Lightning strikes kill 14 in India's Jharkhand

REUTERS, *Bhubaneswar*

Lightning strikes killed at least 14 people in India's mineral-rich eastern state of Jharkhand, police said, the latest deaths linked to annual monsoon rains that unleashed floods and landslides elsewhere.

Farm workers amid crops in open fields accounted for most of the 10 dead in the state's Giridih district, police said. Tuesday's lightning strikes - a common feature of monsoon rainstorms - also injured at least seven, they added.

Yesterday, India's weather office forecast widespread rainfall in the state over the next few days.

Jharkhand saw more than 200 deaths in 2025, mainly attributed to "lightning associated with thunderstorms", the India Meterological Department said in January.

This year's torrential rains brought intense floods in India's rugged northeastern state of Assam, killing nearly 90, while 15 died in the southern state of Kerala, where rains displaced thousands from their homes.



Residents carry the corrugated tin roof of a salvaged house in Paschim Harinchara village of Khuniagachh union in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon after severe erosion by the Teesta devoured a nearby homestead. One of two tin-shed houses was washed away, while locals managed to save the other. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Shakib's Magura home vandalised after he joined Hasina's media event in Delhi

STAR REPORT

Unidentified people last night attempted to set fire to the Magura home of former Bangladesh cricket captain and former lawmaker Shakib Al Hasan, police said.

The incident took place around 9:00pm at the house in Keshab Mor area of the town, said Md Abdullah Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station.

"Several miscreants threw brick chips at the house and vandalised windows. They also tried to set the house on fire," the OC told The Daily Star.

The OC said it was not immediately known who were involved in the incident. Police were deployed around the house following the incident, he added.

The incident occurred hours after former Magura-1 MP Shakib virtually joined a media interaction addressed by ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina. The event was hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia in New Delhi yesterday evening.

S Korean students held over US military base break-in bid

AFP, *Seoul*

A group of eight South Korean student protestors were in detention and under investigation yesterday after trying to break into a US air base, police and the American military said.

The Korean Progressive University Student Union posted social media images of its Tuesday demonstration outside the Osan Air Base, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) south of Seoul.

Members gathered outside the main hub of the US Air Force in South Korea, arguing the US military's presence in the southern city of Gwangju could complicate Seoul's major chipmaking project planned there.

Detrimental

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The foreign ministry also accused Hasina of denying the United Nations' findings on the killing of civilians, including children, during the July-August 2024 uprising, saying the people of Bangladesh had rejected such attempts.

"Upholding the spirit of the July Revolution, our people have firmly resolved that our nation will never again go back to the dark days of fascism and that Bangladesh will never be a client state. Convicted mass murderer Hasina and her mafia enterprise will never have a place in the polity of Bangladesh."

The statement said that Dhaka wants to maintain a constructive, mutually beneficial, and forward-looking ties with New Delhi based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and national dignity.

It expressed regret that Bangladesh's repeated requests for Hasina's return under the 2013 Bangladesh-India Extradition Treaty had yet to receive a response.

Hasina, during the media interaction hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia, said that the ban on the activities of her Awami League should be lifted and reiterated that she would return to Bangladesh in December.

Protect unity against fascism

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He said the parliamentary Special Committee on Constitutional Amendment has also begun work to implement the constitutional reforms endorsed in the referendum.

"By rebuilding the country, we will, InShaAllah, establish a self-reliant, prosperous, secure and democratic Bangladesh envisioned by the martyrs."

Highlighting his government's support for injured July fighters, Tarique recalled the more than 16 years of authoritarian rule, saying millions endured repression, persecution, attacks and politically motivated cases, forcing many from their homes.

"During the July-August mass uprising alone, thousands of students, people from all walks of life, women and children embraced martyrdom," he said, alleging that security forces even opened fire from helicopters on pro-democracy protesters.

He also alleged that enforced disappearances, killings and abductions had become routine under the Awami League-led regime, describing the period as one of the darkest chapters in the country's post-independence history.

"The brutality that persisted for more than one and a half decades can only be compared to the three-and-a-half years of misrule under the Awami League government after independence."

The prime minister commended the Bangladesh Army for standing by the people during the uprising, expressed condolences to the families of the martyrs and declared, "Bangladesh will never again become a subservient state."

The programme concluded with cultural performances featuring patriotic songs and recitations celebrating the spirit of the July uprising, patriotism and democratic values.

During the inauguration, Tarique also spoke with injured July fighter Mitu, who attended the ceremony directly from hospital while continuing treatment for injuries sustained during the uprising.

US, Iran having 'very good' talks

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However, Iranian state media, citing an informed source, said an agreement with Oman on the strait, which normally carries about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, will be delayed "as long as the United States continues to threaten Iran."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmaeil Baghaei, said talks with Oman over transit through the strait were "positive and continuing", and were focused on establishing safe shipping lanes, the state media reported.

He added the route being negotiated was aimed at ensuring the sovereign rights and national security of both Iran and Oman. A proposed deal between Iran and Oman would give Tehran control over ships entering the Gulf through the strait, a senior Iranian source and two regional officials told Reuters.

Trump and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani discussed efforts to narrow differences between Washington and Tehran and improve the prospects for a lasting settlement during a phone call on Tuesday, Qatar's Emiri office said.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis said yesterday that they attacked a Saudi oil tanker off Yanbu, in the Red Sea, as the rebels pressed on with their declared maritime blockade of the kingdom. This was the eighth Saudi oil tanker targeted since the start of the blockade on July 22, a Houthi military spokesman said.

A separate projectile struck an Indian-flagged vessel near Yemen, causing it to capsize and sink, but all 14 seafarers on board were rescued, Indian officials said, in an attack Yemen blamed on the Houthis.

US Central Command (Centcom) said American forces have redirected 45 commercial vessels, disabled two and boarded two others are part of a naval blockade of Iran.

In a separate development, Lebanese official media said an Israeli attack on the country's south killed one person yesterday, as Israel announced it was carrying out strikes in retaliation for what it said was a Hezbollah ceasefire violation.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said the Israeli strike "targeted the roof of a prayer area of the cemetery in the town of Tibnin", killing one person and wounding 11 others.

Chhatra Dal, Shibir clashes continue

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The violence took place between 9:30am and 10:30am after Shibir brought out a procession. Both organisations blamed each other for the clash.

Ashik Ahmed, senior vice-president of Chhatra Dal's university unit, alleged that Shibir activists attacked Chhatra Dal members after they objected to outsiders joining the procession, leaving five or six activists injured.

Shibir's university unit General Secretary Zakaria Islam Babu rejected the allegation, claiming Chhatra Dal activists attacked their procession near the vice-chancellor's gate, injuring at least five Shibir activists.

Additional police were deployed on the campus after the clash.

In Narayanganj, at least five people were injured in clashes between local units of the two student groups around 12:15pm on Allama Iqbal Road next to Government Tolaram College in Chashara following a July Uprising Day programme, said Additional Superintendent of Police Md Hasinuzzaman.

Police and witnesses said tensions escalated after leaders of the rival groups exchanged provocative remarks during the programme. The confrontation later spilled onto the road, triggering a chase and counter-chase before police dispersed the groups and restored order about an hour and a half later.

Shibir's Narayanganj city unit President Amit Hasan alleged that Chhatra Dal activists attacked Shibir members inside the college, leaving three leaders injured.

Chhatra Dal's Tolaram College unit President Monir Hossain Zia denied the allegation, claiming Shibir activists launched the first attack after Chhatra Dal members protested against their provocative speeches and that two of their activists were injured.

Police said no one has been detained or arrested.

"We will analyse CCTV footage and take legal action against those involved in the violence," Hasinuzzaman said.

In Shariatpur, Sadar upazila unit BNP General Secretary Mahbub Morshed Tipu allegedly assaulted two people at a reception for the families of the martyrs and the July fighters at the municipal auditorium.

The victims are Imran Al Nazir and Zakir Hossain Mintu, former convener and joint convenor of the district unit of Students Against Discrimination.

Tipu said the duo previously made derogatory comments against Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his family members. "That is why the two persons were removed from the programme."

In the capital, two leaders of Chhatra Shakti and several other activists were allegedly attacked by Chhatra Dal while attending a July Uprising Day programme at Government Titumir College.

At Alia Madrasa in Bakshibazar, Shibir activists alleged that they were barred from entering their residential hall.

Police said they were maintaining a cautious stance to ensure law and order and taking necessary steps after assessing the situation.

DMP Lalbagh Division Deputy Commissioner Talebur Rahman said no cases were filed over the violence as of yesterday.

Meanwhile, Shibir held a gathering protesting what it described as attacks by Chhatra Dal activists on several educational institutions.

The programme began at the Central Shaheed Minar around 9:00am, and participants later marched to the Raju Bhashkorjo at Dhaka University, where the rally concluded.

Speaking at the gathering, Dhaka South Jamaat Ameer and Chapainawabganj-3 MP Nurul Islam Bulbul claimed that the BNP and Chhatra Dal were following the same path as the Awami League and Chhatra League.

Shibir President Nurul Islam Saddam alleged that the government had failed to ensure timely justice for the July killings and claimed attempts were being made to restore hall occupation, "gonoroom" and "guest room" culture on university campuses.

FSRU fragility exposing gas supply vulnerabilities

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vehicles, and households in many areas received inadequate supplies.

Engineers are expected to restart one of the FSRU's two boilers, potentially restoring 200-250MMcfd, according to Md Salahuddin, managing director of Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd.

Even then, national gas supply will remain far below demand, with around 2,400MMcfd available against a requirement of roughly 3,800MMcfd.

FROM SUPPLEMENT TO LIFELINE

Bangladesh began importing LNG in 2018 through Excelerate Energy's FSRU as domestic gas production started to decline and demand continued to rise. Summit Group's FSRU began operations in April 2019.

At the time, imported LNG was intended to supplement domestic production. But as local output steadily declined, it evolved into a critical pillar of the country's gas supply, leaving Bangladesh increasingly exposed whenever an LNG terminal goes offline.

Domestic gas production fell from around 27.2 billion cubic metres (bcm) in FY2018-19 to 19.6bcm in FY2024-25 -- a decline of around 28 percent over seven years.

During the same period, LNG imports increased 143 percent from 3.28bcm to 7.98bcm, while domestic production slipped further to 14.84bcm in the first 10 months of FY2025-26.

The country has experienced similar disruptions repeatedly. Cyclone Mocha forced both FSRUs at Maheshkhali to disconnect as a precaution in May 2023, temporarily shutting down Bangladesh's entire LNG regasification capacity.

In early 2024, statutory maintenance at the two terminals, carried out at different times, again tightened gas supplies.

The most prolonged disruption came after Cyclone Remal damaged Summit's FSRU in May 2024, reducing the country's regasification capacity to around 600MMcfd from roughly 1,100MMcfd for nearly four months before the terminal resumed operations following repeated repair attempts.

The impact was particularly severe on the power sector. Bangladesh Power Development Board data showed that more than 4,000MW of generation capacity sat idle in August 2024 because of gas shortages.

Against this backdrop, the government on July 28 approved in principle the fast-tracking of a third FSRU at Kutubjom in Cox's Bazar under a government-to-government arrangement with China National Energy Engineering and Construction Co.

The proposed terminal is expected to add another 550-600MMcfd of regasification capacity. The government is also pursuing a land-based LNG terminal at Matarbari.

MOUNTING VULNERABILITIES

Prof M Tamim, former dean of Buet's Faculty of Chemical and Materials Engineering, said LNG was initially conceived as a short-term solution, but gradually became embedded in the country's long-term gas supply strategy.

"If we cannot increase our own supply and have to depend on imports, we will face financial, production and price vulnerabilities," he told The Daily Star.

Those vulnerabilities are already becoming more pronounced.

Petrobangla's LNG import bill rose from Tk 16,505 crore in FY2020-21 to around Tk 59,000 crore in FY2025-26, while Bangladesh has become increasingly exposed to international LNG prices, shipping disruptions and geopolitical developments.

That exposure has already materialised this year.

The US-Israeli war on Iran disrupted LNG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, prompting QatarEnergy to halve its scheduled LNG deliveries to Bangladesh for 2026.

Bangladesh, which received about 60 percent of its LNG imports from Qatar last year, has since sought alternative supplies, including increased purchases from the spot market.

Data from Kpler, an analytics platform, in July showed Bangladesh has imported 35 spot LNG cargoes since the conflict began to compensate for the disruption to long-term supplies.

The episode highlighted Bangladesh's dual vulnerability.

While an FSRU failure can restrict the country's ability to receive and regasify LNG, geopolitical disruptions can simultaneously reduce supplies and make replacement cargoes more expensive.

A similar challenge emerged in 2022, when Bangladesh was unable to buy spot LNG for several months after international prices surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Prices climbed to around $60 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), compared with the roughly $10-12/mmBtu range that had prevailed before the crisis, demonstrating that Bangladesh cannot always rely on the spot market when long-term supplies are disrupted.

NO SINGLE FIX

A third FSRU would reduce the impact of future technical failures by ensuring that the loss of a single terminal accounts for a smaller share of Bangladesh's regasification capacity.

But experts say additional regasification capacity cannot guarantee access to affordable LNG or reverse the long-term decline in domestic gas production.

The additional terminal should be viewed as a temporary bridge rather than a substitute for domestic exploration and production, said Prof Tamim, currently vice-chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

"Another FSRU could be justified as a short-term measure because Bangladesh cannot increase domestic gas production quickly enough to address its immediate supply shortage," he said.

To reduce the exposure to vulnerabilities, Bangladesh must simultaneously pursue domestic gas exploration, coal, renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation to strengthen its long-term energy security, Prof Tamim said.

"There is no single solution," he added.

Big oil firms make $93b in war profit

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profits from just under $50 billion in the same period last year, with campaigners warning that millions of households are left paying the price in higher bills and climate chaos.

The data suggests the eight oil companies -- Aramco, BP, Shell, Equinor, TotalEnergies, Eni, Chevron, and ExxonMobil -- made more than $700,000 of profit every minute over the spring quarter.

Their market valuations were swelling by about $600 billion to above $3 trillion.

The biggest oil profits in the spring quarter were raked in by Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, Aramco, which reported a 34 percent increase in its quarterly net income to more than $33 billion, even as its infrastructure was damaged by drone and missile strikes from Iranian and Houthi forces.

Aramco's fossil fuel production has made it responsible for more carbon emissions than any company in history, according to the database Carbon Majors, followed by Chevron and ExxonMobil and with Shell and BP in the top 10. Saudi Arabia has for decades led successful efforts to block and delay international climate action.

On Tuesday, BP became one of the last big oil companies to publish its results for the April to June period, reporting quarterly profits of $5.73 billion – the highest since the first year of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine and more than double the $2.5 billion of the previous three months.

Patrick Galey, the lead on fossil fuels at Global Witness, told the British newspaper: "While wildfires threaten communities across the world, drought bites and energy costs spiral, ordinary families are paying the price for big oil's prioritisation of shareholder wealth over a livable planet. It's time to make oil giants pay up to repair the climate breakdown they're driving. Think how many fire and flood defences we could build, or how many solar panels we could install, if big oil paid their fair share in taxes."

BP's new chief executive, Meg O'Neill, defended the company's profits by saying it was "focused on the things we can do to try to help address the situation" such as reliably producing more of the oil products that were in short supply.

The company has been cutting the amount it spends on green energy since it dropped its environmental ambitions in a "fundamental reset" early last year, reducing its annual energy transition budget from $5bn to $1.5bn-$2bn.

Shell last week reported its second highest quarterly profits ever as its net income jumped to $9.84 billion, despite producing less gas from its Qatar gas plant due to billions of dollars' worth of damage caused by the war. Equinor's profits climbed to $3.2 billion in the same period, up from $1.8 billion in the spring quarter last year.

In the US, the profits reported by Chevron and ExxonMobil provoked criticism from Donald Trump. The US president accused the pair of "making too much money" from his war on Iran and warned that they would be made to return profits to the public as he nears the November midterm elections with flagging approval ratings.

Chevron reported net income of $12.2 billion for the second quarter, a more than fivefold increase on the same period last year. ExxonMobil reported a profit of $14.5 billion, double what it made in the same period a year ago and its highest quarterly profit since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.