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5.7 quake kills 10

Several hundred injured; over a dozen buildings damaged; many areas faced temporary outages

WASIM BIN HABIB

At least 10 people, including two children, were killed and several hundred injured after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake shook Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh yesterday morning, cracking buildings, sending debris crashing down, and driving residents into the streets in fear.

The quake struck at 10:38am, with its epicentre in Madhabdi of Narsingdi, about 13 kilometres east of the seismic station in Dhaka's Agargaon, said the Bangladesh Meteorological Department. Families were jolted at home on their weekly holiday.

Prof Syed Humayun Akhter, former chair of Dhaka University's Geology department, estimated the epicentre at a shallow depth of about 10km. "Bangladesh has not felt a tremor of such magnitude in recent times. Buildings were shaking like trees," he told The Daily Star.

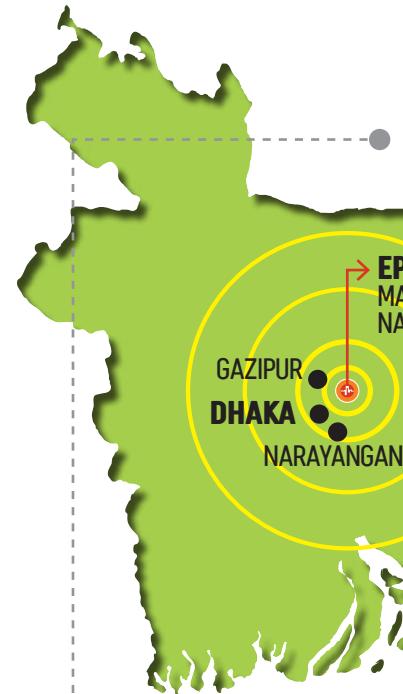
Bangladesh has experienced several earthquakes, especially in the Sylhet region, in recent years, but none of them caused so many casualties or damage.

On this day, November 21, in 1997, which was also a Friday, several deaths were reported after a building collapsed in Chattogram due to a quake epicentred in India's Mizoram.

Reports have emerged of minor cracks appearing in buildings across the capital. Residents described the tremor as unlike anything they had experienced before, with many taking to social media to share photos and videos of cracked walls, damaged floors, and furniture scattered across their homes.

Four of the quake-linked deaths occurred in Dhaka, five in Narsingdi, and one in Narayanganj. Several hundred others were injured across the country as people ran down staircases or jumped from buildings in panic.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



DHAKA

4 killed, buildings damaged

NARSINGDI

5 killed, walls collapse

NARAYANGANJ

1 killed, walls collapse

GAZIPUR

100 injured



A 5.7-magnitude earthquake, the strongest to hit Bangladesh in recent memory, jolted Dhaka and nearby districts yesterday morning, damaging buildings and sending panicked residents rushing into the streets. Tragedy struck Dhaka, Narsingdi and Narayanganj as at least 10 people lost their lives during the disaster. The quake struck at 10:38am with its epicentre in Madhabdi of Narsingdi.

PHOTO: STAR



The struggle to cope with rising salinity, depleting sweet water, and diminishing livelihoods continues on the frontlines of climate change in Bangladesh's rural south west all the while negotiators struggle for a fairer agreement at the UN summit in Brazil's Belem. The Daily Star's Wasim Bin Habib visited towns and villages, tea stalls and paddy fields in Khulna and Satkhira in mid-October, speaking with homemakers, farmers, fishers, and experts to find out what climate change actually means to people on the ground. This is the first of a five-part series.

SALINITY puts lives, livelihoods at risk in the South

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Satkhira, Khulna

As dawn breaks over the muddy banks of the Kholpetua river in Satkhira's Shyamnagar upazila, a pale orange glow spreads across the horizon, lighting up mangrove trees and fishing boats at anchor.

Mohammad Gafur, a small trader in Burigaojini union, walks slowly along the embankment, his worn sandals sinking into the damp, uneven

years of hardship.

Then, changes came quietly. Shrimp farms replaced paddy fields, causing salt to seep into groundwater.

"This is no longer the land our forefathers knew," says Gafur. Around him, the silence of the morning is broken by the lapping of the Kholpetua, which carries the sting of saline intrusion.

Across the southwestern



- Salinity-hit land increased from 83.3m hectares in 1973 to 105.6m in 2009
- 62% of coastal land affected by varying degrees of salinity
- Shrimp farms replaced paddy fields, causing salt to seep into groundwater
- Excessive extraction of groundwater led to depletion of freshwater

earth. The morning breeze brushes against his face as he pauses, gazing at what was once his father's farmland. Life, he recalls, used to be simple.

"We would drink straight from tubewells, and two rice harvests a year were certain," says the 60-year-old man, his face bearing the marks of

districts of Satkhira and Khulna, millions like Gafur are witnessing the gradual intrusion of salinity into their lives. The concentration of salt in water and soil has become one of the gravest environmental challenges for Bangladesh's 19 coastal districts, threatening

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Quake leaves trail of grief

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

What began as a happy weekend morning unfolded into a day of grief for several families, each caught unprepared by the sudden shudder of the earth.

At Armanitola in Dhaka, a mother and a son stepped out together to buy some groceries, just like they always did. On any other Friday, they would have come back home, cooked a meal, and shared a moment of happiness. But this time, the earth shook suddenly, and the family's life was changed forever.

When the son, Raful Islam, 22, a student of the 52nd batch of Sir Salimullah Medical College, mentioned he was craving beef, his mother Nusrat Jahan Mita checked the refrigerator and found none yesterday morning. Wanting to fulfil his request, she went to a butcher shop in their neighbourhood, accompanied by Raful.

As they were buying beef, a 5.7-magnitude earthquake hit Bangladesh, causing bricks and plaster from a rooftop railing collapse.

Passersby rushed four injured people, including the mother and son, to Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital.

Raful, who had been preparing for his second-year final exam, just days away, was among three people declared dead on arrival.

His mother suffered a head injury and now fights for her life.

Brigadier General Md Mazharul Islam Khan, director of the hospital, said doctors would need at least 72 hours before they could determine her condition. "We have not disclosed her

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Too close to ignore, Dhaka must act now

Experts urge strict building code enforcement to avert disaster

HELEMUL ALAM

No recent quake has been felt as strongly in Dhaka and its surrounding areas as yesterday's tremor. The shallow 5.7 magnitude earthquake, with its epicentre in Madhabdi just around 13km from the capital's Agargaon, forced residents onto the streets, fearing aftershocks.

However, no aftershocks were reported.

Some experts have suggested that yesterday's quake might have been a "foreshock", a warning of a potentially larger earthquake to come. Its location also surprised seismologists.

Professor Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of Buet's Civil Engineering Department said historical trends indicate that earthquakes of magnitude 7 on the Richter scale tend to

recur every 100-125 years, while magnitude 8 quakes occur every 250-300 years in Bangladesh and the surrounding region.

"There has been no major quake in this area for the past 100 years," Ansary told The Daily Star. "Based on that trend, a major event could be imminent. I believe yesterday's earthquake is one of those foreshocks – smaller quakes that occur before a larger one."

Professor Munaz Ahmed Noor, vice president of the Bangladesh Earthquake Society, said the epicentre's proximity to Dhaka was unexpected.

"We always assumed major quakes would originate from the Madhupur fault, but this shows that magnitude 5 or 6 earthquakes

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday at a meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia during a reception at Senakunja in Dhaka Cantonment on Armed Forces Day. Story on page 2.



Shrimp enclosures have replaced farmland in Dakkhin Kalikapur village of Khulna's Koyra upazila.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN