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Ctg businessman
rescued after
gunfight with
miscreants

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 11: The abducted businessman, Ashraf Ali, 45, was rescued this morning by police after half an hour-long gunfight with the armed gang known as Iskander Bahini at Hingala village under Raozan thana.

But no casualty was reported from either side during the gunfight between Detective Branch of Chittagong Metropolitan Police and the Iskander Bahini.

DB police raided the house of one Shamsul Alam at Hingala village at around 10:30 am today where the victim was kept hostage since January 6 demanding a ransom of Tk 14 lakh.

Assistant Commissioner of DB Atiqur Rahman in a press release said that the raid was made at the hideout of Iskander Bahini at Raozan after tactfully arresting one of its members Zafr alias Nasir. Nasir had come to Nasirabad to collect a cheque book from the victim's wife following an earlier telephonic conversation.

As per confession of arrested Nasir, the DB contingent went to Hingala village of Raozan. But sensing the presence of police the terrorists opened fire. Police also returned the fire which continued for about half an hour.

At one stage, the terrorists fled into the jungles of the hills at Hingala leaving behind the victim.

BTV to telecast
live President's
JS speech

The Bangladesh Television will telecast live the speech of President Shahabuddin Ahmed from Parliament on January 14, the opening day of the winter session, reports UNB.

As the timing of the President's speech will coincide with the final match of the Independence Cup Cricket Tournament, the BTV will not be able to telecast the match during the President's address at Parliament.

However, the BTV will telecast the recorded portion of the match the same day at some other time for viewers, said an official handout.

Gold bars worth
Tk 1 cr seized
at Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 11: The Detective Branch of police seized 102 pieces of gold bars worth about Tk one crore from Chowdhuki area of the town this afternoon.

Acting on a tip-off, the DB team chased a private car from Sylhet Osmany Airport at about 3:30 pm and intercepted it at Chowdhuki area.

The team arrested two persons and seized gold bars weighing 1020 grams from them.

The arrested were identified as Mahfuzur Rahman, son of Enam Chowdhury of village Barohat under Jakiganj thana and Kamaluddin, son of Aminul Haque of village Kachu under Feni district.

The DB officials suspected that the gold bars were brought from Dubai.

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Crises of Our
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Hafiz

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and Towards an
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International

24 Shi'ite Muslims
killed in Lahore
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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
12	12	5-20	5-34
13	13	5-20	5-35
14	14	5-21	5-35

India in Independence Cup final Azhar's hefty slap

Sports Reporter

Sachin Tendulkar hit a majestic half-century, took three brilliant catches and a crucial return catch to steer India to the finals of the Coca-Cola Independence Cup, slapping a 18-run defeat on arch-rivals Pakistan at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The 24-year-old right-hander, opening the innings with Saurav Ganguly, scored a blistering 67 of only 44 balls to lay the foundation of an imposing Indian total of 245 for seven in

a reduced 37-over-a-side affair. Together with skipper Mohammad Azharuddin, who celebrated his first ton against Pakistan, Tendulkar shared 98 runs for the second wicket after the blood and thunder second match of the tri-nation tourney got off to a delayed start due to bad light.

The kamikaze kid then pulled off two stunning catches to dismiss dashing opener Shahid Khan Afridi and left-handed Aamir Sohail to put a

spoke in the Pakistan spanner. And as if it was not enough, Tendulkar then sent to pavilion a menacingly-poised Inzamamul Haq, who was about to turn the tables around with three successive sixes.

After removing dangerous Inzamam, then at 77, Sachin clung on to a well-judged catch of Azhar Mahmood at deep square-leg to effectively dismiss the hopes of Pakistan who, facing a daunting task of

scoring 6.64 runs per over, folded their innings at 227 for eight.

It was a good toss to lose for Azharuddin who after being put into bat by his Pakistani counterpart, sent Tendulkar to open the innings with left-handed Ganguly.

The little master, racing on

to complete his fastest fifty in one-day international, off only 30 balls, struck 11 sweetly-timed boundaries, which included a quartet in Azhar Mahmood's one prodigal over.

With Tendulkar in frenzy with a flurry of shots much to the delight of a full-house crowd at the Dhaka Stadium, Indian 100 came in only in 11.3 overs.

It was Tendulkar's second consecutive half-century in the tournament. He was eventually gone in the 17th over, but his side was already comfortably placed with 112 for two in 16.5 overs.

Azharuddin then found a wily partner in Navjot Sidhu to guide India cross the 200-mark before the latter departed for 36. Sidhu, run out for a duck without playing a single ball in the inaugural match against Bangladesh the previous day, clubbed three fours in his 43-ball campaign at the crease.

Dropped by Rashid Latif on 79, Azhar completed his fifth one-day hundred, exactly hundred it was, in the final over before Saqlain Mushtaq had the right-hander caught by Afridi.

The Hyderabad-born right-hander clouted seven fours in his watchful knock.

Off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq, capturing the wickets of Tendulkar and Azhar, returned most successful among the Pakistani bowlers with four for 41 runs in his quota of eight overs.

Pakistan were off to a disastrous start losing four wickets for 62 runs. Afridi, the world record holder for the fastest century in limited-over cricket, scored only five before new-ball bowler Mohanty had the hard-hitter caught by Tendulkar in the first slip.

Make-shift opener Ijaz, who scored a breezy 18 off 11 balls.

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TONGUE TELLS: Azharuddin rarely had it so good in the recent times. The Indian captain was among the runs for the successive day in the Independence Cup at the Dhaka Stadium. Here he sweeps leggie Manzoor on his way to first one day ton against Pakistan.

— Star photo

Saga of Radio-TV autonomy-V Much ado about nothing?

By Reaz Ahmad

Members of the commission that formulated the report on Radio-TV autonomy expressed utter disappointment at the non-implementation of their report even some six months after its submission to the Prime Minister.

"It was a team's love-labour sadly wasted", observed M Asafuddoula, Chairman of the 16-member Autonomy Commission, expressing a deep sense of frustration, that also exists among his team members.

The commission was set up in September, 1996 at the directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in line with her party's much-propagated election pledge and repeated commitment to people to give autonomy to Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television (BTV). The UNDP provided funds to facilitate the commission members' foreign trips that helped them to learn about other countries' experience of media autonomy. At the end of several foreign trips and a series of discussions and consultations the

commission submitted a detailed report to the Prime Minister in August last year.

When asked why he was saying "sadly wasted", commission chairman said, "Was the report we produced so bad that it was not worthy of being published, not to speak of its implementation?"

Asafuddoula recalled with deep regret how his commission was "cold-shouldered" while preparing its report. "Now it seems that the report is being kept in cold storage," he added.

After repeated invitations to present himself before the commission for giving his views as the minister concerned, the State Minister for Information did not turn up.

Instead, the then information secretary was sent to represent him before the commission", said Asafuddoula.

He questioned the logic behind keeping the report "confidential". "I, along with my prudent colleagues in the commission, tried to put our best possible efforts in preparing the report. I have not heard

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anything regarding its implementation."

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Welcome sunlight

By Special Correspondent

The sun finally shined yesterday, breaking free the clutches of the fog shrouding it for over a week.

It provided some warmth against the biting cold that continued to grip most of the country yesterday.

But there was no respite from the cold that continued to be unbearable for the poor, especially in the northern region, where the minimum temperature ranged between 5.4 to 5.5 degree Celsius yesterday, according to the Met Office.

A Met Office forecast said that despite touches of haze in the morning, the sky will remain mainly clear, but partly cloudy today.

It said the cold wave will continue to be felt strongly in Faridpur, Chuadanga, Pabna and Jessore regions. Rest of the country other than the Chittagong division will also remain under the grip of the cold cold spell, the forecast added.

Sources said a move to extend the PSC has been initiated and some people in the upper tier of the administration are very much sympathetic to Occidental regarding extension of the contract.

As the termination deadline was drawing near, Occidental

Hosts fight for final today

Sports Reporter

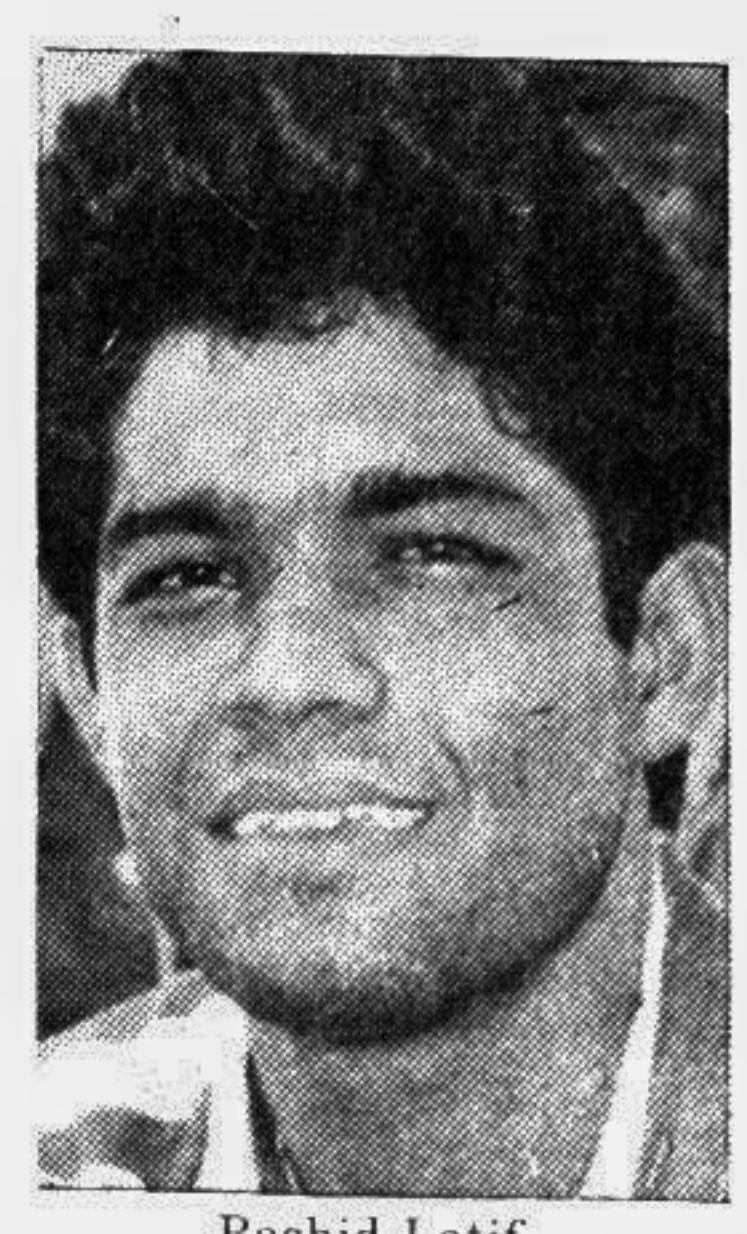
Pakistan will take on hosts Bangladesh in a crucial match of the Coca-Cola Independence Cup at the Dhaka Stadium today.

Weather permitting, the last league match of the week-long tourney will start at 9 in the morning.

The match between the two unequal opponents turned into a very important one as both Pakistan and Bangladesh suffered defeats at the hand of India, who made it to the three-match finals with an 18-run win over their arch-rivals yesterday.

When the fancied former world champions, who won all of their four previous one-day encounters against Bangladesh, will try to extend their winning record to five, Bangladesh, who after their spirited showings against India, will be looking

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Rashid Latif
Fire at Joydevpur
bazar: Two
boys die of
suffocation

GAZIPUR, Jan 11: Two teenaged boys died of suffocation during a fire that broke out at Joydevpur Bazar, gutting five shops, including three jewellery shops, early today, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Sudev, 15, of Panchona in Narsingdi and Zahir, 14, of Mirzapur in Tangail districts.

Another teenaged boy Karim, also a victim of suffocation, admitted to Kumudini Hospital at Mirzapur in a critical condition.

The three boys, employees of "Priya Jewellers", fell victim to suffocation as the shop was closed during the fire. The bodies of Sudev and Zahir were sent to Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Witnesses said the blaze started at about 2:30 am from a shop of the bazar and soon engulfed the other shops.

Firefighters from the district headquarters rushed to the spot and extinguished the flame after an hour long hectic efforts. The extent of damage was said to be more than Tk 10 lakh.

Demands of admin cadre sent to JS body for scrutiny

By Special Correspondent

The government yesterday said the demands of the BCS administration cadre have been sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Establishment Ministry for scrutiny 'since it involves interests of all cadre services'.

The government will take necessary steps as per advice of the Standing Committee, an official handout said last night.

It said: 'An action committee of BCS (Administration) cadre has announced a programme to hold a rally inside the secretariat tomorrow (Monday) to realise their demands including upgradation of some of their posts.... Government officials' holding a rally inside the secretariat is not desirable. Since the government would take necessary steps as per advise of the Parliamentary Standing Committee'.

Administration cadre officials are scheduled to stage protests before the finance minister's chamber at 10 am today and hold a meeting with him. They accuse the finance ministry of suspending the upgradation, ordered by the prime minister.

Their agitation stirred protests from other cadres in

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Occidental's prayer for extension Govt urged to seek legal advice on fate of PSC

By Sharier Khan

The Petrobangla sent a letter to the Energy Ministry yesterday suggesting that the government should seek legal advice on the termination or extension of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with the Occidental for blocks 13 and 14.

As per its provisions, the PSC was