

279 fall victim to extrajudicial killing in 20 months

Says Odikhar report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 279 people fell victim to extrajudicial killing by the law enforcement agencies across the country during the state of emergency between January 2007 and September 2008, revealed a study report yesterday.

The report published by Odikhar, a human rights organisation, covers 20 months of the present government.

The government has set up National Human Rights Commission in the country only to shore up their credibility before the international community rather than safeguarding the rights of the people, it added.

ment to establishing an independent body.

The ordinance stated that the commission would resolve the human rights violations through arbitration or mediation, but Odikhar said the violators should be tried in a court of law, which will ensure exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

Besides, Right to Information Ordinance will curb the freedom of the press and people's right to know rather than extending it, the report said, adding that if the ordinance is promulgated, a person even a journalist will need to apply in a prescribed form for information and the authority will have the power to reject the application or provide the information sought.

It also expressed concern that the draft ordinance was prepared by a committee dominated by bureaucrats who ignored submissions made by key stakeholders like Federal Union of Journalists, National Press Club and South

Asian Free Media Association.

Odikhar observed that the teletapping by the state is a direct contravention of Article 43 (b) of the constitution that ensure a person's right to the privacy of his correspondence and other means of communication.

The report said Truth and Accountability Communication (TAC) has not only failed to attain its desired objective, but it is also contrary to the constitutional provisions and the spirit of law.

Tac's aim to re-energise the country's economy has failed. Corrupt businessmen and bureaucrats are allowed to continue their businesses and services while politicians are barred from contesting in the elections after being bestowed with mercy from the commission, it added.

CLIMATE CONFERENCE 'People's opinion not reflected in finance adviser's speech'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the finance adviser's speech delivered at the UK-Bangladesh Climate Conference 'anti-people and contradictory to the interests of the poor', speakers at a press conference yesterday demanded withdrawal of his speech and called for raising the issue in the next elected parliament.

They said people's opinion was not reflected in his speech and it will pave the way for multinational companies to make the country their colony and a potential market as it was proposed that the World Bank (WB) oversee the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF).

Equity and Justice Working Group (Equity BD) organised the press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

The speakers said Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam in his speech at the conference on MDTF on September 10 invited the WB instead of the United Nations (UN) to conduct the fund, and did not demand that the fund be given as compensation for climate change impacts.

They said G-8 countries and international organisations such as WB, IMF and ADB are trying to entangle Bangladesh in financial trap to make it a fully import-oriented country by forcing it to stop industrial growth in the name of carbon emission.

According to Bali declaration of UNFCCC, developing countries are not bound to adopt low carbon technology for the sake of creating job opportunity to cope with the existing unemployment problems, they said.

Equity and Justice Working Group Convener Rezaul Karim Chowdhury read out a written speech at the press conference. Its members Shahadat Islam Chowdhury, AHM Bazul Rahman and Mostofa Kamal Akhand also spoke.



AHM Bazul Rahman of Equity and Justice Working Group speaks at a press conference on the UK-Bangladesh climate conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and on his left is Mostofa Kamal Akhand.

Boy drowns in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

A six-year-old boy drowned in floodwater at Nabila village in Shahzadpur upazila yesterday.

The boy was identified as Sagar, 6, son of Tayeb Ali.

Family sources said Sagar slipped into floodwater while playing at his house at about 11:00am.



Death anniversary of Noorul Quader today

METRO DESK

Today is the 11th death anniversary of M Noorul Quader, a freedom fighter and the first secretary of the Bangladesh government, says a press release.

Noorul Quader joined the War of Liberation when he was serving as the DC of Pabna. He organised resistance in Pabna which became the first liberated area.

He became the first establishment secretary after independence and also served as the communications secretary. He was also the founder chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

Noorul Quader, who was also the chairman of Desh Group of Companies, set up the first readymade garment industry in 1978.

He passed away on this day in 1997 in London.

Mahboob-ul-Huq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the eighth death anniversary of Mahboob-ul-Huq Payera, a staff reporter of the daily Ittefaq and former president of Feni press club, says a press release.

He was also a former general secretary of Feni District Sports Organisation and former vice-president of Feni Shilpakala Academy.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, a discussion will be held at Feni Press Club at 5:00pm today. A milad mahfil and Quarkhawi will also be held at his village home.

Under-5 mortality rate falls by 50pc

Reveals Unicef report

METRO DESK

Bangladesh has reduced the under-five mortality rate by more than 50 per cent since 1990, revealed a Unicef report on Thursday.

The report shows a 27 per cent decline in the under-five mortality rate worldwide, says a press release.

Like Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Bolivia and Nepal made good progress in reducing under-five mortality, the release added.

These countries are on track to reach the MDG target to reduce by two-thirds the under-five mortality rate between 1990 and 2015.

The report, published on Thursday, revealed that 68 among 1000 children aged under five died in 2007, whereas the number was 93 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990.

In industrialised countries, however, there are on an average just six deaths for every 1,000 live births.

It added that a total of 12.7 million children under five died around the world in 1990, and in 2007 child deaths declined to about 9.2 million.

"Since 1960, the global under-five mortality rate has declined more than 60 per cent, and the new data shows that downward trend continues," said Unicef Executive Director Ann M Veneman. "While progress has been made, much remains to be done."

Under-nutrition causes more than one-third of the 9.2 million under-five deaths worldwide. While there has also been progress in reducing the percentage of under age five children who are overweight since 1990, an estimated 148 million children in the developing world remain undernourished. To ensure these children have the opportunity to survive, efforts to address the nutritional needs of women, infants, and children must be accelerated.

There has also been significant progress in parts of Africa. Eritrea's under-five mortality rate declined by 52 per cent between 1990 and 2007. In Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, and Ethiopia child mortality rates have declined by more than 40 per cent across the same period.

However the highest child mortality is still found in Africa. In Sierra Leone, the country with the worst under-five mortality rate in the world, 262 out of every 1,000 children die before their fifth birthday. "Recent data also indicate encouraging improvements in many of the basic health interventions, such as early and exclusive breast feeding, measles immunisation, Vitamin A supplementation, the use of insecticide-treated nets to prevent malaria, and prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS," said Veneman. "These interventions are expected to result in further declines in child mortality over the coming years."



Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, said Met Office.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Majidee Court and the lowest of 24.7 degrees at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:04pm today and rises at 5:45am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

Fellowship for women journalists

METRO DESK

Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and Article 19, a UK-based international organisation, is jointly implementing a project entitled 'Access to Information for Greater Participation and Government Accountability', says a press release.

A fellowship will be provided to women journalists under this project.

The initiative has been taken in order to strengthen women's active participation in the mass media. Interested individuals are requested to apply within October 10 fulfilling specific conditions.

A proposal on the topic 'Role of information in protecting women's reproductive health' within 8000-10000 words should be submitted with the application.

After selecting the Fellows, MMC will provide orientation and financial assistance to them.

The application should reach Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), 1/20 Humayun Road, Block B, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207. Email: massline@bangla.net.

DHAKA TODAY

Workshop

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) organises a dissemination workshop on IT upgrade project of BASIS. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 4:30pm.

View exchange meeting

RHSTEP and Health and Environment Journalists Forum, Bangladesh jointly organise a view exchange meeting on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:30am.

Talk

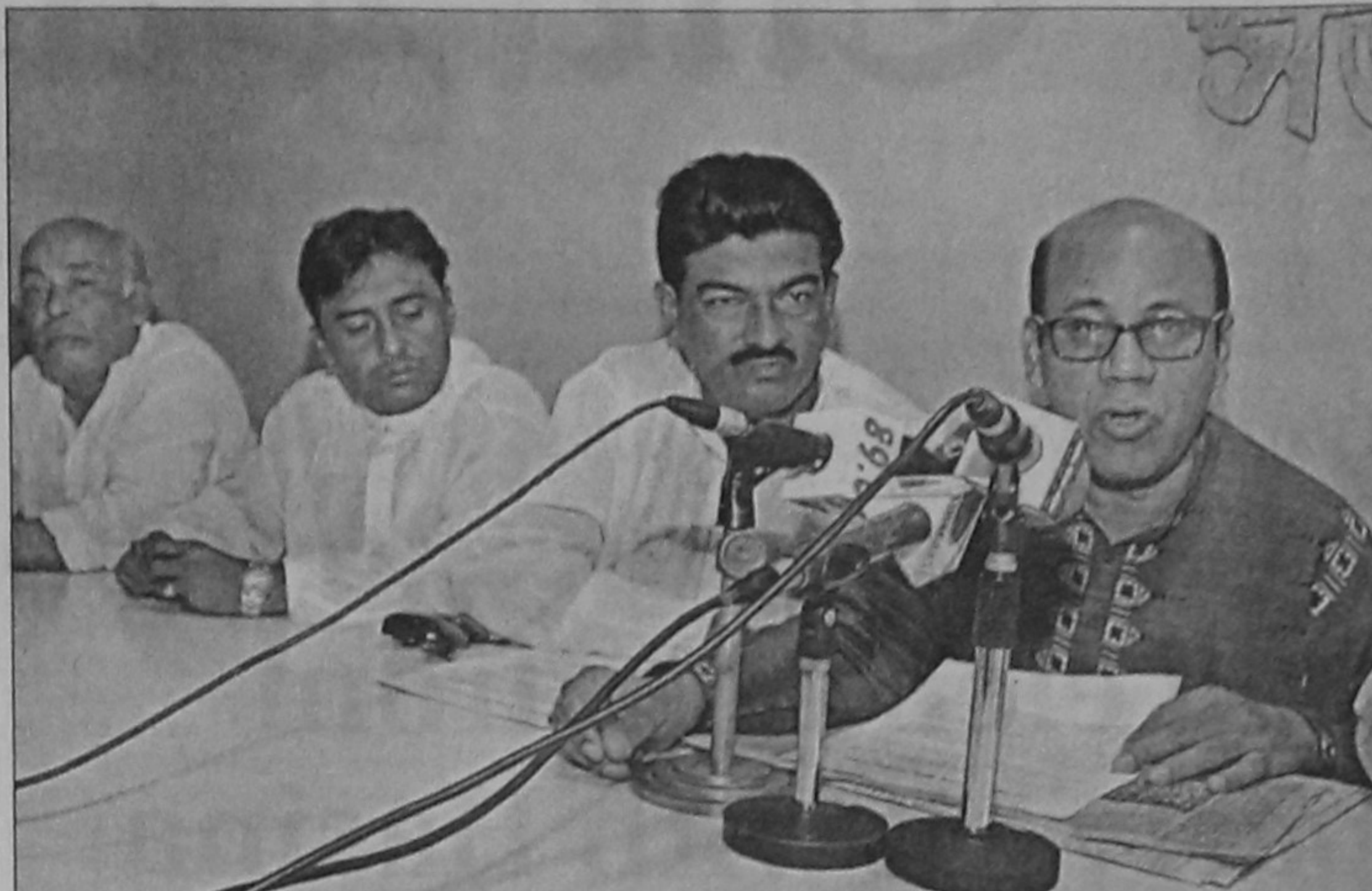
Father Marino Rigon, a distinguished Italian translator of Bengali literature, will deliver a talk on 'Lalan and Tagore: Their thoughts on humanism'. Venue: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable

Bazul Rahman Foundation organises a roundtable on 'National election 2008: Role of media'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 4:30pm.



Awami League leader advocate Kamrul Islam speaks at a press conference on the current socio-political and economic crises at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. Dhaka Mahanagar Awami League organised the event.

Six killed in road crashes

METRO DESK

A total of six people were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in Chittagong, Noakhali, Dinajpur and Pabna yesterday.

Our Pabna correspondent reports: At least two people, including a local unit leader of Awami League, were killed when a microbus hit a three-wheeler van at Dulai village on Dhaka-Pabna Highway at Sujanagar upazila.

The dead were identified as Md Abdul Rashid, 70, of Chinakhora village and Md Ripon, 22, of Dulai village.

Police and locals said the accident occurred when the Dhaka-bound microbus reached the spot, one of the front tyres had punctured. The driver lost the control over steering and hit the three-wheeler. Van puller and AL leader died on the spot.

Sources said the microbus skidded off the wayside ditch.

CU correspondent adds: A minor boy and an elderly person were killed in separate incidents at

Sitakunda and Hathazari upazilas in Chittagong yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Emon, 10, son of Jamal Hossain, of Natunpara under Hathazari and Mohammad Mian, 70, of Bhatiary area under Sitakunda.

Sources said Emon drowned in a pond close to his house at Natunpara while he was taking a bath at around 12:00pm.

In another incident, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw knocked Mohammad Mian while he was crossing Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in Bhatiary area at around 10:00am. He received fatal injuries.

The victim was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: A schoolboy was killed in a road mishap at Nawabganj upazila in Dinajpur.

The dead was identified as Md Mahbul Alam 16, son of Md Mozibur Rahman, of Kalia village under the same upazila.

Quoting locals, police said

Mahbul was crushed under the wheels of a rice-loaded speedy truck while he was crossing the road at Motihara Bazar on Nawabganj-Gobindaganj Highway at 4:20pm. The victim died on the spot.

Driver and helper of the truck managed to flee, leaving the truck on the spot.

UNB from Noakhali adds: A minor boy was killed and 20 others injured when a bus rammied into a roadside tree on Sonapur-Kabirhat Road at Tetuitala under Kabirhat upazila.

Police said the accident took place when the bus hit the tree as the driver lost control over the steering, leaving Horan, 8, of Sundarpur union of the upazila, dead on the spot and 20 other bus passengers injured.

Seriously injured Laili Begum, Nur Nahar and Abdul Shukur were admitted to the district general hospital while the rest were given first aid at the local hospitals and clinics.

Police seized the vehicle.



Detective Branch of Police arrested two fake policemen with 12 cellphones in Chittagong city yesterday.

They poison canal just for good catch

FROM PAGE 1

Local residents said the practice of using insecticides to catch fishes has been going on in the areas under Patuakhali forest division for the last few years.

They said this year local influential people leased more than 40 canals in Sonarchar and Char Kaffarna areas for the whole monsoon from the forest department in exchange for a few lakh taka. Leasing of canals in protected areas is, however, prohibited.

Currently one lakh fifteen thousand acres of forestland are under Patuakhali forest division mainly in shoal areas crisscrossed by canals which are connected with rivers.

At the end of the monsoon, the canals are usually full of fishes including Air, Koral, Bowal, Pangsas, Faisa, Parsa and others.

Fishermen use insecticides like Rotenone, Thyodine, and Fosfoxin and set up fishing nets at both ends of a canal during low tides. Trapped fishes die within a few minutes and the fishermen just collect them.

The local people said more than 100 maunds of fish are caught every day from those canals which is almost four metric tons, while the Department of Forest charges them a fee of Tk 300 for a maund of the catch.

Sonarchar Bit Officer Kazi Alauddin, however, denied the allegation of leasing out canals, saying they 'permitted' a few fishermen to catch fishes in the canals in exchange for Tk 300 'revenue' per maund of the catch.

The local people confirmed that eight buffaloes and three cows died drinking water from those canals,

but Alauddin denied the allegation saying those died of diseases.

Following deaths of some livestock, the aggrieved owners caught Aziz Haowlader and Ahsan of Char Mantaj from the bank of a canal in Tapasi Bon area for pouring toxins into the canal.

Char Mantaj Range Officer Touhidul Islam confirmed the incident and said he was preparing to file a case with Rangabali police station in connection with the incident.

Patuakhali district administration instructed the livestock division to investigate the incident and to collect samples of dead fishes for sending those to the capital for laboratory tests.

"I have been buying two containers of water every day for drinking and other household work. This is not much compared to what my family needs," said Jahana, another resident.

Mitu, a 12-year-old who came to a pharmacy in the area to buy ICDDR, B's oral saline for her one-year-old nephew, claimed the water of Dhaka Wasa is so dirty that even boiling does not purify it properly.

"Although we have been using Wasa's water after boiling it, my nephew and my mother have been suffering from diarrhoea for the last two days," she said.

Ten minutes later, nine-year-old Sami came to buy oral saline for his mother and complained about the water like Mitu did.

Babul of 'Progati Oushadhalay', the pharmacy, said he has been selling more than 100 packs of oral saline and 10 packs of ICDDR, B's saline a day for the last few days. He used to sell 20 packs at best before.

Muslims offering prayers in mosques in the area are also suffering.

Devotees who come to offer their prayers in Ulon Matbarbari Masjid have to use the dirty water for ablution, said Ataur Rahman, a resident of the area. He has his baths and ablutions at a relative's house a kilometre away.

The crises made mineral water business very profitable there, said locals.

"I have been supplying 20 containers of mineral water at Tk 40 each in the area... it was only two containers a day before the crisis," said Roman, a sales boy of a mineral water supply company.

Eight injured in Bagerhat clash

UNB, Bagerhat

Eight people, including a Sramik League leader, were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers at Bagdia village in Bagerhat Sadar yesterday.

Supporters of two groups, one led by Nurul Islam and another by Intaj Sheikh, attacked each other with homemade lethal weapons following an altercation between two group leaders over the sale of a domestic animal of Nurul.

One of the injured, Intaj Sheikh, general secretary of Baroipara union Sramik League, was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Seven other injured from both sides were admitted to Sadar Hospital and Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Two killed in fresh Kashmir protests

AFP, Srinagar

Fresh separatist protests rocked revolt-hit Indian Kashmir yesterday, leaving two people dead and 80 others injured when police fired teargas and bullets, police said.

Thousands of police were deployed across parts of the Muslim-majority state to control crowds of demonstrators hurling stones and shouting, "We want freedom" and "Allah is great."

One protester died when police fired teargas and bullets to disperse thousands of stone-throwing demonstrators in southern Shopian town, 50 kilometres south of summer capital Srinagar, police said.

"The protester died from a bullet injury," a police officer said, adding 30 others were injured, five from bullets.

Thousands of residents later carried the body, chanting, "We will spill blood for blood" as they headed to the graveyard.

A second protester died when he was hit by a teargas shell in northern Baramulla town, 55km north of Srinagar, police officer Faisal Qayoom told AFP.

"Police fired teargas to disperse a demonstration," he said.

In the past few months, Kashmir has witnessed the biggest pro-independence demonstrations since the separatist revolt erupted in 1989. The protests have triggered a heavy crackdown by Indian security forces.

A separatist committee spearheading recent demonstrations had called on people in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley to demonstrate on Friday after Juma prayers.

Water crisis

FROM PAGE 16

taking necessary steps, they said. An official of Wasa said the problem might have developed due to leakage in Wasa's pipeline and they are trying their best to find the leak.

"The water that we are getting is just like sewage which is unusable even for household work," said Swapan Ahmed, a resident of Ulon.

He said he has been bringing in water from other areas and purchasing water to meet his needs.

"I have not had a bath in three days due to the water crisis," said Samsuddoha, another resident of the area.

"I have been buying two containers of water every day for drinking and other household work. This is not much compared to what my family needs," said Jahana, another resident.

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