

Diarrhoea claims 20 lives in Bajitpur

By Rashed Mahmud Titumir, back from Bajitpur

Sept 8: Diarrhoea has claimed 20 lives and attacked 3,000 more during the past five days in Bajitpur under Kishoreganj district.

Different political and social groups, including the ruling party's local branch, alleged non-cooperation and malpractice of the thana health authorities for aggravation of the situation.

"We suspect it is cholera, but clinically we cannot identify it," said Thana Health Administrator (THA) Dr Md Hatem.

When asked whether the sample was sent to the Institute of Public Health (IPH) or the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) for testing, the THA said reluctantly: "We have requested for swab sticks (a specially designed test tube for collecting diarrhoeal germs) from the district headquarters, but they have not sent them yet."

The THA told The Daily Star that he had not contacted any one directly to procure the swab sticks, despite the rise in death toll.

Just when the THA was explaining to this correspondent the supply and distribution of medicine, especially oral and IV salines — which he claimed was adequate — Akhteruddin Bhuiyan of Noahata village, a relative of a severely attacked patient, came with a request to provide the poor patient with a packet of IV saline from the hospital store.

The saline was prescribed by one Dr Hashem, a physician of the complex, but the patient was asked to purchase it from the market. When his attention

ME peace talks

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say what the obstacles were.

Asked if Israel might recognise the PLO within the next 24 hours, as some PLO officials in Tunis had predicted, he said: "Not yet. This is a problem... there are still some issues which have not been decided."

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin faced opposition from his hard-liners, who also opposed the deal.

Hundreds of right-wing protesters blocked traffic in front of Rabin's office. Police moved in to disperse them before dawn with water cannon and clubs. Forty-five people were injured and 33 arrested.

In another development, Arafat told the Israeli magazine Haolam Hazeq that Israel has agreed to a two-stage withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria. There was no immediate comment from the usually secretive Damascus government.

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In Tunis, a senior PLO official said Israel and the PLO had finally come up with a draft agreement for declaring mutual recognition.

The source, who is a member of the PLO committee that supervised the Washington peace talks, spoke on condition of anonymity. He said under the draft, Arafat would:

- Announce recognition of Israel and its right to exist.
- Denounce terrorism.
- Promise to call a meeting of the 468-member Palestine National Council, or parliament in exile, that would formally endorse his statements.

The official said Arafat was expected to make these commitments in a news conference soon after the Executive Committee meeting and also in a letter he would sign and send to Rabin.

The agreement for limited self-rule in Gaza and Jericho could then be signed later in the month, probably sometime before Sept 20, the official said.

Sharif's choice

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with his arch-rival, Benazir Bhutto.

The election commission gave Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party the arrow symbol. Symbols are vital in Pakistani elections as only 30 per cent of the country's 120 million people can read and write.

Most voters from the isolated valleys of the Hindukush mountains in the north to the bullet-scarred slums of volatile Karachi in the south, will simply place a mark beside the symbol of their choice.

Benazir Bhutto, 40, has predicted victory for her party, identified by the arrow which swept her to power in 1988 as the Muslim world's first woman prime minister.

"I will launch a rain of arrows to finish off the remnants of dictatorship," she told an election rally in the southern province of Sindh.

Her government, the first elected in party-based elections after 11 years of martial law, was sacked 20 months later by then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on disputed charges of corruption and misuse.

Int'l Literacy Day

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Bangladesh 2000 in the city yesterday, said: "No progress can be achieved without a strong educational infrastructure."

The National Professor, addressing as chief guest, said: "Compulsory primary education can build up the infrastructure."

The United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) organised a symposium at the premises of the Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Adarsha High School in Mirpur yesterday.

Twenty member organisations of the People's Theatre Association held a combined open-stage drama on mass literacy titled 'Janarat Pathshala' in the city's Tejgaon slum area yesterday evening to mark the day.

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, while attending a rally at Atwa in Panchagar district, urged all to extend their hands to help the government implement different programmes for the eradication of illiteracy.

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia stressed on the need for greater political consensus on the issue of illiteracy. The Works Minister was addressing a rally at the Comilla Town Hall.

Minister for Labour and Manpower Abdul Mannan Bhuyan led a procession in Narsingdi campaigning for mass literacy while the Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam attended a seminar at the Jessore Zila Parishad Auditorium.

Home Minister Abdul Matin attended a discussion at the Shaheed Zia Hall in Narayanjan, Health Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf a discussion at Kazerul in Faridpur while the Communications Minister Oli Ahmed attended a public meeting at the Rangamati Zila Parishad.

Germany keen to invest

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Saifur Rahman said he had very fruitful discussions with the German Minister for Economic Cooperation Carl Dieter Spranger and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee Prof Uwe Holt.

He said he informed them about the priority areas of Bangladesh for development and had sought assistance for those areas only along with some substantial projects. The priority areas, he mentioned, are education, agriculture and poverty alleviation.

The Minister also stressed the need for diversion of all the resources to those priority areas, saying that the Western world itself is facing economic problems which might lead to a decline in the aid flow.

"So we have to adopt a more liberalised policy... cut down expenses... and make the best use of the resources," he said.

The Finance Minister also informed that the German Minister has assured him of increased aid for Bangladesh despite its huge internal expenditures for modernisation and rehabilitation of the former East Germany.

The proposals placed by Bangladesh for aid in certain areas would be discussed for consideration in the forthcoming annual consultations, to be held in December this year.

Regarding the outcome of the ninth meeting of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), he said Bangladesh has proposed for an Islamic common market in the meeting, which was praised by the other Islamic countries. Necessary measures for such a common market would also be taken up for materialising the concept, he said.

Saifur also said another programme initiated by Bangladesh for food security in the Islamic countries was also discussed in the meeting. Iran took up the matter and will organise a discussion on the issue next year.

The meeting also explored ways to strengthen the OIC and expand the areas of cooperation among the Muslim countries.

The OIC member countries expressed concern at the violation of human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina and urged the international community to make an end of the situation, Saifur said.

During his visit to Turkey, the Finance Minister met President Suleyman Demirel and Deputy Prime Minister Erdal Inonu. Saifur also expressed optimism about Turkish investment in Bangladesh.

Secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) Lutfulah Majid, Dhaka's Economic Minister to Bonn Abbas Ahmed and the German Ambassador in Dhaka Jurgen Gehl were present during the press briefing.

Unresolved issues

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positions and attitudes of the parties in Parliament.

The session may also witness hot exchanges on the implications of the Anti-Terrorism Act. The AL has already submitted a notice to the Parliament Secretariat seeking repeal of the law.

If the issue is allowed to be discussed on the floor the AL legislators would try to mount 'tremendous pressure' on the Treasury Bench to repeal the law, an AL leader told The Daily Star. The AL is likely to seek support of the other opposition groups in Parliament on the issue.

"It is now clear that the BNP had passed the law with a view to repressing its political opponents," the AL leader said.

For its part, the ruling party is preparing to show, by citing statistics, that incidents of terrorism had significantly declined following the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill last year.

The Indemnity (Repeal) Bill is also likely to generate heat in the House, especially when the last session of Parliament gave the special JS body on the bill a final deadline to decide on the problem.

Although the deadline is drawing nearer, the ruling party is yet to decide its official stance on the issue.

Both the BNP and the AL will hold their respective parliamentary party meetings on September 11. These meetings are supposed to concentrate on planning strategies to combat each other's positions on different issues.

Beside, three ordinances promulgated following the prorogation of the last session would be laid before the House during the first sitting of the next session. About half a dozen bills, introduced in the previous sessions, will also come up for consideration, Parliament Secretariat sources said.

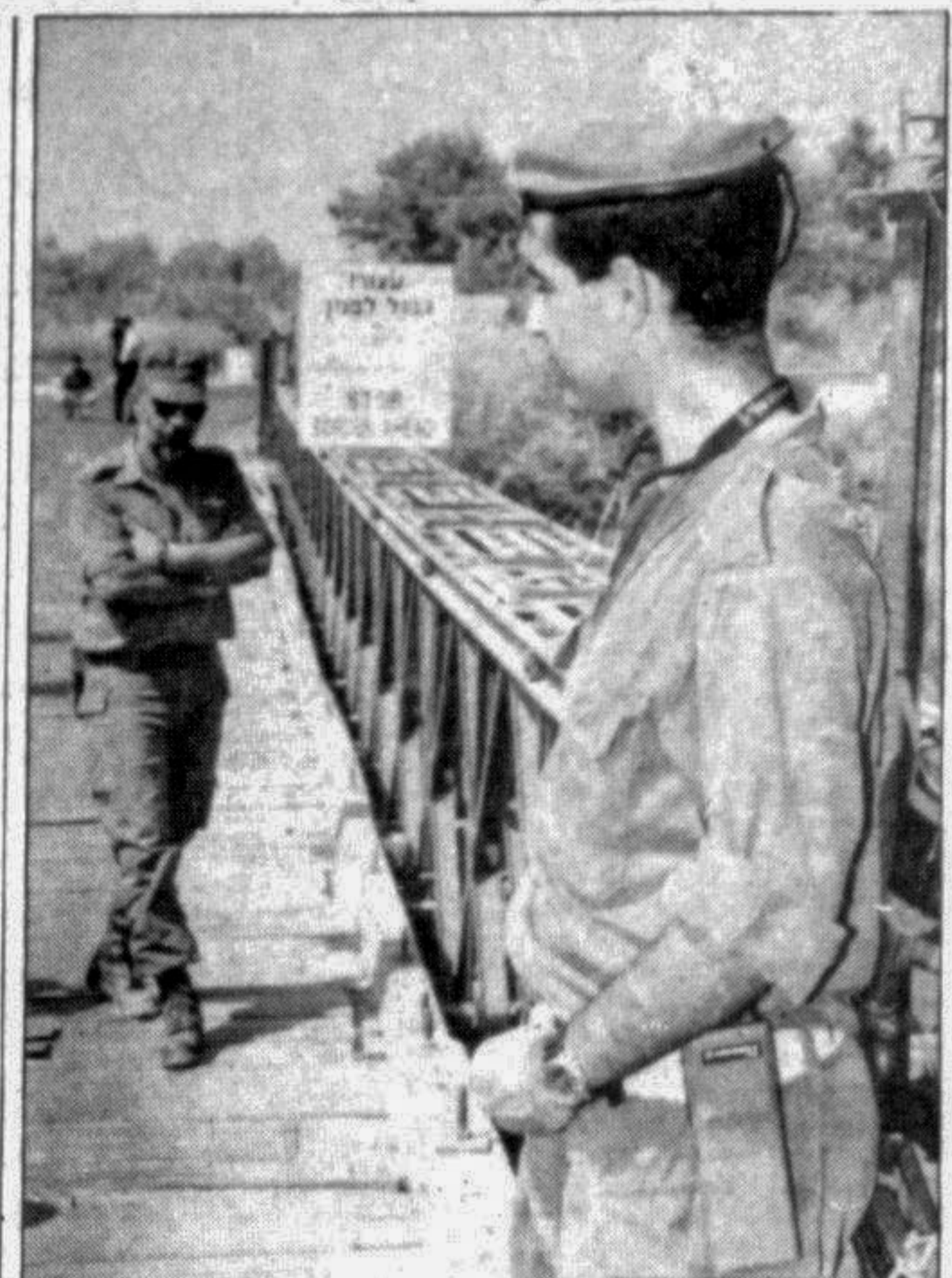
Meanwhile, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali is learnt to have decided to hold meetings of the parliamentary probe committee, constituted to investigate allegations against the Agriculture Ministry and the minister concerned, during the JS sittings.

Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Khandker Delwar Hossain will remain absent in the House for the first few days of the next session because he is scheduled to leave for Australia on the 11th of this month to attend a conference of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

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JERICHO: Israeli soldiers on the Allenby Bridge on the Jordan border Tuesday. The bridge will be the way for Palestinians into the autonomous area in Jericho once the self-rule plan becomes a reality. Should PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat come here, this is probably the route he, too, will take. — AFP photo

Dhaka hails ME peace

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leading towards a just, comprehensive and durable solution of the Middle East problem, which should inter alia lead to the Israeli withdrawal from Al-Quds Al-Sharif and all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories."

The dramatic developments in the Middle East are seen here as a significant move towards resolving the 100-year-old PLO-Israeli conflicts.

Bangladesh, which has been playing an active role in all forums for the establishment of the PLO state and liberation of the occupied territories, is a member of the Al-Quds Al Sharif Committee empowered with the responsibility to work out plans to force Israel to vacate the occupied regions.

Observers here feel that with the resolution of the core issues of the conflicts like self-determination of the Palestinians and a sovereign and independent Palestinian State will bring about durable peace in the region.

The Arab summit in 1964 formed the PLO that launched the struggle for regaining the Palestinian state.

Israel occupied the west bank of the Jordan river including Jerusalem, Golan Heights of Syria and a vast area of Egypt in 1967.

The Security Council adopted a resolution calling for resettlement of the Palestinians in their homeland in 1975.

In 1977, Kurt Waldheim, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, announced a plan of Mini Palestinian State comprising the west bank and the Gaza Strip.

GF's campaign

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nation to stand unitedly against violence and terrorism in the campus.

The standing committee comprises the 12-member Council of Chairman, the Secretariat consisting another 12 and the Treasurer.

The committee, in another resolution, maintained that political parties should cultivate cordial relations among themselves for the greater interest of strengthening democracy and making it meaningful. Like-minded parties should also have a consensus and put in united efforts for the well-being of the country and the people, the resolution added.

The meeting also demanded fair price for agricultural produce to save the farmers. Torture and atrocities on the people of Bosnia were also condemned in the meeting.

The three-day meeting of the committee ends today with delegation of responsibilities among its members. Party sources said each member of the Council of Chairman will head sub-committees which will review national issues and monitor activities of different ministries to determine party policy.

AL observes Peasants' Day

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where copies of the memorandum were submitted to the offices of the respective DCs and Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNOs).

A party press release said last night that police baton-charged a procession at Gazipur while it was proceeding towards the DC's office for handing over the petition. Some 30 workers including women were hurt in the incident, it added.

It said the policemen also obstructed the procession, brought out after the farmers' rally. However, the memo was sent to the DC at the initiative of the party leaders. The police action also prompted the AL unit at Gazipur to organise a protest rally.

Reports from the districts said processions with banners inscribed with the day's slogan and various demands of the peasants converged on the venues of the rallies.

The peasants marched through the roads carrying ploughs, tedder, shovels, yokes and bags containing paddy and jute.

The AL presidium members, including Abdus Samad Azad, Begum Sajeda Choudhury, General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Joint Secretary Abdul Jalil, Treasurer Ashiqur Rahman, Abdur Rouf, MP and some local leaders addressed the main rally of the peasants at Lalmonirhat.

The AL's district unit president Abul Hossain chaired the rally while Advocate Amnur Rahman read out the declaration.

Abdus Samad Azad, in his speech, said the farmers had accepted the demands announced by Sheikh Hasina at the party's August 20 grand rally in Dhaka with a view to saving the country's farmers.

Azad accused the government of raising prices of agricultural inputs on several occasions. Besides, he alleged, the growers were deprived of just prices of their products resulting in a

Madrassah education must suit the times, says PM

The government has decided to constitute a national committee for reforms and development of the country's madrassah education suiting the needs of the time, reports UNB.

The announcement came from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia during a representative conference of the Bangladesh Madrassah Teachers' Association at Sugandha last night.

The Prime Minister also assured of steps to provide facilities similar to those for private primary schools to one Ibtada-e-Madrassah in each union of the country.

"Madrassah education will run alongside primary education", Begum Zia said. "We have to give importance to the improvement of education to ensure progress and prosperity of the country."

Besides religious education, she pointed out, "We need modern and advanced education to keep pace with the fast-moving world."

Begum Zia also hit out at religion-based politics, saying some parties were doing politics by capitalising on religion and creating discipline in national life. "We have to be vigilant against those involved in politics of terrorism in the name of religion," she told the madrassah teachers without specifying any particular quarter.

Madrassah teachers can play an effective role through motivation against those trying to misguide common people in the name of religion, the Prime Minister said. She also assured to solve, in phases, various problems of the madrassah teachers.

Begum Zia also assured that the government was actively considering inclusion of one Ibtada-e-madrassah in the government's Food-for-Education Programme in the unions where the programme has been undertaken.

Reshuffle in CMP

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Thana Rabiul Hossain has been placed in the city Special Branch while Police Inspector Delwar Hossain of DB has been made OC of Doublemooring Thana.

This reshuffle within the CMP was done by Police Commissioner Osman Ali Khan who took over a few months back.

Meanwhile, under a directive of the Inspector General of Police (IG), the Deputy Police Commissioner (DC) of Riot Division Khadem Hossain has been transferred from the CMP to the Ministry of Establishment and AC Saiful Islam has been transferred to Netrokona and AC (Traffic) Abul Kalam Azad to Jessore.

Talking to this correspondent today, the Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Osman Ali Khan said the changes in the CMP administration have been brought about with a view to improving the law and order situation in this city.

However, sources said the recent rise in crime here had forced the authorities to go for this drastic reshuffle in the police administration here. But the CMP Commissioner claimed the crime rate had marked a decline compared to that of the previous year.

Seminar on Farakka in NY Oct 10

The Columbia University, New York, is organising a seminar on October 10 to discuss the adverse impact of the Farakka Barrage on the Southwestern region of Bangladesh.

A western diplomatic source told UNB yesterday that holding of the seminar itself demonstrated the growing global concern on the rapid environmental degradation in Bangladesh caused by Farakka Barrage and the concomitant withdrawal of the Ganges water in upper reaches in India.

Top professional experts of international standing on hydrology, geomorphology and environment will participate in the seminar focusing on the current process of desertification in Bangladesh and how southwestern region is being rendered uninhabitable ecologically and environmentally due to remorseless withdrawals upstream.

A team of experts from Bangladesh is likely to attend the seminar mainly to monitor international concern on environmental hazards being posed to Bangladesh by the unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by India.

Chittagong BCL factions clash

CHITTAGONG, Sept 8: Gunfight and cocktail blasts by two rival groups of students of City College and Sadarghat Islamic College here today rocked the city, witnesses said.

The half-an hour battle, however, ended without casualty when police rushed to the spot. No one was arrested.

Witnesses and police of the Doublemooring thana said the gunfight took place between the factions of Chhatra League — one supporting Akhtaruzzaman while the other Mohiuddin Chowdhury, general secretary of City Unit of the Awami League.

Chhatra League leaders could not be reached for comments.

Justice Baker dead

Justice A K M Baker, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, died here yesterday, aged 92, reports BSS.

He was suffering from old age complications for sometime past. Justice Baker left behind a son and a daughter.

Younger brother of late former chief justice of the erstwhile East Pakistan High Court Justice Amin Ahmed, Justice Baker was a well-known name in the world of judiciary of this country.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Baitul Mokarram Mosque after 'juma' prayers on Friday and he will be buried at the Azampur Graveyard.

His body has been kept at the Birdem for the arrival of his son and daughter from abroad.

Meanwhile, President Abdur Rahman Biswas has expressed his deep shock and sorrow at the demise of Justice Baker yesterday.

In a condolence message President Biswas conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the peace and salvation of the departed soul.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has also expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of Justice Baker.

Shahjahan Kabir and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, president and general secretary of the Feni Samity, condoled the death of Justice Baker, who was an adviser to the Feni Samity.

They recalled his contributions for upholding the values of judiciary of the country.

Diarrhoea breaks out in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 8: Flood situation in the district improved further with recession of the Jamuna and its tributaries but diarrhoea spread in the affected areas claiming six lives today, reports UNB.

Official sources said six people, including a woman and a child, died of the water-borne disease in Kazipur and Chauhal thanas.

Officials said 11 people had been killed by diarrhoea in four days in three thanas.

The Midnight File

Gunmen kill 19 in S Africa

JAHANNESBURG, Sept 8: Gunmen opened fire on people waiting to catch taxi vans Wednesday night, killing 19 and wounding 22, police said. The attack occurred at a street corner in Wadeville, a suburb east of Johannesburg, just after sunset, said police Maj Eugene Opperman. He said about 10 gunmen fired at commuters and fled the scene, reports AP.

12 Kashmiris shot dead

SRINAGAR, India, Sept 8: Indian paramilitary troops shot and killed 12 armed Muslim guerrillas Wednesday in gun battles at different places in the northern state of Jammu-Kashmir, police said. The shootouts occurred in the town of Shopian, 60 kilometres (40 miles) southwest of Srinagar and in a village near Sopore, a police spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Seven guerrillas were killed in the two incidents, reports AP.

Israeli interior minister resigns

JERUSALEM, Sept 8: Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Derf handed in his resignation to-day after the Supreme Court ordered his sacking, a government official said, reports AFP.

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