

At least 16 killed

FROM PAGE 20
who was stranded there and provided images to AFP.

“Roads remain blocked, but some efforts have been made to clear away the damage. It’s pretty bad,” Jung Byung-joon said via Instagram messenger.

“Everything within 100 meters of the airport looks broken. There are a lot of frustrated people at the airport as flights have been cancelled.

“Taxis are still running but it’s windy and still raining so no one wants to leave the airport, including me.”

Another Korean tourist stuck at the damaged airport said she had been unable to make contact with her friend on Borocay on Thursday.

“I tried to call my friend in Boracay today and wasn’t able to get through. Maybe something isn’t working,” Dahae Gong told AFP via Instagram.

“I don’t know when I will be able to go home.”

Still, there was no indication of any major damage or otherwise on Boracay.

Though much weaker, Phanfone tracked a similar path as Super Typhoon Haiyan -- the country’s deadliest storm on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

“It’s like the younger sibling of Haiyan. It’s less destructive, but it followed a similar path,” Cindy Ferrer, an information officer at the Western Visayas region’s disaster bureau, told AFP.

In San Jose town in Occidental Mindoro, a video uploaded by the local government showed overturned fishing vessels and ruined shanties on the coast due to the storm.

Tens of thousands of people in the mostly Catholic nation were forced to evacuate their homes on Wednesday, ruining Christmas celebrations.

Many others were not able to return to their families, with ferries and plane services suspended.

Among those killed was a police officer electrocuted by a toppled post while patrolling.

The Philippines is the first major landmass facing the Pacific typhoon belt, and is hit by an average of about 20 major storms a year.

Many of the storms are deadly, and they typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people perennially poor.

RHD

FROM PAGE 20
it will hamper boat movement, he said.

“They [RHD] should have considered it when designing the bridge and now they are saying that they will demolish it,” he lamented.

Nasrul, also the lawmaker of the constituency concerned, said that the prime minister gave directives not to construct any bridge without the adequate height clearance so that the waterways remain usable. But these pillars will block the waterway.

Abdus Sabur, additional chief engineer (Dhaka Zone) of the RHD, said they stopped the work more than one month ago after receiving a complaint from the local lawmaker.

“We will demolish the pillar soon,” Sabur, who is the RHD project director, told The Daily Star on December 22.

“The implementation authority has already submitted a revised drawing to us and work for demolition of the pillars will start as soon as we get approval from the high-ups,” he added.

Shahin Ahmed, chairman of Keraniganj Upazila Parishad, said, “We have heard that a decision was made to demolish the pillars. If the pillars remain in the canal it will block the waterway.”

THE CANAL
Shuvadya canal connects two rivers – the Dhaleshwari and the Buriganga.

After a bridge was built in 2004 near Kaliganj, the water flow in the canal dropped and it soon dried up completely.

Around 5,000 small garment factories at Shuvadya union are also responsible for the drying up of the canal as these factories had been dumping their waste in the canal over the years, locals said.

The Water Development Board, with assistance of the armed forces and the district administration, excavated the canal and conducted drives against illegal encroachers in early 2008. The canal was reopened to the public for communication on June 16, 2008.

But people kept on dumping trash into the canal that soon blocked the waterway.

Four years ago, a smaller-scale re-excavation effort was made to revive the waterway.

But now a large portion of the canal’s bed near Kadamtali Khalpar area has dried up due to indiscriminate dumping of solid waste. Things turned worse after the three pillars were built blocking the canal, said locals.

Mohammad Shamim, a resident of Jhaubari of Dakkhin Keraniganj, said, “I have seen boat races in the canal after the renovation work around four years ago. But things are back to square one as people started dumping waste in the canal again.”



Indian police detain a demonstrator during a protest against a new citizenship law, in front of Uttar Pradesh state bhawan (building) in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO:
REUTERS

Protests in India after RSS rally

FROM PAGE 20
since he stormed to power in 2014.

Modi denies accusations that the law, which eases naturalisation procedures for non-Muslim minorities from three nations, is part of a master plan to reshape India as a purely Hindu nation.

But coupled with plans for a national register of citizens, it has stoked fears at home and abroad, including in Washington and at the UN rights office, about the marginalisation of India’s 200 million Muslims.

On Wednesday several thousand baton-wielding volunteers from a Hindu hardline group -- of which Modi is a lifelong member -- held a rally in the southern city of Hyderabad, in a

show of support for the government.

Members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a militaristic group that has long espoused “Hindutva” or Hindu hegemony, marched through the streets beating drums and blowing horns.

The parade, organised before the protests began, saw volunteers ride horses, sing songs, and perform group exercises using lathis -- bamboo batons deployed by Indian riot police.

The protests against the citizenship law meanwhile show no signs of going away, although in recent days numbers have been smaller.

Around 2,500 people rallied against the government in the financial capital

Mumbai on Thursday, police told AFP, with demonstrators waving flags and carrying banners calling for a boycott of the citizenship law.

Protesters also took to the streets in the eastern city of Kolkata while hundreds of Muslim women demonstrated in the southern state of Karnataka where two people were shot dead by police in protests last week.

While many of the protests have been peaceful, demonstrations have sometimes turned violent with police also accused of a disproportionate response.

In India’s most populous state Uttar Pradesh -- where 19 people have been killed -- the authorities have arrested thousands and sought

damages from more than 100 people accused of rioting and destroying public property.

Around 130 people have been ordered to pay nearly 5 million rupees (\$70,000) within a week, with officials warning that their properties will be confiscated and auctioned to recover the amount if necessary.

Authorities were bracing for further protests today in Uttar Pradesh, home to a large Islamic minority, and in parts of New Delhi following Muslim prayers.

Mobile internet, which was cut across large parts of Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere last week, has been restored, although the cities of Agra -- home to the Taj Mahal -- and Bulandshahr remain offline.

On this day in 1971

FROM PAGE 20
by many journalists. Pakistan army kill 36 wounded Indian troops in Kamalapur. They hoisted white flag to mark Indian army’s position, Karanjia says.

General Manekshaw meets President Syed Nazrul Islam, Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad and commander-in-chief Col MAG Osmani individually.

Pakistan President Bhutto meets Bangabandhu in Rawalpindi, but the follow-up of the meeting was unknown, a BBC report says.

Provisional President Syed Nazrul Islam says in a meeting at Awami

League’s headquarters in Purana Paltan that diplomatic conversation is underway to free Bangabandhu. Pakistan could not keep the president of a free country for long, he says.

More alleged collaborators arrested: Dr Hasan Zaman, former director of Pakistan Academy, Nasiruddin Ahmad Chowdhury, former minister, Maolana Atahar Ali of Kishoreganj town, Maolana Sayedur Rahman of Mymensingh town, Bahauddin Ahmad, former additional SP of Sylhet, Md SB Doza, CO, Dhaka Kotwali, Nurul Amin, superintendant of Tejgaon

Telephone Workshop, Shahabuddin, foreman, Dhaka Electric Supply, Maolana Bazlur Rahman of Cumilla’s Doyapur, SM Mujtaba Khurshid, former OC of Lalbagh Police Station, Sub-inspector Yusuf Ali Chowdhury, former OC of Kaliganj Police Station, SI Md Isahaq, former OC of Mohammadpur Police Station, Habildar Nawab Khan, EPCA, Shami, Mujahid Commander in Mirpur, Md Akil, Mujahid of Mirpur, Md Ali, Mujahid of Mirpur, Abdul Aziz Manna, Mujahid of Mirpur, Shur Mohammad, Mujahid of Mirpur, Shahabuddin, agent of Pakistan army, Abdul Zahir, Razakar,

Noakhali, Anka Ohee, Razakar, CHT, Abul Bashar Md Shahjahan, Al-Badr member, Feni, Syed Md Mohen Kader from Mohammadpur, Anisur Rahman, commander of Al-Badr, Bilal Hossain, commander of Al-Badr, SA Siddiqui, commander of Al-Badr, ABM Khalek Majumder, Al-Badr, Omar Hayat of Mirpur, Sirajuddin, member of Peace Committee, Ashraf Ali, member of Al-Badr, Faridabad, SM Munibul Haq, convener of Peace Committee, Syed Ershad Hossain, Tejgaon , Dhaka, Syed Md Mohsin, member of Al-Badr, Mohammadpur and Mohammad Hanif of Mirpur.

16,000 complaints filed in Afghan presidential polls

AFP, Kabul

More than 16,000 complaints have been filed to Afghan election authorities over the handling of this year’s presidential polls, officials said yesterday, days after preliminary results put President Ashraf Ghani in place to secure a second term.

Afghanistan’s Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced earlier this week that Ghani had won a slim 50.64 percent majority in the September 28 poll.

The final results are expected to be announced in the coming weeks after the complaints have been reviewed.

“(Officials) have 15 days to finalise its investigation into the complaints and release the results to the candidates,” said Zuhra Bayan Shinwari, head of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), adding that 16,500 complaints were received in total.

If the numbers hold following these investigations, the result is enough for Ghani to avoid a run-off, after he easily beat his long time rival Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who scored 39.52 percent.

According to Shinwari, Abdullah’s team filed around 8,000 complaints to the ECC and Ghani handed in over

3,000, while the rest were submitted by other candidates.

Preliminary results originally due October 19 were repeatedly delayed for what the IEC said were technical issues. Various candidates, particularly Abdullah, alleged fraud.

Observers and candidates have blasted the IEC over its handling of the count and its repeated disregard of the electoral calendar.

The election was meant to be the cleanest yet in Afghanistan’s young democracy.

A German firm supplied biometric machines to stop people from voting more than once.

But allegations of vote stuffing,

illegal balloting and other fraud came almost as soon as the polls had closed.

Nearly one million of the initial 2.7 million votes were purged owing to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll.

Ultimately, only 1.8 million votes were counted -- a tiny number given Afghanistan’s estimated population of 37 million and a total of 9.6 million registered voters.

Abdullah lost to Ghani in 2014 in a divisive election that saw the US intervene to broker an awkward power-sharing deal between the two rivals.

Honest German

FROM PAGE 20
In Germany, anyone who returns a found object is entitled to a finder’s fee based on the value of the item.

In this case, the finder would have been 490 euros richer if he had accepted the reward.

The police’s Facebook post sharing the feel-good story attracted over a 1,000 likes and nearly 180 comments, although some expressed surprise that anyone would walk around with so much cash.

A Krefeld police spokesman told AFP yesterday that while it was “unusual”, the backpack’s owner had said “he felt safer” carrying his money on him.

Four killed

FROM PAGE 20
Since February, shelling and mortar fire across the LoC has become more frequent, after a suicide attack in Indian-administered Kashmir killed more than 40 soldiers, prompting India to blame Pakistan.

The resulting military conflict saw India launch air attacks on Pakistani soil, with Pakistan retaliating and shooting down an Indian fighter jet.

Tensions eased when Pakistan returned the pilot of the aircraft days later but violence at the LoC has continued unabated.

It escalated again in August after India revoked a special constitutional status for Indian-administered Kashmir that allowed it limited autonomy, a move accompanied by a widespread security crackdown to quell protests against it.

Large parts of the territory remain under a security lockdown and curfew, including communications blockades.

Earlier this month, Qureshi wrote a letter to the UN Security Council, claiming India was deploying cruise missiles and other armaments to forward positions near the LoC, escalating both sides’ military posture.

7 migrants die

FROM PAGE 20
Adilcevaz district in Bitlis, which is on the northern shores of Lake Van, the office said in a statement.

The lake is near the border with Iran, from where migrants regularly cross into Turkey, heading west towards Europe, it adds.

It was not clear why the migrants were on the boat in Lake Van, which is completely within Turkey’s borders.

Five people were found dead at the scene and two died in hospital, while the 64 people rescued were taken to nearby hospitals and shelters, the governor’s office said.

It said gendarmerie forces, emergency response teams and police divers were conducting search operations.

Russia raids

Navalny’s offices

but Kremlin

critic is free

AFP, Moscow

Russian police yesterday conducted fresh searches at Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny’s anti-corruption foundation, with his team calling the raid a new bid to disrupt their work.

Navalny, 43, said he was not detained, contrary to earlier reports. “I was simply forcibly dragged out of the office (for some reason),” he said on Twitter.

Navalny also said the police were seizing “everything,” and suggested the raids took place yesterday because he was to address supporters in a weekly YouTube programme in the evening.

Navalny also linked the searches to his refusal to remove a 2017 report that accused Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of massive corruption and has racked up nearly 33 million views on YouTube.

A picture posted by his staff on Twitter showed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s top opponent sitting on the floor with his legs crossed and two men in black uniform looking at him.

A video released by the team showed how law enforcement agents tried to break into the FBK offices using a power saw that sent sparks flying.

“New Year’s fireworks,” Navalny’s ally Nikolai Lyaskin quipped on Twitter. Another video showed men clad in black uniforms, masks and helmets searching the FBK premises.

In a separate development, Russia’s top opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta said yesterday that authorities had searched the Moscow apartment of its special correspondent Yulia Polukhina.

After the raid, the mother-of-two was taken to “an unknown destination,” the award-winning newspaper said in a statement.

“So far this looks like an abduction,” Novaya Gazeta said.

It added that the searches were linked to Novaya Gazeta publications including those concerning “illegal armed groups” operating in the war-torn eastern Ukraine where Kiev is battling against pro-Kremlin separatists.

Authorities have been steadily ramping up pressure on Navalny and his allies in recent years with regular searches and short jail terms for the Kremlin critic and his allies.