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35 Kushtia JSD men killed by outlaws in 14 months

KUSHTIA, Feb 27: Some 35 leaders and workers of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), including five central leaders, out of 117 people, were killed by the extremists in the district in last 14 months from January '98 to February this year, reports UNB.

A JSD top leader Kazi Aref Ahmed and his five colleagues were killed by the outlaws at Kaldaspur Primary School ground in Daulatpur thana on February 16 while they were holding a public meeting.

A total of 30 people, including 16 JSD leaders and workers were killed by the members of the outlaws during the tenure of the present police super who joined here in October last year.

Local JSD leader and UP Chairman Akbar Ali, 55, was killed in broad daylight in Thana Council premises on January 17 this year while another JSD leader Rafiqul Islam was killed the same day at Ziaraki in the district.

Besides, Sukur, Mattur Rahman and Robel were murdered on January 13 this year while JSD leader Moniruzzaman alias Badal on November 31, Sirajul and Asad on November 25 and Adv Nur Hosain Babu on November 21, last year.

On October 20, the terrorists shot dead Bheramara JSD President Ranjit Singh Roy at his residence. Shariful and Mamun were murdered on September 17 while Hiron, Nazrul and Azizur of Kumarkhali thana on September 28.

BNP to observe protest day today

The main opposition BNP will observe countrywide protest day today against the holding of "farical pourashava elections without the voters" and in support of its demand for cancelling the polls, reports UNB.

It will also protest the killing, arrest, repression, violence and harassment of the government during the 66-hour countrywide shutdown, said a party press release.

Rallies and processions would be organised at the district and pourashava levels and in the cities as part of the day's programme, said the release. BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged all the party workers to make the protest day a success.

Meanwhile, Dhaka City unit of BNP will bring out a mourning procession from Nayabazar Nawab Yusuf Market at 4 pm for those killed during the 66-hour nationwide shutdown.

Announcement

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Prayer Timings

February 28

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:29	5:34
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:30	4:35
Maghrib	6:05	6:08
Esha	7:25	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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6 burnt alive: 6000 shanties gutted in Agargaon slum

By Staff Correspondent

At least six people, including four of a family, were roasted alive when a devastating fire razed at least 6,000 shanties at a slum in the city's Agargaon area yesterday.

A Daily Star correspondent saw six bodies, two of them charred beyond recognition by even the neighbours.

Dwellers at BNP Bustee identified four victims as

Samiroun, 30, and her three children -- Rozina (8), Rumia (5), and an 18-month-old infant. The other two could be Tania (7) and Titu (5), who could not be located by their parents and rescuers till late last night.

Police said they took all six bodies to their custody while firemen said they recovered four bodies.

Some residents claimed that

three students of a primary school at the slum were killed in the fire. But neither police nor firemen could confirm this till last night.

Besides, at least 20 people were injured. They were admitted to different hospitals and clinics.

Neither police nor fire sources could confirm the origin of the fire. But according to

some dwellers, the blaze originated from an earthen oven at about 11:45 am at the north-west end of one of the biggest slums in the city, housing about 12,000 shanties.

The fire engulfed the little huts, home to over 30,000 people, mostly from low income group. The fire gutted almost all valuable of the affected families. At least 90 per cent of the shanties on the eastern side of a canal that divides the slum were reported affected.

"We hardly had the time to escape from the fire, leaving all our belongings behind," said a dumbfounded Dulal, a government employee. Dulal found debris of his four rooms when the fire was over.

According to the slum dwellers, the fire originated in the house at the north-west end when the housewife went outside leaving her earthen oven burning. The flame at once spread over a number of attached straw-roof huts, turning into blaze.

Strong winds from the north-west drove the blaze towards the east-south portion of the slum. The sky-high blaze engulfed the shanties at the other end of the nearly kilometre-long slum in about an hour.

As the panicky slum dwellers ran for safety, many of them were injured in stampede through the narrow alleys inside the slums.

Some of them crossed the canal nearby and went to the other portion of the slum which was not affected by the fire. "I just took my three children with me and left the slum, running towards BNP Bazar," said a wailing Rawshan Ara, sitting on the debris.

Eleven units of fire fighters from six city stations rushed to the spot. The rescue operation was delayed as the large fire-fighting vehicles could not make it through the lone narrow entry to the slum.

Joint efforts of dwellers, fire fighters and police took about two hours to extinguish the blaze.

The affected slum dwellers then tried to locate the places where they had their homes just

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Her home and all belongings burnt, Rahima Begum of the city's BNP Bustee, wails over the debris yesterday.

—Star photo by Sk Enamul Huq

11 killed as bus rams tempo in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Feb 27: Eleven people were killed and 30 injured when a passenger bus rams a tempo at Puberchar in Raipur thana on Dhaka-Sylhet highway Friday night, report agencies.

Police said the victims were the passengers and driver of the tempo. Nine of them died on the spot while the others succumbed to their injuries at the hospital.

Seven of the victims were identified as Uttam Kumar, Amir Uddin, Taj Mia, Rashed Mia, Shukur Ali, Taposh Dey and Nazrul Mia.

Police said the accident occurred when the Kishoreganj-bound bus from Dhaka hit the three-wheeler at about 9 pm. The tempo was going to Baricha from Bhairab.

The bodies were sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Police seized the bus. Driver of the bus, however, managed to escape. A case was filed in this connection.

Meanwhile, local people protesting the accident put up barricade on the highway this morning and continued it till noon. They, however, cleared the highway after police intervention.

Thirty bus passengers suffered minor injuries during the accident and were given first aid at the local hospital.

Another report adds, two people were killed and 10 others injured when a truck carrying them fell into a roadside ditch on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Mouna in Gazipur district early today.

Hospital sources said the accident

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Tobarak won't see his wife, babies anymore

By Staff Correspondent

Samiroun (30) came to the city only five days ago with her day labourer husband Tobarak from Arahazur Thana of Narayanjan in search of livelihood.

But the blaze at Agargaon BNP slum roasted her and her three children alive yesterday.

They had rented a hut from Rashida, a landlady, at Tk 400 per month. Tobarak went back to village Friday afternoon keeping Samiroun and the three children -- Ruzina, Rushia and a six-month baby.

Tobarak is scheduled to return today, only to see the charred skeletons of his wife and children.

Taslima, a niece of Samiroun, told this correspondent that her aunt could not make her way as she was lost in the maze of alleyways, caught

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College girl shot dead at Faridpur

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Feb 27: A college girl was shot dead at her brother received bullet injuries when some unidentified gunmen stormed into their residence in Luxmipur area of the town last night.

The dead was identified as Sheuli, 18, a student of Government Sarada Sundari Mahila College in the town.

Police and local people said the armed group numbering about ten knocked the door of Basir Master's house at the dead of night identifying themselves as policemen.

As soon as Basir Master, father of Sheuli, opened the door, the gunmen entered the house and tried to kidnap her daughter at gunpoint.

When the inmates of the house tried to resist them, the gunmen opened fire on them.

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Summit opens in city tomorrow FMs see 'tremendous potential' of D-8

By M Anwarul Haq

The D-8 Summit which begins in Dhaka tomorrow is expected to emphasise the need for expanded trade among the member-countries and taking up of several concrete economic programmes by the eight-nation organisation.

The two-day Summit will be capped by adoption of the Dhaka Declaration.

The D-8 Council of Ministers that met in the city yesterday discussed different areas of co-operation and dwelt on the draft of the Declaration which would be finalised by the leaders attending the Summit.

The ministers present at the meeting reached a consensus that adequate safeguards were required to ensure that "the vulnerable countries are not adversely affected by financial

liberalisation" and acknowledged "the tremendous potential of the organisation." Foreign Minister Abdus Samad said at a press briefing yesterday evening.

The second summit of the alliance in the Bangladesh capital is expected to forge closer ties among its members in an endeavour to create bigger markets for greater benefits of its members.

The Istanbul Declaration launching the alliance on June 7, 1997 identified 13 areas of cooperation for the new grouping of Muslim countries. Originally conceived as M-8 or Muslim-8 grouping comprising the eight most populous Muslim countries, the organisation was named D-8 or Developing-8

when formally launched.

The Foreign Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar aptly explained the spirit of the organisation when he said, "The D-8 would show the world the positive side of Islam through successful economic cooperation, to shed the negative image of religion."

He also reflected the views of D-8 members saying that the D-8 would not be just a talk shop but a dynamic economic forum which would see the implementation of economic programmes and projects.

Although the OIC consists of 57 countries, the eight nations who initiated the D-8 are largest Muslim countries in terms of population, having

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Mohiuddin CCC mayor candidate Upazila election in May: Hasina

CHITTAGONG, Feb 27: Upazila Parishad election will be held in May, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina disclosed this in a closed-door meeting of the ruling party leaders of Chittagong division at the circuit house here this morning, meeting sources said.

She further said that election to the City Corporations would be held after the Upazila elections and asked the party-men to start work in this regard.

The Awami League president declared A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, the incumbent Mayor, as party candidate in the next municipal election for the Chittagong City Corporation.

She urged all the leaders and workers to work unitedly for

him as they did in the last mayoral election.

Thanking the partymen for their firm political commitment, Sheikh Hasina said: "The voter turnout in the just-held municipal elections was 60-70 per cent despite opposition boycott as because the Awami League activists were beside the people."

She congratulated the people on their taking a courageous step to thwart the opposition attempt to foil the local-body elections.

Sheikh Hasina said the opposition parties, during their hartal against the three-day elections, had resorted to secret attacks failing to take the people in confidence.

Asking the partymen to shun conflicts, the ruling party

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Most D-8 leaders arrive today

By Staff Correspondent

Most leaders who are attending the second D-8 Summit are due to arrive in the capital today.

First to arrive this afternoon would be Iran's First Vice President Dr Hasan Habibi who would be leading his country's delegation.

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad will be the next to arrive within an hour of the scheduled landing of Vice President Habibi.

President Süleyman Demirel, President of Turkey, who is the host of the first D-8 Summit would arrive in the evening.

The leader of the Indonesian delegation at the Summit, Minister for People's Welfare and Poverty Eradication, Haryono Suyono is due to arrive at midnight.

The Foreign Minister of Egypt Amre M Moussa who is leading his country's delegation already arrived yesterday morning.

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would be the last head of government to reach Dhaka tomorrow.

The D-8 Summit is expected to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 3 pm tomorrow.

2 die of liquor poisoning in Feni

FENI, Feb 27: Two people died and five others fell sick after taking rectified spirit at Fulgazi Bazar under Fulgazi thana of the district yesterday, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Latu Mia, 40, of Darbarpur village and Abdur Razzak, 35, of South Sreepur village in the thana.

Police said both the victims died in their houses after taking the poisonous liquor at Fulgazi Bazar on Friday night.

Five others fell sick after taking rectified spirit but went in hiding to avert arrest and were reportedly taking treat-

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US sees 'little change' in human rights record Govt, opposition both accused of using violence in politics

By Special Correspondent

The US State Department has criticised the Bangladesh government for its human rights records saying it "continued to restrict or deny many fundamental rights, and failed to prevent or punish abuses committed by others."

"The government's human rights record changed little from the previous year," the State Department's Annual Country Report on Human Rights for 1998 said.

The 28-page report, part of the State Department's Country Profile on 194 nations, was released to newsmen by US Director John Kinnannon at his office here yesterday. Some human rights activists were

also present.

As is our practice worldwide, we provided the Bangladesh government with an advance copy of the report on Friday and informed it that we would also be making the report publicly available at this gathering," John Kinnannon said.

The lengthy report running into several sub-sections, documented political and other extra-judicial killings, including the murder of Rubel and Arun Chakravarty, prison conditions, alleged torture, arbitrary arrests, detention and interference with privacy, and denial of fair public trial.

The report also dealt with is-

sues like freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom of religion, respect for political rights, government's attitude regarding international and non-governmental investigation into alleged violation of human rights, alleged discrimination based on race, sex, religion, workers' rights, child labour, work conditions etc.

It blasted police for abusing human rights and accused both the government and the opposition of using violence in politics. The opposition has been accused of "frequent boycott or absention from parliament."

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Occidental plans to develop new gasfield in Habiganj

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Feb 27: US company Occidental has decided to develop another gas field in Habiganj district.

The company has already started ground work for the purpose, said an official of the company yesterday.

According to the programme, the company will drill two exploratory wells in Baniachang thana, one at Tarasai, about 3 kilometres off the thana headquarters and the other at Pratham Rek, about one kilometre from there.

"We are expecting to start drilling the first well at the beginning of May this year," he said. Since the location is in a remote area, construction of infrastructural facilities will take much time. Though the approximate reserve in the structure is yet to be ascertained, the company official said they are

very optimistic about striking a good reserve.

The company officials held two meetings at the two sites and sought all-out cooperation from the villagers.

While talking to newsmen, local Union Parishad Chairman Mohammad Ali Momin said, "We are ready to extend all-out help, but there should be adequate safety arrangements. Proper compensation should also be given for the acquired land," he said.

"There should be no incident like that of Magurchhara said Hamidur Rahman Araj, Chairman of another Union Parishad. He also demanded jobs for local people.

The company has sought permission from the Petrobangla, Department of Environment and the Depart-

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Share experiences, design nat'l strategy

By Staff Correspondent

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD) Minister Zillur Rahman has suggested a national conference to share field experiences on arsenic problems and then outline a coordinated mitigation programme.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at a two-day national conference on 'Coordinated Action for Arsenic Mitigation' programme held yesterday.

Minister tells arsenic confec in city

The minister said the local government division has launched the Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project with financial assistance from World Bank and SDC. The first phase has started

recently and will continue for three years. Two municipalities and four thousand villages will be covered under the present project.

He said Bangladesh, WB and SDC are jointly financing the project costing US\$ 44 million. The objective of the project is to

provide arsenic free drinking water.

LGRD Secretary Hasnat Abdul Hye said, "This crisis of groundwater arsenic contamination has caught us almost unaware. The very lives of a great many people are in danger that makes us feel both guilty

and anxious to find solution."

Calling for collaboration of international experts and agencies, he said, "Not only nationally, cooperation with international experts is also needed to benefit from the experiences gained in tackling problems in different parts of the world. This conference has been organised to assess the achievements made so far in

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BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM BGMEA ELECTION'99

SAMMILITA PARISHAD PANEL PROJECTION MEETING

PANEL PROJECTION MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 01, 1999 AT 5.00 P.M. AT GRAND BALLROOM OF PAN PACIFIC SONARGON HOTEL, DHAKA.

MR. MOSTAFA GOLAM QUDDUS, PRESIDENT, BGMEA AND PANEL LEADER, SAMMILITA PARISHAD WILL INTRODUCE HIS PANEL OF CANDIDATES HOW WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ENSUING BGMEA ELECTION'99. THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF BGMEA ARE REQUESTED TO KINDLY ATTEND THE MEETING TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS.

KUTUBUDDIN AHMED
CHAIRMAN
SAMMILITA PARISHAD
ENVOY GROUP

MR. SIRAJUL HAQUE
CHIEF CO-ORDINATOR
SAMMILITA PARISHAD
STERLING GROUP