

EARTHWEEK: A DIARY OF THE PLANET

By Steve Newman

Twisters



A powerful cyclonic storm from the Bay of Bengal spawned high winds, severe thunderstorms, and a tornado that killed at least 25 people in Bangladesh during a three day rampage. The twister destroyed 5,000 homes, mostly bamboo and straw huts, and flattened power lines and trees as it wreaked a path of destruction near the India-Bangladesh border.

In the southeastern United States, four people died in an outbreak of violent thunderstorms that spawned tornadoes across four states. Other twisters skipped through parts of Oklahoma and Kansas, but caused no significant damage or any injuries.

Black Snow



Fallout from the smoke of burning Kuwaiti oil wells has blackened the slopes in the Himalayan Mountains of Indian-controlled Kashmir, 2,700 km away. According to a group of Swiss high-altitude skiers, the oily snow was almost 5-cm deep at an altitude of 4,900 metres. Their skis and other equipment became fouled with a gopey black film. The oily layer will probably become a permanent part

probably become a permanent part of the glacial record.

Meteors



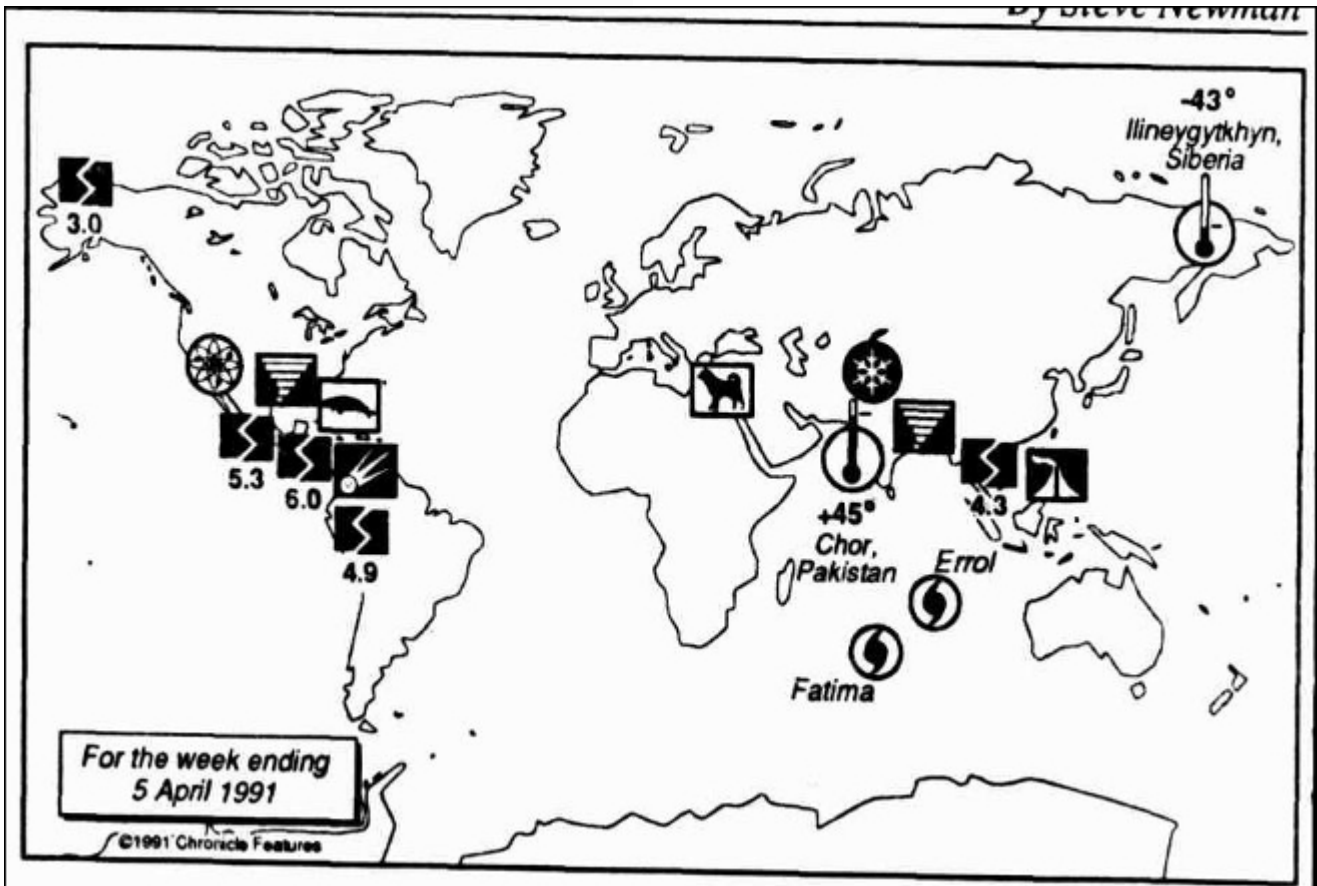
Five fiery objects, leaving trails of smoke across the dawn sky, were seen by thousands of people around Maracaibo, Venezuela on April 2. Air Force Gen. Castillo Losada said he had received reports of the unidentified flying objects from an airline pilot

tying objects from an airline pilot who spotted them near his plane shortly after takeoff. Venezuelan weather experts said the objects were probably a cluster of meteors.

Tropical Storms



Tropical cyclones Fatima and Errol harmlessly dissipated in the open waters of the Indian Ocean



Earthquakes



A moderate quake shook a large part of southern

...moderate quake struck a large part of southern Burma and southern Thailand from beneath the Andaman Sea, but caused no damage or injuries. Earth movements were also felt in central Alaska, Panama, central and southern Mexico, and along the Peru-Ecuador border.

Volcano



Hundreds of Philippine farmers on a small island in the middle of a lake 50 km south of Manila fled Taal Volcano after a series of tremors and a mild explosion jolted the area. The blast sprayed white clay over one nearby hectare. Japanese and French volcanologists rushed to the site, but could find no signs that a dangerous eruption was imminent. Taal last erupted in 1977. In 1911, it erupted twice, burying 13 villages and killing 1,433 people.

Dogs of War



Police in Beirut began a campaign to kill packs of stray dogs that began to run wild through the streets, attacking people at night since peace was restored to the once-divided city three

...restored to the once-divided city three months ago. The health ministry said hundreds of the strays grew savage with no one looking after them during the civil war. They moved out of the downtown area into residential districts after the "green line" was dismantled in December.

Testing



The U.S. conducted its second and most powerful nuclear explosion of the year beneath the Nevada Desert about 160 km north of Las Vegas. Codenamed Bexar, the blast registered 5.5 on the Richter scale and had a force of up to 150 kilotons, the strongest allowed by the Limited Test Ban Treaty.

Manatee Trap



A manatee sucked into a nuclear power plant cooling pond near Port St Lucie, Fla., two months ago continued to elude rescuers. So far, Natalie, as the 550 kg sea mammal was nicknamed, has not been nabbed by divers, floating traps, anchored traps, lettuce and hyacinth lures, or even the tamed chatter of other manatees.

the taped chatter of other manatees. Biologists are not sure if there is sufficient food for Natalie to survive much longer in the cooling pond, and so far she has refused to eat offerings from her Florida Power and Light landlords. Only about 1,200 protected Florida sea cows remain in the wild.

Additional Sources: French Meteorological Station at Reunion, University of California at Berkeley Seismological Laboratory, U.S. Military Joint Typhoon Warning Center at Guam, U. S. Climate Analysis Center, U. S. Earthquake Information Center, and the World Meteorological Organization.