

COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XIII No. 336

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 27, 2003

POUSH 13, 1410 BS

JILKAD 3, 1424 HURI

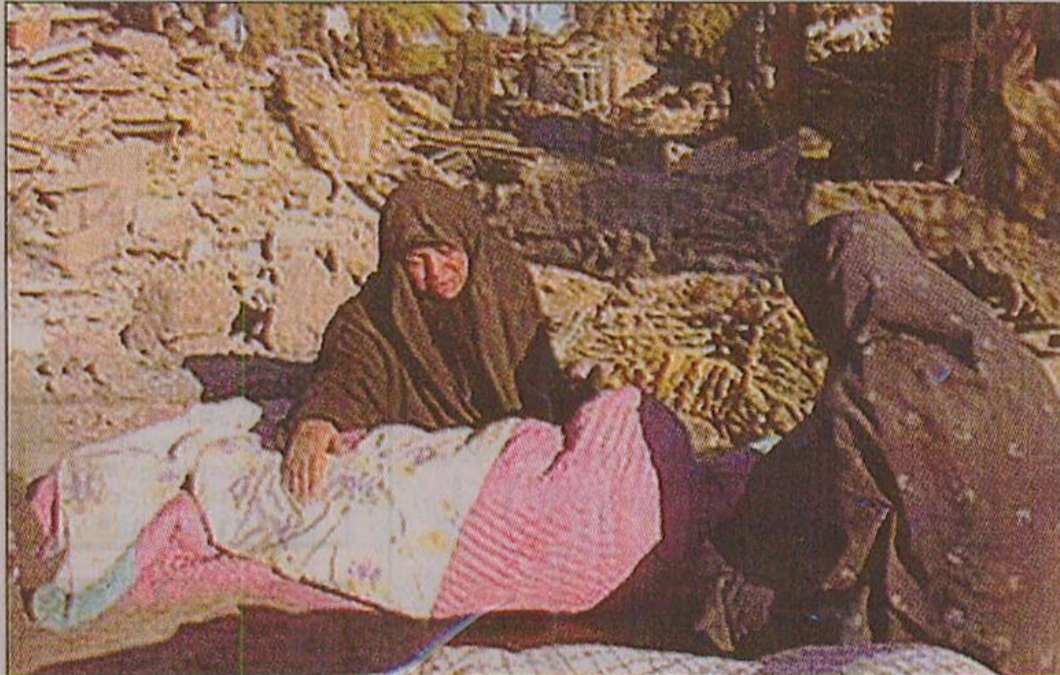
16 PAGES PRICE: TK 7.00

www.thedailystar.net

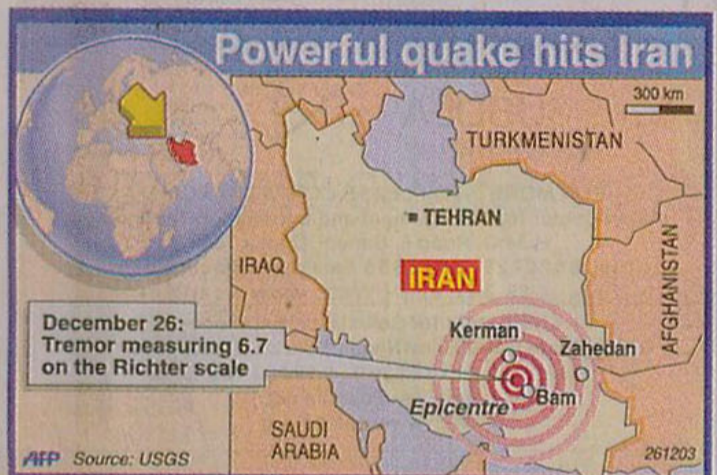
10,000 feared dead in 6.7 Iran quake

AGENCIES, Tehran
A powerful earthquake struck the ancient Silk Road city of Bam in southeastern Iran yesterday and a preliminary estimate said the death toll could reach 10,000.
But state television said at least 4,000 people were killed and some 30,000 others injured, adding: "This is only an initial statistic."
Hassan Khoshrou, a legislator for

Kerman province where the quake occurred, said there was still no precise number of dead from the magnitude 6.7 quake.
"The quake hit the city when most of the people were in bed, raising fears that the death toll may go higher," he said.
About 70 percent of the buildings in Bam, a popular tourist destination some 1,000km southeast of the



An Iranian mother cries over the body of her daughter in the ancient city of Bam after an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.7 on the Richter scale killed at least 4,000 people yesterday.



Ijtema begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Biswa Ijtema, a congregation of world Muslims organised by the Tabligi Jamaat, begins at Tongi about 20 kilometres north off the city today.
Meanwhile, all arrangements have been made for the three-day annual gathering and hundreds of thousands of Muslim devotees from home and abroad have converged on the bank of the river Turag.
The organisers yesterday were giving final touches to the huge canopy erected on 162 acres and earth filling works for holding the Biswa Ijtema, considered as the second largest gathering of Muslims on the planet.



Devotees offer Friday prayers on the bank of Turag river in Tongi as thousands streamed into the venue for Biswa Ijtema, one of the largest religious congregations in the world, which begins today.

4 US soldiers killed in spate of Iraq attacks

REUTERS, Baghdad
Guerrillas extended the biggest insurgent attacks in Iraq since Saddam Hussein's capture, killing four US soldiers in mortar and bomb attacks, the US military said yesterday.
A roadside bomb killed one soldier and wounded another when it exploded by a convoy near Baquba, about 65km north of Baghdad, early on Friday. A second soldier was killed the same day

trying to defuse a bomb outside the town, a US military spokesman said.
Two other US soldiers were killed in a mortar attack on a US camp near Baquba on Thursday.
Guerrillas also wounded two Polish soldiers in an ambush in southern Iraq, the latest in a string of attacks on the forces of countries which have answered Washington's call for troops to help it secure the country it invaded to topple Saddam.
Two Iraqis were killed when a

roadside bomb exploded on a road near Baghdad airport on Friday, witnesses said. There were no further details.
The US military said it had arrested 66 people in a night swoop in Baghdad, including a major general with links to Saddam and 20 other "significant" figures.
The latest attacks capped a Christmas Day in Iraq shaded with gloom by projectiles that slammed into Baghdad hotels used by

Missing schoolboy found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Shanta, a 6-year-old schoolboy missing for two days, was found dead in Khilgaon while a young man was killed and two others injured at a shoot out at Qaderabad Housing at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday.
A student of Class One of a local kindergarten, Shanta went out of their house at East Goran at 5:00pm Wednesday. He went to the office of the commissioner of Ward No. 25, where he met his father Mojibur Rahman.
"I bought him nuts and asked to go home," said Mojibur. But Shanta never returned home.
The boy's father filed a general

Maritime crimes creep up as watchdog keeps aloof

RAFIQ HASAN
When armed robberies and thefts on foreign and local ocean liners at the seaports are on an upward spiral, the high-powered committee formed in 2000 specifically to contain those crimes came up with no effective counter-measures till date.
"At least two to three incidents of robbery or theft or pilferage of goods are suffered by the ships anchored at Bangladeshi ports every week," said Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners Association (Bogsoa).
To check such crimes, local and foreign ship owners hire additional five to six security guards for every ship when it anchors at a

Bangladeshi port or waits at outer anchorage, he told The Daily Star.
This was not required in any other ports in the world, he said, adding the extra security measure was one of the reasons for the increasing cost of using Bangladeshi ports.
Admitting the recent sharp rise in armed robberies and thefts, Director General of shipping department Captain Ahsanul Azim said a committee headed by the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) chairman had been assigned with the specific responsibility to take measures and steps to suppress such crimes at both Chittagong and Mongla ports.
The committee formed in an

inter-ministerial meeting in November 2000 "is solely responsible for the task," he said, without making further comments.
Since then, the committee met several times but could not draw any effective strategy to counter such incidents, sources alleged. The shipping department sent numbers of letters to the committee urging it to hold regular meetings and take effective measures to improve the country's image abroad, they added.
Records at the shipping department show armed robbers attacked more than a dozen foreign and local ocean-going ships anchored at Chittagong and Mongla ports in a

Al-Qaeda blamed for attack on Musharraf

Bombers identified, no change in Saarc Summit schedule
AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan security agencies have identified two suicide bombers killed in a failed attempt on President Pervez Musharraf's life, Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat quoted by state media said yesterday.
"The suicide bombers involved in the attack on Thursday have been identified," he told parliament.
Musharraf escaped death Thursday when suicide bombers rammed the president's motorcade with two bomb-laden cars at a petrol station two km from his residence in Rawalpindi killing 14 people and injuring 46.
The attackers came from two different gas stations as the convoy travelling from the adjacent city of

Islamabad headed towards Musharraf's residence in Rawalpindi.
Al-Qaeda militants and religious fanatics in Pakistan are feared to be behind an increasingly organised effort to kill Musharraf, analysts said.
"The broad guess is that it could be a nexus between al-Qaeda and extremist militant groups here," analyst Talat Masood told AFP Thursday.
"They seem to be determined -- look at their audacity, boldness and precision (in carrying out) the attacks."
Masood, a former army lieutenant general, said militants want to make Pakistan a fortress for Jihad (holy war).

Bigots demand bill declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims

Threaten to hem in MPs
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The anti-Ahmadiyya religious bigots yesterday threatened to hem in members of parliament (MPs), elected on Islamic manifesto, if they do not table a bill declaring the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims in the next parliament session.
"Since they promised an Islamic society, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Fazlul Haq Amini, Delwar Hossain Sayeedi (and MPs of Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic parties) must place a bill in this regard in parliament," demanded Mahmudul Hasan Mamtazi, amir of Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Coordination Committee, an anti-Ahmadiyya alliance.
"If you don't do so, beware

Wage hike riddle

INAM AHMED
The recent Bangladesh Bank (BB) report showing a wage growth over that of inflation last year, a trend that has also continued into this year, has stoked up a number of crucial issues. First, what are the causes of this rise in wages and more importantly, what are the implications for the economy?
The BB Annual Report said the wage rate index increase in FY03 in the manufacturing sector was more than double the increase in FY02, and at 15.4 percent exceeded the growth of nominal GDP as well. This trend, as the BB likes to explain, is a pressure of 'wage-pushed inflation'.

This trend also continues in the current fiscal year with the latest available figures of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics showing that the wage index grew above 8 percent in July-September of this fiscal year, while the national inflation rate in September was 4.71 percent (moving average) and on a point-to-point basis, the rate was about 5.68 percent.
Now, the question looms: Are labourers in so much demand to have leveraged a real wage hike?
"It will be an extraordinary situation if it is a demand-pull situation rather the result of cost-push inflation," said Dr Debapriya

Criminals' hand suspected in children's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Police are yet to find clues to the death of five children in an underground water tank in Azampur in Uttara on Thursday, but relatives of the dead and neighbours suspect crime connection to the tragedy.
The shocked Chalabani community in Azampur's Faidabad locality demanded proper investigation into the drowning to unravel the mystery cloaking the death.
"It's impossible to get into the reservoir as fun. Either one has to enter it raising their hands up or someone has to put pressure on them," said Badsha Miah, uncle of

Russell, one of the five children, disconsolate with grief.
Hundreds of people milled around the open tank yesterday and many vied with others to peer into its fatal depths where Sonia, 7, her brother Jamil, one year and 3 months, Mahmuda, 4 years and six months, Tamanna, 5, and Russell, 6, drowned.
Bodies of Mahmuda, Tamanna and Russell were buried at the local graveyard at 11:30pm on Thursday and that of Sonia and Jamil were taken to their home village of Ulukhola in Pubail.
Dhaka Metropolitan Police

In Loving Memory of Aaron H. Chowdhury (Danny)

On this day of 27th December a year ago you left us, no farewell words were spoken, no time to say good-bye, you were gone before we knew it and only God knows why. Our hearts grieve in sadness and secret tears flow. Time has not healed the pain and agony in our hearts. Your sweet and pleasant memories are forever enshrined in our hearts and thoughts. We love you and miss you.

Dadu Bhai & Dida (Samson & Anita Chowdhury) and members of the family

Congratulations!

to all the management, staff and workers of MBM Garments Ltd. for achieving this auspicious award (National Export trophy : Bronze - 1999-2000). May you all keep up the Good work !

Mahmudur Rahman
Managing Director
MBM Garments Ltd.
M19 & M14, Section 14, Mirpur, Dhaka, Tel : 8011737, 8011157