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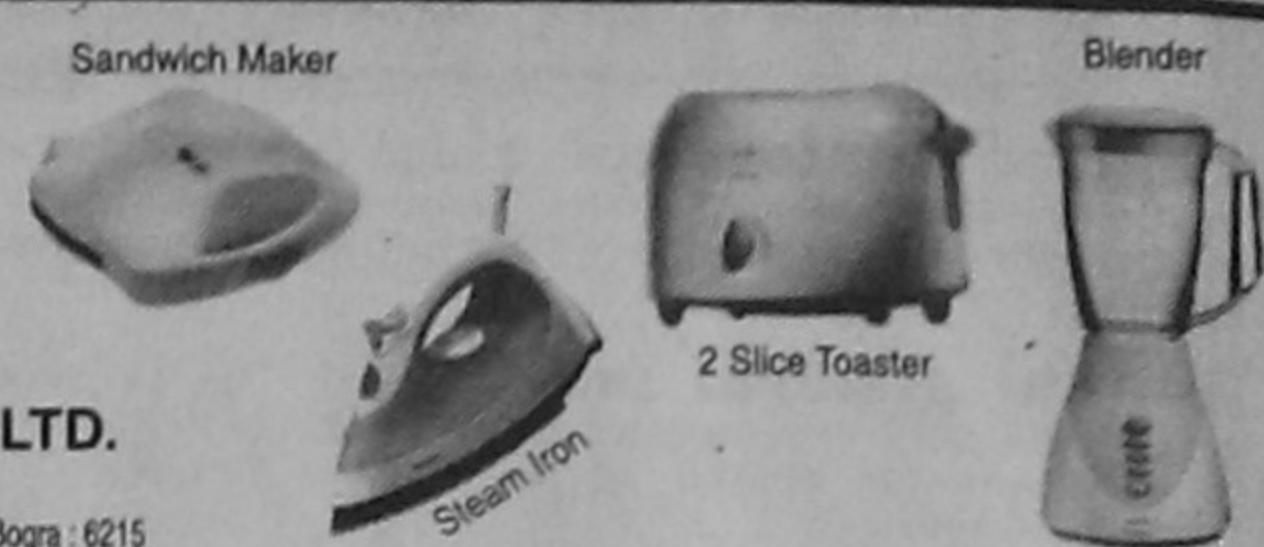
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## Mine explosion in China leaves 118 dead

Death toll may rise, fear rescue workers

SHANGHAI, Sept 28: A gas explosion in a coal mine in southern China left as many as 161 miners dead or missing, officials said today, reports AP.

A mine official said there were 118 deaths. But others said rescue efforts were still under way, and the fate of scores of miners remained unknown nearly a day after the Wednesday night accident.

"There are no signs of life from the mine," said police officer Qian Shixi in Dawan, the town in Guizhou province where the mine is located.

The blast occurred at about 8 pm Wednesday at the Muchongou Coal Mine outside Shuicheng city, said Zhong Tianfang, an official of the municipal mine bureau.

Zhong said 118 miners were killed and 123 rescued.

"The rescue work went very

quickly and smoothly," he said by telephone from Shuicheng, which is 1,350 miles southwest of Shanghai.

However, other officials said rescuers were still looking for more than 120 of the 241 miners underground at the time of the blast.

An official with the provincial government's executive office said 34 bodies had been found by Thursday afternoon and 83 miners rescued. Another 124 miners were missing, said the official, who gave his name only as Mr Pan.

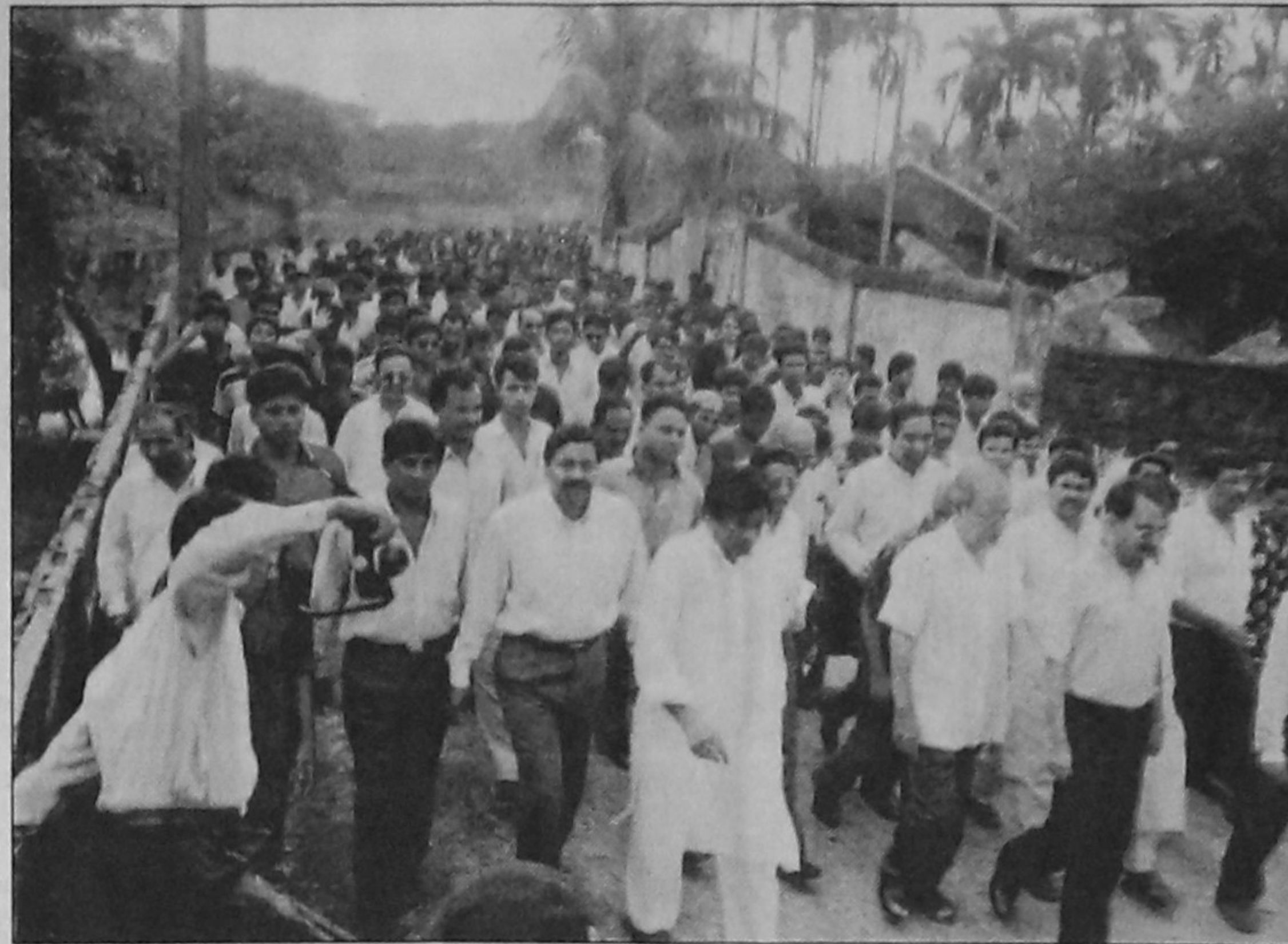
China has the world's deadliest coal mines. More than 2,730 miners died in the first six months of the year, according to government statistics. Many mines are poorly run, lacking adequate fire and ventilation equipment, and safety regulations are spottily enforced.

At least 36 people rescued from the Muchongou mine were being treated for burns and other injuries, local hospitals said.

A doctor at the Erlang Hospital in Shuicheng, who identified himself by his surname, He said some of the 12 miners taken there were comatose. The mine's own hospital received 24 miners, said a doctor there who gave only the surname Wang. He said others might have been taken elsewhere.

Zhong said the state-owned Muchongou mine was properly licensed, unlike the small unlicensed mines that account for a large share of China's fatal accidents.

Zhong said the blast in the Muchongou mine was blamed on a buildup of gas, but the exact cause was still under investigation.



BNP lawmakers and party supporters on their way to the residence of abducted BNP leader Nurul Islam at Uttar Majupur village at Laxmipur yesterday. — Star photo

## Bring culprits to book

From page 1  
dissatisfaction over the role played by the local administration and the police.

He urged the local administration to rescue Nurul Islam

unhurt immediately and arrest the kidnappers. He also urged

them to work without fear or favour.

The DC elaborating the

measures taken to rescue the

BNP leader confessed that the

administration was sluggish in

every process as the kidnappers

assured of handing over Nurul

Islam within 24 hours of his

abduction.

"Sir, don't get me wrong, I

am very much sincere about

the matter and I have been

feeling guilty since the abduction

took place on Sept 18. I

tried to handle the issue with a

soft hand but failed."

The DC assured that the

district administration is

working relentlessly to rescue

the kidnapped leader. He, how-

ever, expressed his apprehen-

sion that Nurul Islam might

have been killed because 10

days have already passed.

Police Super Irian Ali Khan

said emphatically that police

would go to any lengths to se-

cure the release of Islam, and

bring the kidnappers and those

involved in the act to book.

He said 11 Navy men are

searching the suspected areas

and that they will ask for the

dog squad today.

BNP joint secretary Ashraf

Hossain handed over an FIR to

the SP. Nurul Islam's wife Sha-

heen Rashida Islam had filed

the FIR, but was not present at

the meeting. In the FIR, 15

people, including Laxmipur

municipality Chairman Abu

Taher, have been accused of the

kidnapping.

Prof. Chowdhury said every

citizen of the country has the

right to live in peace and with

security and the administration

has been given the power to

ensure security of life and prop-

erty of every citizen.

Referring to deterioration of

law and order in the country,

he asked the local administra-

tion not to shelter terrorists and

to treat them as enemies of the

people.

He said there is still time to

set an example by rescuing the

kidnapped leader and taking

legal action against the culprits.

He also asked them to keep vigil

so that no such incident takes

place in the district in future.

Earlier on arrival at the Cir-

cuit House, the Deputy Leader

of the Opposition was received

by the DC, SP and other senior

officials. Several thousands

local people, who have been

waiting around the circuit

house and the district court

premises, welcomed the BNP

MPs and chanted slogans

against the terrorists.

Later, the BNP lawmakers

along with the DC and SP went

to the residence of Nurul Islam

at Uttar Majupur village. How-

ever, none of the family mem-

bers was present at the resi-

dence. They talked to relatives.

The lawmakers then went to

the District Bar Association

Bhaban and exchanged views

with the lawyers.

Speaking at the meeting, Bar

association President Tarequ-

ddin Chowdhury said that he

had informed both the DC and

the SP about the abduction

immediately after the incidence

and requested them to take

urgent measures to rescue their

colleague.

"Nurul Islam could have

been rescued unhurt had the

police taken prompt action. But

the administration made un-

necessary delays in taking

steps," he said.

Meanwhile, the district ad-

ministration deployed huge

contingent of police in different

parts of the district.

Opposition Chief Whip

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain

MP, Barister Moudud Ahmed,

Abdullah Al Noman, Mirza Ab-

bas, party MPs Chowdhury

Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Major (Retd)

Hafizuddin Ahmed, Sadek Hos-

sain Khoka, Amanullah Aman,

Ehsanul Haq Milon, Abu Hena,

Kabir Hossain, Khairul Enam,

Ziaul Haq Zia, Zainal Abedin

Faruq, Rafiqul Islam Bakul,

Abul Kalam Azad Siddique,

Goutam Chakrabarty, Abul

Hossain, Nazimuddin Alam,

Mosharraf Hossain and Bar-

katullah Bhulu, and central

leaders Abul Khair, Bhuiyan,

Shaheduddin Chowdhury were

among those present.

The programmes over, Prof

Chowdhury addressed a huge

gathering in front of the Circuit

House. Earlier, the BNP law-

makers and leaders were

greeted by the local party ac-

tivists at different places at

Begumganj and Laxmipur.

A tense situation was pre-

vailing in the district.

— Star photo

Sharif's 7 aides

jailed for

contempt of court

ISLAMABAD, Sept 28: Paki-

stan's Supreme Court today

sentenced seven former aides of

deposed prime minister Nawaz

Sharif to one month in prison

for their 1997 storming of the

top court, officials said, reports

AFP.

In addition to the prison

term, the leaders and lawmak-

ers of Sharif's former ruling

party, the Pakistan Muslim

League (PML) will pay a fine of

5,000 rupees (about \$4 dollars)

each, the bench said in its rul-

ing.

See page 11 col 8

Sadek for tech

education

Education Minister A S H K

Sadek yesterday laid emphasis

on imparting technical educa-

tion along with general educa-

tion for the educated section of

society so that they could earn

their bread with dignity, reports

BSS.

"We are satisfied with our

present rate of literacy of

around 62 per cent which

should be increased to cent per

cent within a stipulated time,"

the minister said in the inaugu-

ral session of the national

seminar on "Education for All:

Dakar Declaration and Strategy

for its Implementation" at Hotel

Sheraton.

The minister said skills, val-

ues and attitudes required for

survival of human beings must

be imparted with formal and

informal education to upgrade

the quality of life. Literate peo-

ple can take part in develop-

ment process actively, he

added.

Referring to the around 7

billion taka expenditure in edu-

cation sector, the minister said

the government generates 60

per cent of the cost from its

own resources, 30 per cent

from private sector and only 3

per cent from donors.

"We have to mobilise our

own resources more for

strengthening our base of edu-

cation level," the minister said

adding that effective basic edu-

cation should be ensured for all

by the year 2001 through con-

tinued endeavour of both the

government and the private

sector.

As a follow-up of interna-

tional commitments as well as

country's own plan, he said, the

government decided to gross

enrollment at the primary level

at 95 per cent and competition

rate at the primary level to 70

per cent by the year end.

He said the adult literacy

rate (15 years and above) is

estimated at 62 per cent by mid

2000 and is expected to reach

65 per cent by the end of the

year.

The minister called upon the

officials concerned to imple-

ment the Dakar Framework for

Action to ensure access to good

quality primary education with

particular emphasis to girl child

by 2015.

Presided over by Primary

and Mass Education Secretary

Dr Sadat Hussain, the inaugu-

ral session was also addressed

by State Minister for Education

Satish Chandra Roy, UNESCO

Country Representative Dr An-

sar Ali Khan and Director Gen-

eral of Primary Education Di-

rectorate Prof Saleh Matin.

Later, the working session

of the seminar was held at

BIAM auditorium where Nu-

rdin Mahmud Kamal and