

4 jewellery shops

FROM PAGE 1
ground floor, they went up to the third floor with the lock picking kits. They bore a hole on the steel gate there using a flame gun.

Video footage recovered from close-circuit television camera (CCTV) recording shows five thieves cutting through the steel shutters, then the collapsible gates and the glass-doors of Parma Jewellers, Konica Jewellers, Preyoshi Jewellers and IK Jewellers with the flame gun.

The thieves used candles, torch lights and the flame gun to light the rooms during the heist.

"One of the thieves was wearing a protective jacket while cutting through the gates. They clearly appear very professional," Emran Chowdhury, owner of IK Jewellers, told The Daily Star.

The surveillance footage shows the burglars bagging the ornaments kept on the showcases at the display sections of all the four shops. After taking the ornaments, they threw the empty boxes on the floor.

The thieves emptied all the showcases of the shops and attempted to break four safes of IK Jewellers. They managed to break two, and looted the gold ornaments that were in the safes.

After looting the ornaments, the thieves broke the cashboxes of all the four shops and looted the money.

"It appears from the video footage that the thieves were holding candles and torch lights and also were using the light emitted from the flame gun during the robbery."

According to the owners of the burglarized shops, the thieves made off with gold ornaments weighing about 2,450 tolas and Tk 1 lakh in cash from IK Jewellers, gold ornaments weighing 3,466 tola and Tk 2 lakh in cash from Konica Jewellers, gold ornaments of 1,205 tola and over Tk 1 lakh in cash from Parma Jewellers, and gold ornaments of 700 tola and Tk 1 lakh in cash from Preyoshi Jewellers. The heist that began at 12:14am continued till 3:30am.

The shop owners said although the whole incident was recorded on the CCTV tape, they could not identify the thieves because the images are hazy.

When security guard Kamal Hossain and his supervisor Muzammel Haq went to relieve guards Salahuddin and Monjurul at their duties at 5:45am, they found both of their colleagues lying unconscious.

"It seems the thieves dragged Salahuddin from the backside of the building to the main entrance and placed him in a way that he seemed to be sitting there totally conscious," said Mozammel.

On information, the owners of the shops rushed there and police rescued the two unconscious guards. Police recovered two screw drivers, a wrench, pliers, a pick, two empty bags and seven candles from the place.

Protesting the heist, shop owners and employees of Mascot Plaza kept their shutters down yesterday. They also brought out a procession and held a rally there before blocking Dhaka-Mymensingh highway

in front of the market at 2:00pm. They vandalised four minibuses as well.

The blockade was withdrawn around 4:00pm after police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) intervened.

Police picked up security company SMS's manager, Sirajul Islam, for interrogation.

The shop owners said security guards Harun Mia and Enayet Kabir -- who have been missing since the incident -- were on duty from 10:00pm Tuesday to 6:00am yesterday.

The law enforcers could not arrest any of the burglars nor could they recover the looted gold or cash till filing of this report at 7:30pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, members of police, CID (Criminal Investigation Department) and Rab interrogated security guards Monjurul and Salahuddin.

"It is quite strange that no one could sense anything although the thieves continued the heist from 12:14am to 3:30am," said Anwar Hossain. He also demanded arrest of those responsible for planning security for the complex.

He said 29 jewellery shops have been burglarized in the city since 2001. In the second biggest heist, the thieves made off with gold ornaments weighing about 6000 tola from Karnaphuli Garden City in 2004. Gold ornaments of 4,500 tola were stolen from Navana Tower in Gulshan in 2005.

In a recent big incident, security guards of Holland Centre Shopping Complex at North Badda apparently helped burglars to steal ornaments, cellular phone sets, accessories, and cash worth over Tk 86 lakh on November 26 this year.

Light finally

FROM PAGE 1
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According to the previously announced official election schedule, December 10 is the last date for filing applications for candidacies, while December 11 is the date for scrutiny of the applications by returning officers. The deadline for withdrawal of candidatures is December 19. The EC sources said, the new election schedule will add on an average ten days to each of the earlier dates, and will defer the polling date by one or two days.

"The date for polling is likely to be deferred by one or two days from the earlier date of January 21," a senior official of the EC Secretariat told The Daily Star. "The date of polling may be fixed for January 23," he said.

The EC now hopes the new schedule will end the crisis and will also help the move to correct the mistakes on the updated voter list, the field level task of which will start from Friday.

While leaving his office in the late evening yesterday, acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, who had declined to talk about an election schedule on November 27, however told reporters this time that he will talk to the media about refixing the election schedule today.

After a late night consultation with the president, the EC in a surreptitious and hasty move on November 27 morning announced the current election schedule pushing the country into further political turmoil.

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition and some other political parties rejected the election schedule outright and launched a boisterous movement demanding cancellation of the schedule while BNP-led four-party alliance kept demanding holding of the election as par the announced schedule.

Finally, the council of advisers initiated a move to resolve the crisis on Friday and after holding a series of meetings with the political parties they came up with a package proposal on Monday that includes rearranging the election schedule, reconstitution of the EC, correction of the voter list and transfer of some secretaries.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Supreme Court Ainjibi Sahokary Samity, an association of the SC lawyers' assistants, also demonstrated and held a rally yesterday on the court premises demanding withdrawal of their names from the case filed by the SC keeper.

The Samity decided to submit a memorandum to the SC registrar demanding removal of Rafiqul Islam, the SC keeper. They would go for tougher programmes if their demand were not met.

Meanwhile, officials of the attorney general will stage a token hunger strike today in protest at the November 30 vandalism.

Sammito Ainjibi Samannay Parishad condemned filing of sedition cases against prominent lawyers including Dr Kamal Hossain, Amir-Ul Islam and Rakanuddin Mahmud falsely. The Parishad also demanded lajuddin Ahmed's resignation from the chief adviser's position of the caretaker government and decided to observe "Protest Day" today by organising lawyers' rallies and processions all over the country.

Kabila sworn in as DR Congo president

BBC Online

Joseph Kabila has been sworn in as president of the Democratic Republic of Congo in front of excited crowds and heads of state in the capital.

He is DR Congo's first freely elected leader in 40 years having defeated Jean-Pierre Bemba in a tense run-off presidential election in October.

The 35-year-old took power in 2001 after his father was assassinated.

He headed a transitional government during the past three years after a peace deal to end a five-year war.

Thousands of guests were in the garden of State House just near the huge and powerful Congo river.

Many people were shading themselves under umbrellas in the national colours of blue, red and yellow.

Several African leaders attended the event including South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki and the Angolan leader, Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

Mr Bemba did not attend the swearing-in ceremony yesterday. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe is also not attending - despite being a close ally of Joseph Kabila's father, Laurent.

Last month, the Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge by Bemba, who claimed the run-off vote was rigged.

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Security

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The police, however, could not arrest anyone in this connection as of 7:00pm yesterday.

They closed the road adjacent to the Bangabhaban boundary wall at Dilkusha end and the road from Gulsan to Rajuk Bhaban, setting up barbed-wire barricades.

The police said two street urchins first noticed the five "objects" wrapped in red tape in a bush at the southeast corner of Paltan Maidan around 3:00pm and informed the on-duty policemen. The law enforcers then called in the Rab explosives experts.

Zakir Hossain, deputy assistant director of Rab bomb disposal wing, told The Daily Star that the bombs are very much like crackers and made up of sulphur and stone chips.

If exploded, the bombs could harm people within the 15-20 yard radius of explosion, Zakir said. Earlier on November 20, a drive-by bomb attack was carried out near the south gate of Bangabhaban. Two homemade bombs were exploded in the highly secured area although no one was injured.

Rise above personal

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violence must never be seen again."

In a joint statement, they demanded that those responsible for the November 30 events must be identified through an open and impartial inquiry and brought to book. "We have a shared responsibility to the nation and to our future generations to preserve and pass on a glorious heritage, and not to damage it by seeing it in the context of a partisan contest in which some may inflict damage on others and claim victory," they said.

Dr Kamal, an architect of the country's constitution, Amir, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and Rakan, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, urged the judges and lawyers to recognise that there are moments in their life and that of the nation when they need to rise above personal differences and concerns.

"Without any doubt, we all cherish the supremacy of the constitution, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary," they said.

"This is the heritage built up over many decades, which surely is our sacred duty to protect. We will have failed to discharge this duty if we do not act together without delay to move away from the path of partisan confrontation," the joint statement said.

"If our institutions are damaged and values are lost, we all will be losers, and history will judge us harshly," the renowned jurists observed.

At the same time, the judges and lawyers must unitedly take an initiative to objectively diagnose and identify the causes of the malaise that has afflicted the functioning and practice of the Supreme Court, they suggested.

They went on, "May we not appeal to and count upon the former chief justices to guide us towards adopting timely corrective measures, after conducting an in-depth inquiry among both judges and lawyers, in order to arrive at a true diagnosis of the prevailing situation?"

The inquiry would need to consider acts and omissions about

Drastic changes

FROM PAGE 1
different ministries on deputation.

The council of advisers had also kept under the package proposal the secretaries to the Election Commission, information and law ministries, and the Local Government Division, but these changes are yet to be made, sources said.

According to establishment ministry circulars, Cabinet Secretary M Abu Solaiman Chowdhury was given forced retirement while his post was given to Ali Imam Majumder, principal secretary to the chief adviser.

Md Abdul Karim, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR), was appointed the establishment secretary, his NBR post being given to Establishment Secretary AFM Solaiman Chowdhury.

Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forest as its Secretary Mohammed Haider Ali was made officer-on-special-duty (OSD) at the establishment ministry.

The government appointed Planning Commission Acting Member ATM Sarwar Hossain as a full member of the commission,

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Khulna BNP

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Similar situation was observed earlier over the nomination in Khulna-3 constituency where on Monday, Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman at a press conference announced that he would consider alternative actions if the party nominates former lawmaker Ashraf Hossain as the candidate for Khulna-3.

Leaders of Khulna-4 including Digholia, Rupsha and Terokhada thanas organised yesterday's press briefing expressing their support for Majedul Islam. They also vowed to resist any other candidate nominated by the party high command.

Syed Mohammad Shahidullah and Sheikh Parvez Sazzad Baula, president and organising secretary of Digholia thana BNP, Chowdhury Kawsar Ali and Sheikh Mezbahul Alam, president and general secretary of Terokhada thana, S M Shahjahan, Khan Saiduzzaman and Enamul Kabir, president, joint general secretary and organising secretary of Rupsha thana BNP, were present at the briefing.

Syed Mohammad Shahidullah said in his written statement, "It's not possible to win in Khulna-4 again without Majedul Islam and we will do anything in protest if the BNP (high command) fails to understand the reality".

Rupsha Thana BNP President SM Shahjahan said the BNP chairperson promised the people in our constituency during her visit in 2001 that Majedul Islam would get the

which serious concern has been felt and expressed for some considerable time but ignored, the jurists added.

They questioned if the judges and lawyers are paying the price for failing to take timely corrective action, and instead allowing the virus of partisanship to infect our decisions.

"Can we not appeal that the inquiry should identify the reasons behind actions taken departing from established practices and precedents, bearing in mind that our judicial and legal heritage has been built upon respect for precedents and past practice?"

"Should this not lead us to ask why a series of unprecedented actions have led to serious grievances, some of which are the subject matter of pending writs?" the three legal experts questioned.

They said these include wholesale non-confirmation of judges and wholesale appointments without effective consultation, to the extent that six appointments are reported to be of persons who had never practised in the Supreme Court, and one of a person whose qualifications raised serious questions.

Promises of corrective action remain unfulfilled and the mode of abruptly withdrawing powers from a bench and assigning cases to particular benches have been unprecedented, they said. The exercise of this power in several cases is perceived as striking at the root of the independence of the judiciary, as was the case of the 'stay' of a hearing before a rule was issued. "All these called for urgent corrective action," they noted.

"Let us strive together to shun the path of divisiveness and confrontation, correct mistakes and affirm our resolve to work together so that our Supreme Court can discharge its constitutional duty to do justice, without fear or favour," said the statement by the eminent lawyers.

No scope

FROM PAGE 1
of Rajshahi division today.

On yesterday's discussion between the caretaker government advisers and 14-party leaders, Bhuiyan said, "Everything must happen within the constitutional provisions. We will give our opinion after getting the government's decision as we do not know what they mean by reforms."

In reply to a question, he said, "I think it is not necessary to hold another meeting between the advisers and us as we have already informed them of our views."

On the latest changes in the administration, Bhuiyan said, "We do not oppose the transfers because we believe the government officials will perform neutrally during the election."

ASPIRANTS' INTERVIEW
A lot of supporters of the aspirants gathered on the Hawa Bhaban premises yesterday. They brought out processions and chanted slogans in support of their leaders.

According to the shifted schedule, the interviews of aspirants from Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts will be taken from 11:00am today while interviews of nomination seekers from Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Rajshahi districts will be held from 3:00pm.

The BNP in its press release asked the nomination seekers not to take part in processions and bear banners and festoons and chant slogans while coming to attend the interview.

Inflation

FROM PAGE 16
Tk 5,000 crore borrowing from banks by the government between July and November of the current fiscal year.

A BB high official said the biggest challenge at the moment is to keep the inflation rates under control despite the satisfactory state of macroeconomic situation.

The finance adviser has discussed with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) officials to review the factors that led to the recent rise in inflation, a finance ministry source said.

The adviser has also taken steps to reduce government expenditure in order to reduce government borrowing from the banking system.

Besides, an inter-ministerial meeting is being arranged to discuss ways to bring down the prices of essentials, the source added.

Tax ombudsman

FROM PAGE 16
accepted, the press release said.

Tax Ombudsman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury last night told The Daily Star that in case of trivial complaints, taxpayers can directly approach the NBR for a solution. If there is a substantial complaint, a hearing will be arranged and necessary steps will be taken, he said.

They will seek to resolve each case within six months, he added.

The ombudsman will present an annual report to the president three months after a calendar year ends and it will then be presented in parliament, according to the Tax Ombudsman Act.

The report will include instances where the NBR does not respond to the tax ombudsman's request to take action on complaints.

The office of the tax ombudsman was created in accordance with the Tax Ombudsman Act, enacted in 2005, to ensure transparency and accountability of the tax administration and management, and to reduce taxpayers' harassment.

Jubo Dal

FROM PAGE 16
accused are District Juba Dal General Secretary Abu Hasan Masud, Joint Secretary Monir Hossain, Vice-President of JCD District Unit Khairul Alam Golden, Organising Secretary ZH Khan Manik, Joint Secretary Masud Haider Tipu, JCD leader Kazi Ilyas Shah Hamidi, Jubo Dal leaders Abu Bakar, Lutfor Rahman and Rafiqul Islam.

The name of the other accused could not be known.

Police in the charge sheet stated that the accused damaged the Chakdevpara mahalla residence of Alamgir and set it on fire on October 26. Later, they set ablaze the pick-up van of Alamgir's younger brother and former president of Raninagar upazila BNP Anwar Hossain Bulu.

Nurunnahar Kabir, wife of ex-BNP leader Alamgir Kabir, filed a case with Naogaon Sadar Police Station on November 3 against the JCD and Jubo Dal men.

Hasina slates filing of cases against lawyers

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday protested the filing of cases on sedition charges against renowned lawyers, including Dr Kamal Hossain, M Amir-Ul Islam and Rakanuddin Mahmud, following the November 30 incident on the Supreme Court premises.

In a statement, Hasina alleged that the cases were filed with a view to tarnishing the image of the noted lawyers.

Expressing concern, Hasina, also the former prime minister, observed that the current events at the apex court are pushing the country into a "deep crisis", which is not desired by any citizen.

Seeking immediate withdrawal of the case, she called upon all concerned to uphold the image of the highest Judiciary.

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France for quick

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countries--France, Britain, Germany, Russia, China and the United States--were unable to agree a draft UN resolution at a meeting on Tuesday and France said several key differences remain between the West and Russia.

"Are we in a hurry or not?" French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said at a news conference. "Yes, because I believe, as someone said earlier, that the credibility of the United Nations Security Council is at stake."

Iran denies Western charges that its nuclear programme is a cover for an atomic weapons programme but was ordered by the Security Council to freeze enrichment for failing to convince the world that its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

"My opinion is that we will find a common solution to be united within the framework of a Security Council resolution," he added.

A European diplomat said on Tuesday that France, Britain and Germany, who drafted the original sanctions proposal, told Russia they wanted a resolution to be passed by the end of the year so as to preserve the UN body's credibility.

Douste-Blazy did not, however, say when he expected agreement to be reached. He also said before Tuesday's meeting that he thought all sides were ready to reach a deal.

A diplomat from the 'EU3' said much work remained.

"The gap between the Russian and U.S. positions is still huge," an EU3 diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. The goal had been to have a resolution before Christmas, but it now appeared that would not be the case, he said.

After forcing the Europeans to water down their sanctions plans over the past weeks and spurning tough measures against Iran, the Russians indicated a compromise might be possible, prompting Tuesday's hastily arranged talks.

TELEPHONE TALKS
The Russians agreed to export bans on more technology and materials that could be used in Iran's nuclear or ballistic-missile programmes but little progress had been made on financial sanctions against people and organizations linked to sensitive work, or on visa bans, the European diplomat said.