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ASIA ENERGY COAL MINE PROTEST

7 killed, 60 bullet-hit as cops, BDR open fire

Indefinite hartal called

KONGKON KARMAKER, from Phulbari, Dinajpur

At least seven people were killed and about 300 injured as police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) opened fire on demonstrators advancing towards the office of Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd in Dinajpur yesterday.

Thousands of demonstrators, mainly farmers and indigenous people including women armed with bows and arrows and sticks, joined the protest apprehending massive eviction and loss of farmland that might be caused by the implementation of the Phulbari Coalmine Project.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

One of the casualties in yesterday's police actions on the demonstrators about to besiege the Asia Energy office at Phulbari in Dinajpur.

The protesters enforced an indefinite hartal at Phulbari starting today in protest of the police action.

The Asia Energy yesterday said in a statement that "unrepresentative" outsiders created trouble at the Phulbari coalmine site, UNB reported.

The dead include Tariqul Islam, 24, son of Mokhlesur Rahman of Chandpara, Ahsan Habib, 35, Osman, 24, Raju, 8, and Chunnun. The identity of two others could not be confirmed.

Hospital sources said 60 of the injured, including eight policemen, were bullet-hit and many of them are in a critical condition.

The injured were taken to local Upazila Health Complex by vans and rickshaws as the roads had been made off-limits to all kinds of

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Freed in 3 cases, Ershad awaits another verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court is set to deliver the verdict today on the corruption case filed against Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad in connection with allotting plots illegally to 49 persons when he was president.

The First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, which will deliver the verdict, is also scheduled to hold hearing of a gold smuggling case filed against the deposed president.

The trial of the plot-allotment case began in 1998. The court completed its hearing on August 13 and fixed today for delivering the verdict. The court framed charges against Ershad and acquitted the then Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) chairman Rahamat Ullah after finding no conclusive evidence against him on March 9, 1992.

Ershad was acquitted in three graft cases last week following his announcement to join the ruling BNP-led alliance ahead of the next

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Ivory Coast crash kills 6 Bangladeshi peacekeepers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh were killed and 11 others seriously injured in a road accident in Ivory Coast on Friday hours after they reached the West African state for duty.

A truck carrying the soldiers crashed at Tiasali, some 125km off Ivory Coast capital Yamoussoukro, and veered into a roadside ditch at around 5:30pm local time (11:30pm Bangladesh time), said the director of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The deceased are lance corporal SM Miraz Ahmed (20 Field

Regiment, Artillery) hailing from village Kanudeshkathi in Rajapur upazila under Jhalakathi district, lance corporal M Abdus Sattar (6 Field Regiment, Artillery) hailing from village Dariapur in Chapainawabganj upazila under the district, soldier Abdul Halim (27 Field Regiment, Artillery) hailing from village Bara Chaisuti in Kuliarchar upazila under Kishoreganj district, soldier Mohammad Kamruzzaman Khan (36 Air Defence Regiment, Artillery) of village Bamutia in Chandina upazila under Comilla district, soldier Mohammad Shahid Mia (32 Field Regiment,

Artillery) of village Shatra in Kulara upazila under Mouvibazar district and soldier M Mizanur Rahman (24 Field Regiment, Artillery) of village Bhakutia under Jessore district.

The injured, one in a critical state, are undergoing treatment at a local hospital, said an ISPR press release.

The UN is preparing to send the bodies of six deceased to Bangladesh, ISPR director said.

On the way, the driver of one of the trucks lost control and the accident occurred, causing death of five on the spot and another at a

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

From left... Soldier Abdul Halim, Lance Corporal SM Miraz Ahmed, Soldier M Mizanur Rahman, Soldier Kamruzzaman Khan, Lance Corporal Abdus Sattar and Soldier Muhammad Shahid Miah. The six were killed in a road accident in Ivory Coast.

Dhaka, Delhi to follow peaceful border management

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both Bangladesh and India agreed to strictly follow the international conventions for peaceful border management following frequent skirmishes between border guards of the two countries, sources said quoting the upshot of home secretary-level talks that ended here yesterday.

The neighbouring countries also agreed on coordinated efforts to stop smuggling of drugs, illegal arms and explosives, trafficking in women and children and

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BSF shoots 2 farmers dead in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gunned down two Bangladeshi farmers at Dharmagar village in Ranishankail upazila under Thakurgaon district yesterday morning.

The victims were identified as Md Azmal Hossain, son of Kabir Hossain of village Chikni in Ranishankail upazila and Abu Taher 20, son of Rais Uddin of village Chakmapara in the same upazila.

The Indian border guards

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Young leaders ask BNP to ditch senior rebels

Leave the matter to standing body; PM to take final decision on alliance with Ershad inclusion

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The ruling BNP's national executive committee (NEC) members lambasted yesterday some of their senior leaders and demanded immediate expulsion of them from the party for criticising Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary

general of the party.

During the meeting of the national executive committee of BNP yesterday, the leaders and activists expressed their support for the party's recent move to include Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) in the ruling alliance.

Sources said the NEC members

blamed the government for sky-rocketing prices of essentials and for the unbearable electricity crisis. They warned that the party will have to face hurdles in the next parliamentary election if the government fails to improve the situation immediately.

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PHOTO: STAR

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia addresses the ruling party's National Executive Committee meeting at Prodhmantrii Bhaban in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday.

SLAUGHTER OF COPS Hunt for outlaws begins amid high alert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Naogaon

Police in six northern districts were put on the highest level of alert yesterday, and they launched combing operations in the areas identified as 'outlaw prone' by a closed door meeting of the law enforcers in Chowbaria chaired by the inspector general of police.

The alert was issued after receiving information that the outlaws of self-styled Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) are active again in the region and they might embark on more severe attacks, meeting sources said.

The identified six trouble prone districts are -- Rajshahi, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Bogra, Pabna and Sirajganj. An intensified drive was launched against the outlaws in these districts.

The PBCP outlaws killed four

policemen and a BNP leader, and looted a pistol, a shot gun, a Chinese rifle and a .303 rifle from the policemen at Chowbaria market under Manda upazila in Naogaon on Friday.

Meanwhile, a PBCP (Lal Potaka) source told The Daily Star that PBCP claims responsibility for the murders.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Anwarul Iqbal who rushed to Chowbaria from the capital following Friday's incident, visited the scene and talked to witnesses and local people.

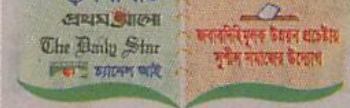
Local BNP Lawmaker Shamsul Islam Pramanik, senior police officials including Rajshahi Range DIG Nayeem Ahmed, and several superintendents of police of northern districts attended the Chowbaria meeting.

The IGP later separately held a

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Bear polls expense to end rule of black money

Regional dialogue asks govt



RAFIQ HASAN and HASHIBUR RAHMAN BILU, from Bogra

Speakers at the regional dialogue in Bogra yesterday demanded election campaign of candidates from all the parties from a single stage and their election expenditure at the expense of the government to avoid the influence of black money.

Emphasising reaching the dialogue up to grass roots level, they demanded reforms in the election system, separation of judiciary and Election Commission from the executive body and stoppage of religion-

based politics.

The honest citizens are also forced to be corrupt, as the corruption has been institutionalised in the society, the speakers said, adding that the Election Commission and local administration should remain out of political influence.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the dialogue as part of a civil society initiative with the collaboration of The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and the Channel I. Executive Director of CPD Debapriya Bhattacharya conducted the dialogue on campaign for honest and competent candidates in the election in 2007, and accountable development.

Educationist Shyamol Bhattacharya and retired teacher of Bogra Polytechnic Institution

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Lankans the fastest

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

The hosts, Sri Lanka, clinched a delightful double in the 100m sprints as Susanthika Jayasinghe and Dus Surendra emerged as the fastest woman and man of South Asia here yesterday.

The 25-year-old Surendra, sandwiched in Lane 4 by veteran and Games record holder Anil Kumar and Jagdish Basak, outraced

both the Indian opponents to win the 10th South Asian Games men's 100m sprint in 10.52s at the Sugathadasa Stadium.

Anil, who set the South Asian record of 10.37s in Kathmandu 1999, finished one hundredth of a second behind (10.53s) while Jagdish claimed the bronze with a time of 10.61s.

In the day's previous event,

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