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The Daily Star

VOL. VIII NO. 331 REGD. NO. DA 781

INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

POUSH 12 1405 BS

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 26, 1998

RAMADAN 6, 1419 HIJRI

16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

Damaged gas line yet to be repaired

By Staff Correspondent

The Titas Gas authorities failed to engage Fire Brigade divers yesterday to repair the damaged under-water 12-inch diameter gas pipeline in Turag river below Mirpur bridge.

"It was not possible for us to arrange Fire Brigade divers because of holiday. They declined to work on holiday," a Titas Gas official said.

The damaged pipeline continued to emit gas, creating enormous bubbles at the spot. Many mechanised and non-mechanised boats were seen passing close to the troubled spot.

No guard was found at the site during a visit to the spot by this correspondent yesterday afternoon.

The Titas Gas authorities which earlier sought the Navy's help in repairing the damage will hold the second round of talks at the Naval headquarters on Sunday, sources said.

Divers on Thursday identified the damaged section of the pipeline. They found that the safety concrete coating on the 50-pound pressure pipeline was severely damaged when it was hit by a mechanised boat on Wednesday. It is one of the main supply lines of gas for the capital's western part including Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas.

The Titas Gas is considering sending vigilance teams to inspect gas pipelines, specially those under water and under bridges in the city, its Managing Director Sekendar Hayat told The Daily Star yesterday. A committee will be formed to investigate the incident under Turag river, he said.

One killed, 5 hurt as AL-BNP clash in Sujanagar

PABNA, Dec 25: An old man was killed and five others were injured in a clash between the supporters of Awami League and BNP at Tatibandh village in Sujanagar thana today, reports UNB.

The clash took place after two weeks of the by-election in Pabna-2 constituency.

The dead was identified as Mobarak Molla, 80, of the village. All the injured — Qudus Molla, 47, Binot Molla, 36, Jotian, 35, Abdul Molla, 45, and Jadu Molla, 38, were admitted to Pabna General Hospital.

Local people said the clash between the two groups erupted at about 5 pm.

Local AL alleged that the AL supporters attacked them due to political rivalry centring the by-election.

However, Awami League denied BNP allegation.

Mizan reinstated

Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury has been reinstated as Vice Chairman of the party, reports UNB.

JP Chairman H M Ershad reinstated the elderly leader of the party in all his posts, including the Member of the party Presidium and Vice Chairman of the central working committee, said a press release.

Meanwhile, a presidium meeting of the party will be held at chairman's office at Baridhara in the city at 11 am today.

Inside Today

Article

President Clinton impeached

High Drama in the US Congress

Column : The Horizon

This Week

by Arshad-uz Zaman

Page 4

Business

Merchant banks still mere spectators in capital market

Indian fiscal deficit set to exceed target

Pages 8, 9

Star Literature

Music: Impromptu Jazz from Germany; Book

Review: Two Prose in Parallel; and Fiction:

Rib Number Thirteen

Pages 6&7

Shri, Ifar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Shri	Ifar
6	26	5-23	
7	27	5-14	5-23
8	28	5-15	5-24



Feeling the bite

Mercury fell down to 11.4 degree Celsius in the city yesterday, the lowest so far this winter, giving people a feel of cold.

— Star photo by Enamul Huq

Benu says he and Khaleque joined AL voluntarily

Ward Commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation Ismail Hossain Benu who also joined the ruling party along with S A Khaleque on Thursday said they both did it voluntarily, reports UNB.

"Khaleque and I joined Bangladesh Awami League willingly and it was a result of our three months' efforts," Benu, a BNP leader and ward commissioner of Mirpur area, told newsmen yesterday amid a wave of controversies over his colleague's latest political turn-about.

He narrated the backdrop of their joining Awami League at a press conference at a community centre at Pallabi.

The press conference followed a riddle that city BNP leader S A Khaleque joined Awami League offering flowers to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and then described the joining as an act "coerced by DGP", making a dramatic appearance at an ifar party hosted by BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia the same evening.

Khaleque made the volte face being frustrated for not getting any hopes from the Prime Minister about his future status in the party, Benu said. "Besides, continued pressure from BNP also made him deny joining Awami League," the ward commissioner told reporters.

Benu said on December 24, he boarded the Nishan Patrol car of Kamal Ahmed Majumder MP and went to the residence of Khaleque. He changed his dress keeping up in his drawing room.

Later, we all together moved towards the Prime Minister's office in the MP's car. No other person was there, bar its driver."

On the way, he said, the two bought two bouquets from the roadside and joined the Awami League in a "cordial atmosphere".

To a query, Benu said Khaleq wanted to know about his position in the party, but he did not receive any specific assurances

from the Prime Minister, which might have frustrated him.

"What more do you want? You are with me," Benu quoted Hasina as telling Khaleque in this regard.

At this stage, Mayor Hanif advised Khaleque to keep faith in Bangabandhu's daughter. Khaleque then said to the Prime Minister: "Now you are my guardian. Please take care of me."

Benu said the joining ceremony over, they left the Prime Minister's office with the local MP and Khaleque got down at his residence.

But in the evening, Khaleque's "embarrassing and confusing statement puzzled us all," he added.

At the press conference local Awami League leaders and his supporters were present.

The Director-General of Forces Intelligence has rebutted the news implicating the agency in BNP leader S A Khaleque's contentious joining of the ruling party.

We want to ensure religious rights of all: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina yesterday said her government wants to build a society where there will be no discrimination and every one will enjoy their due rights, reports UNB.

"We want such a society where nobody will snatch the rights of others and will work unitedly imbued with patriotism... we want everyone to live with full religious rights," she said.

Hasina was talking to the members of Christian community who gathered on the green lawn of the PM's official residence on the occasion of holy Christmas.

Christians of all ages — young and old, men and women — joined the function at Ganobhaban premises at the invitation of the Prime Minister.

At the beginning of the function in the afternoon, a group of little boys and girls presented Christmas Carol and exchanged greetings with the Prime Minister.

See Page 12 Col 8

6 of a family burnt alive in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 25: At least seven persons, six of them a family, were burnt alive in a devastating fire in the city's Pahartoli Sarapara area in the early hours of today, police and Fire Brigade sources said.

The six are the mother, Jahanara Khanam, 38, and all her five sons and daughters Selina Aktar, 14, Jasim Uddin, 12, Shahnewaz Begum, 9, Monir Hossain, 5, and Sumon, 3. The other victim is Hajera Begum, 40, of a neighbouring family, police said.

The fire broke out from the oven when Jahanara was cooking sehti at about 3 am and her husband, transport worker Abul Kashem was asleep with their children, witnesses said.

The fire spread in minutes, its licking flames engulfing a cluster of 10 tin-shed and bamboo structures while all were asleep.

Hearing screams of his wife, Kashem made a frantic bid to

come out with his children but failed. He managed to storm out but his family was burnt alive inside, the witnesses said.

Hundreds of people from nearby areas rushed for help, making desperate bids to save the screaming inmates and douse the fire. It was a heart-rending scene. The affected people were wailing and many of the onlookers were in tears, the witnesses said.

Fire Brigade rushed to the spot immediately after getting the information and put out the fire in about an hour.

As inmates of the gutted houses were frantically trying to escape, they could not save any household goods, witnesses said.

Police later recovered the charred bodies. The incident cast a pall of gloom in the city.

According to Fire Brigade, the loss of properties was estimated at one lakh 50 thousand taka.

Accused DU teacher blames 'outsiders' VC blames newspapers for 'baseless' reports

By DU Correspondent

The Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University has said any attempt to tarnish the image of teachers of the university will not be tolerated.

At a seminar on Policy of the newspaper and ethics of the newspaper, organised by Dhaka University Journalists Association at "TSC cafeteria" yesterday, VC Prof AK Azad Chowdhury alleged that a particular quarter was trying to tarnish the image of the university and its teachers.

He also alleged that some newspapers were publishing "baseless and fabricated" reports that DU teachers were involved in sexual abuses.

The VC said on the basis of an interim report, action has been taken as regards a teacher against whom complaint was lodged. Stern action would be taken against any teacher found guilty by the inquiry committee.

He said there are now two

groups active in the field — one demanding punishment to the teachers and the other trying to protect their image.

He urged both groups not to observe any programme concerning alleged sexual offences of teachers till the probe body report is published.

Meanwhile, Emran Hossain, a teacher of political science of DU yesterday denied allegations that he had sexually abused a female student of the department in 1997.

In a press release, he said that some outsiders had been spreading misleading, untrue, fabricated and politically motivated reports.

See Page 12 Col 3

It monitoring of Ganges water flow from Jan 1

PABNA, Dec 25: Officials of Bangladesh and India will start joint monitoring of the Ganges water flow at Farakka Barrage in India and Hardinge Bridge point in Ishwardi from January 1, the beginning of five-month lean period, reports APB.

The joint-monitoring of the flow of waters by the two countries during the lean period has been envisaged in the 30-year water sharing treaty signed between the two countries on December 12, 1996.

Official sources said a two-member expert team from Bangladesh left for India on December 19 for monitoring the flow of the Ganges water at the Farakka Barrage point.

Members of the delegation are Executive Engineer of Hydrology Department Azizul Haq and Deputy Engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) Mohammad Rafiqul Islam.

Sources said, the Indian team, however, is yet to arrive at the observation point and their names could not be known till now.

Under the water-sharing treaty, Bangladesh is to get 67.516 cusecs (cubic foot per second) of water during the first 10-day cycle from January 1.

The flow of the Padma is presently over 100,000 cusecs, an engineer of WDB told local journalists, who made a spot visit to the Hardinge Bridge point on December 24.

CPA, dock workers sign accord on incentive scheme

CHITTAGONG, Dec 25: A memorandum of understanding to introduce the much awaited incentive scheme for the dock workers of Chittagong Port was signed here today, reports BSS.

According to official sources, the agreement was signed between authority of the Chittagong Port and leaders of three dock workers unions in presence of Deputy Minister Sabir Hossain Chowdhury at Port Rest House.

Chairman of Chittagong Port Rezwanul Haq, signed on behalf of the government and Hazi Yunus, Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and Abdul Khaleque Chowdhury signed on behalf of the dock workers.

The port users also in principles agreed to implement the incentive scheme.

See Page 12 Col 3

Election Commission Secretariat Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

No. ECS/ID/Publication/13/98/367

Dated: 7 Poush, 1405 BS/21 December, 1998

Sub : Regarding production, collection & preservation of voter's identity card.

Bangladesh Election Commission has been given the responsibility under Election Rules, to provide all voters in the country with identity cards. The voter's identity card production programme has resumed throughout the country from last week of November '98, who have not got their photograph taken earlier for voter's identity card are requested to get their photographs taken by going to the camp set up at their respective union/municipality/municipal corporation/village/mahalla & ward. Each esteemed voter is requested to know the time table of his/her respective area. Besides, the thana polling officers/Assistant Registration officers will arrange for announcing the location of camp & timetable in your area through miking and posters & leaflets.

Voter's identity card will be used not only at the time of casting vote but also in 14 additional cases viz. 1) fixed property transfer, 2) mutation & substitution in matters of property, 3) land settlement among the landless, 4) compensation of land acquisition, 5) marriage registration, 6) procurement of various licences & permits (fire arms, driving, various trade, contractory, radio, television etc), 7) procurement of passport, 8) issue of boarding pass in air travel (in the interest of security, specially domestic), 9) receiving loan or transaction from bank/financing institution, 10) VGF/VGD, 11) all relief receipts, 12) identification of plaintiff, witness & accused in court cases, 13) interview for job & 14) obtaining any govt facility, as document aiding identification. Thus the voter's identity card bears a great importance.

It's a duty of all esteemed voters to get photographed by going to camps set up at village/mahalla/ward and inspiring others in the matter, collect voter's identity card and preserve it. As such the esteemed voters are requested to get photographed by going to the camp set up at their respective village/mahalla/ward of their respective union/municipality/municipal corporation. After production of ID card it will be distributed among the voters on behalf of Election Commission. Each voter is requested to properly preserve the identity card after receiving it.

In case of any problem, please contact the thana Nirbahi Officer/Thana Polling Officer & Assistant Registration Officer of your Thana.

Public representatives, political activists, social workers, NGOs, all Govt Departments & all esteemed conscious citizens are also requested to extend all possible cooperation in production & distribution of voter's identity card.

Md Helal Uddin Khan

Additional Secretary &

Project Director

Voter's ID Card Project.

DFP-26899-22/12

G-2886

Gunbattle in Sundarbans leaves 4 pirates dead

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 25: Fierce gunbattle between two rival groups of pirates in the Sundarbans Wednesday afternoon left at least four dead and 25 injured.

Two of the injured — Fazul Huq, 30, and Bikash Pande, 32, — were handed over to Shyamnagar thana police on Thursday noon. They were found lying on the bank of Mahananda canal with severe bullet injuries.

According to police and eyewitnesses, both the groups were locked in gunfight for about four hours in the canal of Mahananda near Raimangal river.

Kawser Ali, a boatman and the two injured pirates now in custody told police that the gunbattle took place between the 'Kalu Bahini' of the Sundarbans and the 'Kiron Bahini' of Shyamnagar border area over sharing of extorted money, looted goods and poached of tiger and deer.

Shyamnagar thana police today went to the spot to recover the bodies.

Bikash Pande, one of the two

injured rounded up from Mahananda canal is an Indian national by birth. Police quoting Pande said pirates of Kiron Bahini took away two mechanised trollers, firearms and ammunition of Kalu Bahini.

The pirates coming from across the border often create reign of terror in the Sundarbans and loot money, belongings of 'Bawalis' and fishermen, said an official of the Sundarbans Forest Division.

AL activist shot dead

JESSORE, Dec 25: A former

UP member and an activist of the ruling Awami League was stabbed and then shot dead by unidentified assailants at Raghunathpur village in Sarsha thana of the district on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said Nurul Islam, 45, former member of Bahadurpur UP, came under attack while he was going to Benapole Bazar at 2 pm.

Sultana feeling homely, gaining weight at zoo

By Shehab Ahmed

Sultana is making steady progress after finding a new home and a 'mother' at the Dhaka Zoological Garden. She was rescued by forest guards from a water hole at a deep forest at Ramu in Cox's Bazar on October 24.

"Her health is good, she is suckling 12 litres of pasturised semi-skimmed milk everyday," Dr Begum Nurjahan told The Daily Star last week about the health of the zoo's latest addition, the baby elephant which was only eight days old when she took her charge.

She weighed only 65 kg when she arrived at the zoo, emaciated, sick with diarrhoea and traumatised after a long journey in a pick-up van on October 28.

The forest guards and a zoo vet picked her up at Ramu after forest department officials brought her walking down the



Sultana, the baby elephant, and a child at the Dhaka Zoo.

—Star photo