

DISASTERS UPDATE

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TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

National

Lightning kills 35 in Bihar, Jharkhand

29 Jun 2009, 1745 hrs IST, **AFP**

PATNA: At least 35 people including eight children were killed after they were struck by lightning in the adjoining eastern Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand, officials said Monday.

Around 18 people were killed late Sunday by bolts of lightning across Bihar, including six children, State Disaster Management Minister Devesh Chand Thakur said.

"The children were playing in the pre-monsoon showers when lightning struck them," Thakur told AFP from the state capital Patna.

Twelve others who were injured were hospitalised, he said.

Torrential rains accompanied by strong winds uprooted trees, damaged houses and brought down power cables across the impoverished state on Sunday night, he said.

In neighbouring Jharkhand, 17 people including two children were killed by lightning strikes, also late on Sunday night, a disaster management spokesman said in the capital Ranchi.

Lightning strikes during the June-September monsoon season are common, with villagers housed in bamboo-and-grass huts most at risk of death and injury.

Mock drill at Metro premises

Staff Reporter, **The Hindu**, Monday, Jun 29, 2009

Photo: PTI



Checking preparedness: A mock drill being conducted at the Yamuna Bank Metro Station in the Capital on Sunday.

NEW DELHI: A mock drill to assess the preparedness at Delhi metro rail stations against terrorist attacks was organised on Sunday at five different metro premises.

The exercise started when the DMRC Operations Control Centre (OCC) received messages from the Delhi police and stations concerned that “bomb blasts” had taken place at New Delhi metro station, in the last coach of a metro train at Dwarka station and on the track between Nawada and Dwarka stations.

Immediately afterwards information was received that mock “serial blasts” had taken place at Yamuna Bank station in the parking area, a feeder bus and a coffee shop. Five supposed “terrorist attacks” were then reported at Kashmere Gate station where the mock “terrorist” even enacted capture of the Station Control Room (SCR).

Personnel of the DMRC, Delhi Police, Central Industrial Security Force, Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Civil Defence, Delhi Fire Services and Medical Services immediately rushed to the location to bring the situation under control, take the supposed “victim” to hospitals, tackle within “terrorists” and evacuate commuters. The National Security Guard also observed the entire mock drill.

The situation was brought under control in about 40 minutes, a DMRC statement said.

“Between 8-01 a.m. and 8-43 a.m. all metro train operations remained suspended and entry into stations was closed as a part of standard emergency procedure. Announcements were made in the metro trains and stations during this period urging commuters to remain calm,” the statement said.

Sharad Pawar allays fears on drought

J. Balaji, **The Hindu**, Monday, Jun 29, 2009

“Trend of delayed monsoon is nothing new”

Plan one for normal monsoon and plan two for inadequate and deficit monsoon

IMD: south-west monsoon likely to resume after July 1

NEW DELHI: Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on Sunday allayed fears about the country facing a drought this year. Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced that the south-west monsoon was likely to resume over the remaining parts of central India and some parts of north-west India after July 1.

“There is absolutely no need for any panic or worry. This trend of delayed monsoon activity is nothing new. As Agriculture Minister at the Centre, and in Maharashtra before that, I have seen such a trend. Even last year there were good rains in the beginning. After that there was a lull for a week. Again it started raining and again stopped for one to two weeks. Thereafter it continued to rain heavily,” the Minister told *The Hindu* from Mumbai.

The Agriculture Ministry was keeping everything ready — plan one for normal monsoon and plan two for inadequate/deficit monsoon. Since the monsoon became active after a week’s delay, he hoped that better food production could be achieved in this season (2009-10) too.

Moreover, sowing in substantial parts of the country was normally carried out only in the July-August period; and delay in sowing in June in some areas need not be a cause of worry. He pointed out that the crops in some of the rain-fed areas in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and the Telangana areas of Andhra Pradesh received good rains.

Mr. Pawar was confident that this year too the food production (rice and wheat) could set a record as in the last two years. The production of these essential items crossed to 510 lakh tonnes during 2008-09 from over 400 lakh tonnes in 2007-08. He claimed that the panic button pressed in some circles on inadequate monsoon was “unnecessary.”

Quoting the IMD, Mr. Pawar said the monsoon would be 93 per cent in July and 101 per cent in August. “If it is correct, the question of drought does not arise.”

The IMD said that in the next two or three days the monsoon would advance further in some more parts of the country as the conditions are favourable; and those places could be Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, the remaining parts of West Bengal and Sikkim, and some parts of Bihar, Jharkhand and east Uttar Pradesh

It said that heat wave conditions in some parts of north Madhya Pradesh, north Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh and at isolated pockets of West Uttar Pradesh would abate from the region during the next 48 hours. Isolated rain or thundershowers are likely in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the next 24 hours and it is likely to intensify.

Swine flu cases go up to 93

Aarti Dhar, **The Hindu**, Monday, Jun 29, 2009

NEW DELHI: There has been a steady increase in A (H1N1) influenza cases in the country with the number touching 93 as four more suspected patients tested positive.

Of the confirmed cases, 61 have been discharged while the remaining are undergoing treatment at identified health facilities. The situation was being monitored, a Health and Family Welfare Ministry official said here on Sunday.

Of the 676 people tested so far, 191 were identified through entry screening, 27 through contact tracing and the rest self-reported. The new cases are from Hyderabad, Gurgaon, Kolkata and Mumbai.

The case in Hyderabad is a 10-year-old boy who had travelled from the U.S., transiting Frankfurt and Mumbai (AI 144) before reaching Hyderabad on June 25. He had self reported at the identified health facility.

The case in Gurgaon, which is indigenous, is the sister of another positive case reported on June 26. In Kolkata, a girl child, who travelled from Bangkok to Kolkata was afflicted. The case in Mumbai is a 45-year-old woman, mother of a case reported on June 26. She had also travelled from the U.S. to Delhi. The contacts were being traced, the spokesperson said.

Heat hits apple crop in fruit bowl of India

Sanjay Sinha, Press Trust Of India

Shimla, June 29, 2009

Soaring temperatures coupled with insufficient rain have taken a toll on apple production in Himachal Pradesh with 25 per cent of the crop suffering damage.

Apple crop in the low and middle hills has been badly hit and if the monsoon fails to arrive even next week the crop in the upper hills would also be affected, K R Dhiman, Vice Chancellor of Dr Y S Parmar University of Horticulture & Forestry, Nauni, in Solan district told PTI.

“The damage to the Apple crop because of rising mercury and absence of rain is estimated to be around 25 per cent,” he said.

Moreover, the adverse climate has also affected the size of apples, the Vice Chancellor of Chaudhary Shrawan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyalaya, Palampur, Tej Pratap. said.

The hill state known for its cool climes is witnessing hot conditions presently. Temperature is hovering around 30 degree Celsius in the queen of hills in the month of June as compared to 24-25 degrees in previous years.

HP has received 60 per cent deficit rainfall this year, Director State Meteorological centre, Manmohan Singh told PTI.

Minor fire in Congress headquarters

29 Jun 2009, 1746 hrs IST, **PTI**

NEW DELHI: A minor fire broke out at the Congress headquarters here this afternoon, fire brigade officials said.

The incident occurred in the media conference room of the AICC when the air conditioner caught fire at around 15:25 pm, they said, adding three fire engines were immediately rushed to the spot.

The fire was extinguished within 10 minutes, the officials added.

International

Three dead, 60 hurt in central China train collision

Monday, June 29, 2009 : 1230 Hrs

Beijing (**AP**): Two passenger trains collided on Monday in an accident that killed three people and injured an additional 60 as train cars were derailed and nearby houses knocked over, Chinese state media and an official said.

The pre-dawn crash occurred in Hunan province when a train going from the provincial capital Changsha to the southern city of Shenzhen collided with another Shenzhen-bound train, state television said.

The China Central Television newscast showed a tangle of red, white and blue train cars on their sides at the station at Chenzhou, where the collision occurred at 2.34 am (12.04 am IST).

"One train compartment has been crushed out of shape. Debris and the belongings of the passengers are scattered everywhere," a CCTV reporter said as the camera showed seats ripped from the floor and the ground littered with plastic bottles and scraps of paper.

Rescue workers wearing hard-hats rushed around the scene, shouting instructions as police and medics crammed into collapsed train compartments. A group of men were shown carrying a body covered in a pink quilt on a stretcher. The report said two people were killed on the trains while one died when their home was damaged.

Workers were busy cleaning up the area of rubble from the ruined walls of two nearby houses and repairing power lines, CCTV said.

An official at the railway ministry said the cause was under investigation. He refused to give his name, a common practice among Chinese authorities.

The official *Xinhua News Agency* said the railway minister had traveled to Chenzhou to oversee rescue operations.

Telephone calls to the Chenzhou station, the city's government offices and main hospital all rang unanswered.

Last year, 72 people were killed and hundreds were injured when a high-speed passenger train jumped its tracks and slammed into another in eastern Shandong province.

South Korea's swine flu tally nears 200

Associated Press

SEOUL, June 28, 2009

South Korean health authorities have confirmed five more cases of swine flu, raising the country's total to 196.

Health Ministry official Kim Tae-yoon said Sunday that five children at a Seoul day-care center have tested positive for the virus over the past several days.

The Health Ministry said in a statement that 132 of the 196 cases have been discharged from hospitals. The rest remain quarantined.

Four dead from east China storm

Source: [Xinhua News Agency](#)

Date: 28 Jun 2009

NANJING, Jun 28, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- A severe rainstorm killed four people in east China's Jiangsu Province early Sunday, local meteorological bureau said.

The four villagers in Fengxian County, Xuzhou City, were crushed to death at about 2 a.m. after fallen trees caused their houses to collapse.

Four cities and counties in Jiangsu had received precipitation of more than 25 millimeters by 5 a.m. Sunday as thunderstorms swept the province on the weekends.

Torrential rain will continue to lash the region in the four days through July 1 and some parts could receive rainfall of as much as 150 millimeters, the provincial meteorological bureau said.

Heavy rain also wreaked havoc in the southwestern municipality of Chongqing as one quarry worker was still missing Sunday after being washed away by flood in Fengjie County.

The heavy rain from Saturday to Sunday has affected 196,500 people in seven districts and counties in Chongqing and incurred a direct economic loss of 127 million yuan (18.6 million U.S. dollars).

The municipal meteorological bureau warned that the losses could rise as the heaviest rain this summer would hit the city from Sunday night to Tuesday.

Dengue cases rise to 12,000 in Lanka

29 Jun 2009, 1314 hrs IST, **PTI**

COLOMBO: The number of people infected with dengue has risen to over 12,000 in [Sri Lanka](#) this year, with at least 152 deaths reported to the health authorities, officials said today.

The government was battling to clean up the city and suburbs in a bid to rid mosquito breeding grounds and prevent the spread of dengue fever, officials said.

The government was also importing a predator bacteria to attack mosquito breeding grounds, officials said, adding that the first consignment of the BTI bacteria should arrive this week from Cuba. **Sri Lanka is a dengue endemic country.**

Seven people catch swine flu in West Bank village

29 Jun 2009, 0112 hrs IST, **AP**

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian [health](#) minister said seven people from one extended family have been diagnosed with swine flu.

Health Minister Fathi Abu Mughli said two siblings returning from the US infected five of their relatives in the northern West Bank village of Barka.

In total, 11 Palestinians in the West Bank have contracted swine flu. About 300 Israelis have been diagnosed with swine flu.

Abu Mughli said on Sunday the seven new cases don't appear serious, but doctors asked the [patients](#) to stay home for a week. He did not know where in the US the two relatives caught the illness.

The World Health Organization considers the swine flu a "moderate" pandemic. Around 60,000 people have contracted the virus worldwide.

*Compiler
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