAR

Hardly aware of ethics and the law of the land regarding wildlife, an elderly woman gives a happy look, holding the meat of natural birds caught and slaughtered by her family members after the creatures got hurt during Tuesday night's nor'wester in Barisal city. Above, a bowl full of meat from birds caught the same night.

themselves preparing meals with the meat.

Thousands of sparrows, waterfowls, cranes, storks, and herons regularly take shelter on the huge trees on the office premises considering it as a safe place, said Monir, night guard of the office.

"My duty starts at 10:00pm. Mostly the outsiders who sheltered here during the storm involved in catching and killing the birds. It happened due to their unawareness about the nature," said Monir, who himself could not resist the temptation to catch a

few of the birds.

"I promise not to do the bad act again," said an apparently repentant Monir. Contacted by this correspondent, Rowshanara, superintendent of the office, said from her home, "I have heard the matter. I will investigate it."

Asked why no office staffs were found at the office during the journalists' visit there more than once from morning till afternoon, she said, "All went for taking tea and lunch as there was no work for them."

Women getting self-reliant by doing embroidery works

UNB, *Thakurgaon*

A section of poor women and girls in the district is becoming self-reliant by doing embroidery works on fabrics.

The women after finishing their household works, make embroideries on 'sari, kameez and urnas' for an extra income.

Girls who cannot continue studies for financial constraint are also engaged in the sector that has turned out to be very helpful for their economic self-sufficiency.

About 700 women of seven villages, including Shibganj, Munshirhat and Chilarang under Sadar upazila, earn their livelihood mostly through embroidery works.

These women with their sewing craftsmanship make exquisite pieces of artworks on fabrics with colourful threads and stones, known as 'jari' and 'puti'.

About four years ago, Abu Sayed, husband of Sufia Begum, 28, of Shibganj village under Sadar upazila, was killed in a road accident.

He left behind two daughters and a son. Sufia Begum was worried as how would she run the family.

One day, she saw one of her neighbours doing embroidery works on 'saris'.

She also started the work and within five days she completed embroidery on a piece of sari and earned Tk 500.

Sufia Begum said if she had not started the work at that time, she would have had to

start begging for running the family.

Champa Begum and Sadika Khatun of the same village are students of classes VIII and VII respectively at local Madarganj High School.

Due to financial inability of their families, their studies stopped midway.

They also started the same work and it helped them keep their studies on right track.

Mamuni Begum of Shibganj said, everyday about 400 women take 'saris' and 'urnas' from her and after necessary embroidery works deposit those to her and take their wages.

She said doing embroidery work on a piece of sari generally takes a week and costs Tk 500 to 700.

The finished saris are taken to capital Dhaka where a single piece sales between Tk 5,000 and 15,000 depending on the works.

Businessman Sohel Khan, proprietor of Tamanna Enterprise in Dhaka, recently opened up an opportunity for the helpless women.

He makes designs on the 'saris' and 'urnas' and sends those to Thakurgaon for embroidery works.

On getting the embroidery works done at Thakurgaon, he takes the items back to Dhaka to sell those in noted shops and malls.

According to Sohel Khan, about 700 poor women were now engaged in the promising embroidery industry in Thakurgaon.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Once profusely flowing Monu River has become a stream due to construction of sluice gates upstream. At least 12 rivers flowing through Moulvibazar district are in the same situation as rubber dams and sluice gates greatly affect the water flow of the rivers.