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Pakistan allows thousands to flee combat zone

Troops kill 55 more Taliban militants

AFP, Shaguna Naka

Pakistan's military suspended a curfew yesterday in a northwest city where it is fighting Taliban guerrillas, officials said, allowing tens of thousands of civilians to flee the area.

In what is emerging as a grave humanitarian crisis, hundreds of thousands of desperate civilians have been trying to get to safety from the Swat valley, where the army launched a new offensive late last month to crush the militants.

The suspension came as the Pakistani military said troops had killed 55 mili-

tant in various parts of the valley and had arrested a top Taliban commander, Dawa Noor, during the last 24 hours.

The government suspended a curfew for people going out of Swat's main city of Mingora from dawn until mid-afternoon, and local administration chief Arshad Khan said residents had been advised to leave -- and were doing so.

"People are leaving in large numbers," Khan said. "They are vacating their homes."

Hundreds of vehicles including buses, cars, rickshaws, pickups and motorbikes were seen crossing the Shaguna Naka

checkpoint at the exit of the conflict zone.

People sat on the roofs of buses and backs of trucks with their bedding and clothes as they headed for Mardan 30 kilometres away where authorities have set up camps for the displaced people.

"The situation is very, very bad. We have no hope for life," said a young man who identified himself only as Ibrahim.

He said he came with 30 people who fled Odigram village near Mingora to escape the fighting.

"We are going to Mardan. We are just going to sit under a tree somewhere. We

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Bagmara AL leader killed allegedly by Jamaat cadres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An Awami League (AL) leader was stabbed to death at Balia under Bagmara upazila yesterday afternoon.

Bagmara upazila acting president of AL Mokbul Hossain Mridha blamed armed cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami for the murder.

The deceased was identified as Shahadat Ali, 45, a teacher of Jatrapukur Dakhal Madrasa.

He was the convener of AL's election conducting

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

VOTE COUNTING TODAY

Congress, BJP step up hunt for allies

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

As India waits with baited breath for the results of parliamentary elections today, with the possibility of a hung parliament looming large, ruling Congress and the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stepped up their hunt for allies across the political spectrum to put together coalitions that will help them catapult to power.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi had a meeting with ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) ally Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar in New Delhi Thursday night, and spoke to Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP)

President Ram Vilas Paswan over the phone.

Senior Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee met Samajwadi Party (SP) General Secretary Amar Singh and is reported to have lured him to participate in a coalition government, while Mukherjee's party colleague also Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath spoke to another regional outfit and potential ally, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik.

Sonia's talks with Lalu and Paswan assumed significance as Congress had failed to reach a seat sharing accord with the two regional politicians in the Lok Sabha poll and fought their parties in Bihar. Lalu and Paswan were also upset over Rahul Gandhi's praise for their rival

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

30 hurt in BCL-Shibir clash at CU

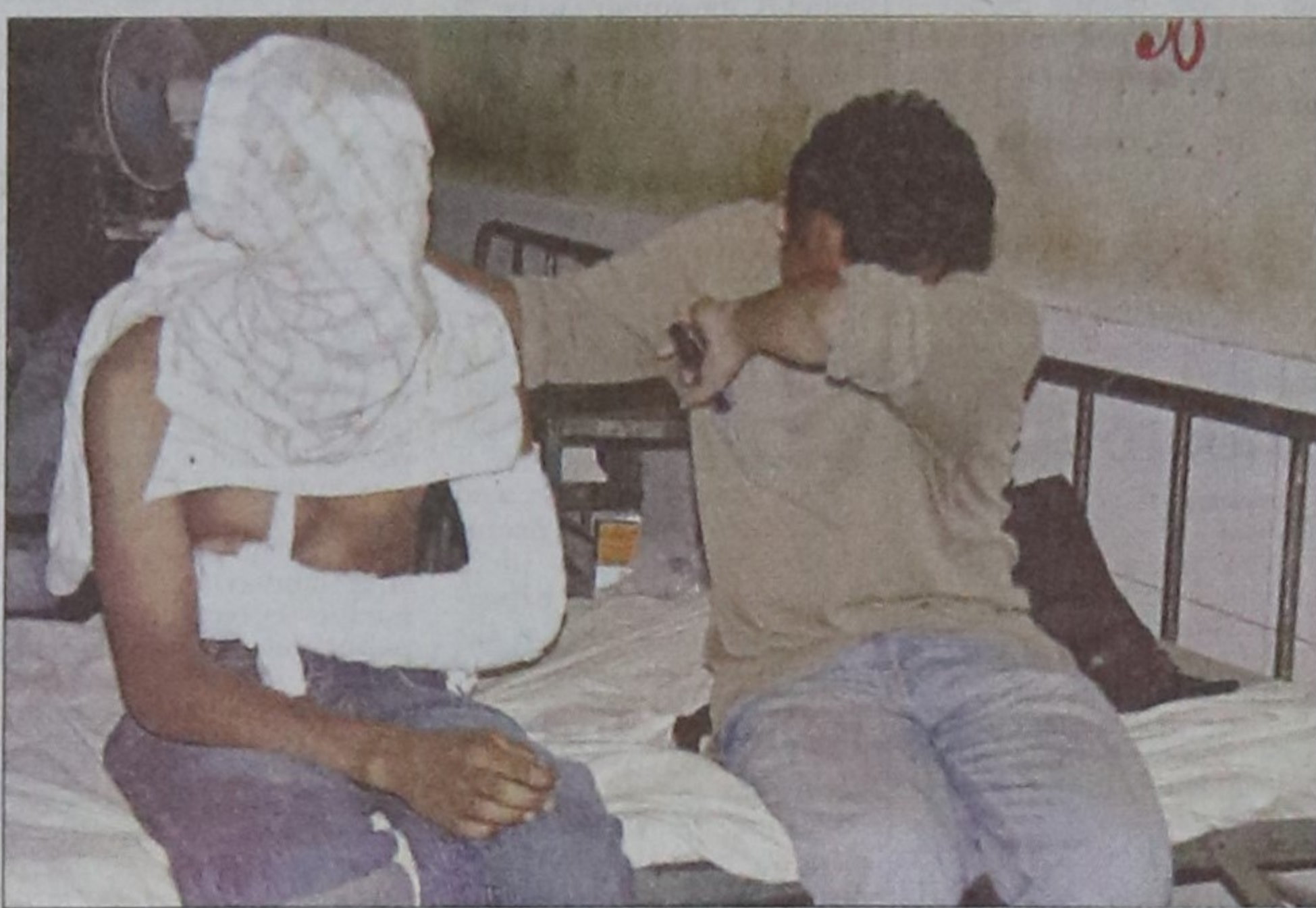
CU CORRESPONDENT

At least 30 activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) were injured in a series of clashes between them on Chittagong University (CU) campus Thursday night.

Meanwhile, the CU authorities at a meeting yesterday suspended all classes and examinations of the university until May 21 to maintain peaceful atmosphere on the campus.

Sources said the clash erupted at Shaheed Abdur Rab Hall at about 10:30pm over

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Two activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir hide their faces as journalists take pictures at Chittagong Medical College Hospital. They were injured in a clash with BCL activists at Chittagong University on Thursday night.

PHOTO: STAR

DISTRICT COMMITTEES BNP sits today to pick leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Standing Committee (NSC) of BNP will sit today to finalise the names of conveners and joint conveners of district convening committees as part of the process of reorganising the party.

Party insiders said BNP might announce committees for most of the districts within next week after finalising the names.

However, the NSC, the party's highest policymaking body, might not announce committees for a few districts where BNP is dealing with intra-party conflicts.

A high-powered special committee led by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia has already scrutinised the names of possible conveners for the committees.

The committee members include party's Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and NSC members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Moudud Ahmed.

"The chairperson will make the final decision at the standing committee meeting tomorrow [Saturday] evening," NSC member Moudud Ahmed told reporters after attending a discussion titled 'India's water aggression: From Farakka to Tipaimukh' organised by Chironton Bangladesh Kendrio Sangsad at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

WAR CRIMES TRIAL BDR mutineers' trial acid test for govt Says AI programme director

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The government's ability to hold a credible and fair trial of war criminals depends largely on how appropriately it han-

dles the trial of BDR mutiny, says Amnesty International Asia Pacific Programme Director Sam Zarifi.

Zarifi suggests that the trial of BDR mutiny should not be held in court martial but in legitimate civilian process. It is also necessary

Full interview on page 3

to ensure special training to all the people involved in war criminals' trial for a fair and credible outcome in international standard, he adds.

"If the government can't handle that trial [of BDR mutiny] appropriately, it's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Sam Zarifi

Swine flu-hit NY shuts schools

WHO reports over 1,000 new global cases in a day

AFP, New York

New York City authorities yesterday closed three schools following a swine flu outbreak as the World Health Organisation reported more than a 1,000 new cases around the globe in 24 hours.

The WHO said there are now 7,520 confirmed cases around the world, just a day after pleading for more time to decide whether to mass produce a vaccine.

New York officials said an assistant

principal of one of the schools that will stay closed through next week was in serious condition in hospital.

There are about 4,500 students at the three schools and city mayor Michael Bloomberg said they were ordered closed because of "an unusually high level of flu-like illnesses."

The A(H1N1) outbreak came less than two weeks after New York health authorities pronounced the all clear after other schools were affected by the virus through

students who had visited Mexico.

Bloomberg said swine flu had been identified in four students at one of the schools, all in the Queens district, "as well as in a staff member at the school who is critically ill."

"More than 50 students have been sent home from the school with flu-like symptoms," he said. At a second school, 241 students reported absent Thursday, and at a third 29 students were documented

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Bring political parties under tax net Demand lawyers

DU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Kar Ainjibi Samity, an organisation of tax lawyers, yesterday demanded that political parties be brought under the tax net to increase the national revenue.

"We have been saying for years; the large political parties are spending crores of taka but there is no system to ensure accountability for their source of income," president of the organisation Zakir Hossain said yesterday.

He was addressing a press conference at the National Press Club.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Prayer Timing		
May 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Thousands had to leave country in last decade

Claims indigenous people's body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An organisation working with indigenous people claimed that around 50,000 adivashi people were forced to leave the country due to harassment and repression during the last decade.

The Adivashi Manobadhikar Report 2008 claimed that non-adivashi people were relocated to the hilly region under a political scheme of "population transfer" and they contributed to the harassment and repression of the indigenous people.

The report said, "The army is trying to rehabilitate 10,000 non-adivashi people to Kasalong Reserve Forest in Mijoram border area."

Bangladesh Adivashi Forum published the report at a press

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

চট্টগ্রাম উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ
চট্টগ্রাম ভবন, চট্টগ্রাম

আমরা গভীর শোকাহত

দেশের বিশিষ্ট পরমাণু বিজ্ঞানী ও গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার স্বামী ড. এম এ ওয়াজেদ মিয়া'র মৃত্যুতে আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত। তাঁর এ মৃত্যু দেশের অপূরণীয় ক্ষতি। চট্টগ্রাম উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষের সকল কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারী পরম করুণাময়ের কাছে তাঁর বিদেহী আত্মার শান্তি ও মাগফেরাত কামনা এবং শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের সদস্যদের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন করছি।

আবদুচ ছালাম
চেয়ারম্যান
চট্টগ্রাম উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ

জিডি-২৫০৪

গুলশানের অটবি সেন্টারে এখন একটি গুহার ভেতরে কেউ একজন গুহাচিহ্ন আঁকছে। কাক ডাকছে কোথাও, ডাকছে নানান পাখি। বার্না আছে একটা, আর একটা নৌকো, আর কিছু শাপলা।

আম গাছে আম, কাঁঠাল গাছে কাঁঠাল। ফার্নগুলিতে পেলেও পেতে পার একটা দুটো লাল ফড়িং। রোলে চড়বে? না আঁকবে ছবি?

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