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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 Muchonggou 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.

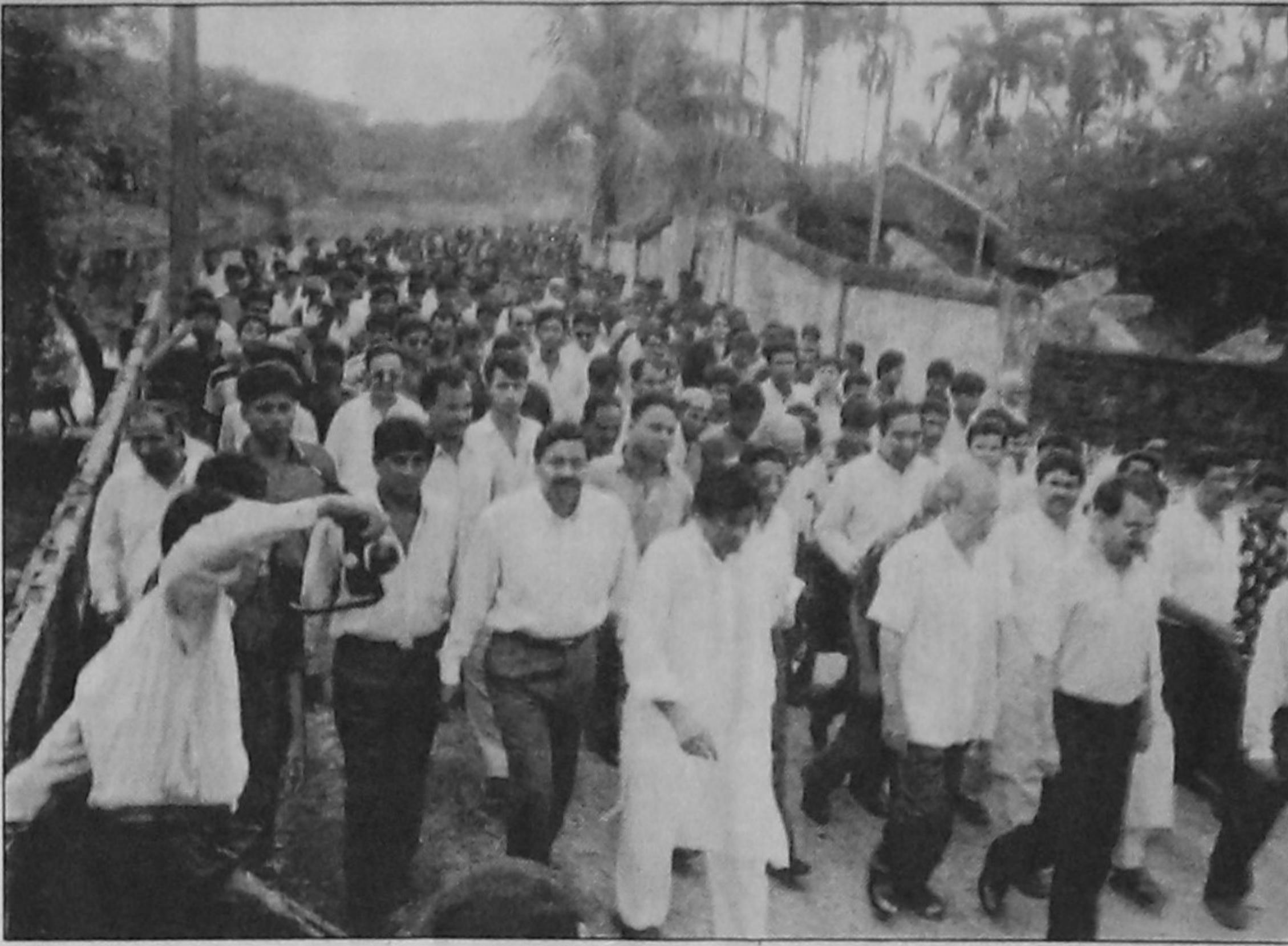
Many mines are poorly run, lacking adequate fire and ventilation equipment, and safety regulations are spottily enforced.

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

A doctor at the Ertang 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 Muchonggou 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 Muchonggou 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

Flood engulfs fresh areas

Dhaka-Calcutta bus service suspended

By Staff Correspondent

Flood situation deteriorated further in Jessor, Sathkira and Jhenidah districts yesterday with inundation of fresh areas.

The situation slightly improved in Kushtia, Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj districts, as major rivers were flowing below the danger marks.

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) yesterday announced suspension of Dhaka-Calcutta bus service due to flood, BSS reported last night.

Flood engulfed 15 unions in Sathkira, 10 in Jessor and 12 in Jhenidah, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Sathkira, the affected upazilas are Kalaroa and sadar upazilas.

About 15 unions in the two upazilas have been inundated

with on rush of waters from across the border.

About one lakh people in the affected areas have been marooned.

River Ichhamati swelled further and road link between Sathkira and Jessor remained snared as flood waters inundated Navaron, Kalaroa and Sarsha points.

Sources in the District Relief Office said, flood water submerged about 60-km of roads in the upazilas.

In Jhenidah, all 12 unions in Moheshpur upazila were affected by flash flood caused by on rush of waters from across the borders.

According to official sources, about 180-km of roads, 78 bridges and 190 culverts were damaged in the deluge.

In Jessor, flood hit fresh areas are in Chowgachha upazila.

The worst-hit villages are Andulia, Pakuria, Daulatpur, Ram Krishnapur, Kula, Rasulpur and Rajapur.

About 20,000 people in these villages have been marooned.

Army and BDR personnel have started evacuating the affected people to safer places.

Flood situation slightly improved in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Kushtia.

Diarrhoea has broken out in the affected areas. About 290 patients have been admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

In Kushtia, the situation improved as river Gora registered a further fall yesterday.

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 unharmed 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, however, expressed his apprehension that Nurul Islam might have been killed because 10 days have already passed.

Police Super Irfan Ali Khan said emphatically that police would go to any lengths to secure 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 Sheenah Rasheda 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 property of every citizen.

Referring to deterioration of law and order in the country, he asked the local administration 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 Circuit 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. However, none of the family members was present at the residence. They called 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 Tarequdin Chowdhury said that he had informed both the DC and the SP about the abduction immediately after the incident and requested them to take urgent measures to rescue their colleague.

Nurul Islam could have been rescued unharmed had the police taken prompt action. But the administration made unnecessary delays in taking steps," he said.

Meanwhile, the district administration deployed huge contingent of police in different parts of the district.

Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain MP, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Abdullah Al Noman, Mirza Abbas, party MPs Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Amanullah Aman, Ehsanul Haq Milon, Abu Hena, Kabil 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 Baratullah Bhulhu, and central leaders Abul Khair Bhuiyan, Shafeeuddin Chowdhury were among those present.

The programmes over, Prof Chowdhury addressed a huge gathering in front of the Circuit House. Earlier, the BNP lawmakers and leaders were greeted by the local party activists at different places at Begumganj and Laxmipur.

A tense situation was prevailing in the district.

Sharif's 7 aides

jailed for

contempt of court

ISLAMABAD, Sept 28: Pakistani 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 lawmakers identified as Ja-

hangi, 20, and Noor Quasem, 20, were arrested today in this connection. A case was filed.

Meanwhile, Chandaon and

Bakolia police in a joint raid at Kalia Mela Bazar under Bakolia thana arrested an FIR named

of a murder case last night.

The accused identified as Md

Jamal Hossain alias Rassel, 20,

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Tulun who succumbed to his

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