

TORNADO, STORMS 23 killed in Mississippi

AFP, Washington

At least 23 people died as violent storms and at least one tornado ripped through the US state of Mississippi, tearing off roofs and flattening neighborhoods, officials and residents said yesterday.

The southern state's emergency management agency said at least four people were missing and dozens were injured, while tens of thousands of people in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee were without power.

"At least 23 Mississippians were killed by last night's violent tornadoes. We know that many more are injured. Search and rescue teams are still active," Governor Tate Reeves said on Twitter.

"The loss will be felt in these towns forever. Please pray for God's hand to be over all who lost family and friends."

Confirming the death toll at 23, the emergency management agency cautioned: "Unfortunately, these numbers are expected to change."

Search and rescue operations were underway in Sharkey and Humphreys counties, about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of the state capital Jackson, the agency said on Twitter.

"My city is gone," Rolling Fork Mayor Eldridge Walker, whose town is located in Sharkey county, told CNN.

He told CBS affiliate WJTV that when he was able to leave his home, "what we found is devastation all around us."

Woodrow Johnson, a local official in Humphreys County, told CNN his wife woke him up and they heard what sounded like a train.

"It was a very scary thing," Johnson said, adding his neighbor's house, a trailer, was "completely gone."

The National Weather Service warned residents that as clean-up operations continue, "dangers remain even after the storms move on."

TV footage showed homes levelled and debris strewn across roads as emergency services attempted to get to those who needed help.



Supporters of India's main opposition Congress party hold placards and raise slogans after the party's leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as a lawmaker by India's parliament on Friday, at the party's headquarter in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rahul Gandhi: 'Princeling' heir to once-powerful Indian dynasty

AFP, New Delhi

Being born into India's most famous political dynasty is traditionally a guaranteed ticket to the prime minister's office, but Rahul Gandhi's chances of fulfilling his family destiny now look smaller than ever.

The 52-year-old, who was expelled from parliament Friday after a defamation conviction, is the son, grandson and great-grandson of former Indian leaders.

But his family legacy has not equipped him to compete against the electoral juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose party holds a near-monopoly on power through nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

Modi has revelled in casting his chief opponent, dubbed an "empty suit" in leaked US embassy cables from 2005, as an out-of-touch princeling more interested in luxury and self-indulgence than fighting to help

the world's biggest democracy.

His Congress party was a once mighty force with a proud role in ending British colonial rule 75 years ago, but under his stewardship it has become a shadow of its former self, plagued by infighting and defections.

Rahul was born in 1970 into India's equivalent of the Kennedy clan in the United States, with its own history of elite prestige, political power and tragedy.

At the time his grandmother Indira Gandhi — daughter of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and no relation to fellow independence hero Mahatma Gandhi — was premier.

Indira was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984 in retaliation for ordering a military assault on the Golden Temple,

the faith's holiest shrine, earlier that year.

She was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi, Rahul's father. Rajiv was assassinated in 1991 by a Tamil suicide bomber when Rahul was 20.

Rahul was enrolled at Harvard but dropped out after a year following his father's death.

He later graduated from Rollins College, Florida and in 1994 earned a master's degree from Cambridge.

While in his 20s, he lived in London, where he worked at a management consultancy for a time as his mother Sonia, Rajiv's widow, took charge of Congress.

She worked to groom her son for top office but by the time he was ready to lead, the political fortunes of the charismatic Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party

were fast on the rise.

He steered Congress to two landslide election defeats, with Modi openly mocking his privileged upbringing at campaign rallies and comparing it to his own humble origins as "a son of the soil".

His exhortations of religious tolerance and India's secular traditions also failed to dent the BJP's muscular advocacy for the Hindu majority, at a time of rising intolerance against Muslims.

Gandhi stepped down as opposition leader in 2019 after the second loss and his mother also vacated the party presidency last year.

But analysts say the family remain in de facto control of the party and are still its most recognised faces.

And Gandhi remains the most likely candidate to defeat Modi in next year's election, even if political experts consider another BJP landslide a near certainty.



BLASPHEMY CHARGES

Pak court sentences man to death

AFP, Peshawar

An anti-terrorism court in northwest Pakistan has convicted and sentenced a Muslim man to death after he was accused of posting blasphemous content in a WhatsApp group. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even unproven allegations can stir mobs and violence. Syed Muhammad Zeeshan was convicted under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act and Anti-Terrorist Act by the court in Peshawar on Friday. Zeeshan, who is a resident of the northwest city of Mardan, was also fined 12 million rupees (\$4,300) and handed a total of 23 years imprisonment. He has the right to appeal. The case arose after Muhammad Saeed, a resident of Talagang in Punjab province filed an application with the Federal Investigation Agency two years ago accusing Zeeshan of posting blasphemous content in a WhatsApp group. While Pakistan's laws prohibiting blasphemy can carry a potential death sentence, so far it has never been enforced for the crime. Although many cases involve Muslims accusing fellow Muslims, rights activists have warned that religious minorities are often caught in the crossfire, with blasphemy charges used to settle personal scores. According to the National Commission of Justice and Peace, a human rights and legal aid group in Pakistan, 774 Muslims and 760 members of various minority religious groups were accused of blasphemy in the last 20 years.



EU, Germany reach deal to phaseout fossil fuel cars

AFP, Brussels

The European Union and Germany yesterday said they had struck a deal after a dispute over the planned phaseout by 2035 of the sale of cars using fossil fuels. A landmark deal to prohibit new sales of fossil fuel cars from 2035 is key to the bloc's ambitious plan to become a "climate-neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. But in an unprecedented move earlier this month, leading car producer Germany blocked the agreement at the last minute after it had already been approved under the traditional EU legislative process. Berlin demanded that Brussels provide assurances the law would allow the sales of new cars with combustion engines that run on synthetic fuels, the focus of the breakthrough announced on Saturday. German Transport Minister Volker Wissing said on Twitter that vehicles with combustion engines could continue to be registered after 2035 if they only use fuels that are neutral in their CO2 emissions.

আলহাজ্ব সর্বশক্তিমান

জয় বাংলা
জয় মুক্তিযোদ্ধা

একটি
বাংলাদেশ
হুমি জাতির জনতার
সারা বিশ্বের বিশ্বাস
হুমি আমার
অহংকার

২০২৫
বার্ষিক
পার্থিবতা
দিবস

যাদের আত্মত্যাগে
আজ এই
স্বাধীনতা
তাদের প্রতি-
শ্রদ্ধা

আলহাজ্ব আসাদুর রহমান কিরণ
মেয়র (ভারপ্রাপ্ত), গাজীপুর সিটি কর্পোরেশন।