

20 Islamic militants killed in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Twenty suspected Islamic militants gunned down by Indian security forces were among 23 people killed in a day of violence in Indian-administered Kashmir, an army spokesman said yesterday.

The surge of violence coincided with the counting of votes in the disputed territory's assembly elections, in which the ruling National Conference took a drubbing.

The spokesman said in one incident Indian troops shot dead nine rebels during a cordon and search operation in the Kaswa Beru area of central Budgam district, about 60 kilometres (37 miles) from Kashmir's summer capital, Srinagar.

A civilian was killed in the crossfire between the rebels and security personnel, while an Indian trooper also died in the firefight.

Indian troops also shot dead 11 suspected rebels in three separate incidents in Kashmir's Baramulla and Kupwara districts Thursday, the spokesman said.

Four of the militants were killed in the Kreeri area of Baramulla district, while seven were shot in two incidents in Kupwara.

Overnight, one civilian was killed and three others were injured in Kupwara district when a mortar shell fired by suspected rebels exploded near them, police said.

Also on Wednesday, militants

fired shots at the residence of a local politician in Kashmir's central Doda district. The politician escaped unhurt.

More than 37,000 people have died in Kashmir since an Islamic insurgency erupted in 1989. Muslim separatists, who boycotted the election, put the death toll twice as high.

Durga Puja

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Ganesh, believed to be her children.

Durga is believed to come to earth for four days beginning today, the Sasthi or sixth day of the moon. The face of the goddess will be unveiled during the 'Bodhon' rituals.

The Saptami featuring the first day of Durga Puja will be celebrated tomorrow with the predawn bathing of Kola Bou.

However, the most important day of Durga Puja is Ashtami, celebrating the goddess's victory over 'Mahishashur', the demon, symbolizing the victory over evil. Hymns are recited and flowers are offered to Devi Durga on this day. The devotees seek the blessing of 'Durgatnashini Durga', the saviour from all evil.

The Nabami bhog or food offered to the goddess which is later distributed among the devotees is a great attraction for the children as well as for the adults. Dashami is the day when the devotees bid farewell to the goddess along with her children and immerse the idol in the river. The longing to see the goddess next year begins all over again.

Transcending religious limitations, Durga Puja has become a social festival for the Bengali Hindus. People share pleasure by exchanging puja gifts with near and dear ones.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia have felicitated the members of the Hindu community on the eve of the festival. The government has taken extensive security measures to ensure peaceful celebration of Durga Puja and distributed Tk five crore among the Hindu for the celebration.

2 housewives

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autopsy.

A case was filed with the Gulshan Police Station in this regard.

Our Narayanganj correspondent adds: A housewife was murdered for dowry allegedly by her husband in Bhabanathpur village under Sonargaon Thana yesterday noon.

The victim was identified as Khodeza Begum, 20 daughter of Garib Nawaz.

According to locals, Khodeza was married to Kawsar, 28, of Bhabanathpur village in 1999. Right after the marriage, Kawsar began to demand money for dowry and received about Tk four lakh at different times from his father-in-law.

Yesterday morning, Kawsar went to his father-in-law's house to demand an additional Tk 1 lakh. But failing to get the money, an angry Kawsar returned home and severely beat Khodeza, which resulted in her death, sources said.

Later, Kawsar and his family hanged Khodeza's body from the ceiling, trying to make it look like a suicide. But the neighbours did not believe them and called the police.

Kawsar and his family fled the scene before police arrived from the Sonargaon Thana.

5 of a family beaten up by rivals

UNB, Manikganj

Five members of a family were injured when their rivals beat them up at Baliabid village in Sadar upazila Wednesday.

Locals said Kausar of the village and his accomplices attacked Chan Mia and his family members while they were going to Dhaka, and beat them up with sticks and rods.

Chan Mia, 22, his father Sadaruddin, 70, mother Ayesha, 55, and sisters Aklima, 15, and Taslima, 17, were injured and admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Sources said there has long been a dispute over land between the families of Chan Mia and Kausar and the attack might be related with the dispute.

10 houses burnt to ashes in fire in Manikganj

UNB, Manikganj

Ten dwelling houses of three families were burnt to ashes in a fire at Kakolbari village in Saturaia upazila Monday night.

Villagers said goods worth over Tk 7 lakh in the houses of Abdul Mannan, Mohammad Ali and Afzal of the village were gutted in the fire forcing the three families to live under open sky.

Two villagers were injured while trying to extinguish the fire. The cause of the fire could not be ascertained.

Schoolgirl gangraped in Barguna

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A schoolgirl was gangraped at Betagi upazila in Barguna district yesterday, police and locals said.

They said five youths -- Shahidul, Mostafa, Asad, Shaheen and Hasib -- kidnapped Reshma Begum, 14, a student of class nine, while she was going to a photo studio at Mokamia Bazar at noon. They took Reshma to a nearby jungle and raped her by turn.

Hearing her screams, local people rushed to the jungle and caught two of the rapists, Shahidul and Mostafa, while three others managed to flee.

Local people handed over the two to Betagi police.

A case was filed. Medical test of the victim will be held today, police said.

2 killed

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Durbapur.

In fact, Wednesday night's armed attack was an attempt on the life of Altaf, said the officer-in-charge (OC) of Monirampur Thana.

A case was lodged yesterday accusing several persons, OC said.

One more Satkhira blast victim dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Another victim of the Satkhira bomb blast incidents of September 28 died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Wednesday night, raising the death toll to three.

The victim was identified as Selina Parveen, 28, wife of Dr. Amirul Islam, and a paramedic of Noapara Shastha Paribar Kalyan Centre.

On the fateful day, Selina, a resident of Satkhira town, went to a fair at the Satkhira stadium accompanied by her husband and child Choyon, 6. While they were at a circus inside the fairground, a powerful bomb ripped through the circus arena injuring over 36 persons including Selina.

On September 30, Selina was brought to a hospital in Dhaka City in a critical condition. On Wednesday night (October 9), her condition worsened and she was shifted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she died at 10.00pm.

Earlier, two other bomb blast victims -- Motala Alam Mukto, 14, son of Mohammad Mokarram Hossain and a student of class nine at Labsa High in Satkhira, and Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, 25, son of Sheikh Anisur Rahman -- died at the DMCH on October 4 and October 7 respectively.

On September 28, the first bomb exploded inside the Roxy cinema at about 7:30pm, leaving at least 90 people wounded. Five minutes later, a second bomb went off at the circus inside the Satkhira stadium, injuring over 36 persons.



Arrested on charge of killing their housemaid at the Kazi Nazrul Islam Road in the city's Mohammadpur area Wednesday night, Shahidul Islam and his wife Piya Islam break down in tears, when photographed.

Halt oppression: Hasina

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vote for the BNP-led alliance in the last election, to ask themselves questions about the price hike of essentials, unbridled violence and criminal activities, governance and freedom of expression.

Hasina observed that a stable socio-economic condition was not possible by barring the single largest party of the country from exercising its political rights and by not taking the party into confidence.

In her written speech, the AL chief gave a vivid description of the government's failures on different fronts, starting from the worsening law and order to pervasive corruption to a stagnant parliament.

She said the ruling alliance has miserably failed to contain unbridled criminal activities and violence in the country although it came to office promising to curb both.

The opposition leader lamented that a person accused of killing two journalists has become information minister while a man against whom the previous BNP government had pressed corruption charges in 1991 have become law, justice and parliamentary affairs minister. And an advisor to the prime minister was an accused in a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader killing case.

Hasina alleged that in last one year the government has withdrawn cases against 45,000 criminals and released them, making innocent citizens' lives all the more vulnerable.

The opposition leader named her party leaders who have been arrested and tortured after being implicated in false cases. Taking advantage of Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code and Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Act, some 50,000 innocent people were arrested without warrant in last one year.

She further said that lives of 20 lakh shop owners and 80 lakh family members are at stake today because of extortion.

On the economic front, Hasina came down hard on the government for the rise in the prices of essentials. She said per kilogram rice price rose by Tk 6, lentil by Tk 10 and soybean oil by Tk 10 per kilogram this year compared to their prices in corresponding period of last year.

Hasina was also critical of the closure of the Adamjee Jute Mills and the subsequent slump in jute prices. She said the government remained indifferent as 1,000 garment units were shut down throwing four lakh garment workers out of jobs.

Turning to corruption, the AL chief talked about the wheat purchase scam, fund withdrawal by the Danish government on charge of corruption by the shipping minister, textbook related corruption and jet fuel purchase scam. She was highly critical of the government for suppressing the findings of the official probe reports on wheat purchase

scam involving around Tk 100 crore.

The opposition leader also touched upon the issues of politicisation in the administration, repression on journalists and unceremonious exit of former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Hasina regretted that the government was yet to form parliamentary standing committees on various ministries despite being in office for a year and passed 23 bills without going through any process of scrutiny.

She alleged that the opposition was repeatedly deprived of speaking on the floor of the parliament on various issues of national interests.

Referring to the one crore new voters who voted for the first time in last year's elections, the opposition leader noted that the government could provide no job opportunities for them. "Other than frustration and deception, the government could offer new generation nothing."

The former prime minister noted that GDP has gone down by 22.5 per cent in last one year, inflation in food prices has risen by 48.4 per cent and number of the jobless rose by one crore. During last one year, Hasina alleged, corruption worth Tk 11,000 crore took place, while foreign investment has been down to one-third of what it was when the Awami League left office.

Hungarian wins Nobel

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occurrence, outside the normal history of western Europe, calling it instead "the ultimate truth about human degradation in modern existence".

Kertesz' work centers on the decisive event in his life, a period spent in Auschwitz to which he was taken in 1944 as a teenage boy during the Nazi persecution of Hungary's Jews.

The Swedish Academy said his work described "the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history".

Kertesz himself has said, "When I am thinking about a new novel, I always think of Auschwitz".

After his liberation, he worked from 1948 for a Budapest newspaper, Vilagossag, but was sacked in 1951 when it adopted the party line.

Since completing his two-year military service immediately afterwards, he has supported himself as an independent writer, including of musicals and light theatre, and translator of German authors such as Nietzsche, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Freud, Roth, Wittgenstein and Canetti, who have

all influenced his own writing.

"The refusal to compromise in Kertesz' stance can be perceived clearly in his style, which is reminiscent of a thicket hawthorn hedge, dense and thorny for unsuspecting visitors," the Academy said. "But he relieves his readers of the burden of compulsory emotions and inspires a singular freedom of thought," it added.

Kertesz's first novel, "Fateless", published in 1975 after 10 years of writing, is based on his experiences in Auschwitz and later Buchenwald, although he denied that it was autobiographical. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung called the novel "one of the most important works of 20th-century European literature".

Also published in English is "Kaddish for a Child not Born", Kaddish being the name of the Jewish prayer for their dead. In this book, the Kaddish is said for a child which the main protagonist refuses to beget "in a world that permitted the existence of Auschwitz."

On learning of the award, Kertesz said it was "interesting" that he had received the Nobel Prize for

his writings on the Holocaust and dictatorship. "Perhaps there is something to be learned there for eastern European states in general."

Kertesz was among the writers rumoured to be in the running for this year's prize, along with Philip Roth, Mario Vargas Llosa, Cees Nooteboom and Hugo Claus.

However, his Nobel success has clearly wrong-footed booksellers. Internet bookshop Amazon.co.uk for example does not stock "Kaddish for a Child not Born", and cannot deliver "Fateless" for one or two weeks.

Kertesz will take home the prize sum of 10 million kronor (1.10 million euros/dollars).

He will receive the award, along with the other Nobel laureates, from the hands of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf at the official ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of the death in 1896 of the prizes' creator, Swedish scholar and inventor Alfred Nobel.

President, PM greet Hindus

UNB, Dhaka

President Dr Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia greeted the Hindu Community on the occasion of their largest religious festival Durga Puja beginning today.

In his message on the occasion, the President said the greater unity of the people irrespective of cast and creed and amity among them can lead a nation towards prosperity.

"Our constitution ensures the religious rights of all people. Durga Puja inspires the people to spread the message of unity and helps flourish generosity," the President said.

In a separate message, the Prime Minister urged all, including the Hindu Community, to build Bangladesh as a self-reliant country through mutual cooperation and communal harmony.

"Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony. Here everybody enjoys the liberty in observing his or her own religious rituals," the Prime Minister said.

New water protocol to be finalised on October 14

STAR Report

The first-ever protocol on test of toxic elements in drinking water will be finalised in the country, sources in the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) said yesterday.

A meeting on October 14 will finalise the inclusion of elements in routine monitoring on drinking water samples.

Three new test laboratories will be set up in Barisal, Rangpur and Sylhet in addition to the existing four, which were also improved to enhance the water-testing capacity with technical assistance from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Water samples will be collected from hand-pumped and deep tubewells at random across the country at least twice a year. Similar tests will be carried out before installation of any deep tubewells.

Bangladesh had no protocol on what elements to test in analysing drinking water samples. At present, the DPHE tests iron, chloride, manganese and arsenic on a priority basis.

The previous meetings of the WHO, the Department of Environment (DoE) and the DPHE worked on the inclusion of elements.

Chemical test experts recommended arsenic, lead, iron, manganese, fluoride, zinc, nitrate, sulphate and boron for a twice-a-year analysis and water turbidity, colour, odour and the total dissolved solids for physical test.

However, elements like uranium, barium, molybdenum, antimony, cadmium and chromium will not be included in the protocol, although the samples analysed for drinking water quality showed that many elements exceeded the WHO-recommended limit.

According to a countrywide study, naturally occurring inorganic chemicals like uranium, manganese, boron, sulphur, fluoride, phosphorus and many other trace elements were found in groundwater in several places as well as in the Dhaka WASA water supply.

Also, separate studies initiated in 1998-1999 revealed levels of contamination -- very high in some cases.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded study jointly carried out by the British Geological Survey (BGS) and the DPHE analysed 3,534 water samples from hand-pumped tubewells in 61 districts.

All samples, mostly from the government-owned tubewells, were analysed in the UK laboratory with inductively-coupled plasma-atomic

emission spectrometry (ICP-AES), a highly reliable water-quality testing method.

The survey covered special study areas in Faridpur, Chapainawabganj and Laxmipur where each sample was tested for more than 100 chemicals.

The study concluded that 35 per cent of the samples exceeded the WHO guideline value of 0.5 milligram manganese a litre. Wells in the western part of the country (Rajshahi) were relatively high in manganese, while the reverse is true of the southern part.

Five per cent of the samples exceeded the WHO guideline value of 0.5 milligram boron a litre, with its contamination in southern coastal and north-eastern areas.

A smaller number of samples exceeded the WHO guideline value of 0.7-milligram barium a litre -- mostly in southwestern coastal regions.

Molybdenum was also found high above the WHO guideline value. The study also found uranium in a very high concentration, with about 50 samples exceeding the WHO guideline value of two micrograms a litre in Chapainawabganj.

Arsenic, antimony, boron, cadmium, chromium, molybdenum, nickel and uranium were found in low concentration in the water samples from seven WASA deep tubewells.

In response to the alarm, the Unicef office in Dhaka sent a special request to the DPHE, urging inclusion of 'certain new parameters' in drinking water quality tests.

Each laboratory test on arsenic costs as high as around Tk 500, while manganese, boron, sulphur, iron tests cost around Tk 50 each. Although there is no known carcinogenic effect on human health as yet, chromium in high concentration, says WHO, can damage liver.

Boron, if ingested in an excess quantity for long, can lead to damage in the central nervous system. Long-term exposure to cadmium causes high blood pressure, sterility among men and can damage kidneys.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission is considering test on uranium, a radioactive element found in high concentration in many places.

Life term

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lage, was acquitted of the charge.

According to the prosecution, the accused called Zahur ul of his house, took him to a nearby house, beat him mercilessly and then strangled.

Motahar Hossain, father of the victim, lodged a case with Raninagar thana against four persons. After investigation into the case, police submitted charge sheet to the court against them.

The judge, after examining the witnesses and evidence, pronounced the judgement.

APPA K Abdus Salam conducted the case on behalf of the state while Advocates Jahangir Alam, Ismail Hossain and Samarendranath Das appeared for the accused.

Newmooring

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The project was kept hanging even after approval by ECTEC in May 1999.

Trade circles and port officials say the container terminal is now a crying need to face the challenge of containerisation of cargo globally.

In 2000, consultants were engaged to prepare documents for floating international tender. But the work was delayed for unknown reasons, sources said.

Poisonous liquor kills 3 in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Three persons lost their lives in last three days after consuming poisonous liquor in Jhenidah district.

Abdur Razzak, 40, of Arpara village in Jhenidah died on Tuesday while Surat Ali, 42, of the same village died yesterday after they drank poisonous liquor at a shop at Kaliganj thana. Ishaque Ali, 45, of Nishchindipur village died Wednesday.

Another two, namely Babu and Bahazzel, were admitted to the Jhenidah Sadar Hospital after consuming liquor. No case was filed in this regard, police said.

Baridhara Park

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the authorities stopped the move following reports by The Daily Star.

There is a serious tussle between the DCC and the Rajuk over ownership of the parkland.

A senior official of the Rajuk preferring anonymity said he heard about the leasing arrangement by the DCC to some outsiders.

But the sources in the Estate Department of the DCC said the DCC did not lease the parkland to anybody and all structures set up there are illegal.

Contacted, Chief Estate Officer of the DCC AKM Fazluzzohor told The Daily star that he did not know anything of the leasing arrangement.

Surveyor of the Zone No. 9 of the DCC Estate Department Faridul Islam expressed ignorance about the leasing arrangement but admitted that the people illegally occupied the park for long.

He said the authorities served notices on the illegal occupiers. Also, they announced with loud-speaker that the occupiers should leave the parkland.

Executive Engineer of the Zone No. 9 Mezbaur Karim refuted the allegation of leasing arrangement in exchange for Tk 1,000 from each businessman. Nor does he know who collects the rents.

Asked how the occupiers run their business without his permis-

sion, he said he would immediately raise the point with the DCC higher authorities. Of relevance, Mezbaur Karim has the managerial power to evict the land-grabbers.

"We will write to the Estate Department, detailing the encroachment and then go for stern action against the land-grabbers shortly," he promised.

The DCC did not take any initiative yet to develop the park.

69 families

FROM PAGE 12

ings including their beds and domestic animals, and even took away the heads of all tube-wells in the area, he alleged.

The 'Kuwaiti Palli' was established eight years ago on 4 acres of land by a rich man of Kuwait, Abu Musa Daud, to rehabilitate the distressed and hapless people.

Meheruddin said members of local 'Mitani Sangha' planned to grab the land to make a playground there. As part of their plan, they let loose the miscreants and evicted the families.

The OC of Sadar Thana said no case was filed in this regard. Deputy Commissioner and police superintendent visited the spot but they denied the allegation of eviction.