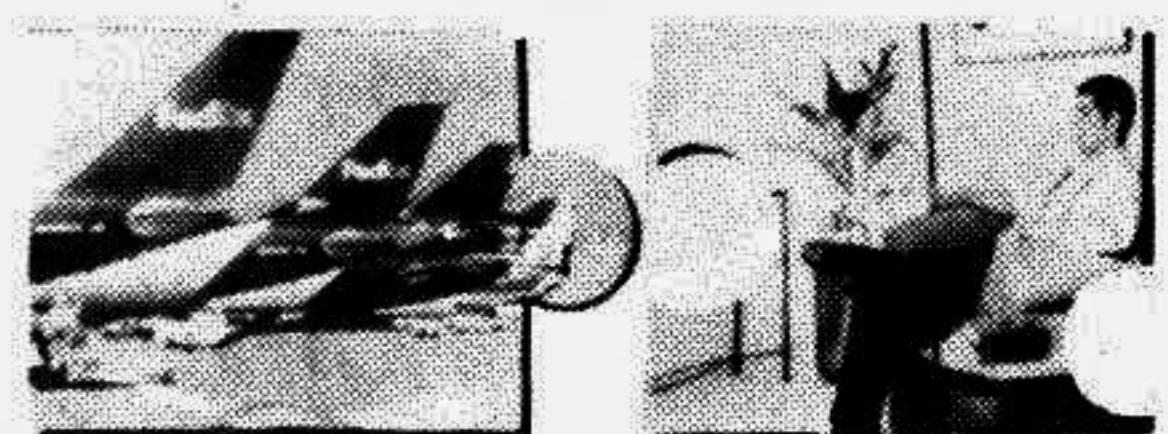


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Plane crash in China kills 61

BEIJING, Feb 24: A Chinese domestic airliner crashed today in southeast China, killing all 61 people aboard, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported, reports AP.

The Russian-made Tupolev-154 with 50 passengers and 11 crew members exploded at 4:20 pm as it neared its destination of Wenzhou, a city in coastal Zhejiang province about 400 kilometers south of Shanghai, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Police and firefighters treated those injured during the accident, Xinhua said, apparently referring to people wounded on the ground.

I heard it. There was a whirling sound and then an explosion. The sound was extremely loud," said a farmer in a village who said he was a few hundred meters from the crash site. "There was fire. It was very big."

One villager was injured, possibly by debris, and taken to a hospital, said the farmer, who refused to give his name in a telephone interview. He said the plane came down in fields.

Local officials said the plane crashed south of Ruian, a city 30 kilometers south of Wenzhou.

First woman poura chairman

Anen Begum became country's first elected woman municipal chairman, reports UNB. She won election to Chenggarchar municipality in Chandpur securing 6,734 votes. Election Commission sources said Anen Begum defeated her nearest rival Mohammad Rafiqul Islam alias George by a margin of 3,030 votes.

In this pourasava, a total of 12,661 out of 18,013 voters cast their votes in the election held on Tuesday, sources said.

Ahmed Sharif

From Page 1
val Bangla literature, Sharif enriched the gamut of the language and the literature with many original contributions. Author of more than 100 publications including some 40 original books of research and personal essays, he edited some 40 manuscripts of the mediaeval Bangla literature.

He also delivered 12 commemorative and institutional lectures - all embodiments of his scholarly views - at home and abroad.

Two volumes of his *Banglae and Bangla Sahitya*, published between 1978 and 1983, are rated by the sub-continental scholars as masterpieces. A major recognition came from the Rabindra Bharati University, India, which conferred upon him the Doctor of Literature in 1995 for his contribution to Bangla literature.

In 1968, the Bangla Academy honoured Sharif with its Literary Award. Daud Literary Award went to him in 1969 and the *Ekuish Paddak* in as late as 1991.

However, many believe that one of his major achievements was that he unlike many of his contemporary scholars and academics, he had been able to exact the hatred and enmity of reactionary forces by the bold expression of his own views.

The professor was also universally admired for his ability to say 'no' to various material temptations. Unfavourably, he upheld his sense of integrity and dignity all his life.

Uncompromising till death, Sharif rose above all religious and parochial outlooks towards life. For his brave utterances against communalism and superstitions, autocracy and fascism, his life came under threat many times. He did not care.

Sharif influenced many youths, if not all who came across him. Young people used to pay regular visits to his residence and took part in the weekly discussions and issues ranging from the ideal of child rearing to modern theories of literature and philosophy. Many young people found Sharif younger than them during those debates and discussions.

Sharif will continue to live in other different ways, his life will be a scholarly contribution.

Sandhani, a voluntary organisation that receives donation of eyes for the poor blind, collected Sharif's eyes hours after he expired. His corneas went to two blind men - Hafez Khairul Alam Khokan from Madaripur and Sakir Hossain of Dhaka.

Sharif's body, now at the BURDEM mortuary, will be kept at the central Shadi Minar for two hours from 3:30 pm Sunday for a last glimpse by his admirers. His body will then be handed over to the Bangladesh Medical College authorities for dissection and study by the students. This will be done in accordance with his last wishes.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Iran gives Bangladesh land to promote trade, ties

Iran has given Bangladesh 2000 square metres of land as a gift in its prime Free Zone in Kish Island in the Persian Gulf, according to a message received here from Bangladesh embassy in Tehran.

The land has been given to Bangladesh by the Kish Free Zone Organisation for promotion of bilateral trade and economic ties.

It was handed over to Bangladesh Ambassador to Iran Tufail K Haider by President of Kish Free Zone Organisation Zaidpanah Fadaee at a simple ceremony in the island recently, the message said on Tuesday.

The land was given to Bangladesh as a result of the initiative and efforts taken by the ambassador.

Bangladesh has been paired up as twins with the second

largest Iranian province of Kerman, which has also been given 2000 square metres of land next to the plot allotted to Bangladesh.

Kerman will set up commercial units, cultural and information centres and industrial projects. Likewise, Bangladesh may establish her own commercial economic and cultural centres and industrial units in the allotted land. This will be a partnership arrangement as twins between Bangladesh and Kerman in business, industry, tourism and culture.

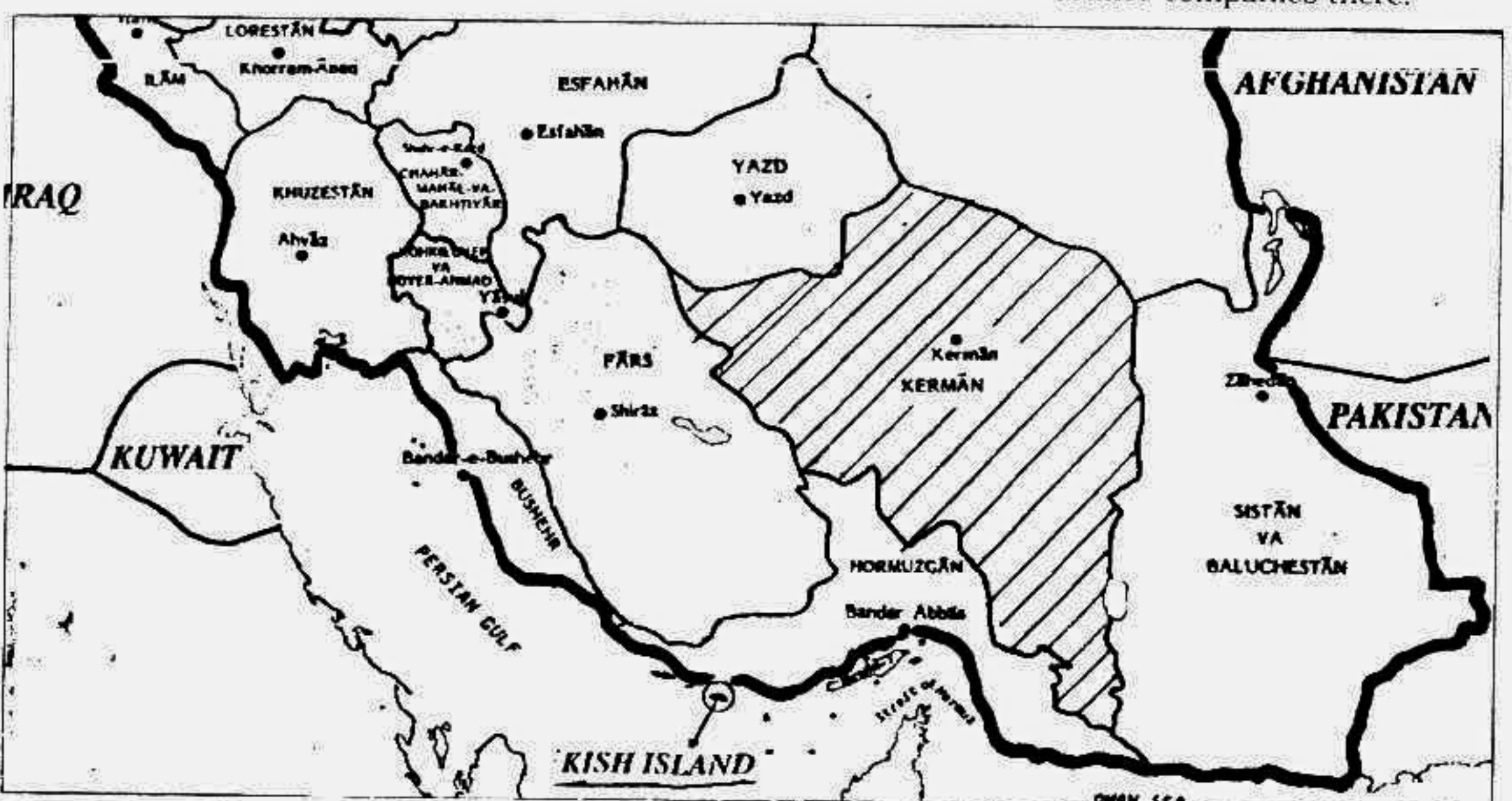
Similar pairs between 10 other foreign countries and various provinces of Iran have already been selected. Bangladesh is a partner in the eleventh twinning.

Located only 18 km from the southern shores of mainland Iran, Kish Island has an area of

some 90 sq kms. It is the leading and most advanced of the five Free Zones in Iran, situated conveniently on the main Persian Gulf trade route, some 200 kilometres west of Bandar Abbas port and the Strait of Hormuz.

Over the past 3-4 years, the Iranian government developed the entire infrastructure at Kish Free Zone in a massive drive to provide local and foreign businessmen and investors with utility services and other tax-free facilities for setting up industrial projects, and trade and tourism centres. The result has been quite spectacular.

To complete the process, a bill has been introduced in the Iranian Parliament to reform existing laws to ensure security to foreign investment, and setting up of foreign banks and insurance companies there.



AL won't use armed forces for political gains: Hasina

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said here today that Awami League government would never use the armed forces for political gains and purposes, reports BSS.

"We want to keep the armed forces above all political debates as they symbolise the country's unity and sovereignty," she said while addressing the commanding officers of East Bengal Regiment at Chittagong Cantonment this morning.

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman and Commandant of the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) Brigadier Rezaul Haider also spoke on the occasion.

Sheikh Hasina, who is also in charge of the Defence Ministry, said that armed forces were used in the past by the vested quarters to fulfil their political ambitions. She said a large number of officers and soldiers were killed due to divisions and conflicts created purposefully.

She said a lot of mothers had lost their sons and wives their husbands due to such conflicts created by some vested quarters. She said members of the armed forces were hanged to death through holding secret trials.

She urged them to earn people's confidence as it was very important for the country's development and progress. She said a country could not progress and prosper if there was a division among the people. She said "enough damage was done. We do not want any more damage to our armed forces."

She said false propaganda was carried out against Awami League with a purpose to malign our party. "We have proved that we want to develop the country with the active cooperation of all the citizens," she added.

She also addressed the officers and troops of the Bangladesh Army at a ceremonial parade marking the presentation of national standards to the 'Durgaj Chobhis' and 'Mrittunjoi Pochhis'. Two battalions of the East Bengal Regiment at the Shaheed M R Chowdhury parade ground of the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) at Chittagong Cantonment this morning.

Earlier, she reviewed the smartly turned-out parade and took salute at the impressive march past on board an open jeep.

On arrival at the parade ground, the Prime Minister was received by Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, the Chittagong Area Commander Major General Abu Kaiser Fazlul Kabir and EBRC Commandant Brigadier Rezaul Haider.

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Two stabbed

From Page 1
assailants entered the house of Nazir and stabbed his elder brother Anwar at about 3 am yesterday. When Nazir tried to resist the attackers, the gang dragged Nazir out of the house and stabbed in his chest.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead at around 5 am.

In the other incident, a gang of about six led by a brother of Gani's divorced wife attacked him near a petrol pump in Aminbazar area at around 8:30 pm on Tuesday, police said.

The gang stabbed Gani indiscriminately and left the spot. Gani died on the spot. Both the bodies were sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Two murder cases were filed with Savar thana in connection with the incidents yesterday.

50 municipalities

From Page 1
pur, Kalita, Mongla Port and Paikgachha of Khulna division; Barguna, Pirojpur, Bakerganj and Nalchiti of Barisal division; Tangail, Mymensingh, Durgapur, Bhairab, Nalitabari, Narsingdi, Faridpur, Madaripur, Tungipara and Kotlaipara of Dhaka division; Chhatak, Madhabpur, Srimangal and Kulaura of Sylhet division, and Daudkandi, Hajiganj, Kochua, Raipur, Noakhali, Chakhal, Patiya, Khagrachhari and Rangamati of Chittagong division.

Zillur

From Page 1
Quoting press reports, he said BNP candidate was elected chairman in Bagerhat where 73 per cent votes were cast. Even Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury congratulated the winning candidates of Jatiya Party.

The Awami League leader advised the opposition leader to refrain from making untrue statements to confuse people and capture power through illegal means and be respectful to democracy and practice of healthy politics.

D-8 officials

From Page 1
tary Dr Taufiq Ali, who is the coordinating official for the summit, will preside over the meeting of the D-8 commission, the official-level body of the group.

The first summit of the block was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1997. D-8 groups Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The commission meetings will be followed by a session of the Council of Ministers on Saturday to finalise the draft of the agenda.

The heads of state and government are due to arrive in the capital on February 28. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to receive them at Zia International Airport.

The heads of the delegations will have a joint call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed. Besides, they will lay wreaths at the national mausoleum at Savar and visit the Bangladesh Museum. The D-8 leaders will also have a river cruise on the Buriganga and the Meghna.



Police intercepted a BNP procession led by Sadek Hossain Khoka MP near Motijheel thana during hartal yesterday.

One killed during hartal

From Page 1
cluding Khulna and Mymensingh, hartal was observed partially.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that offices, both public and private, business establishments and educational institutions were open during hartal hours in many parts of the district yesterday.

In Narayanganj, the hartal call was largely ignored for the second day yesterday.

In capital Dhaka, police detained 73 people on charges of rioting.

Four political parties, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote enforced the shutdown to resist municipal polls, which they boycotted on the plea that the polls would not be fair and free under the incumbent Election Commission.

At least four on-duty press photographers were injured

Poll results

From Page 1
Brahmanbaria - Mohammad Helal Uddin (20,558 votes); Laxmipur - Mohammad Abu Taher (unopposed); Basurhat - Mirza Abdul Quader (unopposed); Chenggarchar - Ms Anen Begum (6,734 votes); Bhederghanj (Shariatpur) - Mohammad Abdul Hye Mia (1,463 votes); Netrakona Sadar - Mohammad Motiar Rahman Khan (10,447 votes); Gopulpur (Tangail) - S A Zabbar (unopposed); Sherpur (Bogra) - Mujibur Rahman alias Moju (6,025 votes); Kishoreganj Sadar - Mohammad Nurul Islam alias Nuru (16,121 votes); Dhulakhian (Bhola) - Mamunur-Rasheed Chowdhury (3,923 votes); Trisal (Mymensingh) - Mohammad Abdur Rasheed (4,757 votes); Rangaj (Laxmipur) - Mohammad Ali Akbar (5,262 votes); Chatmohor (Pabna) - Mohammad Abdul Kalam Azad Minto (12,886 votes); Gournadi (Barisal) - Golam Sarwar Farooq (11,510 votes); Muktagachhia (Mymensingh) - Kandkar Mohammad Abdul Malek Shahidullah (10,664 votes); Satkhira - Sheikh Ashrafur Huq (9,703 votes); Patuakhali - Moshtaque Ahmed (10,422 votes); Bheramara (Kushtia) - Mohammad Sirajul Huq Dudu (2,950 votes); Mirpur (Kushtia) - Mohammad Saiful Khan Chowdhury Farooq (2,495 votes); Bhaluka (Mymensingh) - Mohammad Mozifuddin Sarker (2,335 votes); Lalmonirhat - Mohammad Lutfur Rahman (8,251 votes); Rajbari - Ali Newaz Mahmood (10,738 votes); Chandina (Comilla) - Mohammad Abdul Mannan Sarker (4,850 votes); Nabiganj (Hobiganj) - Mohammad Tolazzal Hossain Chowdhury (11,797 votes); Shubkhali (Madaripur) - Latif Molla (4,025 votes); Bhuapur (Tangail) - Anwarul Islam Talukder alias Biddut (4,861 votes); Jhenidha (Jhenidha) - Mosharraf Hossain Mosha (14,201 votes); Shahjapur (Sirajganj) - Mohammad Nazrul Islam (10,303 votes); Char Borhanuddin (Bhola) - Basir Ahmed Miah (1,501 votes); Damudha (Shariatpur) - Humayun Kabir (2,969 votes).

when police used baton on them in front of the Jatiya Press Club at around 4:15pm.

It ensued when a rickshaw-puller was severely injured as some unidentified miscreants threw crude bombs in front of the Club where rickshaws were waiting.

Shukkur Ali, 40, the rickshaw-puller, lost his right hand as a result of the bomb injuries. The amputation took place during an emergency operation at DMCH in the evening.

Police stopped a minibus following the incident and resorted to indiscriminate baton charge after the explosion. The BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote tried to take snaps of the events. Despite repeated requests from the crowd to conduct a search inside the minibus, police allowed it to leave the place.

The injured press photographers included Amran Hossain of The Daily Star, Hasanuzzaman Tarun of the Manab Zamin, and Mamun Abedin and Saiful Islam of the Bhorer Kagoj.

A clash erupted in city's Maghbazar area last night between Jamaat activists and slum dwellers near the rail track. The slum people threw bricks at the central office of Jamaat immediately after a tempo was set on fire by pro-hartal elements near Century Arcade shopping mall.

Police lobbed teargas shells to quell the one-hour fight.

A teenager, Khokor, received injuries when a bomb exploded in his hand at Bijoyagar early afternoon.

At least 10 people were injured in running battles between activists of pro- and anti-strikers at Shaheed Faruk Road near Jatrahari crossing. Two, identified as Saifur and Jahangir, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bomb injuries.

They exploded a bomb and off and on in the sprawling neighbourhood. Some anti-hartal elements snatched camera of Jewel, an on-duty lensman of the Janakantha and assaulted

Sohrab, a press photographer of Sangbad. Jewel later told reporters that attack on them was absolutely unwarranted as they were taking snaps of pro-hartal activities.

Besides, incidents of cracker explosions left Zahurul Islam, 36, injured near National Sports Council offices, Majnu, 36, in Demra thana premises, Alauddin in CMM Court area and a teenager, Faisal, at Bangladesh Math in the old part of the city.

Our DMCH correspondent reported that two youths, Saiful, 16, and Jahangir, 20, received rubber bullets at Jatrahari in late afternoon. But no details could be gathered immediately.

An aged woman, Shar Banu, and Humayun, a staff of a vernacular newspaper, also received bomb injuries near Kazi para bus stoppage and Saidabad respectively.

Normal life in the capital and elsewhere in the country was disrupted during the hartal hours. Quite a large number of rickshaws were on the streets but a few buses and tempos operated in the city.

Schools remained closed and attendance was thin at different government and private offices in the capital.

Paramilitary BDR, riot police, armed corps and Ansars guarded street junctions.

Inter-bank foreign exchange transactions were carried out on wire by some banks.

Long distance buses remained in their garages, railway officials said trains ran on schedule.

Pro-strikers damaged rail tracks on different routes early Wednesday. Rail officials said the tracks were restored soon afterwards.

Out of nine Biman scheduled flights on various domestic routes, five were cancelled due to lack of passengers. The rest four domestic flights and all 11 international flights of Biman operated on schedule.

Only a few motor launches left the Sadarghat terminal in the capital.

ZIA: Foreign nationals

From Page 1
mented "from Tuesday night. Initially, the order was not to issue visa to persons coming from D-8 countries but since yesterday, it is being applied to all foreign nationals, an airport immigration official said.

Officials of different airlines however claimed that they did not receive any written notice about the decision and were conveyed it verbally.

Bangladesh has always followed a liberal visa regime to encourage foreigners, particularly investors and tourists, visit the country. The country's missions abroad had made it known that anyone willing to travel to Bangladesh could collect visa upon arrival at the airport.

This facility was extended for several years to encourage foreign businessmen, investors and tourists visit the country. Visa or landing permit was issued on arrival at the ZIA for different durations ranging

from 72 hours to 10-15 days upon payment of requisite fees. There is also a separate counter at the ZIA to give on-arrival visa.

The sources said, on an average 30 to 50 foreign nationals arrive in Bangladesh every day and collect their visas from the airport.

When contacted, DG Immigration Wahidul Huq said, issuance of on-arrival visa has been stopped temporarily and will be resumed immediately after the D-8 Summit.

Home Secretary Shafiqur Rahman, when contacted, said the measure has been taken for security. The authorities can suspend such facilities if they felt it necessary, he said.

Businessmen and airline officials however felt that suspension of on-arrival visa is a pension of any facility extended for long and known world-wide should have been properly communicated weeks before through a special travelers advisory.

The number of garment manufacturing and exporting factories has increased to 3265 from only 800 nine years back.

The sector now employs around 10 lakh people and earns around 70 per cent of country's total export earnings.

The foreign currency earning from the sector now stands at around US \$4 billion.

The major export categories to those countries include shirts, skirts, trousers, terry towel, shop towels, sweater, coats, gloves, playsuits, underwear, bras and baby garments.

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Sharif to visit Sunderbans March 3

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who will be in Bangladesh soon in connection with the second D-8 summit, will visit the Sunderbans, a source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday, reports BSS.

Sunderbans has recently been designated by UNESCO as a world heritage.

The heads of government and state of member countries of D-8 will start coming from February 28 to attend the summit.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the two-day summit on March 1.

Sharif will visit the Sunderbans on March 3. He will be received there by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Minister for Forest and Environment, the source added.

Snipers

From Page 1

Shukkur Ali met the worst tragedy of his life just as he was about to carry a Sheorapara-bound passenger from in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city at about 4 pm yesterday, the second day of the three-day shutdown. After taking the first hartal day off, he started work on the second as he had no money to buy food for his eight-member family living at Baosabad colony in Mirpur.

Panic gripped the entire press club area after a hand-made bomb blasted with a thunderous sound. The bomb fell on Ali's right hand as he was starting for Sheorapara. Simultaneously a mini bus that had touched the press club stoppage sped away.

However, it was not clear if the thrower was actually in that bus or in a hideout across the road, that witnessed frequent movement of public service automobiles.

Some of the witnesses said that the bomb came from the other side of the road where several multi-storey buildings stand. They viewed that the target of the bomb attack was the bus, plying in defiance of the Opposition shutdown, or the police obstructing picketing on the hartal hours. But the rickshawpuller, positioned in between the bus and the police team, became the unfortunate victim.

Others, who also saw the incident, said the crash might have come from the mini bus that sped away from the scene.

However, a vendor who was very close to the victim, said the mini bus stopped to load and unload passengers as usual and had to flee to avoid the explosion.

Before the Shukkur Ali story could be sorted out, another cracker was thrown on a mini bus yards away from the spot of the first explosion. But the second explosion did not hurt anybody.

Police stopped the bus and started beating up the panicked passengers who had departed the automobile. Press photographers' taking snaps of the beating angered the policemen who then came down on the lensmen, injuring at least six of them.

Shukkur Ali was among dozens of others who were critically injured in bomb attacks by snipers, a trend of violence that marked the second day of the opposition shutdown countrywide just like it had marked the first.

Crackers were hurled on buses, tempos, rickshaws and on streets at different parts of the capital on both days. The list of victims from these attacks included a seven-year-old girl to a 50-year-old woman, a BDI official to a daily Ajker Kagoj peon, a on-duty police peon to a pro-hartal picket and garments workers and to an automobile driver.

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