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WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

SUMMARY

Afghanistan



Policemen among 15 dead in security incidents

Source: Pajhwok Afghan News (PAN), Kabul/Lashkargah

Date: 08 January 2015

Three policemen among 15 people have been killed and several others wounded in different incidents in different parts of the country, officials said on yesterday. Maj. Farid Ahmad Obaid, police spokesman in southern Helmand province, told Pajhwok Afghan News that a clash erupted in Naway district on Tuesday night between militants and police. One rebel was killed and two others wounded in the firefight, he added. Two police personnel wounded in a clash with rebels in Sarwan Kala and Zambali areas of Sangin and Grishak districts, he added. In Zabul, three policemen died in a road accident on Kabul-Kandahar Highway near Sufa district late Tuesday evening, Sardar Muhammad, the district police chief, said. In Kandahar, the 205 Atal military corps in a statement said six militants were killed and four others injured in cleanup operations in Maiwand and Zherri districts. It confirmed three Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers wounded in a blast in Khas Uruzgan district in Uruzgan province. Another statement from the Ministry of Defence said five militants killed and two others wounded when their own bomb they were making exploded prematurely in Qarabagh district of southern Ghazni province.



Air pollution more dangerous than insurgency: NEPA

Source: Tolo News, Kabul

Date: 10 January 2015

Blaming the worst air pollution of Kabul on lack of government's serious programs to fight the tragedy, the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) called air pollution more dangerous than insurgency. As the winter arrives, the air pollution in the capital city increases two-fold following wood burning and use of fossil fuels like coal, seriously impacting the environment and causing several diseases.

Earlier, the Kabul residents had also complained of worst air pollution, saying two to three persons in each family were getting sick due to polluted air. Blaming the previous government for polluted environment in a meeting Thursday in Kabul, the NEPA officials asked the unity government to fight the phenomenon with serious will. "It is a serious issue in Afghanistan but unfortunately there is no strong will to eliminate it," said Mustafa Zahir, head of NEPA. "Even after a decade, this problem has not been solved so far." The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) officials have also expressed deep concerns regarding the matter, linking the increased air pollution to the population growth in Kabul. "The population is growing as the people are leaving the farms and moving to the cities," UNEP country director Andrew Scanlon said. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has also acknowledged the issue, saying air pollution was causing respiratory illnesses among the citizens. According to World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution is a major environment-related health threat to children and a risk factor for both acute and chronic respiratory disease.

Traffic accident kills two, wounded 9 people in Sar-e-Pul

Source: Bakhtar News Agency (BNA), Sar-E-Pul

Date: 10 January 2015

In a traffic accident two persons lost their lives and 9 others wounded in Sar-e-Pul province. The incident happened late on Thursday (08/01/2015) when a vehicle type of Falankoch deviated from the road in Balkhab-Sar-e-Pul highway. Gen. Noor Habib Gul Bahari in-charge of police in the province stated BNA, two persons were killed and 9 others were injured in the event. Gul Bahari claimed that the main reason behind the incident was carelessness and high speed of the driver. Meanwhile, doctors in a health centers reported critical the health conditions the two injured of the incident.

Necessary facilities for 3000 families

Source: Government of Afghanistan, Kabul

Date: 11 January 2015

With a cost of more than 17 million and 400 thousand Afs seven development projects of the Regional Programmes of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development were completed in Ghor province. These projects include: construction of two water intakes, four irrigation water reservoirs, a canal (1565 meters in length) and 300 meters long retaining wall. Approximately, 3000 families have benefited from these development projects. The mentioned projects have been completed in Ahangaran, Sarekasy, Dahn Jarmon, Kandabash, Chapary, Ghar Sufla and Nawabad villages of Shahrak district and the capital city of Ghor province. Upon the completion of these projects about 4500 acres agricultural lands were irrigated.

Badakhshan avalanches claim 5 lives; women among victims

Source: Pajhwok Afghan News (PAN), Faizabad

Date: 14 January 2015



At least five people, including two women, have been killed and three more hurt in two separate avalanches in northeastern Badakhshan province, officials said on yesterday. The avalanches occurred in Shoki and Mahami districts of the vulnerable province, bordering Pakistan's northwestern valley of Chitral. Fakhruddin Beazar, Shoki district chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News three people, including a woman returning from a health clinic, lost their lives and two more were wounded. Two other people were killed and a third wounded in a similar incident in Mahami town, district chief Mohammad Ismail said. Their bodies were discovered and returned to families with the help of residents. Several districts of the mountainous province remain cut off from the capital Faizabad due to heavy snowfall in winters.

Bangladesh



Ten shanties gutted in Chittagong

Source: The Daily Star, Staff Correspondent

Date: 08 January 2015

A fire broke out in Firoze Shah Colony area of the city early yesterday and gutted ten houses. No casualty, however, was reported in the incident. Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from a gas cylinder leakage at a house of the slum at around 2:30 am and engulfed adjacent houses soon. The flame of the fire brought under control in an hour, they said. Fire service officials said according to the slum dwellers the extent of losses in the incident worth Tk 8 lakh.

City braces for environmental problems: Nishat

Source: The Financial Express

Date: 09 January 2015

Dhaka city will experience severe environmental problems in the coming days due to urban flooding caused by climate change, according to an eminent water expert, reports UNB. "Dhaka city will face severe impacts of flood in the future due to heavy rainfall if 300 millimetres of precipitation occurs in the capital in a day," said Prof Ainun Nishat. He was addressing the inaugural session of a three-day Gobeshona Conference at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in the city on yesterday. Prof Ainun Nishat said the Chittagong port city has already experienced a severe urban flooding in the last monsoon with a 300-millimetre of precipitation in a day and if the same magnitude of rainfall occurs in Dhaka city, its drainage system will simply collapse, accelerating an urban environmental disaster. The Gobeshona Conference for Research on Climate Change in Bangladesh is an annual conference that showcases research on climate change in Bangladesh. Gobeshona is a knowledge sharing platform for climate change research on Bangladesh. About the global climate fund, Prof Nishat said the Green Climate Fund has already been set up. "If we (Bangladesh) can work out proper plans and actions to cope with climate change impacts and submit those to the fund authorities, I'm optimistic we'll get money from the fund." Executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies (BCAS) Dr Atiq Rahman said the poorest of the poor are going to be affected further due to climate change. "The poor have already paid due to climate change impacts. If you go to the country's coastal belt, you'll see poor people raise their homesteads with their own resources," he said. Speaking at the same conference Water Resources Minister Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud said about 30 per cent of the floating people in the capital are the worst victims of riverbank erosion. "About 30 per cent of the floating people of Dhaka city come from the areas affected by riverbank erosion, losing their homesteads and all belongings," he said. Speaking as the chief guest, Mr Mahmud said Bangladesh is one of the biggest deltas with the estuary of three river systems-Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (GBM). The three river systems bring around 1.5 billion tonnes of silt, which run through Bangladesh each year accelerating the riverbank erosion, he said, adding that 93 per cent of GBM catchment is outside the country while only seven per cent of catchment is located inside it. "Water of the 93 per cent catchment areas of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna flow through only seven per cent narrow catchment," the minister said. Terming climate change one of the biggest threats to

Bangladesh, he said the problems of climate change cannot be addressed by Bangladesh alone as the world's rich nations are responsible for global warming. Deputy Minister for Environment and Forests Abdullah Al Islam Jacob, France Ambassador in Dhaka Sophie AUBERT, water expert Prof Ainun Nishat, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies (BCAS) Dr Atiq Rahman and director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) Dr Saleemul Huq, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Oil spill hit 500 sqkm area of Sundarbans

Source: The Daily Star, Staff Correspondent

Date: 10 January 2015

WATER	CONTAMINATED AREAS	NON-CONTAMINATED AREAS
Oil content	295-1,650 mg/L	6.68-11.3 mg/L
Total suspended solids	317-1,681 mg/L	8.9-15.8 mg/L
Phytoplankton abundance	24- 67 units/L	171-349 units/L
SOIL		
Oil content	370-1690 mg/ kg of 2-inch surface soil	4-8 mg/ kg of 2-inch surface soil

The recent oil spill has affected an area of over 500 sq km in the Sundarbans, which will see an array of aquatic life including dolphins and crocodiles die out or migrate elsewhere due to the loss of food, breeding capacity, and habitats, finds a survey led by a Khulna University professor. The inter-tidal zones and the forest floor besides the Shela River, where a tanker sank on December 9 last year spilling over 3.5 lakh litres of furnace oil, and its connected canals and creeks have been contaminated, says the draft of the report, "Impact of Oil Spillage on the Environment of Sundarbans". Prepared by Prof Abdullah Harun Chowdhury of KU and three other teachers, the findings were presented

at a press conference titled "One Month of Oil Spilling Disaster in Sundarban: Field Study, Investigation Report, Proposal and Programme" in the capital's Mukti Bhaban yesterday. The National Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas and Mineral Resources, Electricity Sector and Ports organised the conference to announce its six-day Long March from Dhaka to the Sundarbans beginning March 11. The march aims at pressing for effective measures to protect the forest. According to the survey, physiological activities and breeding systems of all aquatic plants, vertebrates and invertebrates including oxygen and food producing phytoplankton, zooplanktons, insects, all fish, shrimp, crab, mudskipper, otter, fishing cat, dolphin, crocodile, turtle, and aquatic birds will be affected. Comparisons between contaminated and non-contaminated areas show wide gaps in oil content in water and the population and number of species of phytoplankton (primary producer in the food chain). In affected areas, oil content was recorded at 295-1,650 mg/L, comparing with 6.68-11.3 mg/L elsewhere. Internationally, the highest 10 mg /L is the tolerance limit for aquatic biodiversity, says the report, adding that higher concentrations create lethal conditions for aquatic life. In addition, only 18 species of phytoplankton were found in affected areas, compared to 47 species in other places. The concentration of its population was also very poor--24-67 units per litre, while 226-456 units per litre were detected in non-contaminated zones. Visiting 15 different locations hit by contamination and three spots in non-affected areas on December 11-25, a research team collected water, soil and biological samples from a study area of over 1,200 sq km. Laboratory tests and field study revealed high presence of total suspended solids, (decaying matter, industrial waste that affect stream health and aquatic life), chemical oxygen demand (which determines the amount of organic pollutants) and small populations of phytoplankton. Calling for an immediate stop to the movement of cargo vessels through the forest and restoration of the previous Mongla-Ghashiakhali channel in six months, the committee member Kollol Mostafa said the natural recovery of the Sundarbans must be unhindered. The forest sprawls over more than 6,000 sq km in Bangladesh territory. Eng Sheikh Md Shahidullah, environmental activist Prof Anu Muhammad, singer Anusheh Anadil, and Eng Anupam Saikat Shanta were present.

Disaster warning Coastal women do not have equal access: Study

Source: The Independent, Staff Correspondent

Date: 10 January 2015

Women do not have equal access to disaster warning as the men in the coastal areas of Bangladesh, a recent study reveals. The study titled 'Water, vulnerability and the practice of adaptation: Gender realities of disasters in Bangladesh' was conducted by Dr Farhana Sultana, assistant professor of the Geography Department of Syracuse University of New York. In the study, Dr Farhana said, "Inter-sectionality of social difference, especially along gender and class lines, differentiate the ways that impacts of disaster are felt and experienced". "Gendered implications of disasters in Bangladesh are particularly poignant as patriarchal norms, inequities and inequalities often place women in considerably disadvantageous positions", she added. The study observed that in most cases, disaster warning in coastal areas is disseminated in public places where women generally do not go due to social taboo or religious reasons stimulated by patriarchal society norms. Incidentally, owing to cultural practices men, most of the time do not provide the warning to their respective female family members, rather expect them to remain at the household and safeguard belongings which increase women's vulnerability.

The study examined the aftermath scenarios of a number of disasters of the recent times and found that in most cases women were either not informed or forced to stay at home during disaster. Women too, due to their lack of education, mentality of protecting the belongings and natural shyness prefer to be at home rather than with others at the cyclone shelters, the study found. The study opined that at least 30 percent female casualties could be reduced if proper steps are taken by the respective authorities to make the disaster warning accessible to women. It also observed that any effective response to disaster affected communities cannot be considered complete unless women-specific responses are interwoven in a variety of adaptation options considered in the targeted areas.

400 shanties gutted in Katasur fire, minor killed

Source: The Financial Express, Staff Correspondent

Date: 12 January 2015



A minor girl was burnt alive and 400 shanties were gutted as a slum caught fire at Battala in Katasur area of Mohammadpur in the city on yesterday morning, reports UNB. Azizul Haque, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said the fire erupted at a shanty of Pulpar Basti (slum) in the area at about 8:28 am and soon engulfed the entire slum, killing four-year-old girl Fatema. Fatema's garment worker mother had gone to her workplace leaving the child asleep in their room. Major AKM Shakil Newaz, director (operation and maintenance) of fire service and civil defence, said they were informed about the fire at 8:15am and reached the spot at 8:25am. Ten fire fighting units rushed in and managed to bring the blaze under control at about 9:40 am. The fire fighters are still busy with rescue work in the area. Fire Service sources said some residents of the slum, while going out for workplaces, witnessed the fire originated from an earthen oven of a shanty at 7:30am.

Knowledge sharing vital to fight climate change

Source: The Daily Star, Staff Correspondent

Date: 13 January 2015

People will learn to effectively battle climate change once they pick up the idea of sharing knowledge, experience and good practices, experts and professionals told the concluding session of a four-day international conference yesterday. “Tackling climate change is inherently a learning-by-doing process,” said Dr Saleemul Huq, director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). “Bangladesh has actually done quite a lot. We now need to learn from what we have done before we do something more, particularly learn from past mistakes,” he told “Gobeshona Conference” in the ICCCAD situated on the capital's IUB campus. Aiming to promote this form of participation, the conference was organised by Gobeshona, a knowledge sharing platform for climate change research on Bangladesh funded by UKAid and formed by multiple local and foreign institutions and organisations. The day's focus was on government officials who shared experiences and lessons learnt while working on climate change and disaster management with activists worldwide. The gathering saw presentation of over 100 papers by participants from research, academic, government and non-government organisations, private enterprises and media from home and abroad. The topics included climate change and livelihood, water, health, migration, gender, renewable energy, natural resource management, political economy of climate change, disaster risk reduction, adaptation technologies, waste management, urbanisation, communication and using research for policy formulation. These papers, alongside others of the platform, are available at www.gobeshona.net while it was decided to hold the conference every year. Environment and Forests Minister Anwar Hossain Manju was present as chief guest while Secretary Nazibur Rahman and IUB Vice Chancellor Prof M Omar Rahman also spoke.

Fire kills 13,000 poultry birds in Chuadanga

Source: The Daily Star, Staff Correspondent

Date: 14 January 2015

Two poultry farms were gutted in a fire, killing at least 13,000 chickens at Chandpur village in Damurhuda upazila of Chuadanga early yesterday. Police and fire service sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at the farm owned by Dewar Hossain at around 3:00am and soon engulfed the adjacent farm of Tofazzal Hossain. On information, a fire fighting unit from Chuadanga district fire service station rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze with the help of locals at around 4:30pm. Zakir Hossain, in-charge of the fire service station, told this correspondent over cellphone that at least 13,000 chickens of the two poultry farms were burnt to death and two sheds and other valuables were completely destroyed. Our Bogra correspondent adds: Seven shops were gutted in a fire at Mahasthangarh Mazar area under Shibganj upazila of the district on Monday night. Fire service source said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop at around 10:00pm and soon spread to six other shops. Being informed, fire fighters from Bogra Fire service station reached the spot and doused the flames.

Bhutan



14 injured in bus accident

Source: Kuensel Newspaper

Date: 10 January 2015

At least 14 people were injured and have been admitted to the Bajo regional hospital after the bus they were traveling in from Phuentsholing to Tsirang went off the road and fell 17-feet at Taksha on the Wangdue – Tsirang highway at around 4pm, today. The injured passengers include, a driver, eight female

passengers including three female children and six adult males. Dzungkhag and health officials, dessup volunteers, RSTA and police brought the injured passengers to the hospital in ambulances. The adha gup informed authorities of the accident. The injured patients were in stable conditions, health officials said.



Eight killed in different mishaps on city roads

Source: The Hindu

Date: 10 January 2015

HYDERABAD: It was a day of bloodbath on the city roads as eight people, including three morning walkers, a woman and her 7-year-old son, were crushed to death in 4 different road accidents on Friday. The otherwise quiet village of Nagaram in Maheswaram on the southern fringes of the city woke up to a rude jolt when three youngsters were fatally knocked down by a speeding Swift Dzire car around 5 a.m. Raghavender, 22, Srisailam, 19, and Janardhan, 23, were walking on the road when the car rammed them from behind. Two empty liquor bottles were found in the car but the driver Ajay, who initially fled the spot and was caught late in the night, maintained that they belonged to some passengers. Two more youngsters — engineering final-year students of Brilliant college Krishna Teja, 21 and Bharat, 21, — got killed when the bike they were riding crashed into a lorry on Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway at Peddamberpet village close to Outer Ring Road (ORR) junction. They were returning home after appearing for exams when the accident occurred at 4.30 p.m. as the lorry driver suddenly slammed the brakes, Hayathnagar Sub-Inspector Srinivas said. In a separate incident, death came calling for a private school teacher Manjula, 34, and her son Arnar, 7, near R.S. Brothers junction at Gangaram in Chandanagar when a DCM van hit the Honda Activa they were riding. While moving ahead as the signal turned green, the van hit the two-wheeler from the side. The mother and son fell on their left side and came under the rear tyres of the van while her daughter Akshara, 4, escaped with wounds. In another incident, M. Manik, 35, died on the spot when a tipper lorry hit the Scooty he was riding at Laxmivihar main road in Chandanagar.

Six killed in roof collapse in Ballari

Source: The Hindu

Date: 10 January 2015

Karnataka: In a tragic incident, six persons – two women and four girls – were buried alive when the roof of their old house, collapsed. The incident occurred in Kelageri locality in Kottur town in Ballari district during the wee hours of Saturday. The house belonged to Barkera Phakkirappa, who runs an eatery in front of the bus stand in the town. Phakkirappa, his wife Vasanta, and a woman and her twenty-day old baby, had a miraculous escape. According to information reaching here, the roof, which had wooden beams, collapsed on Vasanta's mother Hanumanthamma (65), her sister Manjamma (31), Manjamma's daughter Netravati (12), and Phakkirappa's three daughters aged five, three and two. Phakkirappa, his wife and new born, who were sleeping on a cot survived because an almirah, which tilted when the roof collapsed, blocked the debris from falling on them. The police rushed to the spot, and removed the bodies from the debris for post-mortem examination. The Kottur town police have registered a case.

Eight swine flu cases detected in Haryana: official

Source: PTI

Date: 11 January 2015

Chandigarh: While swine flu cases are rising in Delhi, eight cases have been detected in neighbouring Haryana so far and the state is planning to start a helpline in each district. "Eight cases of swine flu have so far been detected. However, the situation is fully under control and health department is geared up for surveillance, prevention, identification, testing, isolation and treatment of the cases," Haryana's Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Ram Niwas said today.

Four dead as bus falls off road near Dehradun

Source: The Hindu

Date: 11 January 2015

Four persons were killed and 40 injured in a bus accident at Almora district's Bajol village, on Sunday morning. According to the Almora district disaster management department the dead include a woman and her three-month-old son. The Uttarakhand Roadways bus, which was travelling from Delhi to Ranikhet, fell off the road into a 40 metres deep valley, at a distance of about 15 kilometres from its destination. Station House Officer (SHO) of the Ranikhet police B C Sharma said, "The preliminary enquiry shows that the driver is responsible for the accident. The driver might have dozed off while driving, or, might have taken a sharp turn that might have caused the accident." The injured were rushed to hospitals in Haldwani and Ranikhet, Mr. Sharma said.

Three killed, 11 injured in road mishap

Source: PTI

Date: 12 January 2015

Ratlam (MP): Three persons were killed and 11 others injured today when a truck went out of control after its brakes failed near here in Madhya Pradesh, police said. The truck, carrying electricity poles, collided with an autorickshaw, killing three of its occupants, and then hit 11 pedestrians and other road users before crashing into a roadside house, said Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Prashant Choube. A brake failure caused the accident on Rajapura-Mataji Road, he said.

Fire engulfs several forest areas in Jammu

Source: PTI

Date: 12 January 2015

Bhaderwah (J&K): A major fire broke out in several areas in Batote forest division in Jammu and Kashmir, forest officials said. Fire broke out in several areas in Marmat-Batote forest division since yesterday, they said. The blaze has spread to six areas in Marmat forest belt, they said, adding, operation to extinguish the fire is yet to be started.

'Emerging economies must help combat climate change'

Source: The Hindu

Date: 12 January 2015

BARODA: U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said here on Sunday that while respecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, emerging economies such as India, China, South Africa and Brazil should take necessary action to combat climate change. Interacting with presspersons after visiting a canal-top solar power project here, he said the developed countries had caused much more impact on climate than the developing nations and they had different capacities to tackle impacts. India was taking necessary action by projects such as the canal-top power project, a creative and impressive one which all

developing countries should emulate. To questions, he said climate finance was the most important aspect to make combating climate change a success. India could play a vital role as one of the fastest growing economies. He was catalysing funds into the Green Climate Fund, which had topped \$10 billion last year. He was optimistic about arriving at a new, robust climate treaty in Paris.

North India reels under severe cold wave; Heavy fog disrupts air, train services

Source: newsonair

Date 13 January 2015



A bone-chilling cold wave continued to sweep North India, while dense fog engulfed most of the places in the region affecting normal life. Foggy weather also affected road, rail and air traffic in the region. Dense fog enveloped Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, affecting the movement of trains. According to the North Western Railway spokesperson, 25 trains were running late due to the fog. Vehicles were also moving at snail's pace at highways due to dense fog in the early morning hours. However, in Jammu & Kashmir, there was relief from the intense cold conditions, including Ladakh region, as the minimum temperatures rose by several degrees, staying above the freezing point at most places for the first time in about a month. Delhi today experienced the coldest day of the year with minimum temperature plummeting to 4 degrees Celsius. Cold wave continues in the national capital and foggy conditions prevailed in many parts of the city. According to MeT Department, visibility dropped to less than 50 metres at 8.30 AM from relatively better conditions at 5.30 AM when it was recorded at 400 metres. Flight operations were also affected leading to delay and diversion. Most of the north-bound trains are running several hours behind schedule due to dense fog in the Gangetic plain . 55 trains have been delayed and 13 trains had to be cancelled. It will be a clear day ahead but the skies will turn partly cloudy midnight onward with moderate to dense fog. Yesterday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 16.2 degree Celsius and minimum at 5.7 degree Celsius.

Many hospitalized after gas leak in industrial area in Ahmedabad

Source: newsonair

Date 13 January 2015

In Gujarat, many people were affected following industrial gas leakage from a factory in Vatva GIDC area of Ahmedabad last night. According to fire brigade officials, the gas leakage was reported in phase II of Vatva GIDC -Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation- area. Later, it was found that leakage gas was Olium-65 and leaked from one chemical unit in Rameshwar Park of Vatva GIDC phase two. About 300 people have minor affect and some of them were also hospitalized. Impact of leakage was in one kilometer of area and many people fled for their safety. About 10 fire fighters were rushed on the spot and situation was under control within 3 hours.

Cold claims 7 lives in UP as north shivers

Source: DD News

Date 13 January 2015



The harsh winter weather in north claimed seven lives in Uttar Pradesh even as fog caused disruptions in rail and air schedules on Monday amidst a forecast for rain or snowfall in some parts of the region in the coming days. Delhi shivered under overcast skies on Monday as a dip in the mercury added to the winter woes while early morning fog also hit rail operations. The maximum temperature in the national capital was recorded five points below the season's average at 16.2 degrees Celsius while the minimum dropped 1.5 degrees to settle at 5.7 degrees, two notches below the normal. Fog affected visibility in the morning and 41 trains were running behind schedule by several hours. However, flight operations were smooth at Delhi airport, authorities said. Kashmir continued to groan under the biting cold weather conditions with minimum temperatures hovering below freezing point across the Valley. The weatherman has said that there is a possibility of light rain or snowfall at isolated places in Jammu and Kashmir over the next 24 hours. With the weather having remained mostly dry so far, minimum temperatures in the Kashmir and Ladakh region continued to stay below freezing point. Many water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake, were partially frozen as the cold intensified. Srinagar, the summer capital of J-K, recorded a low of -3.1 degrees, down by about a degree from the previous night's -2.2 degrees. Meanwhile, in UP, as many as seven persons succumbed to the bitter cold conditions, the MeT department said on Monday. While five persons died due to cold in different parts of Bareilly district, two deaths were reported in Barabanki district. Under the spell of dry weather prevailing in UP, fog was reported at most places. The mercury fell in the Gorakhpur division but rose appreciably in the Lucknow, Allahabad and Kanpur divisions. The lowest minimum in the state was recorded at 3.6 degrees at Hamirpur. The situation was no better in Punjab and Haryana, where day temperatures settled much below the normal while adverse weather conditions hit air and rail traffic. Thus, a few flights from Chandigarh were delayed on Monday, said an official at the airport there. While maximum temperatures have plummeted several notches below normal across the two neighbouring states, the minimum dropped at some places on Monday, including at Narnaul in Haryana, which recorded the lowest temperature for the two states at 3.5 degrees, two notches below the normal. Amritsar in Punjab registered a low of 5.8 degrees after a rise of two degrees in the mercury while the minimum at Patiala and Ludhiana was recorded at 6 and 7.8 degrees, respectively. Rajasthan, too, continued to reel under the cold weather and also saw dense fog wreaking havoc with rail services. Twenty-four trains of North-Western Railways were running late by between 45 minutes and 14 hours while four trains were cancelled and one had to be rescheduled in view of the fog in the northern areas. Mount Abu, the lone hill station in Rajasthan, recorded a low of 2 degrees. There was warning of heavy rain or snowfall at isolated places in Himachal Pradesh even as the minimum rose by a few degrees and the weather remained dry in the hill state. The MeT office predicted light rain or snowfall at some places on Tuesday and forecast heavy rain and snowfall on Jan. 14 in the state due to a Western Disturbance as an upper air cyclonic circulation over northeast Afghanistan and neighbourhood extends further.

Over 70 swine flu cases reported in Telangana

Source: newsonair

Date: 14 January 2015



In Telangana, the number of swine flu cases has been on the rise during the New Year with more than 70 cases diagnosed positive for H1N1 virus in the state. Coordinator for prevention of swine flu, Dr Subhakar told AIR correspondent that a total 71 cases were diagnosed positive and treated during the first half of this month, where as a total 77 swine flu cases registered during the entire 2014. He said a senior citizen, a suspected H1N1 case died of multiple problems after admitted into the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad this morning. However, he said the report over the actual reason of the death is awaited. He also said 16 deaths reported due to swine flu during 2014 in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Four swine flu cases were reported in Andhra Pradesh so far during the current year while 11 reported during 2014.

Seven houses gutted in Raichur

Source: The Hindu

Date: 14 January 2015



Fire and Emergency Services personnel fighting to extinguish the fire at Myadar Street in Raichur on Tuesday.

RAICHUR: Seven houses, stocks of grain, cash, jewellery, clothes and household articles were completely burnt in a fire on Myadar Street in the Sia Talab area here on Tuesday. There was no casualty. A huge gathering at the spot initially disrupted the Fire and Emergency Services operations, but the police forcibly removed them so that the personnel could go about their job. According to eye-witnesses, the fire was first noticed in the house of Maruthi at noon and spread to five adjacent houses. The others who lost their houses are Tayappa, Narasimhalu, Sakrappa, Geethabai and Mahadeva. "A sum of Rs. 1.3 lakh was reduced to ashes in the fire. I had saved it all with my hard work," Sakrappa told *The Hindu*. Maruthi said that he lost Rs. 25,000. "Hard-earned valuable jewellery, grain, clothes, cooking utensils, television sets and other household articles were completely destroyed. All we earned from our years of labour was reduced to ashes within minutes," a woman was seen lamenting at the spot. "We have made temporary arrangements at a nearby school. We are also making arrangements to provide construction material to the victims," Deputy Commissioner Sasikanth S. Senthil said.

6 Sabarimala pilgrims die in accident

Source: The Hindu

Date: 14 January 2015

BALLARI/CHITRADURGA: Batri, a locality in Ward No. 31 of Ballari City Corporation, woke up to shocking news on Tuesday morning. Six persons from the locality, all devotees of Swamy Ayyappa, were killed and four suffered injuries in a road accident that occurred between Molkalmuru and Hangal in Chitradurga district. They were all returning to Ballari from a pilgrimage to Sabarimala when a lorry collided with their van. A pall of gloom descended on Batri as the news spread. People in the locality were seen standing in groups near the houses of the six deceased, trying to console the grieving family members. As many as 40 persons from the locality had gone in different vehicles to Sabarimala. Some of them stayed back for the Makara Jyoti festival, while others, who had witnessed the jyoti earlier, decided to return. Of them, two vehicles were heading towards Ballari via Molkalmuru, enquiries revealed. The four injured have been admitted to VIMS hospital in the city. When they heard the news, several relatives of the deceased immediately rushed to Molkalmuru to bring the bodies back. The names of the dead were given as Honnurswamy (30), Lanki Reddy (35), Satish (18), Ramu (25), Murali (25) and Tirumal (23). The injured are Keshav (14), Vijay (15) Kumaraswamy (30) and Veeresh (25). “Lanki Reddy, one of the deceased, called his wife at around 4 a.m. to tell her that he and the others were near Molkalmuru and would be reaching Ballari by 6 a.m. But by 6 a.m. only the news of his death came,” a grief-stricken relative told *The Hindu*. One of the residents of the locality said all the six dead were breadwinners of their families and were the only sons of their parents. “We are all worried about the family of Murali. His mother is mentally unsound and weak, and there is an aged grandmother as well. Murali used to toil as an agricultural labourer to eke out a living. Now God alone can save the family,” another resident said.



MNDF puts out Hulhumale' fire, source unclear

Source: Haveeru News, Male'

Date: 11 January 2015

The Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) has put out a fire that broke out in a forest area in Hulhumalé. The fire had broken out in the trees to the east of Nirohmagu, which happens to be a frequented garbage disposal site. The MNDF's Fire and Rescue department said that the fire had started at around 9:15 pm on Friday (08/01/2015) night. It was put out at about 3:30 am. No one was injured in the fire. The MNDF further said that the fire had originated from dry trash, though the source of it is yet unclear.

Hulhumalé reclamation cost USD 22 million lower

Source: Haveeru News, Male'

Date: 12 January 2015



The Hulhumalé reclamation project is now running on a cost that's USD 22 million lower than the one previously proposed, said Tourism Minister Ahmed Adheeb. The second phase of the reclamation project began on yesterday night. Minister Adheeb, who is also the chair of the cabinet's Economic Committee,

said that the cost reduction came after President Yamin Abdul Gayoom's discussion with the companies running the reclamation. He said that the companies which had originally proposed to conduct the reclamation had named to steep a price, and 'the President himself' had approached them and other companies to have the project done at a lower cost. "The 50 million dollar project is running at such a low a cost because of the President's effort" Adheeb said "Talks are still ongoing with Belgium's Dredging International to maintain the cost at that range".

The Hulhumale Development Corporation has estimated the land reclamation would take six months to complete; however, the reclaimed land will only be usable by December of 2015. After adding 240 hectares and reclaiming land up until Farukolhufushi – an island in the same lagoon as Hulhumale' – the island would be 410 hectares in size. It is currently 188 hectares. When Hulhumale' was first administrated, it was built to house a population of 60,000 people. After the reclamation, it would be large enough to house a 100,000 people. A USD 30 million dollar loan from the Bank of Ceylon is funding most of the project.

Nepal



Fire guts two houses in Sunsari

Source: Republica News, Sunsari

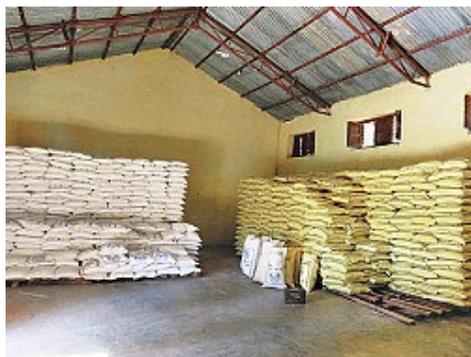
Date: 8 Jan. 2015

SUNSARI, Jan 8: Property worth Rs 300,000 was gutted after two houses in Ghuski VDC of Sunsari district caught fire from a bonfire lit nearby. According to the District Police Office, Sunsari, the houses of Najam Alam and Ikbal Alam were reduced to ashes. Food grains in store, clothes and other property inside the houses were gutted in the incident. Property worth Rs 300,000 was damaged by the fire, Najam claimed. Police and locals doused the fire after their hour-long efforts.

Famine looms large in Jajarkot

Source: Kantipur News, Jajarkot

Date: 15 Jan. 2015



JAJARKOT, JAN 15 - The threat of acute shortage of food looms large in the remote region owing to the failure of Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) to transport subsidized rice to its depots located in remote parts of the district for the past eight months. The transportation of rice in the depots had been delayed after NFC declined to entertain the tender applications filed by transport entrepreneurs. The NFC had invited tender bids to transport rice to its depots at Chauka, Nayakbada, Dhogi and Dushhera VDCs in April last year. However, unsatisfied with the terms, the Corporation had called for tender applications again in August, 2014, rejecting the previous tender applications registered by transport entrepreneurs again. Acting chief Ram Prasad Poudyal of the NFC branch, Jajarkot said that the reason impeding the tender

process this year was beyond his understanding. “The central office had supplied 550 quintals of rice via Himali Transport Services through special provision in September. However, nothing has reached the depots since then,” Poudyal said. While the NFC warehouse at the district headquarters has 250 quintals of rice in stock, the depots in remote VDCs do not even have a single grain of rice. While flood ravaged VDCs, including Ramindanda, Sakla, Rokayagaun, and Nayakbada VDCs have been affected the most, locals of more than a dozen VDCs, including Dhime, Paik, Dandagaun, Ragda, Bhagwati, Pajaru, Daha, Lanhan, Garkhakot, Dushhera have been grappling with the crisis. “The Dalits and economically deprived families living in Dalit settlement of Bayakada in Bhawati VDCs have been compelled to purchase rice at very high prices by borrowing money from moneylenders,” said local Dilli Bahadur Baniya of Ragda. A kilogram of rice can fetch up to Rs 100 in remote VDCs. Despite the government’s assurance to provide subsidized rice to locals in the remote VDCs with low agricultural production, locals have been compelled to live through the problem since years due to the apathy of NFC to ensure proper transport and distribution of food grains. Although NFC has allocated 4,000 quintals of rice for the district headquarters and 800 quintals per depot, it is yet to initiate procedure to transport them.

Inmates deprived of food

Similarly, inmates at the Jajarkot prison have been facing acute food shortage due to the failure of NFC to supply rice. “The shortage had been felt as the NFC warehouse only has three quintals of the specific type of rice to be supplied to the prison,” said Poudyal, adding that the remaining stocks were a year old. The NFC has been supplying ‘aruwa mota’ rice to the prison. Although the rice is of low-quality, inmates accused the government of feeding them rotten rice. The monthly demand of rice for the inmates at the Jajarkot prison is around eight quintals.



Pakistan

Blast kills three miners in Orakzai

Source: Dawn News, Kalaya

Date: 8 Jan. 2015

KALAYA: Three labourers were killed and two others suffered injuries when a blast occurred in a coalmine in Doli area of Orakzai Agency on Tuesday evening. Assistant political agent, lower Orakzai, Mohammad Arshad, confirmed the incident, saying that the coalmine blast claimed lives of three miners and caused injuries to two others. The victims were identified as Rahimuddin, Ajmal Khan and Ismail Khan. They belonged to Shangla district. The injured labourers were identified as Qayyum and Janan, who were shifted to a local hospital. Soon after the incident, a rescue team of mines department reached the area and initiated operation. The bodies were dispatched to their native areas after completing legal formalities. It is to be mentioned here that at least 146 labourers have been killed in incidents at coalmines in Orakzai during the past two years. At least two dozen mines in the area have been declared dangerous.

Three killed, 12 injured as passenger train hits truck in Jamshoro

Source: Dawn News, Dadu

Date: 9 Jan. 2015

DADU: Three persons, said to be labourers, died and about a dozen others were injured when a passenger train hit a truck at the Thathi railway crossing near the historical town of Amri in Jamshoro on Thursday. Police said that the accident took place due to thick fog. The Quetta-bound Khushhal Khan Khattak Express originating from Karachi was passing through Thathi village while the truck had just reached the level crossing. The truck driver could not see the approaching train due to the fog, police said. They said the truck was forcefully hit by the train with the result the driver and many of its other occupants, all said to be labourers, were seriously injured. Three of the victims, Sabit Ali Solangi, Khabar Ali Solangi and Nadeem Ali Solangi, succumbed to their injuries, they added. The other victims, later identified as Muslim Solangi, Musharraf Solangi, Bachal Ali Solangi, Majeed, Shaukat Brehamani,

Mumtaz Solangi, Lakhi Dino Solangi, Asif Solangi, Allahyar Solangi, Ramz Ali, Meer Hazar and Mehboob Brehmani, were taken to different hospitals in Sann, Amri and Sehwan Sharif. Jamshoro SSP Naeem Ahmed Shaikh said that the people travelling in the truck were residents of Shalmani, Lakha and Sann towns. People at the scene of the accident said that the level crossing was without barrier and their repeated calls for the installation of standard barriers had remained unheeded in the past.

Breach causes flooding near Thull town

Source: Dawn News, Sukkur

Date: 10 Jan. 2015

SUKKUR: More than 30 houses were damaged when a deluge gushing out of breaches in irrigation channels known as Naheeb Wah and Pahor Wah Walls hit Haq Bahoo Colony near Thull town of Jacobabad district on Friday afternoon. The locality has a large number of concrete and thatched houses built within the surroundings of the two channels off-taking from Moosa Allahabad Shakh (canal). Some of the affected thatched houses were swept away and the concrete houses sustained extensive damage, residents of the colony said. They said that the irrigation staff posted in the area was promptly informed with request to close the canal gates but no one came to their rescue until the breaches widened by 15 feet and the affected people started plugging work on their own. The plugging work was under way till last reports came in at around midnight.

30 feared dead in accident

Source: Dawn News, Karachi

Date: 11 Jan. 2015

KARACHI: At least 30 people were feared dead late on Saturday night when a bus carrying over 50 passengers to Shikarpur from Karachi collided with an oil tanker near National Highway and caught fire, officials said. "The accident was reported near Link Road off National Highway," said Karachi commissioner Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqi. "I can't confirm right now the number of casualties, but rescue workers are retrieving bodies from the bus." An Edhi Foundation worker confirmed retrieving more than 20 bodies. TV channels reported at least 30 people had been burned to death in the crash.

Two die in house collapse

Source: Dawn News, Kasur

Date: 11 Jan. 2015

KASUR: The roof collapse of a house claimed the lives of two minors on Saturday while six others, including two women and a minor, suffered serious injuries at Qila Roopa Singh in Chunian. Hashmat Ali with his son Awais Elahi was living in a rented double-storey house in Qila Roopa Singh. On Saturday, the roof of the upper portion caved in, and the whole house collapsed. Hashmat and Awais, who were at the upper portion, suffered injuries. Hashmat's sons, Saqib Elahi, 5, and Musa Elahi, 3, who were on the ground floor, died on the spot while Awais's wife Nadia Bibi, son Qasim, 7, and mother-in-law Majeeda Bibi suffered serious injuries. Rescue 1122 retrieved the bodies and injured people from the debris and shifted the injured people to the Chunian Civil Hospital, from where they were referred to Lahore Jinnah Hospital.

Bus inferno toll climbs to 62

Source: Dawn News, Karachi

Date: 12 Jan. 2015

KARACHI: At least 62 people, including women and children, were burnt alive when their bus caught fire after an oil tanker collided with it off the National Highway in Malir (briefly reported in Dawn's Sunday edition) in the wee hours of Sunday. The fierce blaze left the victims burnt beyond recognition. The ill-

fated bus was going to Shikarpur from Karachi. The dead included 13 members of one family and nine of another. The accident took place a few months after 58 people were killed when a bus smashed into a truck (in November last year) in Khairpur. Before that, a bus-trailer collision on the National Highway in April near Sukkur claimed over 40 lives. This followed a collision between two passenger buses and a petrol tanker which had claimed 35 lives in Gadani in Balochistan's Hub district. Despite such tragic incidents occurring in quick succession, no action has been taken either to do something about overloaded passenger buses which have become virtually death traps with little provision for safe exits for passengers in such emergencies or for immediate fire control or rescue. According to officials, the collision took place when the driver of the tanker reportedly carrying combustible material lost control while overtaking a vehicle and hit the overloaded bus. The road linking the National Highway with Super Highway is in a dilapidated condition. The officials and relatives of the victims blamed delayed rescue efforts for the colossal loss of lives. "We received 62 bodies whose facial features and other parts were deeply burnt," police surgeon Dr Jalil Qadir said outside the JPMC mortuary. "The bodies were burnt to the extent that it was difficult to identify their gender and age. After examining the bodies, we decided to take their samples for identification. Blood samples of 24 claimants/heirs were also taken," he said. Dr Qadir said the samples would be sent to a laboratory in Islamabad as there was no DNA test facility in Sindh. There is a chemical examination lab in Karachi and the provincial government is considering setting up a DNA facility. According to him, one more patient was brought to the Burns Centre of Civil Hospital in the night. He had suffered burn wounds on his face, nose and ear. The patient told hospital officials that when the fire broke out in the front side of the bus, the passengers ran towards the rear but fell on each other and within a "few minutes" the fast approaching flames engulfed them all. He said he had saved his life by jumping from a broken window. "The body of a child was stuck to the mother," said Dr Nasrin Qamar, a medico-legal officer at the mortuary. Hands and legs turned into ashes and only the middle parts of the bodies remained intact, she added. Moving scenes were witnessed at the hospital where relatives of the victims had been waiting since early morning to receive the bodies. "My brother Nazeer Ahmed had come to Karachi from Khairpur to meet his two sons who work in a factory," said his sister Sadori. "The sons had given the father some money from their salary and also taken his picture with their mobile phones," the grief-stricken woman said, adding: "I have been here since morning to see the body of my brother, but doctors said there was nothing left to see." Saleem, who works at the JPMC mortuary, said a minor girl might be identified because her bangles and some pieces of clothes were intact. Shahzad, another mortuary worker who was collecting human bones, said a young man had been identified by his relatives with the help of a few pieces of his clothes, but despite this, officials took DNA samples for his proper identification. "A man and his female relative with her two minor children were also brought for treatment," said Dr Seemin Jamali, head of the JPMC emergency department. They told doctors that they were in the last row of seats in the bus and saved their lives by jumping from a window after breaking it. Three other people who were on the roof of the coach also saved their lives by jumping down. One of them, Akhtiar, told journalists that the bus, which left Karachi's Quaidabad area at about 11pm on Saturday, was fully loaded and some passengers were made to sit on stools kept in the place in the middle of the seats on two sides. He said the tanker which collided with the bus was on the wrong side along a dilapidated stretch of the highway. "Both the drivers jumped out of the windows and fled," said Akhtiar, who sustained minor injuries in his foot. If the bus driver had opened the door before jumping out, many lives could have been saved, he added. None of the passengers was alive when a fire tender reached the place after about two hours. "Some lives could have been saved if Steel Mills had sent its fire tenders as requested by police," Sindh Transport Minister Mumtaz Jakhrani told reporters outside the JPMC mortuary. He claimed that the Steel Town SHO had called the PSM fire station but its attendant told him that they could not send fire tenders without permission by the PSM chairman. "We have reports that both the drivers are alive and they fled after the collision," Mr Jakhrani said, adding that police were trying to arrest them. He said the tanker was carrying chemicals which triggered the fire after the collision. According to him, the chief minister has set up an inquiry committee headed by the Karachi commissioner. "Initial findings suggest that overtaking by the tanker's driver caused the accident," Karachi Traffic DIG Dr Amir Ahmed Shaikh said, adding that narrowness and dilapidated condition of the road contributed to the tragedy. A witness told police that fire tenders arrived two hours after the accident. "It is a single track road where heavy traffic ply," the DIG traffic said, adding that they had written several letters to the authorities concerned for a double track because the road catered to the needs of commuters from Steel Town, Bin Qasim, Gulshan-i-Hadeed and other localities for easy and short access to the Super Highway for upcountry journey. He said police were also examining reports that the tanker was carrying flammable material and the bus running on CNG which was not allowed for long journey by rules. The

bus was also reportedly not fit for long journey. The DIG traffic said he had also set up a committee comprising two SSPs traffic to ascertain the causes of the accident and suggest measures to avoid such tragedy in future. The ill-fated bus was owned by one Badar Abro and its driver was Asif Jakhrani, he said, adding that the owner of the tanker had so far not contacted police.

Five killed in road accident

Source: Daily Times, Gaggoo Mandi

Date: 13 Jan. 2015

GAGGOO MANDI: At least five people, including three women, were killed and six others injured when a bus hit a rickshaw, on Monday. Police said that the accident took place near Adda Quarters in suburbs of Gaggoo Mandi of tehsil Burewala where an over speeding bus hit a motorcycle rickshaw. As a result of the collision three women died on the spot and eight people sustained wounds. The injured were rushed to a local hospital where two more succumbed to their wounds raising the death toll to five.

Bride among five killed in Lahore wall collapse

Source: The News, Lahore

Date: 14 Jan. 2015

LAHORE: At least five people including a bride were killed when a wall of a Marriage Hall collapsed during a wedding ceremony here on late Tuesday night. According to rescue sources, five people were killed and 12 others injured as wall collapsed during a valima ceremony. The injured were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. Identities of the deceased were yet to be known.



Fire engulfs building in Rawalpindi

Source: Daily Times, Rawalpindi

Date: 15 Jan. 2015

RAWALPINDI: Fire engulfed a building Wednesday in congested commercial area of the city. Rescue teams along with fire tenders arrived at the scene to extinguish the fire. According to media reports the building is located in China Market at College Road. There are no immediate reports of any casualty as a result of the fire.

Swat valley jolted by quake measuring 4.6

Source: Dawn News, Swat

Date: 15 Jan. 2015

SWAT: An earthquake of magnitude 4.6 was reported in Swat and its adjoining areas on Thursday causing fear and panic among residents. People left their houses and workplaces and headed out for open spaces fearing a strong earthquake. There was no loss of life or property reported after the tremors. According to the Met Office in Islamabad, the epicenter of the earthquake was located near Tajikistan. The epicenter of the earthquake was located 95km west of Murghab, Tajikistan at a depth of 129 km, according to the USGS website.



Sri Lanka

Awareness programs on natural disasters

Source: Daily News, Colombo

Date: 9 Jan. 2015

According to the Disaster Management Centre, 116 persons have died of natural disasters countrywide during 2014. The deaths are due to floods, earth slips, hurricanes, thunderbolts and lightning. The Education Ministry has instructed all school heads in the Kurunegala and Puttalam Districts to conduct awareness programs on this issue and safety measures to avoid such tragedies, a senior Zonal Director of Education in Kurunegala told the Daily News. He added that 250 awareness programs will be held in schools during the first school term this year with the participation of officials attached to the Disaster Management Ministry. About 50,000 students are expected to be educated under this program.

Rain damages reservoirs

Source: Daily News, Colombo

Date: 9 Jan. 2015

Heavy rain experienced during the recent adverse weather conditions has damaged six reservoirs and a major irrigation canal in the Trincomalee district. The reservoirs maintained by the Agrarian Services Development Department are in the areas of Kantale, Kinniya, Gomarankadawala and Morawewa. The reservoirs which require repair are Nikawewa, Samagipurawewa and Weeragaswewa off Kantale, Nadu-Uttukulamawewa and Thorankulamawewa off Kinniya, Adampanewewa and Mahadiwulwewa and Galsorowwaela off Gomarankadawala.

Rs 150m for flood-affected people

Source: Sunday Observer, Kurunegala

Date: 10 Jan. 2015

Due to the recent unfavourable weather conditions and flooding, 15,061 persons and 4,415 families in the Kurunegala district were badly affected. The government had released Rs. 150 m to help the victims and Rs. 50 m would be paid to paddy and vegetable farmers in the Kurunegala district, to cover up their losses due to weather conditions. District Secretary, H.M.P. Hitisekara, told the Sunday Observer that members of the Armed Forces did a remarkable service during the inclement weather to help those affected.