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BID TO PROTEST LYNCHING OF 3 JMJB CADRES BY MOB

50 injured as Bangla Bhai's men clash with police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 50 people, including eight policemen, were injured in clashes between police and Bangla Bhai-led Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) at Bhabaniganj in Bagmara yesterday night.

Reinforcements from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), the Rajshahi police line and three neighbouring police stations were involved in the clashes, which ensued after police

foiled a JMJB attempt to organise a procession in protest against the lynching of three JMJB men on Saturday night.

Police rounded up 64 JMJB cadres for clashing with police, but did not detain any of the leaders who led the attacks.

Tear gas shells, rubber bullets and brickbats were used during the clashes, police said.

A curfew-like situation now prevails at Bagmara following the

incident, as police and Rab forces patrol the region and the streets remain deserted.

The injured policemen include Golam Kibria, officer in charge of the Bagmara police station, Sub Inspector (SI) Salauddin, SI Mahbub Hossain, SI Sanaullah, SI Monirul, ASI Zahangir, Havildar Poritosh and constable Ershadul.

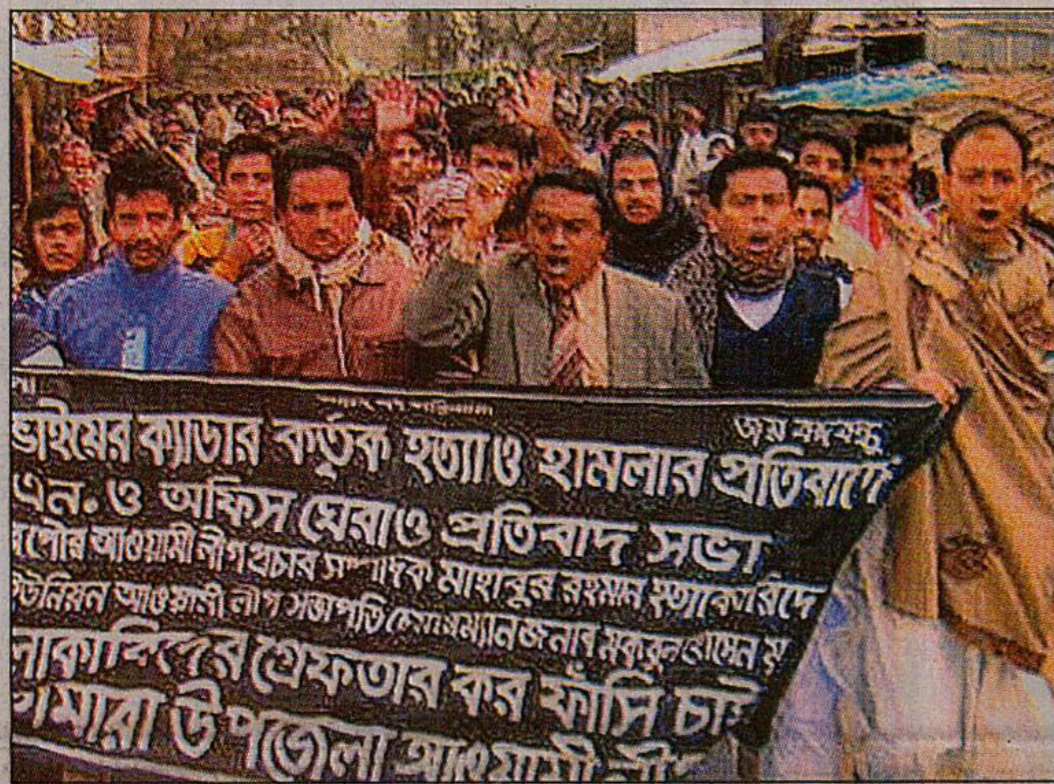
Since being barred for the first time by law enforcement agencies, JMJB men have started gathering

arms and recruiting armed cadres from different parts of the country, sources said.

The sources last evening witnessed some JMJB leaders vowing to retaliate for the lynching and to battle against law enforcement agencies if the situation demands.

"I heard one of our leaders calling upon his senior to come to Bagmara immediately with heavy arms for the retaliation. He vowed to fight with

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Local unit of the Awami League (AL) took out a procession at Bagmara upazila headquarters in Rajshahi yesterday protesting the killing of Taherpur AL leader Mahbubur Rahman and attack on Sreepur Union Parishad Chairman and AL leader Mokbul Hossain Mridha by the cadres of Bangla Bhai on Saturday night.

As he refused to quit AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Cadres of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) attempted on the life of the Sreepur Union Parishad chairman for his refusal to quit the Awami League, sources close to him said last night.

A few cadres of JMJB commander Bangla Bhai went to Mokbul Hossain Mridha's house in Sreepur seven days ago and asked him to leave his party, said a cousin of Mridha.

Local AL leaders claimed the JMJB cadres have also threatened three other UP chairmen in Bagmara with death unless they quit their party.

"Mridha is an important personality in the upazila unit AL, although he was just a union unit president. That's why the JMJB targeted him," said Ashrafur Islam, Mridha's brother.

The attack was planned by ruling BNP-Jamaat as part of their design to eliminate the AL, Mridha told The Daily Star at Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital.

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UPDF blocks road protesting killing of party leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) yesterday enforced a six-hour road blockade programme in the district in protest against the killing of party leader Juddhamoni Chakma last week in Naniachar upazila allegedly by Parbatya Chattagram Jono Sanghaty Samity (PCJS) cadres.

Vehicular traffic on the Rangamati-Khagrachhari route remained suspended throughout the day. The UPDF activists however removed the barricade from the roads from Rangamati district town to Chittagong, Kaptai, Rajshahi and Chandraghona after 12:00 noon.

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Announcement

Today's issue of The Daily Star does not include 'Lifestyle' due to Eid holidays. We regret any inconvenience caused to our readers. However, today's 16-page edition is priced at Tk 7 only.

'Crossfire' kills 5 across country

STAR REPORT

Five people including three alleged criminals, an outlaw and an extremist were killed in 'crossfire' between their accomplices and police in the capital and elsewhere in the country in the last four days.

Of the five, two muggers were killed in Dhaka, an outlaw was killed in Kushtia, a kidnapper in Chittagong and an extremist in Naogaon, police said.

The unidentified muggers were killed in a shootout with police at Shyampur in the capital.

In Dhaka, a taxicab carrying four muggers was heading for Madanpur under Sonargaon Police Station in Narayanganj at around 10:00pm on Friday. The gang stopped their vehicle at Shanir Akhra and posing as passengers took one passenger, Solaiman Hakim.

The muggers then snatched Tk 9,020 from Solaiman at gunpoint.

The victim cried for help and a team of Demra police chased the cab that sped towards south Dhania in Shyampur area.

The muggers suddenly stopped the vehicle, came out of it and

started firing on the police team indiscriminately. Police returned fire and two muggers were killed in the encounter. Two others managed to escape.

Sub-inspector Abul Kashem of Demra Police Station and Solaiman were injured in the shootout, police said.

Police recovered the money with the wallet. They also seized two revolvers and two bullets from the dead bodies.

Solaiman was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and the dead bodies were sent to Midford hospital morgue for autopsy.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: Leader of a gang of kidnappers was killed in crossfire between police and his associates in Rangunia in the early hours yesterday.

The criminal, Kalu Mia alias Kola, hailed from Jaynagar village under Rangunia upazila of Chittagong. According to sources, district police arrested Kola Sunday afternoon from a remote hilly area of Razarhat in Rangunia. During primary inter

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Tangail deaths caused by Nipah virus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical experts yesterday confirmed an outbreak of deadly Nipah virus in three villages in Tangail where five people died and 25 more were reported suffering from viral infection since January 5.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in a press release yesterday confirmed the Nipah outbreak.

It said samples of blood and tissue of sick patients had been sent to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta, US. The CDC on January 20 conveyed the test report that shows one patient is Nipah positive.

The deadly virus is transmitted from animal to human and requires close contact with contaminated tissue or body fluids from infected animals.

The DGHS, in the wake of the CDC report, has taken immediate measures to further investigate the mode of transmission and epidemiology of the virus. It is also collecting more samples to analyse suspected

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Robbers gun down one in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Robbers gunned down one person and injured two others at a house at South Hashimpur in Chandanail upazila in the early hours of Sunday.

The dead was identified as Alamgir, 25, and the injured are Laila Begum and Omar Ali of the same family.

Omar was admitted to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) in a critical condition.

Sources said a gang of about 20 stormed into the house of one Aminur to commit robbery at about 3:00am. They opened fire when members of the family tried to resist.

The robbers took away valuables including ornaments and mobile phones worth around Tk 2.5 lakh, according to a case filed with Chandanail Police Station.

A bad day for cattle traders

Prices slump just before Eid

ABDUL KADER

While costs for rearing cattle shot up this year, cattle prices at the eleventh hour of the Eid-ul-Azha went down significantly, causing frustrations among cattle traders in the 16 make-shift markets throughout Dhaka.

In the final hours of Eid, buyers in Dhaka purchased bulls at much cheaper prices compared to the first 24 hours of selling on January 20. A medium-size bull, which originally sold at between Tk 25,000 and Tk 30,000, later fetched only Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000 at the close of the buying period.

This was a cause of great concern for cattle traders, who hoped to sell cattle at higher prices to make up for increases in rearing costs caused by a rise in the prices of essentials.

They blamed the price-hike of cattle feed on last year's devastating flood, which caused massive damage to paddy production and depleted the main supplies of cattle feed, including straw, bran and broken rice.

Traders coming to Dhaka, from Rajshahi, Kushtia, Jessore, Faridpur and other parts of the country also had to pay extra truck fares, due to an increase in the price of diesel in December.

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FENCHUGANJ 90MW POWER PLANT

PDB gives way to lone, 'disqualified' bidder

SHARIEF KHAN

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) is pushing ahead with the sixth tender for the 90 megawatt combined cycle power plant in Fenchuganj, apparently to award the contract to a 'disqualified' lone bidder, sources said.

When the BPDB floated the project's tender for the sixth time in October last year, two companies participated in it -- Japanese Sumitomo Corporation and Chinese Harbin Power Engineering Ltd. The tender rules dictate that the bidder must have 10 years' experience in setting up and operation of combined cycle power plants.

Harbin lacks this experience, but the BPDB overlooked this shortcoming, sources said.

In November, Sumitomo withdrew from the bidding accusing the BPDB of siding with Harbin, which is not supposed to be considered technically qualified as per the bidding criterion. "BPDB is not proceeding with the evaluation process in a fair and transparent way..." Sumitomo wrote to the BPDB accusing it of favouring Harbin.

The BPDB however does not

accept the allegations. It says Sumitomo has withdrawn because it had lapses in its proposal.

And now the BPDB has asked Harbin, the lone bidder, to submit its financial offer by the first week of February, sources said.

"There are some shortcomings in the Harbin's proposal, but we can go ahead with it," said a BPDB official, "the fact is we have rendered this project five times. So we are going ahead with whatever we have."

"But this is not final. We will seek the government's permission. If the

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Drive to recover forest land grabbed in Dhaka, Gazipur

REZAUL KARIM

The Ministry of Environment and Forest has launched a drive to recover over 12,000 acres of forest land under Dhaka Forest Department, illegally occupied by land grabbers using fake documents and in connivance with local administration.

According to the settlement survey conducted in 1972-75, the total land in protected forest is around 66,000 acres in Dhaka and Gazipur districts but the forest department has authority on only 670 acres.

Of the 66,000 acres, some 64,000 acres are in Gazipur and the rest in Dhaka. Over the last 50 years, land grabbers encroached upon more than 12,000 acres, particularly in

Bhawal area of Gazipur, official sources said.

Different real estate companies, private firms and influential people have recently stepped up their illegal bid to occupy more forest land and other 'khas' (government-owned) land through fake documents, forged signatures and secret deals with local administration.

The sources mentioned that land grabbers are even getting court verdicts in their favour 'secretly' by showing fake documents and 'forged no-objection letters' from the forest department. In most cases, they manage to get court verdict without the knowledge of the forest department.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest has recently identified plunder of its 120 acres of forest land

in Gazipur and initiated a legal process at the Supreme Court to recover the land as lower court verdicts went in favour of the encroachers.

Of the 120 acres, two real estate firms grabbed 30 acres in Shibrampur mouja in Sadar upazila of Gazipur district, and another 90 acres in Araishaw Proshad mouja in Joydevpur upazila of the district.

Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam confirmed the forest department's ownership of the land and filing of cases in the highest court for its recovery.

"We have taken an initiative to gradually recover forest land from illegal occupation," Tariqul added.

According to official records, one Nayab Ali Munshi had grabbed 30

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Eid-ul-Azha celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muslims across the country celebrated their second biggest religious festival, the Eid-ul-Azha, on Saturday with religious enthusiasm.

Eid-ul-Azha, the festival of sacrifice that marks the end of the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia is celebrated by the Muslims throughout the world, especially with the sacrifice of animals.

Gathering in thousands at different prayer grounds, mosques and open places, the Muslims of Bangladesh offered Eid prayers seeking divine blessings and peace, progress and prosperity of the Muslim ummah and development of the country.

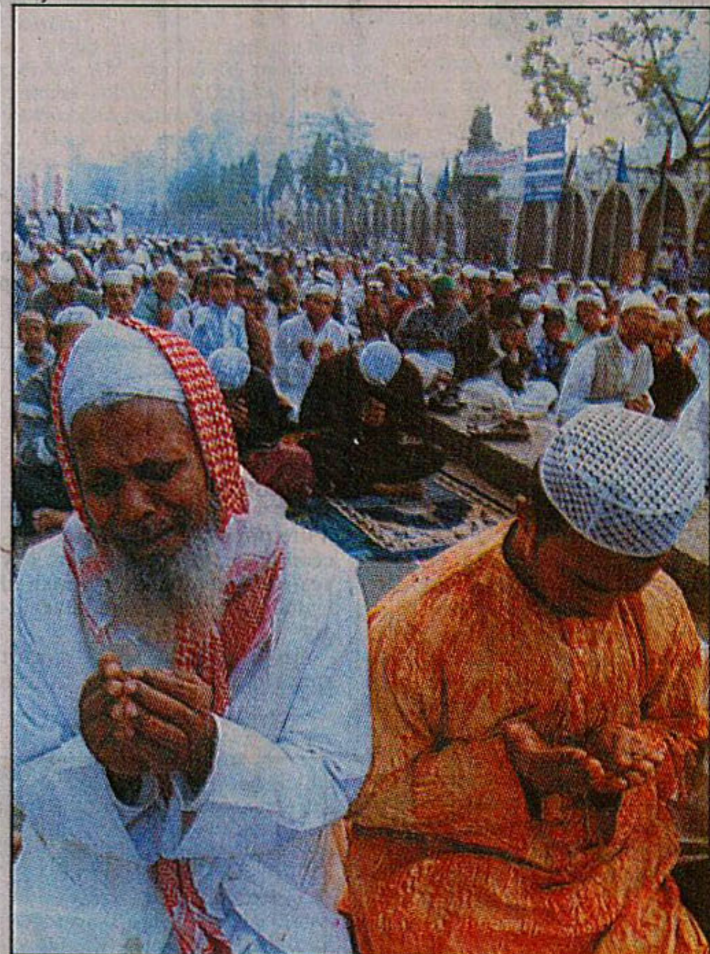
After the prayers, the devotees embraced each other exchanged Eid greetings.

Muslims slaughtered sacrificial animals that commemorates the willingness of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) to sacrifice his son Ismael (AS) to the wish of almighty Allah some 3,800 years ago.

The main Eid congregation in the capital was held at the national Eidgah (Eid prayer ground) at 8:00am, conducted by the Khateeb of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Moulana Obaidul Huq.

Speaker of the Jatiya Sangshad

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The Eid-ul-Azha congregation at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on Saturday also spreads to the adjacent streets.

PHOTO: STAR

Tanners happy as hides sold at lower prices

STAR REPORT

Tanners and leather exporters are happy this year as they were able to procure hides of sacrificial animals at comparatively lower prices.

They said improved law and order situation has helped them avoid extortion while procuring hides during the Eid-ul-Azha.

Around 45 percent of the total raw materials for the tannery industry is collected during the Eid-ul-Azha season. Hoodlums, extortionists and hide smugglers do a brisk business after the Eid every year.

The tanners said the law enforcement agencies this year took all-out measures to check smuggling of hides of sacrificial animals which were sold at prices 15 to 20 percent lower than those of last year.

"Eid-ul-Azha is our peak season to procure hides and we suffer lot of problems every year. But it was an exception this year as we did not face any musclemen while procuring the hides," said a top leader of Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather Goods and Exporters Association (BFLLEA).

He said export income from leather sector may rise by around Tk 100 crore to Tk 150 crore as the tanners and exporters were able to buy a huge number of hides.

"So far we don't have any news about hide and skin smuggling. The procurement of hides of the sacrificial animals is satisfactory," Harun Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Tanners' Association (BTA) told The Daily Star yesterday.

Tanners and BFLLEA this year fixed the purchasing prices of hides

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ALLEGED DENIAL OF VISAS

Dhaka regrets Delhi's remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka yesterday denied Delhi's allegations of refusal of visas to Indian journalists, terming Delhi's comments "sweeping and regrettable".

A foreign ministry spokesperson yesterday said some 200 Indian journalists visited Bangladesh last year and 116 in 2003.

The spokesperson dismissed the comments made by Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) as "sweeping and regrettable".

On January 18, MEA spokesman Navtej Sarna said, "It may be mentioned that Bangladesh routinely denies visas to Indian journalists..." He was explaining why a Bangladesh columnist, Sadeq Khan was denied Indian visa.

Sarna said Khan was refused visa "taking into account the antecedents of the journalist concerned."

The foreign ministry has already received 82 forms from Indian journalists wishing to cover the upcoming 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka during February 6-7.

Dhaka, however, has not yet received the particulars of 40 Indian journalists scheduled to accompany Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the spokesperson added.



Bangladesh opener Nafees Iqbal raises his bat after scoring a half-century against Zimbabwe yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh chase goes awry again

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

Bangladesh's hopes of winning their maiden one-day series suffered a major blow when they conceded a 31-run defeat to Zimbabwe in the second match here at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

The loss after a three-day Eid break leaves the home side 2-0 down in the five-match series. Bangladesh went down by 22 runs in the first match in Dhaka on January 20.

The Tigers now must win the third match here tomorrow to keep the series alive against a constantly improving Zimbabwe side.

Zimbabwe skipper Tatenda Taibu did not hesitate to bat first after winning the toss for the second match in a row. The visitors made full use of an easy-paced wicket to

post 237-5 thanks to a sparkling all-round display by Barney Rogers and a combative 84-run stand between Taibu and Elton Chigumbura in just 55 balls for the unbroken sixth wicket.

Bangladesh, in their chase, managed only 206 before being bundled out in 47.1 overs.

Left-handed opener Rogers made 66 off 85 balls studded with nine boundaries. But the Zimbabwe innings flourished at the end with Taibu hitting a responsible 64 off 80 deliveries and Chigumbura smashing a quickfire 30. The pair took the match away from the firm grip of the hosts, clobbering 93 runs in the final ten overs with 58 coming in the last five.

Taibu hit three sixes, two coming

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Six lynched, 7 others murdered in 4 days

STAR REPORT

Six people including three alleged operatives of Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) were lynched and seven others murdered across the country in the last four days.

A mob beat three JMJB men to death after the Islamist militants killed an Awami League leader of Taherpur municipality and shot at a union parishad chairman in Bagmara upazila Saturday night, our Rajshahi correspondent reports.

Eleven JMJB cadres intercepted Mokbul Mridha, chairman of Sripur Union Parishad and also vice-president of the union unit of Awami League (AL), at Kuthibari while he

was returning home from Sripur bazaar at 8:30pm.

"The attackers swooped on us and hit Mridha with iron rod, then shot at him," said Yusuf Ali Pramanik, who was accompanying Mridha during the attack.

Hearing the victim's scream, locals chased the attackers who hurled bombs at them, killing one person and injuring at least 30 others. The dead was identified as Mahbub Hossain Dewan, 25, a ward-level AL leader of Taherpur municipality.

Nine of the injured were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The mob then caught three

attackers and beat them to death.

The three were identified as Abdur Rahman, 20, a student of Taherpur Madrasa, Ibrahim Hossain, 18, an SSC examinee from Bhabaniganj High School and Abdul Baki Murad, 22, of Pallapara in Bogra's Adamdighi upazila.

Locals said the dead were operatives of JMJB, an Islamist outfit led by Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai active in the northern region.

Rapid Action Battalion later visited the spot and seized three pistols, two bullets and a bomb from there, said sources.

21 LYNCHED IN DHAKA

A mob beat Monir, 22, a mentally

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