

Typhoon death toll rises to four in Philippines

AFP, Manila

At least four people are known to have died after a powerful typhoon ripped through the Philippines, officials said yesterday, with high-speed winds prompting large-scale evacuations, tearing off roofs and shutting down Manila airport.

Typhoon Kammuri wreaked havoc on islands and provinces south of the capital Manila on Tuesday, sending nearly 600,000 people fleeing their homes, civil defence officials said.

Three people died on the islands of Mindoro and Marinduque after being hit by falling trees and other objects, and a fourth drowned on the island of Leyte, police and officials reported.

“Our hope is those (deaths) would be the last,” civil defence official Mark Timbal told AFP.

The impact could have been worse if not for the preparations made by communities and local governments however, Timbal added, with several provinces reporting zero casualties.

“We saw an improvement in the behaviour of the people who are now more willing to participate in evacuation procedures,” said Timbal, who is the spokesman for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

“Social media is a factor, while people also became more concerned over their safety in light of the series of deadly earthquakes that hit the country in recent months.”

“Pre-emptive evacuation was the key,” said Sher Saises, a civil defence official in the central city of Tacloban -- ground zero for Super Typhoon Haiyan, the country’s deadliest on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

Other civil defence officials who spoke to AFP described how residents, including about half a million from the Bicol region southeast of Manila, sought safety from high waves, floods and landslides days before the storm made landfall.

Manila airport shut down for 12 hours Tuesday as a precaution, affecting nearly 500 flights, while half the day’s programme at the Southeast Asian Games, hosted by Manila and nearby cities, was rescheduled over safety concerns.

Four other people drowned in the Bicol region this week during the passage of Kammuri, police told AFP, but added they could not immediately determine whether these deaths were typhoon-related.

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, killing hundreds and putting people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty.

ACC okays

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using faked loan documents.

Mahbub said the money was later transferred to a bank account of SK Sinha and siphoned off.

The 10 other accused are former managing director of Farmers Bank KM Shamim, former senior executive vice president Gazi Salauddin, first vice presidents Swapon Kumar Ray and Shafiuddin Askary, former chairman of the bank’s audit committee Mahbubul Haque Chisty, vice president Md Lutful Haque, businessman Md Shahjahan, Niranjan Chandra Saha, Ranjit Chandra Saha and his wife Shanti Roy.

The name of senior vice-president and former branch manager Md Ziauddin Ahmed was not included in the charge sheet as the ACC probe didn’t find his involvement in the loan scam, Mahbub said.

Sinha sent his resignation letter to Bangabhaban on November 10, 2017, from abroad. President Abdul Hamid accepted the resignation three days later.

The former CJ is now staying in the US.

The ACC in October last year said it found evidence of fraud involving transactions of Tk 4 crore borrowed by two businessmen, Shahjahan and Niranjan, from Farmers Bank.

Later, the graft watchdog launched a probe into the allegation. The investigation found that the money was deposited in Sinha’s bank account.

Artificial neurons

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“Until now neurons have been like black boxes, but we have managed to open the black box and peer inside,” said Professor Alain Nogaret, from the University of Bath, who led the project.

“Our work is paradigm-changing because it provides a robust method to reproduce the electrical properties of real neurons in minute detail.

“But it’s wider than that, because our neurons only need 140 nanowatts of power.

“That’s a billionth the power requirement of a microprocessor, which other attempts to make synthetic neurons have used.

“This makes the neurons well suited for bio-electronic implants to treat chronic diseases.”

The research – carried out in collaboration with Universities of Bristol, Zurich and Auckland – is published in the Nature Communications journal.

Bangladesh 7th worst-hit nation

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second hottest year since records began due to a severe heatwave.

Asked about the report findings, Professor Emeritus of Brac University Dr Ainun Nishat, a water resource and climate change specialist, said there is no doubt that Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, but at the same time, its ability to cope with the adverse impacts has gone up manifolds.

“But there is no room for complacency because the intensity and frequency of climate events are unpredictable. We have to concentrate on capacity building for the future.”

On this day in 1971

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Pak soldiers, were also destroyed.

Pakistan Navy’s pride, “Gazi” -- a submarine the US had lent it -- was destroyed in the Bay of Bengal in an attack by the joint naval force.

The joint naval force advised vessels of neutral states to leave the Chattogram port. The joint command refused them any security. The Pakistan force turned out to be too weak to defend the port.

The allied force began their march

According to the report, about 495,000 people died as a direct result of more than 12,000 extreme weather events globally and losses between 1999 and 2018 amounted to around \$3.54 trillion.

The fifteenth edition of the CRI showed that signs of escalating climate change can no longer be ignored in any continent or region.

The climate risk report said poorer countries were the most affected between 1999 and 2018. It also said eight of the 10 worst-hit countries were developing economies.

“Impacts from extreme weather events hit the poorest countries hardest as these are particularly

towards Dhaka. They deployed heavy resistance on highways that connected Dhaka with other districts. Cumilla, Chattogram, Sylhet, Natore, Rangpur and Jashore road routes were cut off from Dhaka.

The 57th Mountain Division of the Indian army joined the Muktibahini at the Akhaura battle field. They created resistance on the south and western parts of the area. Facing the heavy resistance, the Pakistan army eventually surrendered and Akhaura was freed.

vulnerable to the damaging effects of a hazard and have a lower coping capacity and may need more time to rebuild and recover.”

It also said, “The Climate Risk Index may serve as a red flag for already existing vulnerabilities that may further increase as extreme events will become more frequent or more severe due to climate change. Effective climate change mitigation is therefore in the self-interest of all countries worldwide.”

The risk index was prepared by using the NatCatSERVICE database of the reinsurance company Munich Re and socioeconomic data of the International Monetary Fund.

Subedar Ashraf Ali Khan, Sipahi Amir Hossain, Lieutenant Badiuzzaman, Sipahi Ruhul Amin, Sipahi Sahab Uddin and Sipahi Mustafizur Rahman were martyred in this battle.

A few Pakistani military men escaped to Brahmanbaria after the battle but around 160 were killed by the allied force.

Source: Shafiullah, KM Bir Uttam Major General. Muktijuddhe Bangladesh, Dhaka: Agami Prokashon, 1995: 201.

Buet, JU finally set to reopen

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demands, and sit for the tests only if the third one is met at least a week prior to the tests,” said Sayem.

After the first two demands were met, the agitators met the VC last Wednesday and complied with his request to start the term finals from December 28, he added.

Term finals of all departments were scheduled to start on October 20, but they were eventually postponed owing to a boycott of classes by agitating students.

On November 26, the Buet authorities expelled the 26 students for their involvement in the Abrar murder and on November 28, they suspended nine others for their involvement in ragging at Suhrawardy and Ahsan Ullah Halls.

On December 3, the university authorities issued a notice stating that they would expel any student

found to be involved in ragging that leads to death, serious “bodily harm”, any form of disability, permanent mental imbalance or trauma, and the disruption of academic life of any fellow student.

Meanwhile, the Jahangirnagar University authorities yesterday decided to open all dormitories from today after a month-long shut down following an attack allegedly by BCL men on protesting teachers and students. The incident left more than 20 injured on November 5.

“An emergency syndicate meeting, chaired by JU vice-chancellor, decided that all dormitories will open from Thursday while classes and examinations will begin on Sunday,” said JU Acting Registrar Rahima Kaneez.

“The syndicate urged all stakeholders of the university to cooperate with the authorities to

maintain a congenial academic environment on the campus,” she added.

On the other hand, the protesting teachers and students declared they would bring out a procession today on the campus demanding the removal of JU VC and the punishment of those who swooped on protesting teachers and students.

The protesters will also publish a record book on December 10 on the VC’s irregularities and allegations.

Contacted, Prof Rayhan Rhyme, co-coordinator of the platform “Jahangirnagar Against Corruption”, said, “One of our three demands was to reopen the dormitories. We will continue our protest until the other two demands are met.”

He added that they would remain alert so that academic activities are not disrupted by their protest programmes.

BRI driven by Chinese interest

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During his stay in Dhaka, he met Prime Minister’s Foreign Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi, Defense and Security Affairs Adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique, Army Chief Gen Aziz Ahmed, Principal Staff Officer of Bangladesh Army Lt Gen Md Mahfuzur Rahman and some other top officials.

Schriver said enhancing security cooperation, including maritime, counterterrorism, military training exercise and cyber security, between the two countries came up during discussions with Bangladesh officials.

The US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), which the US describes as “an ironclad and enduring commitment” to a region spanning from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian subcontinent, was also discussed prominently.

Asked about the BRI, Schriver said IPS is not a direct counter to China or BRI, but it happens to be the case that the BRI is driven by Chinese interest and it has particular impact on many countries that concerns the US.

The BRI, an ambitious programme to connect Asia with Africa and Europe, aims at improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth. As of October this year, the plan covers some 4.6 billion people from 138 countries who have a combined GDP of \$29 trillion.

The US, which is now in a trade war against China, has been critical of the BRI. Some Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar, have already joined the BRI, but India and Japan, two close allies of the US, opposed the initiative. Bangladesh says it is open to joining IPS for its economic interests, not anything else.

Schriver said IPS focuses on three areas -- economics, good governance, and security -- and it seeks to protect and advance shared principles in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, in which sovereign and independent nations like Bangladesh can prosper in freedom and peace.

He said he found alignments of Bangladesh and US principles in terms of IPS. In general, Bangladesh is a supporter of international laws and norms that are evident in how well the country is represented in the international forums and that it has significant contribution to UN peacekeeping missions.

Schriver said sometimes there is a narrative put out by some competitors of the US that IPS is a confrontational approach and asks countries to choose between the US and China. The IPS is actually inclusive and is designed to support the enduring principles -- sovereignty of countries regardless of its size, international law and norms, peaceful dispute resolution, and free, fair and reciprocal trade.

“If China can support the same principles, it will certainly be welcome as partner with us,” he added.

The US official said he had talks with Bangladesh officials on the progress of the two bilateral defense agreements that his country wanted to sign.

Dhaka last year sought to buy advanced military equipment, including attack helicopters, combat fighters and missile systems, from the US as part of its goal to modernise the military by 2030.

The agreements -- General Security of Military Information Agreement and Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement -- would open the aperture

for closer cooperation, more sharing of information, and the sharing of sensitive technology and capabilities, Schriver said.

Asked if the US has an urgency to sign the defense deals, he said they wanted to ensure that it was done correctly and properly based on confidence of both sides. The Bangladesh officials were positive about the deals and both the sides were in discussions, he added.

“I would say that the sense of urgency relates to the fact that we want to do more, we want to advance the defense relationship...to open ways for further cooperation.”

Schriver clarified that the deals were for the sake of mutual interests in improving relationship between the two countries.

“If anybody objects to that, a neighbour or any other country in the region, that should be of interesting concern of both of our sides. We expect Bangladesh to have good relations with its neighbours. We have no issues with Bangladesh improving relations with other countries,” he added.

Asked if Washington was more engaged in improving defense relations with Dhaka at a time when the latter was not so happy at the US remarks regarding the state of democracy and human rights in Bangladesh, he said based on its foreign policy, his country would always have political engagements.

“We have to stay aligned. We are happy to have strong relationship. If at some point of time it becomes out of balance, we will recalibrate,” Schriver said.

The US official left Dhaka yesterday.

main components of the agreement. How has that not been implemented? Implementing that is at the heart of ensuring peace in the region.”

Meghna Guhathakurta, executive director of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh, said, “Since the state has given commitments, it must fulfill those.”

The organisers yesterday also pointed out that freedom of association was a limited right in the CHT region. “When we wanted permission to celebrate World Indigenous Day in Rangamati this year, we were not given it,” they wrote in the statement.

UK PM denies dodging Trump in pre-election Nato trip

AFP, Watford

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied yesterday that he was avoiding being pictured with Donald Trump ahead of a UK election next week, as footage emerged of other leaders mocking the US president.

Johnson met Trump away from the cameras on Tuesday before a two-day Nato summit, avoiding the media fanfare that normally accompanies such talks.

He also failed to publicly greet Trump and his wife Melania on the doorstep of Downing Street before a reception with other Nato leaders.

Johnson’s team are wary of what Trump might say during his two-day visit, with Britain set to go to the polls on December 12.

Johnson’s Conservatives are leading opinion polls but the rival Labour party has sought to whip up public opinion against Trump, who is deeply unpopular in Britain.

In a press conference on Tuesday, the president promised to “stay out” of the election campaign and most of his remarks were about divisions within Nato.

But he still managed to endorse Johnson as “very capable” and intervene in a row over US interests in Britain’s state-run National Health Service (NHS) after Brexit.

Arriving for the formal Nato talks in Watford, north of London, yesterday, Johnson denied he was trying to avoid being seen with Trump.

“I’m going to be photographed with every possible leader,” he insisted, and later posed with the president for an official welcome alongside Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg.

Downing Street said Trump and Johnson had discussed the Nato summit and an earlier meeting between Britain, France, Germany and Turkey about the situation in Syria.

Trump wrote on Twitter that he “enjoyed” the talks, which he said covered “numerous subjects including Nato and trade”.

Johnson is campaigning for re-election on a promise to get Britain out of the European Union next month, more than three years after the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Saudi king invites Qatar emir to Riyadh summit

AFP, Doha

Saudi King Salman has invited Qatar’s emir to a meeting next week of the Gulf regional bloc in Riyadh, Qatari state media said Tuesday, without specifying if Doha had accepted.

The invitation to the December 10 summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation (GCC) comes amid signs of reduced animosity between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which has led an economic boycott of Doha since 2017.

Saudi Arabia and allies Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates closed their airspace to Qatar Airways and banned travel to the country over charges that Doha backs radical Islamists and seeks closer ties with Iran.

Qatar vehemently denies the charges.

The three Gulf boycott countries are currently participating in a regional football tournament in Qatar, having announced their participation at the last minute.

Saudi Arabia, which has also sealed its land-border with Qatar, will play

He has held up a new US trade deal as one of the prizes of Brexit but has faced accusations from Labour that this will open up the much loved NHS to US firms.

Johnson denies this, and Trump said his country would not be interested in the NHS “if you handed it to us on a silver platter”.

Officials were braced for Trump to become more loquacious in a press conference after the Nato talks later yesterday -- particularly after footage emerged apparently showing other leaders apparently laughing at him.

At a Nato reception at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday, Johnson can be heard asking French President Emmanuel Macron why he was late.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau noted that Trump’s press conference had run on, as he commented on everything from “nasty” Macron’s criticism of Nato as brain dead, to “delinquent” European countries that failed to meet defence spending targets.

“Oh, yeah, yeah, he announced...” an amused Trudeau declares in the footage, adding: “You just watched his team’s jaw drop to the floor.

Banker sued

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officer-in-charge of the station, told

The Daily Star that the victims, aged between six and seven, were playing at the accused’s yard in a village of the upazila on Monday afternoon.

He was home alone. Luring them chocolates and biscuits, he took the three to his room and sexually assaulted them.

The victims were admitted to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex around Tuesday noon as they were suffering from pain, he said, adding that Mobarak went into hiding.

Hasan Farooque, resident medical officer of the health complex, told journalists that the victims were admitted to the hospital with sexual assaults and they were given treatment.

They were later moved to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital for medical tests, he said.

Locals demanded immediate arrest of Mobarak and his exemplary punishment.

the hosts at the semi-finals today.

“The emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, received a written message from... Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to attend the (GCC) summit,” the Qatar News Agency reported.

The emir has been represented by senior officials at GCC summits since the blockade was imposed, despite having received invitations.

Regional analyst and King’s College London assistant professor Andreas Krieg said he believed that Riyadh had pushed for the gathering to be shifted from the UAE to Saudi Arabia to increase the likelihood of the emir attending.

“Talks that have been held over the last couple of weeks, including the ones with the foreign minister, have centred on a lift of the blockade from the Saudi side,” he said.

The Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani met with officials in Saudi for talks last month, according to an Arab diplomatic source.

Religion-based

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upper house, and it is unclear whether it would succeed there this time.

Apart from stoking unease among Muslims, the proposed changes have also provoked anger in north-east India that for decades has seen major influxes of people of different religions -- including Hindus.

Modi’s right-hand-man, Home Minister Amit Shah, held talks with representatives from the region on Tuesday over their concerns.

Shah has been vocal in pushing through the bill that he says is aimed at “saving the lives” of persecuted religious communities in neighbouring Muslim-majority countries.

He has also proposed a “national register of citizens” that he said this week would see “each and every infiltrator identified and expelled” from India by 2024.

Shashi Tharoor from the main opposition Congress party yesterday told reporters that the bill “violated” the basic idea of a secular India as pushed by Mahatma Gandhi.

“Those who believe that religion should determine nationhood... that was the idea of Pakistan,” Tharoor said, calling the legislation “fundamentally unconstitutional”.

“It is simple. Citizenship CANNOT