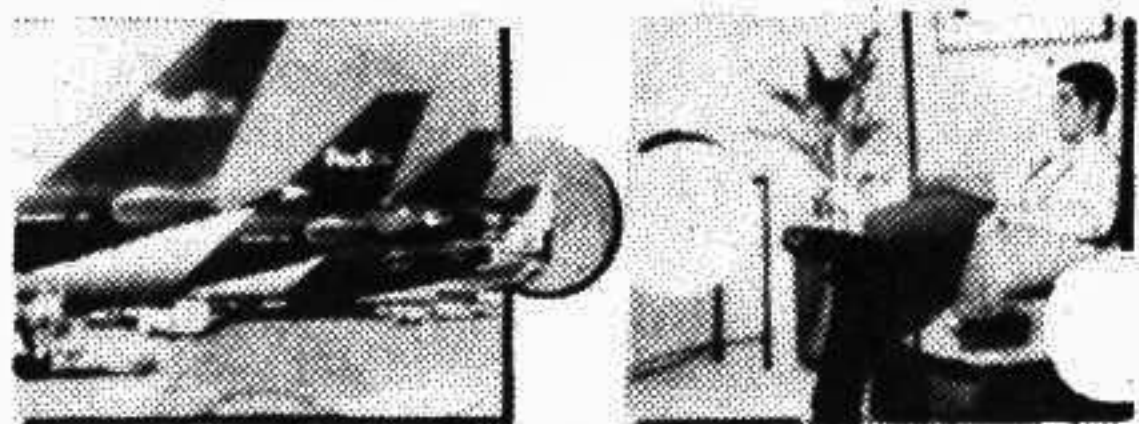


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Burned Agargaon slum Thousands under open sky, await relief

Star Report

Thousands of fire victims were searching yesterday for their remaining valuables from the debris at Agargaon slums razed by a devastating fire on Saturday.

At least six people, including women and children, were killed in the fire that left around 20,000 homeless. Around one square kilometer of slum area turned into a pile of debris after the blaze.

EC must have

From Page 1

representative bodies". Underlining the importance of reforms of the electoral systems, the Kathmandu declaration said: "Timely and necessary reform in the electoral process would enhance the credibility of the election system. Any reform measures should aim at enhancing the capacity of the Election Commission to better superintend, conduct, direct and control the electoral process."

The election commissioners attending the conference also viewed that the reforms in the functioning of the political parties, aimed especially at their financial transparency, would substantially help the Election Commissions ensure free and fair elections.

The conference also resolved that it was the need of the hour to set up a 'Forum of the Chief Election Commissioners of South Asia'. In this regard the conference has authorised the CEC of Nepal, Bishnu Pratap Shah, to consult his counterparts and initiate necessary steps to establish such a regional forum.

Munira Begum lost all her savings along with her kutchra house. "I do not know what to do with my two children," Munira, a hospital aid, told The Daily Star.

Some of the homeless were trying to re-build their damaged shanties while thousands of others living under the open sky.

Wealthy locals with the help of the ward commissioner arranged the preparation and distribution of food to fire victims.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia, along with their respective party members, visited the spot yesterday and distributed some relief goods. But the relief material was inadequate.

A frustrated victim Aftab, 60, lost hope of getting assistance from the government or any other organisation and left the slum area temporarily. "You have done enough for us, now I am going to help myself," he said sarcastically.

Noor Hossain was awed by the sight of the prime minister distributing relief goods on the barren grounds of his burned house. However, he did not take any assistance.

Some voluntary organisations also came up and extended a helping hand to the victims. They provided them with dry food, cloths, pure drinking water, utensil and household materials.

The gravity of the debacle, however, was epitomised by Mazed's, 30 statement.

"I lost everything in the fire but I am not so depressed as I see my two children alive," she said.

Sajal murder Bail prayer of Niaz rejected

By Staff Correspondent

Niaz Ahmed, brother-in-law of Sajal Chowdhury, who was shot dead during hartal hours on February nine, was sent to Dhaka Central Jail on Saturday after expiry of one day's police remand, police said yesterday.

Niaz, 30, was produced before the CMM's court on Saturday. Police did not pray for his further remand. But earlier on Thursday, police had prayed for a twelve-day remand. A bail petition was moved on behalf of Niaz but it was rejected.

Sajal Chowdhury, 25, was shot from a point blank range by armed men from an anti-hartal convoy of motor vehicles at Dhanmondi, led by local MP of ruling Awami League during hartal hours on February nine.

Mohammadpur police Wednesday arrested Niaz as an FIR named accused in two cases lodged with Mohammadpur thana. He was arrested from near his 308/A, West Dhanmondi residence.

Police however failed to arrest any one in connection with the killing of Sajal till last night.

Aziz Bhui

From Page 1

in film star Sohail Chowdhury murder case and in the A-TV case.

He has not been granted bail in the A-TV case. The court, however, granted him bail in the case filed under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Barrister Shaikat Ali Khan assisted by advocates Md. Tazuddin, Fazlul Huq Farid and Rehan Hossain moved for the petitioner, while Deputy Attorney General Md. Mamunul Hossain and Assistant Attorney General Md. Aminuddin appeared for the government.

Summit opens today

From Page 1

Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey. These states have a combined population of nearly 800 million and command nearly eight per cent of the global GDP.

Although the OIC consists of 57 countries, the D-8 members have nearly half the population of the OIC states.

Ministers that met in the city on Saturday discussed different areas of cooperation and dwell 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."

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

He went on "D-8 would not be just a talk shop but a dynamic economic forum which would see the implementation of economic programmes and projects."

Egyptian Ambassador to Bangladesh Ossama Mohammad Tawfiq said "We are not outside the OIC but have made a more meaningful forum for taking up positive economic programmes."

All the foreign dignitaries now in the city in connection with the Summit are being lodged at Sheraton Hotel which has been closed to all others. A massive security dragnet has been thrown all around the hotel and all places to be visited by the dignitaries.

Shazneen

From Page 1

Rahman during the cross-examination by the defence lawyer yesterday.

The Gulkhwani of Shazneen was held on April 26. I do not remember at that moment exactly how many days after the Gulkhwani Badal was arrested.

It is not true that CID police picked up Badal without the knowledge of the informant and that he was taken on the pretext that he would be made an witness.

It is absolutely untrue that my daughter Shazneen used to take Shahid along when she would go to school or anywhere outside the residence.

At this stage, the prosecution lawyers strongly objected to the question of the defence lawyer.

There were about 10 to 12 household staff at my residence on the night of the incident.

Daval used to work with his brother carpenter Shani Ram.

My wife has five sisters and a brother. They are — Arati, Bharati, Minoti, Pronoti, Tapati and Shatya.

Bharati and her husband Dipak Dutta were at my residence that night. They had been staying with us for about one and a half months.

I do not know whether police interrogated Bharati and Dipak after the incident.

At this stage the defence lawyer pointed at accused Minu, who was then standing at the dock, and asked Latifur Rahman whether he knew her.

Yes I know her. She is maid Minu.

The judge AK Roy fixed March 4 for further cross examination of the informant.

Malaysian FM

From Page 1

a certain code of behaviour." Globalisation, he said, should not be used as a new form of domination. "The developed countries want no conditions while entering our market but we can not freely enter their markets. We can not say that globalisation is not good but it has its negative effects."

Giving his views about the media he said, "It is often seen having some bias. The Western media has a mindset of its own. "Slant creates wrong perception. They (Western media) can not accept that we have a different view and still be correct. They want to show that Asia and the emerging countries are plagued with problems. I do not think that the developed countries want to see developing countries attain their level."

Responding to questions on the political situation in his country following removal of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and his trial he said, "Initially Malaysia had economic and financial crisis. Anwar brought a political dimension. The western press tried to project Anwar as all important. In reality there is considerable exaggeration and misreporting. This is part of the political process. Once you are there, you make mistakes in politics, you make mistakes in your life. There is law and law has to be allowed to take its own course."

"We have a due process of law. It is not for me to make judgement. It is for the court to make judgement. At the end of the day it is the court which will decide."

"In our country, we have systems. We have got judicial process, we have got legal process, we have got electoral process and all these should be utilised. In our case, we are doing everything within the system."

The foreign minister emphasised that his country's political problems were domestic. "It is Malaysia's crisis. We can handle it. Political problems can not be solved through street agitation. We have seen too much of disorder that has created sufferings to the people. But the western press tried to paint that there is instability. But in reality there is no real political crisis. There is no instability."

He said there are over 1,50,000 Bangladeshis working in Malaysia. He explained that in certain sectors, when the work permit expires, it is not renewed unless there is requirement in the concerned micro-sector.

"Generally we are pleased with the performance of Bangladeshis in our country. They are very hard working people."

Shazneen

From Page 1

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Akhteruzzaman won't resign from party, JS

By Staff Correspondent

BNP lawmaker Akhteruzzaman decided not to resign from the party and from parliament following discussions with party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan last night, party sources said.

He had declared on February 19 that he would resign both from the party and parliament if the BNP chief did not expel Moudud Ahmed, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Habibul Islam Bhuiyan from the party by February 28.

He had demanded expulsion of the three party leaders after they addressed a meeting of the party at Kishoreganj on February 19. Two factions of district BNP held separate meetings on the day. Akhteruzzaman addressed the other meeting.

Akhteruzzaman along with a group of party leaders from Kishoreganj came to the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP chief Khaleda Zia yesterday evening.

He entered Khaleda's chamber and wanted to submit his resignation. But an angry Khaleda asked him to go to the party secretary general, the sources said. Mannan Bhuiyan was not present at that time.

Party security personnel did not, however, allow the local leaders to get into Khaleda's chamber.

Akhteruzzaman then went to Mannan Bhuiyan's residence and had a discussion with him. A mid-ranking BNP leader, who was present there, told The Daily Star over telephone that Bhuiyan assured him of looking into his demand and asked him not to resign. Akhteruzzaman agreed.

Akhteruzzaman then went to Mannan Bhuiyan's residence and had a discussion with him. A mid-ranking BNP leader, who was present there, told The Daily Star over telephone that Bhuiyan assured him of looking into his demand and asked him not to resign. Akhteruzzaman agreed.

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Ekushey Book Fair extended till Mar 10

By DU Correspondent

Bangla Academy authorities yesterday extended the duration of the Ekushey Book Fair for another ten days till March 10.

The month-long fair was scheduled to be concluded yesterday. The authorities' notice extending the fair came at about 4 pm.

The decision was announced after a meeting between Sports and Cultural Affairs Minister Obaidul Quader and Director General of the Academy Dr. Syed Anwar Hossain at the latter's office, sources at the Academy claimed while talking to The Daily Star.

When contacted the DG denied it and said the decision was taken to fulfill the "expectations of publishers, writers and readers."

When contacted, some members of the Boi Mela Parishadana Committee, publishers and writers however expressed mixed reaction over the decision.

Osman Gani, a member of the Committee and owner of Agamoni Prokashani said the Academy authorities did not consult the Committee in taking the decision. "The authorities did not even inform the Committee," he said.

Another publisher and member of the Committee said he was not aware of the decision.

Expressing his reaction to this correspondent, eminent writer Humayun Azad said the Ekushey Book Fair should be

Mustafiz

From Page 1

tary on August 17, 1997. He was given extension for two years in December in recognition of his outstanding service.

Rahman was also known for his academic works and had a number of publications to his credit. He translated Jahanara Imam's book "Ekkattur Dinguli" into English.

He was fond of music and used to play violin.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter.

Family sources said his body is expected to be flown home tonight.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, in separate messages, condoled his death and said the country lost "an efficient, seasoned and prudent diplomat."

concluded within the month of February. There was no demand and no reason for the extension.

When contacted the minister said, "It depends on the authorities whether they would extend the fair or not."

Earlier in 1996, the Academy extended the Ekushey Book Fair for a week following requests from publishers and writers.

Meanwhile, people in their thousands thronged the fair yesterday, knowing that it was the concluding day.

A total of 633 books were released at the fair till yesterday