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6 die in Gazipur factory fire

Machines, goods at Jamuna Spinning Mills gutted in 8-hr blaze

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Six employees of a spinning mill were charred to death and three others received serious burns when a devastating fire ripped through the factory at Shafipur in Gazipur Wednesday night.

Firefighters struggled for more than eight hours to bring the fire under control and found the six charred bodies inside the factory of Jamuna Spinning Mills Ltd, a concern of Jamuna Group.

The dead are Lt Col (ret'd) Nazrul Islam, 55, general manager (Administration), Kamrul Islam, 36, production officer, Saiful Islam, 25, assistant quality controller, Badsah Miah, 32, dropper man, Abu Taher, 55, guard, and Lokman Hossain, 25.

The workers and locals however alleged the fire claimed more lives and the factory authorities drag away some of the charred bodies from the factory Wednesday night before the firefighters arrived.

Fire Brigade and Civil Defence sources said the fire could have originated from friction of the machines while the mills authorities suspect electric short-circuit as



A man picks a bit of cotton inside the burnt down Jamuna Spinning Mill in Gazipur yesterday. The fire left six people dead and three injured.

PM'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

Dhaka, Islamabad to sign MoUs on export, agriculture, tourism

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Pakistan are expected to sign several MoUs aiming to expand bilateral cooperation in agriculture, tourism and export promotion during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's 3-day state visit to Islamabad beginning on February 12.

"The visit is very significant from our point of view and we expect positive outcomes from this visit," Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin said yesterday

while briefing diplomatic correspondents on the upcoming visit.

"The PM's visit is not as the Saarc chairperson, it is entirely a bilateral one," he added.

Khaleda Zia last visited Pakistan on January 2004 to attend the 12th Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Summit.

Official sources said Dhaka would ask for duty-free access of 73 items under nine categories to Pakistani market and request Islamabad to ratify the Safta (South

Multinationals patenting drugs despite WTO waiver

Local pharmaceutical companies risk losing business

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Ignoring a WTO waiver of patent-protection obligations for the least developed countries (LDCs), a number of multinational pharmaceutical companies are patenting their drug formulas here, posing a serious threat to their local competitors.

In the last couple of months, the Department of Patent Design and Trademarks has issued patents for at least 40 drug formulas, sources at the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (Bapi) said.

The local pharmaceutical companies usually manufacture drugs using reverse engineering of the multinationals' products.

"If the multinationals now object to local companies' marketing or exporting these drugs, it is sure to cripple them," Bapi General Secretary Nazmul Hasan, also chief executive officer of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, said yesterday.

Besides, he said, due to the patent protection, the prices of these medicines in the local or the international market will be 15 to 20 times higher than the present ones.

Japan expects free, fair polls in Bangladesh

Japanese FM tells The Daily Star

MONZURUL HUQ, from Tokyo

Japan expects the next general election in Bangladesh will be free and fair, and it will reflect the will of the people, says Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso.

Talking to The Daily Star at his office here yesterday on the occasion of 33rd anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two countries, Aso spoke about Japan's continued support for Bangladesh's development, its increased focus on democracy and good governance in the country and other issues.

"Japan has previously provided assistance for consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh, including personnel exchange, technical cooperation, and the dispatch of

Rab seizes 9 grenades in raid on JMB man's house

UNB, Naogaon

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized seven grenades, 10 bullets and some books on jihad from the house of a Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadre at Parkasunda village in Atrai upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

Acting on a secret information, a team of Rab-5 raided the house of JMB cadre Sekander Ali and seized the arms and ammunition. Sekander, however, managed to flee, sensing the presence of the elite force.

No one was arrested in this connection.

4 govt officials sued for causing Tk 20cr loss

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sued four government officials for inflicting a loss of over Tk 20 crore on the public exchequer.

ACC Inspector Shaheen Ara Mamtaz filed the first information report (FIR) with Ramna Police Station, bringing the corruption charges against the four.

The accused are retired secretary-in-charge Azizur Rahman, Secretary of Bangladesh Petroleum Institute Alaul Haque, retired deputy secretary Abdul Mannan and Proshanta Kumar Das of the

KILLING OF JHALAKATHI JUDGES

Sunny, Awal, bomber jailed for 40 years

Trial to continue as one denies charge and 4 others still at large

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday sentenced top Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders Ataur Rahman Sunny and Abdul Awal and suicide bomber Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun to 40 years' rigorous imprisonment each for killing two judges in Jhalakathi.

Barisal Speedy Trial Tribunal passed the verdict on the day set for framing charges against the militants as the detained JMB leaders pleaded guilty.

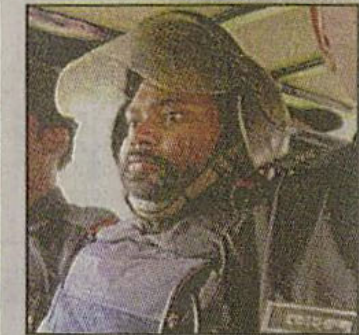
The trial, however, will continue as Sultan, a charge-sheeted accused, has denied the allegation brought against him and the rest four—JMB chief Abdur Rahman,

Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, Molla Omar alias Shakil Ahmed of Tangail and Amzad alias Khaled Saifullah of Pirojpur—are still at large.

Ataur Rahman Sunny, head of the JMB military wing, is also a



Ataur Rahman Sunny



Abdul Awal

Danish envoy says sorry for cartoons

Security upped around embassy amid siege threat

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Officials of the Danish mission in Dhaka are passing their days in "grave fear" in the wake of violent protests in some countries against the publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, said the envoy.

Addressing a press briefing at a city hotel yesterday, Ambassador Niels Severin Munk Apolligis to the Muslim world for publishing

the cartoons in a Danish daily that hurt the sentiments of Muslims and non-Muslims alike across the globe.

Focusing on the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and Denmark, the envoy said: "We have full-fledged cooperation with Bangladesh."

He noted that Bangladesh is a trusted development partner of Denmark and his country has a

PM condemns publication

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has strongly condemned the publication of a cartoon of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) in a Danish newspaper, terming it an audacity of the highest order, malicious and communal misdeed.

In a press statement yesterday, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia denounced the outrageous act on her own behalf as well as on behalf of her party, alliance, government and pious people of Bangladesh.

She said publishing the imaginary cartoon of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) has hurt the feelings of the Muslims all over the



A rickshaw-van overloaded with food items for mass arrest victims makes way to Dhaka Central Jail gate yesterday.

BLANKET ARREST

Inmates suffer hell in crammed Dhaka jail

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

In addition to inmates four times its capacity, Dhaka Central Jail had to cram in some 2,500 newcomers following the recent blanket arrest.

Packed like sardines, prisoners and detainees are forced to live in inhumane life, suffering insufficient food, space and toilet facilities.

A number of blanket-arrest victims on release from the

ANNOUNCEMENT

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The Capital

Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A regional leader of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddha faction was killed in a 'crossfire' during a shootout between his accomplices and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) early yesterday morning.

The victim Muhammad Shariam Molla, 42, was arrested Wednesday night at Baroipara of Rampal upazila in Bagerhat, said a Rab press release yesterday.

The press release said a Rab team along with Molla went to Talbonia of the same upazila to recover weapons. His accomplices fired on the team as they reached the spot forcing Rab to retaliate. The 15-minute-long firefight left

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Ashura today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA), grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), will be observed in the country today.

On this day in the Hijri year 61, Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) along with the members of his family and close relations embraced martyrdom in the hands of Yazid's forces in Karbala to uphold the cause of Islam and the teachings of the Prophet (SM).

The day is a public holiday. Different religious and political organisations have drawn up programmes to observe the day through holding discussions and bringing out Tazia processions in

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Notice

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on account of holy Ashura. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. The Star Weekend Magazine will not come out today for unavoidable reasons.

STAY FRESH