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## Tribal rebels gun down 11 in Assam

GUWAHATI, India, Dec 12 : Separatist tribal guerrillas shot dead 11 people belonging to a rival militant group today in India's northeastern state of Assam, police said, reports AFP.

Heavily-armed militants of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) attacked members of Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) while they were in a meeting in Silmora village, 180 km from the state capital Guwahati.

The BLT, a tribal Bodo militant group, had entered into a ceasefire with the Indian security forces earlier this year.

The group has long been involved in fratricidal war with NDFB, which is fighting for a separate homeland.

Concerned by the fighting between rebel groups, the state government on Tuesday said it had decided to provide security to all the families of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the most prominent militant group.

"All possible security will be extended to family members of ULFA leaders as their parents should not be held responsible for what their sons are doing against innocent civilians," a state government spokesman said.

ULFA militants are the main suspects behind a killing spree against non-Assamese people in which more than 120 people have died in the last six weeks.

Most of the victims have been Hindi-speaking traders from the northern state of Rajasthan and the eastern state of Bihar.

Unidentified gunmen have shot dead at least five persons from the families of ULFA militants in retaliatory attacks over the last two weeks. ULFA has blamed the killings on government agents.

More than 10,000 people have died in an insurgency over the last 10 years in the remote north-east state.

## Lanka's move to revive SAARC

COLOMBO, Dec 12 : Sri Lanka is escalating diplomatic moves to revive a South Asian grouping hit by squabbling between the two biggest members, India and Pakistan. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said today, reports AFP.

Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister said he was travelling to neighbouring India later this week primarily to discuss issues relating to the seven-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

He said Sri Lanka as the chairman of the regional grouping was keen to ensure the continuity of the movement begun in 1985 and was hopeful of getting at least a foreign secretaries level meeting off the ground.

In the past 18 months there had been no high-level meeting of SAARC. Kadirgamar said as smaller members of SAARC - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal - pushed for a summit that was delayed by over a year.

The summit due in Nepal has been delayed with India's reluctance to go into a meeting with Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

**Miscreants attack fishermen in Sonargaon: One killed, 20 hurt**

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 12 : A fisherman was killed and 20 others were injured when miscreants hired by a local influential person attacked Noorertek village of fishermen under Sonargaon thana this afternoon.

The dead was identified as Nawab Ali, 45.

Of the injured, four were identified as Sohel, 18, Amir 20, Farid Mia 24, and Babul 18. Sohel was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition while the rest to local health centres and clinics.

The incident took place when Ali Akbar Bhuiyan, the local influential person, allegedly tried to resist the fishermen while they were fishing in a waterbody there this morning.

Armed men of Ali Akbar attacked the village at about 12:30 pm. The fishermen also launched counter attack.

Though police arrived at the village by late afternoon, intermittent clashes were taking place in the village between the two sides till filing of this report at about 9:30 pm today.

According to sources, Nawab was killed on the spot when a spear hit in his abdomen during the clash.

## Correction

In the headline of a front page news item published yesterday, the abbreviation for Bangladesh Shilpa Bank was inadvertently printed as BKB instead of BSB. We regret the mistake.

## Slum dwellers should not be evicted without proper rehabilitation

*Speakers recommend low-cost housing for garment workers*

By Staff Correspondent

Slum dwellers should not be evicted without proper rehabilitation arrangements and immediate steps should be taken to develop low-cost housing for garment workers, speakers at a roundtable recommended.

Relocation of garment factories should be expedited and industries should give proper attention to the housing facility of their workers, they said.

The roundtable conference titled Slum eviction and its impact on garment sector: A Dialogue for reaching consensus with regard to garment factory workers habitation, was held at IDB Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Organised by the Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) in collaboration with Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) and The Daily Star, the roundtable was moderated by Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Quamrul Islam Siddique, Secretary to Ministry of Housing and Public Works, the acting chairman and other officials of Rajuk, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, BGMEA vice-president Nurul Haque Sikdar, academicians, NGO representatives and leaders and workers of garment industries were among those who spoke at the roundtable.

Siddique said slum dwellers are not involved in criminal activities; rather it is a section of hoodlums and extortionists with political blessings who use the slums to carry out criminal activities in the name of

different cooperative societies or associations. NGOs can come forward with specific housing plans for the poor, he added.

The secretary said there are examples where the government allotted valuable lands to the poor, but these were later transferred to other parties at higher prices by giving power of attorney. This problem should be addressed immediately.

Siddique also blasted the World Bank, saying that it usually talks about the poor but extends housing funds for the rich.

Dr Bhattacharya said housing for the workers should be a part of industrialisation.

BGMEA vice-president Nurul Haque Sikdar said his association would make hostels for the workers provided land is available from the government and added that the BGMEA is ready to pay for the land.

Prof Nazrul Islam, Chairperson of Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), said providing housing facility for workers was mandatory in the industrial zone earlier, but the industries in the recent past did not follow this.

Slums are springing up in the urban areas due to absence of employment opportunities in the rural areas. Industry cannot be set up outside the designated industrial zone, he added.

The industries not approved by Rajuk should be relocated outside Dhaka city, he said and suggested that NGOs come forward to developing housing for the poor.

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A roundtable on 'Slum Eviction and Its Impact on Garment Sector: A Dialogue for Reaching Consensus with Regard to Garment Factory Workers Habitation' organised by Coalition for Urban Poor (CUP) in collaboration with BGMEA and The Daily Star in progress in the city yesterday.

-- Star photo



Traders in the city's Nilkhel area took out a procession carrying sticks yesterday after they chased some alleged terrorists who went there to take procession of a shop illegally.

-- Star photo

## Three already launched BMTF to assemble 300 military trucks

Star Business Report

The Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF) Ltd launched three assembled military trucks named 'Arunima Bolyan' yesterday, three months after it came under the management of Bangladesh Army.

The BMTF will assemble 300 such trucks, which will be bought by the Army.

"This is the first step towards attaining self-sufficiency in production of heavy defence equipment," said Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Mustafizur Rahman, who is also Chairman of the BMTF Board. Army technicians assembled the trucks, he said.

"Today, in the month of victory, we have launched the trucks with a motive to be self-dependent," he said at the launching ceremony.

He said that the cost for each truck is Tk 20 lakh. The imported parts cost Tk 19 lakh.

By assembling locally, we are getting the trucks at almost half the price."

The BMTF is also producing Tk one crore worth of tools and spares for the Rural Electrification Board (REB). The production started on November 6, he said.

Earlier, BMTF Vice-chairman Maj Gen Mahmuduzzaman gave a background of the factory.

The first phase of installation of the factory was done during the Pakistani period. After independence, the installation was completed in June 1980 at a cost of Tk 135.09 crore. It was turned into a public limited company (PLC) in August 1979.

As the factory continued to incur loss due to poor management, the government signed a contract with a Belgian firm -- Fabric National -- for its management and training of technicians. But it failed to make it a profitable enterprise.

The factory remained closed since July 14, 1994. The factory was handed over to the Army on July 27 this year, he said.

## BSF frees 13 Bangladeshis

KURIRAM, Dec 12 : Thirteen out of 14 Bangladeshi nationals, arrested by BSF in Indian territory Monday night, were released after a Company Commander-level flag meeting with BDR at Burungamari border this noon, reports AP.

The destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, on Dec 6, 1992, sparked off riots between Hindus and Muslims that killed 2,000 people across India.

Last week, K Sudarshan, chief of the Association of National Volunteers, or the RSS from its initials in Hindi, tried to absolve the Hindu nationalist of the blame for razing the mosque to the ground by claiming that a bomb explosion had destroyed 2,000 people across India.

Increased breast-feeding and reduction in 'artificial' breast-feeding can save about 1.5 million children a year, Unicef's "State of the World's Children 2001 - Early Childhood" released yesterday said.

The report was released at a simple function held at the LCED building at Agargaon in the city.

Among others, Unicef representative in Bangladesh Shahida Afzal, State Minister of Women and Children Affairs Prof Zirnatunisa Talukdar and Dr Shah Mohammad Farid of Planning Commission were present at the function.

The report found that the five killers of under-five children are prenatal diseases (20 per cent) diarrhoeal diseases (17 pc), respiratory diseases (18 pc), malaria (seven pc) and vaccine-preventable diseases (15 pc), the report said.

Governments should give the highest priority to care of under-five children. But it is unfortunate that such children receive the "least attention".

International Sri Lanka was ranked 135th in 1999 in under-five child mortality. Maldives 55th and Bangladesh 53rd.

Japan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland topped the rank, 187th, in the lowest rate of child mortality.

By staff correspondent

## Unicef report

About 177 million children get stunted mainly because of malnutrition of their mothers during pregnancy.

Adequate sanitation facilities are crucial for reduction of the death, yet 2.4 billion people lack access to such facilities globally, it said.

The Unicef report said the best investment in human resources is the investment in childcare, which needs 80 billion dollars a year globally.

The report, simultaneously released elsewhere in the world, in the first 36 months of a child's life, brain connections multiply and thinking and behaviour pattern is formed. This period is "most crucial", it said.

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ment leaders, policy makers and development agencies seem not concerned about it.

The report called upon governments to give priority to rights of children and their proper development.

It also called for preparing parents for their pivotal role in childcare, building capacities of communities to support them and creating a social environment free from violence and discrimination at all levels.

At the launching, it was disclosed that Bangladesh made progress in reducing under-five child mortality rate and is now positioned after Sri Lanka and Maldives in the SAARC countries.

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## 11m children under-5 die a year around the globe

By staff correspondent

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## Israel, Palestinians resume high-level contacts

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had been renewed, but would not refer specifically to Sunday's sessions. The meetings are aimed at calming the situation and examining the possibility of renewing negotiations once the situation has calmed down," said Sher told Israel radio.

Sher said he was unaware of a new U.S. initiative to revive negotiations. U.S. President Bill Clinton's Mideast envoy, Dennis Ross, was to meet later Tuesday

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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