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**LAND-MOBILE CALL
BTTB to charge
per minute**

MONJUR MAHMUD

Calling from Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) land phones to mobile phones will get very costly soon, as the state-owned operator is going to charge the calls per minute instead of the present 5-minute peak and 8- to 10-minute off-peak chunks.

Presently, a caller from a BTTB phone to a cellphone can talk for five minutes for Tk 1.5 in the 8am-11pm peak time and for eight to 10 minutes in the 11pm-8am off-peak time. But when the new BTTB tariff regime comes into effect, applicable everywhere in the country, the caller will have to pay Tk 1.5 for every minute of the talk time, sources said.

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**Factory fire
injures 6
in Tejgaon**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six workers of a label-making factory suffered burns, five of them critically, when a fire broke out at the factory in Tejgaon industrial area early yesterday.

The injured -- Milon Hossain, Mohammad Masud, Saidur Rahman, Noor Alam, Babu and Hanif -- were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"I heard a bang at 12:35am when we were working inside the tinned SRA label industry. Soon thick smoke covered the area and I found fire in my clothes," said label operator Mohammad Masud.

He said he and four other label operators tried to rush out of the

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**Arms, explosives
recovered
in Rangamati**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday destroyed a den of terrorists in Uttar Bhuiyanchhari area under Baghaichhari upazila of the district and recovered firearms and explosives.

Being tipped-off, the BDR men led by Commander of 32 Rifles Battalion Lt Col Abdul Aziz rushed to the area into a deep forest and cordoned off the hideout at around 2:00 am, BDR sources said.

Sensing the presence of the paramilitary troops, the terrorists fled the scene, leaving behind four country-made guns, two detonators, two fuses, 10 bullets of light gun, two explosive power gels weighing 110 grams and 50 grams and olive colour uniforms.

Sources in the BDR Rangamati sector headquarters said the BDR personnel raided the hideout at dawn and demolished it. They deposited the arms and explosives with Baghaichhari Police Station.

Kushtia operation ends in fiasco

STAR REPORT

The government believes Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) top brass, who were reportedly holding a meeting in Poradaho in Kushtia on Thursday, had fled before the fully-fledged operation began.

The eighteen-and-a-half-hour-long biggest ever operation ended at 1:30am yesterday without holding any JMB operatives, leave alone

any top leaders, much to the frustration of locals, who underwent untold ordeals.

Primarily, a 100-strong local force started the operation and three helicopters took commandos of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) from Dhaka.

Sources in local law enforcement agencies said the information of the operation was leaked but their high-ups ruled out the possibility.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar told reporters yesterday there was 'enough time' for anyone to flee before the fully-fledged operation started.

About 1,000 men from police, Rab and Bangladesh Rifles searched every house in 10 villages in two upazilas. They were reinforced with another 700-strong force.

But the JMB 'top brass' had

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PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion seizes a large quantity of bomb making materials from Bogra yesterday.

Bomb-making materials seized in Bogra: 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two more full-time leaders of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and recovered a huge cache of bomb-making materials believed to be enough to make up a bomb factory in the district on

Thursday.

The seized chemicals include 1 kg gunpowder, 6.5 kg sulphur, 4.8 kg lead styphnate, 1 kg beeswax, 5 litre sulphuric acid, 200 gm silica gel, 50 gm chalk powder, 100 gm putty and 500 gm liquid adhesive, said a Rab press release yesterday.

The other materials recovered

are 25 yards of wire double ply, one wrench, one cutting plyer, 800 gm nuts, bolts and springs, five jugs, three funnels, six pairs of gloves, two safety pipette fillers, five thermometers, one packet pH indicator (acid-base indicator) paper, one spirit lamp, four jars, three

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Huda quits as JAF chief



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a dramatic turn of events, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda stepped down from the top office of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum (JAF) just a day after being elected its president amid growing rifts within the pro-government lawyers' front.

In less than 24 hours of his becoming the president through a self-styled national convention, Huda announced his resignation at an impromptu news conference in the capital yesterday evening. Barrister Nazmul Huda's resignation

came hard on the heels of a rival faction's news briefing on the same day questioning his authority to form the forum's committee.

While the chief patron of the JAF, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia asked both the feuding factions of the pro-BNP lawyers' forum to refrain from holding conventions, the Huda faction convened on Thursday and announced a 301-strong central committee of the JAF with Nazmul Huda as its president and one of his opponents from the rival faction, Barrister Aminul Haque, as the general secretary.

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**COUNTER-TERRORISM
Bangladesh,
US may set
up bureau**

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and US are likely to set up an institutional framework of counter-terrorism bureau to enhance Dhaka's capability to effectively deal with terrorism and militancy.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca, who will arrive in Dhaka on January 26 carrying a letter of President Bush, will sit with the government officials and discuss the modalities of the proposed bureau, a foreign ministry official told the news agency yesterday. "Modalities of the proposed

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15 Bangladeshis languish in Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Fifteen young men from Panchagarh have been languishing in Amritsar Central Jail in the Indian state of Punjab for a year, while the Bangladesh government continues to be indifferent to freeing them and bringing them back to the country.

Abdur Rashid, a resident of Jalasi area in Panchagarh town told The Daily Star on January 8 that his son Mostafa, 22, along with Rashed Ali, 20, Asgar Ali, 20, Delwar Hossain, 25, Lutfor Rahman, 35, Shahabuddin, 18, Nur Alam, 18, Delwar Hossain, 18, Humayun, 17, Shajahan Ali, 28, Nur Nabi, 28, Rabbani, 30, Majid Mia, Helaluddin and Rezaul, all from Panchagarh town, had gone to Dhaka a year ago in search of work.

Since then he had not received any news of his son or the others until three months ago when he received a letter from his son letting him know that all the fifteen men including his son are imprisoned in Amritsar.

He also came to know that some

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42 killed in Slovak plane crash

AFP, Budapest

A military airplane carrying 43 Slovak peacekeepers ploughed into a snow-capped mountain in northeast Hungary, killing all but one of the troops and crew, authorities said yesterday.

The troops were returning home from duty in Kosovo when the Antonov plane crashed and exploded into flames near the village of Telkibanya, spewing body parts and bits of metal around the freezing terrain.

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Farm subsidy fails to meet fertiliser price gap

Tk 600cr more needed to ensure production

REAZ AHMAD

The Tk 1200 crore farm subsidy in the current fiscal year now appears too inadequate to meet the fertiliser price gap due to a huge mismatch between production and requirement of chemical fertilisers in the country.

Farm production would suffer colossal losses unless the government provides another Tk 600 crore in farm subsidy, most conservative official figures show.

Of the Tk 1200 crore budgetary allocation as farm subsidy, Tk 396

crore would go straight away to private fertiliser importers as rebate for marketing non-urea chemical fertilisers -- TSP (triple super phosphate), MoP (murate of potash) and DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) -- for farmers at 25 percent subsidised rate.

The remaining Tk 800 crore is far short of the amount needed to cover the huge losses the public sector would incur in producing and purchasing 26 lakh tonnes of urea to meet the requirement this fiscal year (2005-06).

With the government purchas-

ing nine lakh tonnes of urea, nearly one third of the total demand, from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Limited (Kafo) and international market at much higher price, at least Tk 1,416 crore in subsidy on urea is required, official statistics show.

Production by six state-run urea fertiliser factories is projected to be 19 lakh tonnes this fiscal year, forcing the government to procure nine lakh tonnes at the international market price, three times the domestic production cost.

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**BOOSTING TAX COLLECTION
Buyers of costly Eid cattle under probe**

NBR also investigating why top Dhaka businessmen not on top-taxpayer list

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As part of its effort to reach this fiscal year's ambitious tax-collection target, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is gathering information about the buyers of expensive sacrificial animals for the January 11 Eid-ul-Azha.

It is also investigating to know why most of the top businessmen of Dhaka are not on the list of top taxpayers.

The NBR so far has collected Tk 14,542 crore, or 41 percent of its tax-collection target, Tk 35,652 crore, for FY2005-06. However, the board is satisfied with the half-yearly collection and believes an intense drive against tax evaders will help it realise the target in full in the remaining months.

"Tax collection usually remains slow in the first part of the year and

picks up speed during the second part. We believe if we seek tax from people on the basis of information about their lifestyle, we can achieve our target," NBR Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

The Eid-ul-Azha drew the attention of NBR because a good number of people bought sacrificial animals priced at over Tk 1 lakh each. There were reports that one person alone bought 125 cattle and many people bought more than 20 for the Eid.

NBR officials said they now want to investigate whether the taxes these people pay match such lavish spending.

The NBR has already collected the names of the leaseholders of Eid cattle markets in Dhaka and Chittagong to collect information

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Murder of abducted boy sparks agitation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Hundreds of people of several villages staged demonstration and held a rally at Kadamtola of Solonga Bazar under Solonga upazila in Sirajganj district yesterday afternoon demanding punishment to the abductors and killers of schoolboy Niloy.

Niloy 8, a student of class two of Bika Academy at Kawla in Uttara in the capital, went with his parents to his grandfather's house in Bhoromohoni village of the upazila for celebrating Eid-ul-Azha.

A gang of criminals abducted him on 12 December evening when he was playing in the courtyard of his grandfather's house. They demanded Tk 6 lakh over mobile phone for Niloy's release.

After Niloy's father Abdul Halim filed a case with Solonga Police Station accusing Rintu, Sujon, Ershad and Ershad's wife Kajoli, police on December 14 arrested

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