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# Religious riots claim 400 in Nigeria

KADUNA, Nigeria, Feb 24: More than 400 people died in two days of religious riots in Nigeria, the head of a Kaduna based human rights group said today as estimates of the numbers killed mounted, report agencies.

Shehu Sani, head of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) told AFP: "The Muslims have already buried many of their dead. More than 200. The Christians are burying theirs. Our people have gone round the town and from what we have seen, there are more than 400 dead."

More than 200 bodies are being kept in mortuaries in the northern city of Kaduna, local newspapers said today.

Vanguard counted 210 charred bodies at the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, said the independent Vanguard, one of several papers to carry the report.

Residents say they believe many hundreds of people were killed in the rioting which

started on Monday after a demonstration by Christians against demands by Muslims for the introduction of Islamic sharia law to Kaduna State.

Police sources say they cannot yet confirm more than 100 dead in the clashes that have left mosques, churches and shops destroyed.

Local authorities imposed a total ban on movement in Kaduna and nearby towns on Wednesday to stop the violence spreading.

Police and soldiers patrolled the smouldering streets of Kaduna as politicians debated the impact of deadly riots on the fragile religious and ethnic balance in Africa's most populous nation.

Bodies — many of them charred — littered the streets, where smoke wafted Wednesday from burned buildings and the remnants of bonfires built during the rioting.

An overwhelming stench filled the morgue at the main hospital, where about 200 bod-

ies were piled up on slabs, on the floor, and even the ground outside after two days of religious clashes.

Handcuffs grabbed what belongings they could and set off on foot to escape the city where fighting erupted Monday morning during a demonstration by local Christians against a proposal to bring Islamic law, or sharia, to Kaduna state.

Guns, cutlasses and other weapons were used in the clashes, which continued Tuesday, said workers sitting through the bodies at the morgue.

"People were slaughtered like chickens and goats," said Nkechi Nwosu, a Christian, who sought refuge with her 15-year-old son at the Army Referral Hospital. "I haven't seen anything like this in the ten years I have lived in the city."

Police, fearing that the violence could spread to other cities, played down the death toll, maintaining for a second day that just 13 bodies had been recovered.



**Hoping against hopes**  
Having resisted the latest demolition drive, the dwellers of the Tejgaon rail-gate slum rallied at the Paltan Maidan yesterday to attract authorities' attention.  
Star photo: Anisur Rahman

# PM tells rally at Kurigram Opposition opposes PSA to keep people hostage to terrorists

KURIGRAM, Feb 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has again blasted the opposition for opposing the Public Safety Act, saying they want to keep the people hostage to hoodlums, reports UNB.

"They are conducting movement against the Act to support the terrorists and making the public hostage to them (terrorists)," she told a huge public meeting at Kurigram Government Degree College ground this afternoon.

Hasina wanted to know what the opposition would gain by doing so. She said her government would resign in due time, handing over power to a neutral, caretaker government before the election.

"If the people vote for us we will come to power again... Otherwise, the opposition will come to power. Until then the opposition will have to be patient."

The prime minister said the opposition will have to keep patience for the continuation of democracy. She alleged that the opposition do not want the continuation of democratic process, rather they want to capture power by force.

Referring to the "unholy alliance" of the opposition parties, she said, "Biswa Behaya" (shameless) Ershad and "vote choir" (thief) Khaleda Zia were united to foil democracy and capture power by toppling Awami League government.

"They have joined hands to oust the government only to capture power."

She said Khaleda Zia had branded Ershad as the killer of her husband and now she forged an alliance with him in a "shameless manner."

Ershad, who was confined to jail for six years during Khaleda's rule, has joined hands with the BNP leader only to capture power, she said.

Hasina said their other friend, Golam Azam, collaborated with the Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War and conducted genocide and repression on women.

She said the opposition parties have made the alliance at a time when the government is busy with development work.

The BNP-led opposition are conducting movement to plunder public money once they are in power, as they did during their rules, she added.

# President's plea for clean campuses

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has called upon all to think of a solution to the problems plaguing the country's educational institutions, reports UNB.

"Unfair means in examinations, irregularities, anarchy and terrorism have been rising in our educational institutions... students are even demanding the right to adopting unfair means in the examination halls," he said.

The president was addressing the inaugural session of the 27th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Scouts National Council at the National Scouts

Building yesterday.

"Education is the backbone of the nation. Without education, no society or country can be civilised," said President.

He said the physical and mental development of children is possible through the scouting movement.

President, who is the country's chief scout, also distributed the highest scouting award "Silver Tiger" to three scouts and the second highest, "Silver Hilsa", to 10 others for their significant contribution to the development and expansion of society in Bangladesh.

Commissioner of Dhaka District Rover Scouts Dr. Q.A.T.M. Habibur Rahman, Regional Deputy Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts (Rajshahi region) Mohammad Mohsin Khan and Treasurer of Bangladesh Scouts (Khulna region) Mohammad Nurul Islam received the Silver Tiger.

The ten "Silver Hilsa" award recipients are Khan Shahabuddin, Mohammad Abdus Sattar Khan, Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Sayedul Islam Mallik, Mohammad Abul Kalam Chowdhury, A.F.M. Shamsuzzaman, Khan Ziaul Haq, A.K.M. Yunus, Mosrusul Karim Chowdhury and Josef Modhu.

President said the Education Ministry assisted "Promotion of Scouting in Bangladesh" and the Primary and Mass Education Department assisted "Primary School Cub Scouting Expansion." These programmes are effective steps to expand scouting in educational institutions, he added.

He lauded the initiatives taken by the Bangladesh Scouts to organise and equip youth for the new millennium and wished their activities all the success.

Attended by more than 200 councillors, distinguished people and scouts, the inaugural function was also addressed, among others, by Chief National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts Montur ul Karim and president of Bangladesh Scouts Mohammad Mahbubuzzaman.

# Autorickshaw driver shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent  
An autorickshaw driver was shot dead in the city yesterday by a person who had borrowed money from him.

The tragic incident occurred at Shewrapara bus stand in the city's Mirpur area yesterday.

The victim was identified as Mohammad Azad, 20, a resident of Shewrapara.

Some sources concerned said that the incident occurred at about 7 pm when Azad asked the borrower, identified as Jahangir, to pay back the money. Jahangir refused to return the money and picked up a quarrel with him.

At one stage, Jahangir shot Azad. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, hospital sources said.

Mirpur police said last night that an emergency officer went to the spot and the hospital to investigate the incident. No case was filed in this regard and no arrest was made.

Meanwhile, a hardware trader was stabbed by extortionists at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday.

The gang attacked Julhus 28, as he refused to pay toll.

He was brought to the DMCH in a critical condition, hospital sources said.

# Fake fertiliser raises farmers' fear

By Reaz Ahmad

Substandard fertiliser produced from dust and ash in makeshift factories near Jessore has hit the market, threatening farmers' expectations of a bumper boro crop.

Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury said the ministry has heard about the factories and was taking steps to stop the trade.

She said the ministry has also met with officials from the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association to make sure there is enough fertiliser in remote areas so farmers won't fall prey to the unscrupulous businessmen.

The government sent one person connected with adulterated fertiliser manufacturing to jail in Niphamari recently, while police also detected contaminated fertiliser in Bogra.

However, they could not arrest the dealers, raising questions about the effectiveness of the government's crackdown.

The Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, the organisation that represents dealers across the country, cancelled one of its affiliate's membership for his involvement in adulterated fertiliser sales. He is still at large.

Fertiliser consumption peaks in February. Bangladeshi farmers will use about 22 lakh metric tons of urea in 1999-2000. However, state-run factories will only produce about 17 lakh metric tons. The remainder comes from the Khatagola Fertiliser Company in Chittagong or imports.

Tofail Ahmed, the minister of industry, denied suggestions that the contaminated fertiliser entered the market due to domestic production shortfalls.

"We've imported fertiliser to fill up the gap," said Ahmed. "There is plenty of fertiliser in the buffer stocks."

Fertiliser prices have increased over the last two weeks due to the shortfall, hovering at Tk 300 to Tk 350 for a 50-kilogram sack. Triple Super Phosphate costs between Tk 600 and Tk 650, while Diammonium Phosphate sell for between Tk 450 to Tk 550.

However, one frustrated trader said fertiliser prices will remain high until the government tackles toll collection in the transport sector.

"If one counts the Tk 1,300 spent on tolls to transport a truck full of fertiliser from a factory in Ghorashal to Dinajpur, then how can you expect fertiliser prices to remain low," he said.

Abdul Baten, executive secretary of the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, said dealers would keep fertiliser prices at a reasonable level, despite the odds.

Tolls on fertiliser dealers and the transport sectors has pushed us to the limit," said Baten. "We have to pay a Tk 25 additional charge on each 50-kilogram sack, we draw from the buffer stocks due to domestic shortfall in urea production."

# HC stays central bank order against Rahman Group

By Staff Correspondent  
The High Court yesterday stayed a central bank order issued on January 13, and issued Rule Nisi following six writ petitions by six companies of the Rahman Group, says a press release of Moudud Ahmed and Associates.

The central bank directed the Sonali Bank to take legal action against Rahman Group, following which the bank issued a final notice on February 7, demanding additional downpayment, the press release said.

The HC Bench comprising Justice Md Mozammel Haq and Justice Md Abdur Rashid also directed the Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Bank and Sonali Bank to show cause as to why the central bank order and the Sonali Bank notice should not be declared to have been made without any lawful authority and of no legal effect, the release added.

The six companies which filed the writ petitions are: Olympia Knitting Industries, Rahman Spinning Mills Ltd, Rahman Quality Garments, Rahman Hosiery Dyeing & Finishing Mills, Rahman Hosiery and Jasy Hosiery.

# 2 alleged muggers beaten to death in Ctg

From Our Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: Two alleged muggers were beaten to death by the local people at Asadganj in the city this morning.

The victims were identified as Bitu Das, 22, and Minta 1/18, 25.

Witnesses said, a gang of four muggers attacked a businessman near Chhoto Bridge at Asadganj at around 9 am while he was going to a local bank to deposit money.

As the businessman cried for help, local people rushed to the spot and chased the muggers. They caught two of the four muggers and started beating them. The rest two managed to flee.

On receiving information, police rushed to the spot and rescued the injured muggers. They took them to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (MCH) where they succumbed their injuries at around 10:30 n.

# Date-expired milk seized in Chittagong

From Our Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: A large stock of expired milk powder was seized in the city yesterday.

Double Mooring police recovered 65 tons of milk powder in a godown of the Islamic Khatungonj branch at larchat in a six-hour raid today.

The recovered milk in 2680 sacks worth about Tk 75 lakh have been smuggled into the city by a wellorganised circle of unscrupulous businessmen.

The milk was stocked in the godown by one Farhad Hing of Khatungonj Ameer ket, sources said.

Police has sealed the godown in the milk powder inside and sent a sample to Dhaka to whether it is adulterated or loactive.

With this so far smuggled expired milk powder worth about Tk two crore was recovered in Chittagong.

# Kalu Murder Case Jamai Farooq, Nasir placed on remand

From Staff Correspondent  
KHULNA, Feb 24: Jamai Farooq and Nasir Khan were placed on police remand for five days in connection with the Kalu Murder Case.

They were produced before the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Khulna at 12:45 pm. They are also accused in Panna Murder Case.

Dr Tejendra Chandra Das of DMCH gave testimony to the court saying he had done autopsy of the body of Panna. He found marks of bullet injuries in the right side of his neck, said Dr Das.

Jamai Farooq told the court that name of his father is Ismail Khan and not Nowsher Ali as mentioned in the FIR lodged with Khulna thana in Panna murder. My father died when I was a child. So, I am not guilty of this murder, he said. Security was tightened in and around the judge court.

Jamai Farooq has already been condemned to death in Zainal Khan Murder Case. Both he and Nasir were found nervous when produced before the court.

Ershad suddenly became furious and termed Jamai Farooq as worthless. They whispered for few minutes in the witness box, but had to discontinue it as police warned them.

Hundreds of people thronged the court area from far and near to see Jamai Farooq and Nasir Khan. But they were frustrated failing to get into the security ring formed with riot police.

They raised slogans demanding execution of Ershad and Jamai Farooq.

Meanwhile, police today arrested Forkan Khan, younger brother of Jamai Farooq from the court compound.

"There are many allegations against Forkan," police said.

# Liaison body discusses next course of action

By Staff Correspondent  
A meeting of the Central Liaison Committee yesterday discussed country's latest political situation as well as the next course of action.

Held in the evening at the residence of BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan under his chairmanship, the meeting also discussed about the four party chiefs' visit to divisional headquarters for mass contact in March next.

But details of the visit of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote chief Azizul Haq are yet to be finalised.

Meeting sources said that it discussed the forthcoming SSC examinations, Eid-ul-Azha and US President Bill Clinton's visit to Dhaka in the next month and agreed to announce some "lighter and mass contact type" political programmes on February 28.

There may be public meetings, rallies and processions in Dhaka and other cities during the SSC examinations from March 2-15, Eid vacation on March 16-18 and Clinton's proposed visit on March 20.

Possibility of calling any hartal is thin in the first three weeks of March, said a liaison committee representative and added that the alliance would not hesitate to go for tougher action if the government took any important decision which could go against the demand and stance of the opposition.

It also discussed about the formation of the All Party Action Council (APAC) in different parts of the country and reiterated its intention to constitute the APAC at all levels immediately.

Sources said the meeting discussed a wide range of matters but did not take any decision and decided to meet on February 27 to finalise fresh programmes.

The meeting instructed the component parties of the alliance to take adequate preparation for making the February 28 countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal programme a success.

BNP leaders Tariqul Islam, M Shamsul Islam MP and Anwar Zahid, JP leaders Kazi Firoz, Rashid, ABM Golam Mostafa and Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Jamaat leader Abdul Qader Mollah and IOJ leader ARM Abdul Matin attended the meeting.

# Declare Manju's JS seat vacant Ershad writes to Speaker

Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad urged Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday to declare Communication Minister Anwar Hossain Manju's parliamentary seat vacant, reports UNB.

In a letter to the Speaker, Ershad said Manju violated the party's constitution and ignored parliamentary procedure when he joined the government and accepted the ministership.

Manju's decision should be considered as his resignation from the party and his seat, argued Ershad.

Ershad cited Article 70 (1) of the Constitution to back up his claim that Manju resigned from the party when he joined the government and Article 67 (1) to back up his claim that Manju's seat was vacant.

Ershad also referred to Case No. 22 of a 1999 civil appeal filed with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and Case No. 1, which was filed with the Election Commission during the same year.

Ershad stated in the letter that Anwar Hossain Manju was nominated and elected to parliament by the Jatiya Party as Jhalakati-2 constituency's representative in the 1996 general election.

"However, Manju violated the party's constitution and ignored parliamentary procedure by joining the government on June 23, 1996, even though he knew his party did not support the consensus government of the honourable Prime Minister."

According to parliamentary procedure, a seat can be declared vacant by gazette notification if an MP violates or opposes a party decision.

However, the Speaker can send also the dispute to the Election Commission or schedule a vote to determine who the real leader of a parliamentary party of a party.

Ershad asked the Speaker to arrange a gazette notification to declare that Manju's seat was vacant.

# UGC lags way behind schedule Annual Report for 1998 yet to come out

By Asad-uz-Zaman

The University Grants Commission (UGC), the regulatory organisation for the public and private universities, is running much behind time as it is yet to publish the annual report for the year 1998, although a long period of time has already elapsed.

The UGC officials explained that they were not able to publish the report till now because the concerned universities did not provide necessary information in due time.

"I think the report is in the printing press. It may reach the office within a week," said one of the top officials, on conditions of anonymity.

This correspondent made several attempts during the last few months for collecting the report. But all the attempts went in vain as the concerned officials made almost similar statements during this period.

According to the UGC sources, there was a constitutional obligation to submit the report of the year 1998 in the parliament within March 31, 1999. But the report was yet to see the light of the day.

Talking to The Daily Star, UGC chairman Professor ATM Zahurul Haque said they were trying to publish, as soon as possible, the annual report for the year 1998.

There were delays for sending the information from public as well as private universities.

That is why, the report was not published in due time," he pointed out.

When asked, whether there was any constitutional obligation for publishing the report within March 31, the UGC chairman replied in the negative, but said that the UGC usually sent the annual report to the Parliament Standing Committee through the Ministry of Education for discussion.

He, however, said he was not in a position to throw more light on the delay of publishing the report as he had joined the UGC in April 1999. "I could not say why the delay was made previously. Those who were in the UGC earlier could possibly speak better about the matter," he said.

A former UGC member, who had completed his tenure several months ago, said that they tried to publish the annual report regularly since joining the organisation.

He, however, pointed out that the reasons for the delay to publish the annual report for the year 1998 were unknown to him, although he went through the unpublished copy of the report and gave his necessary consent for its publication.

He also requested this correspondent to write on the contents of the annual report apart from the matters relating to the delay in its publication.

# EPB gets tough on truant factories

By Rafiq Hasan

Sixty-three garment factories exported more than three lakh dozen ready-made dresses with forged visas and quota documents from 1997 to 1999, according to Export Promotion Bureau statistics.

Bureau sources said the government suspended the offenders after completing its preliminary investigation into the fraud. Thirty-three factories are still suspended, while 15 have resumed exports after paying a fine equivalent to four times the documents' value.

One suspension was lifted after a writ petition in the high court division. The government is still investigating four other factories. Eight garment factories were black listed for allowing reserve quota through forged export licenses.

The suspended factories are Hope Fashions Ltd., Peoples Apparels Ltd., Western Fashions Ltd., Shawagtam Garments Ltd., AB Fashion Wears Ltd., Mir Fashion Wears, U.S. Garment Industries, Sayeed Trading, Rupali Garments, Reliance Apparels, High-tech Fashion Wears Ltd., H.R. Dresses, Haq Wears International, Rabi Apparels Ltd. and Vallicima Apparels.

The eight blacklisted factories are H. R. B. Apparels, Mark Knitwear, Stitch Well Design Ltd., Asiana Garments Ltd., Haydory Textiles, Sanowara Garments, Commitment Garments and Mostafa Garments.

Last July, the bureau announced that 24 factories were involved with quota and visa forgeries, but the number rose to 63 recently, said bureau sources.

Anisur Rahman Sinha, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the association would cancel the guilty factories' memberships.

"We want that the government to take action against them after proper investigation is complete," said Sinha.

"However, the government should not suspend export activities until it proves the factory is guilty of forgery."

However, Sinha said the government agency in charge of garment exports must also take responsibility for corruption in the quota transfer system, since corruption cannot occur without help from officials on the inside. The government should punish those officials, he said.

Sinha said visa forgery should end, since the government introduced the Electronic Visa Delivery System in January.

**8 houses gutted from N'ganj**  
From Our Correspondent  
NARAYANGANJ, Feb 24: At least eight houses were gutted in a fire at Maurapat in Chamari area of the town today.

Fire service source said the fire originated from an electric short circuit in a shop and soon engulfed the surrounding houses.