

At least 16 killed

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Boracay, Coron and other holiday destinations that are famed for their white-sand beaches and popular with foreign tourists.

Mobile phone and internet access on Boracay was cut during the storm and the networks remained down on Thursday, making assessment of the damage there difficult.

"Still, communication lines are down. Electricity is still down," Jonathan Pablito, police chief of Malay town in Alkan province, which is on an island neighbouring Boracay, told AFP.

Pablito said ferry services between Boracay and Aklan -- the main way to travel to and from the holiday island -- were still not operating on Thursday, even though the storm had passed.

"We have no news from coast guard if ships were allowed to sail. Since the 24th... all those going to the island and coming from the island weren't able to cross."

The airport at Kalibo town in Aklan, which services Boracay, was badly damaged, according to a Korean tourist 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 Boracay 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.

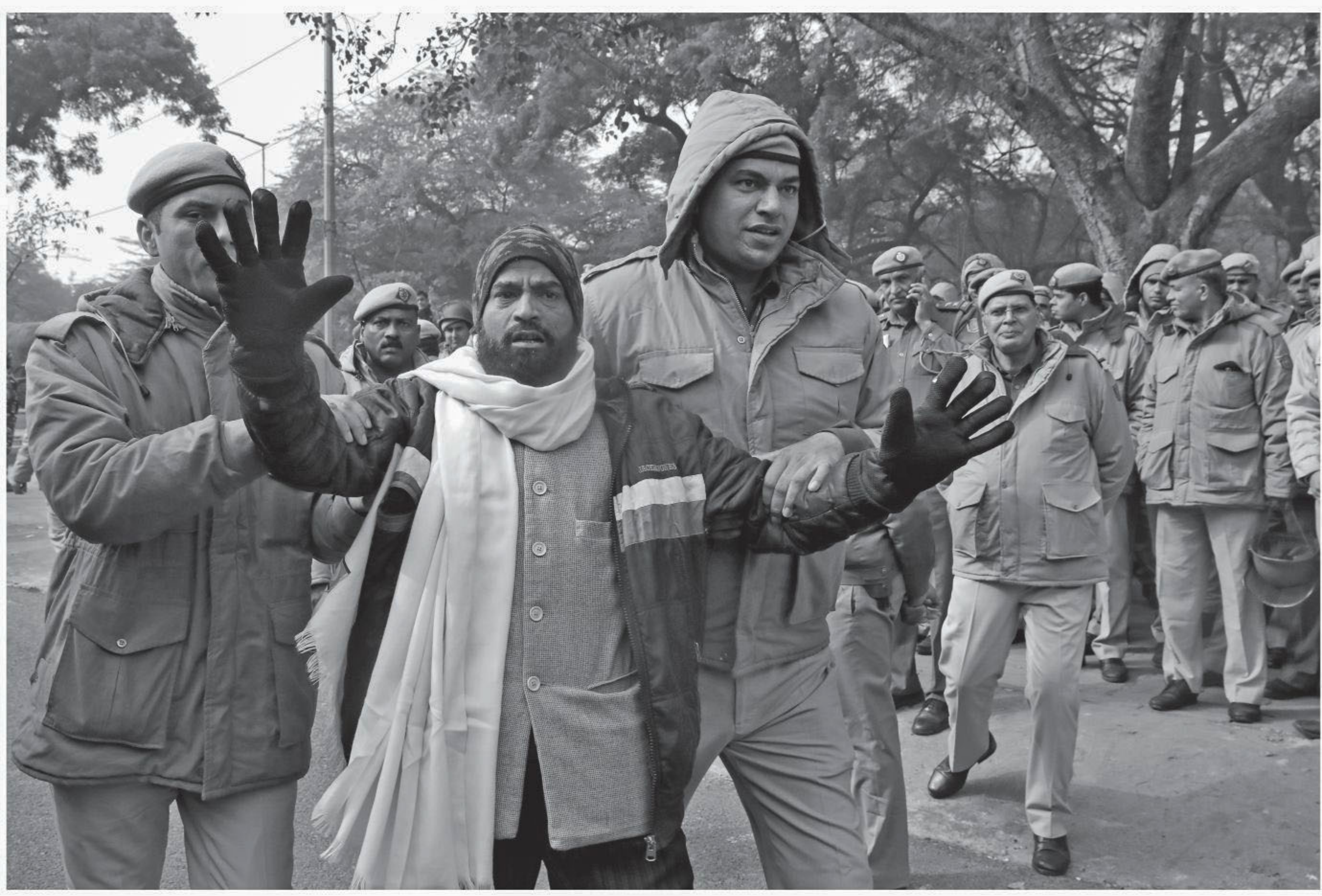
Though much weaker, Phanfone tracked a similar path as Super Typhoon Haiyan -- the country's deadliest storm on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

"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.



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

RHD

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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
Shuvadaya 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 Shuvadaya 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."

7 migrants die

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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.

On this day in 1971

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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, superintendent of Tejgaon

Telephone Workshop, Shahabuddin, foreman, Dhaka Electric Supply, Maolana Bazur 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, EPCAF, 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 Bashir 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.

UN, Pope voice solidarity with Burkina Faso after jihadist attack

AFP, Ouagadougou

A jihadist attack that left 42 dead in the north of Burkina Faso, the worst assault in the country for five years, plunged the nation into mourning over Christmas and sparked messages of solidarity from the United Nations and Pope Francis.

Thirty-five civilians, including 31 women, and seven soldiers were killed Tuesday in a morning raid which lasted for several hours and targeted both civilians and a military base in the northern town of Arbinda, the army said, adding that 80 assailants were killed.

Around a dozen soldiers also died in a separate night-time ambush 60 kilometres (37 miles) away in Hallele, in the same volatile northern province of Soum, security sources said Wednesday.

Burkina Faso, bordering Mali and

Niger, has seen frequent jihadist attacks which have left hundreds of people dead since the start of 2015 when Islamist extremist violence began to spread across the Sahel region.

"A large group of terrorists simultaneously attacked the military base and the civilian population in Arbinda," the army chief of staff said.

"While the (military) group was under heavy fire, another group of armed individuals attacked the civilian population, mainly women including displaced people who had taken refuge in Arbinda," a security source told AFP.

President Roch Marc Christian Kabore confirmed that 35 civilians were killed in the "barbaric attack" in Arbinda and declared 48 hours of national mourning over Wednesday and yesterday.

Government spokesman Remis

Dandjinou said 31 of the civilian victims were women.

There was worldwide condemnation of the attack, as well as expressions of support for Burkina Faso.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the Christmas Eve attack and offered his "deep condolences" to the families of the victims, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

"The Secretary-General conveys the solidarity of the United Nations to the government and people of Burkina Faso," he added, emphasising the UN's continued support for the Sahel region in their efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism.

In his traditional Christmas message, Pope Francis denounced attacks on Christians in Africa and prayed for victims of conflict, natural disasters and disease on the world's

poorest continent.

The pontiff urged "comfort to those who are persecuted for their religious faith, especially missionaries and members of the faithful who have been kidnapped, and to the victims of attacks by extremist groups, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria".

In Brussels, the head of the European Council Charles Michel tweeted: "Inates in Niger yesterday, Arbinda in Burkina Faso today... Martyr towns, victims of a rampant terrorism that threatens us all. The European Union stands by Africa in its battle against terrorism."

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou also expressed his "solidarity" and, speaking "in the name of the Nigerien people" offered his "condolences for all civilian and military victims."

Kremlin critic and his allies.

The FBK offices were searched several times this year.

The foundation's door, which has been repeatedly broken down, now has its own account on Twitter.

"I am alive and hanging in there," the account said yesterday.

Navalny helped organise major protests against the government this summer that saw tens of thousands march in Moscow to demand fair elections.

A number of people received jail terms for taking part in those protests. On Wednesday, Navalny said that one of his allies had been forcibly conscripted and sent to serve at a remote Arctic base, a move his supporters also said amounted to kidnapping.

Honest German

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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.

Mentally

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arrest the accused who went into hiding.

A cousin of the victim filed a complaint with Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nusrat Jahan in this regard. The UNO directed the police to take legal action against the accused.

The OC said the victim was in safe custody and they would send her to Jashore General Hospital today for medical examination.

Four killed

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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.

Cold

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president of Panchagarh Exporters and Importers Association.

Meanwhile, around 130 children and 162 adults were admitted to the Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital with diseases that were related to the weather, said sources at the hospital.

KM Kamruzzaman Selim, deputy commissioner of Thakurgaon, said the district administration already distributed around 35,500 blankets and 200 quilts.

THREE DIED OF BURN

A minor girl and a youth, sustained burn injuries while trying to keep themselves warm by sitting beside fire, died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The dead are Sabiha, 3, of Sundarganj upazila, and Alam Mia, 35, of Sadullahpur upazila in Gaibandha.

In Thakurgaon, one Romija Bewa, 70, was burnt alive at Senua Bazar area in Pirganj upazila on Wednesday night.

Around 7:00pm on the evening, started burning firewood under her bed to keep her room warm. At one stage, her mosquito net caught fire. She was burnt alive, said Proddip Kurmar Roy, officer-in-charge of Pirganj Police Station.

Our Dinajpur and Thakurgaon correspondents contributed to this report