

# The Daily Star



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## Opposition leaders may not attend Paris meet

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Opposition representatives including former Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman are not attending World Bank-sponsored Paris Investment Forum meeting from April 21 though efforts were on about their participation in the meeting. BBC radio reported yesterday.

The World Bank took the initiative to include opposition leaders to attend the meeting but they declined to attend when the government proposed the opposition leaders to be part of its team, the radio said.

Saifur Rahman told the radio that he was eager to play his role in boosting investment in the country following invitation from the World Bank. BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia also gave the green signal to his participation. But the opposition leaders declined to attend the investment forum meeting as government representatives, the BBC said.

At least 30 companies from the USA and Europe along with some private companies from Bangladesh are likely to attend the investment forum aimed at attracting investors in the infrastructure projects.

BBC quoted World Bank Dhaka resident mission chief Frederick Temple as saying that the volatile political situation in Bangladesh would be underlined in the Paris investment forum meeting.

## Loadshedding, water crisis on Eid days

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Loadshedding and poor water supply have marred Eid celebrations in many city areas.

Although massive loadshedding or water supply shortfall during Eid holidays are unusual as industries and offices — remain shut, residents of Dhanmondi, Elephant Road, Mirpur, parts of Old Dhaka, Shahjahanpur and other areas complained to The Daily Star that the situation was as bad as usual.

The dry, hot weather made the life of city dwellers in those areas miserable.

See Page 12 Col 5

## Shazneen murder Order for charge framing today

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The judge of the Narl O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Adalat will deliver order regarding framing of charges against the accused persons in the Shazneen murder case today. Hearing on the matter ended yesterday.

Defence lawyers submitted before the court that none of the accused were involved in killing or raping Shazneen. Arguing for relieving the accused of charges, the defence lawyers said trial of the same case cannot continue in two courts at a time. Hearing of another case on Shazneen murder is continuing in the first metropolitan additional Sessions Judge's Court, they added.

Accused Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu, Parveen and Shahid were produced before the court during the hearing yesterday.

**Announcement**  
Due to the Eid holidays Star Weekend Magazine will not be published on Friday (April 2). We regret inconvenience to our valued readers.

## Inside Today

### Article

**Return of Star Wars and its Likely Repercussions**  
Column: Panorama by Dilara Choudhury Page 4

### Alternatives

Electoral process in Bangladesh: Rationales for reforms; Electoral system in Pakistan: Issues in debate Pages 6 & 7

### Prayer Timings

April 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:30	5:35
Zohr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:30	4:35
Maghrib	6:20	6:23
Esha	7:30	7:35

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Rivals slaughter two Naogaon AL leaders

**ATRAI (Naogaon), Mar 31:** Two ruling party leaders of Atrai thana were killed by assailants and the Officer-in-Charge of the police station was mobbed for inaction yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

Police and villagers said Atrai thana Awami League president Advocate Siddique Rahman Raja and Sramik League convener Arun Kumar Sarkar were attacked and slaughtered by their political opponents at Jagdas village in No-4 Panchpur union at about 5:30 pm.

The victims were returning home by a motorbike after attending some organisational programmes, including the opening of a cricket tournament, at Poishita village, far off the thana headquarters.

From Poishita, Raja went to Barsat village where, after saying his Jôhr prayers at a mosque, he attended a party

meeting. Lastly, he went to Baitakhal village and also attended a meeting there.

On their way back, the gunmen in the guise of beggars intercepted them at Jagdas village and then brought out their arms from a nearby pile of straw.

Smelling foul play, Raja, Arun and Moktar Hossain, Publicity Secretary of the thana unit of Juba League, abandoned the motorbike and tried to run away. "As Raja fell down in mud, the attackers indiscriminately stabbed him in his entire body and finally slit his throat," said a witness.

They also stabbed Arun to death when he tried to save Raja. Moktar managed to flee the scene.

After the incident, Atrai thana OC Zulfiqar Ali Gazzali went to the spot with one officer and two constables by a motorbike at about 7:30 pm at the request of local Awami League

leaders.

As they arrived, agitated villagers encircled the policemen and requested them to go for action, but they refrained from proceeding further on the plea that they were not carrying arms. At this stage, the people swooped on police and assaulted the OC.

The bodies of Raja and Arun were sent to Naogaon Sadar Hospital for autopsy. The dead were brought home today for burial.

Police could not yet ascertain the political identity of the assassins and the motive behind the killings.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim flew to Atrai this afternoon, along with IGP AYBI Siddiqui, and held meeting with local Awami League leaders and the administration to take stock of the situation.

Narrating the gruesome See Page 12 Col 1

## Decomposed body at DB office Victim identified, police claim

**Star Report**  
Police have claimed that they have identified the man whose decomposed body was discovered in the water tank of the DB office in the city after cleaners found a driving license and a card while washing the reservoir on Thursday.

According to the police, the dead was identified as Jalal Ahmed alias Shafi, a resident of 8/8 Lalmatia, Block-B under Mohamadpur thana who hailed from Patia of Chittagong. He was a professional driver, mainly driving his own microbus with a tour operator known as Dhaka Tours. His driving license dated back to 1967.

Acting upon clues, the investigating officials rounded up six persons from the canteen of the DB office in connection with the killing. They are Anwar Hossain, Piroze, Mamun, Zafar, Zahir and Mizan. Anwar is the lease holder of the canteen and a former president of the Rent-a-car Association.

CID and DB investigators were also interrogating the victim's wife, 40-year-old Halima Khatun and her daughter Popi. Police are now looking for one Kabir, who allegedly called out

## Khaleda says Dialogue only if govt comes up with specific proposals

**BNP is likely to join a dialogue with the government to resolve the long-standing political stalemate if the government comes up with specific proposals, reports UNB.**

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia indicated this while talking to a group of newsmen at her official residence yesterday evening.

"We can sit across the table to resolve the current political crisis if the ruling party comes forward with specific proposal. The ruling party is not sincere to their words and deeds," she said replying to a correspondent.

See Page 12 Col 8

## BTV to telecast Indo-Pak match

Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast live the cricket match between India and Pakistan of the tri-nation Pepsi tournament to be held at Mohali today, reports BSS.

The match will be telecast through ESPN Star Sports channel, BTV sources said.

BTV will also telecast live the final match of the tournament which will be held on Sunday.



President Shahabuddin Ahmed offering his Eid prayers at the National Eidgah Maidan in the city on Monday. — Star photo

## Mastaans rule Eid cattle market in city

**By Special Correspondent**  
Mastaans ruled the cattle market for the Eid-ul Azha in the city. They used guns and exploded bombs at some places to drive away traders and buyers alike from the markets in a bid to jack up the prices.

Gangsters took over the main cattle market at Gabtali on Mirpur road, allowing only a limited number of trucks carrying sacrificial animals to reach the market to keep prices 'stable'. Others controlled the Sawarighat on the Buriganga, another major entry point to different city markets.

They also regulated the flow of cattle trucks and boats to the city through various other routes. In some cases, they forced the traders to flee the markets keeping the cattle in their 'safe custody', witnesses said.

The local mastaans at different places used their muscles to collect hides and skin after the 'kurbanî', not allowing genuine traders to buy those.

About a dozen toughs ran the show at Gabtali Sunday and Monday night and also used mobile phones in doing the mischief.

What had been a buyers' market till Sunday morning

turned into a sellers' one as the goons created an artificial crisis in supply, shooting prices high. The price charged for a bull rose to Tk 10-16 thousand by afternoon from Tk 7-8 thousand in the morning.

This made the desperate buyers race from one market to another.

Some were lucky enough to get their cattle from the roving bands of traders who had to flee the markets virtually taken over by mastaans.

A cattle market, in such a situation, sprang up at Asad gate. It saw rush of buyers by evening but supply was poor with spiralling prices.

Hoodlums created a reign of terror at the temporary markets at Azimpur, Lalbagh and Chankar Pool early Sunday.

They fired shots in the air and exploded home-made bombs scaring away the large number of buyers, witnesses said.

They alleged Tiger Babu, a gang leader, was seen running the show at Azimpur market with a mobile phone at about 1 p.m. His pictures were carried by national dailies in December last after his brief rendezvous

on city streets with a shot gun.

He is said to be a close associate of Lalbagh MP Haji Mohammed Selim. According to police, he is on the wanted list.

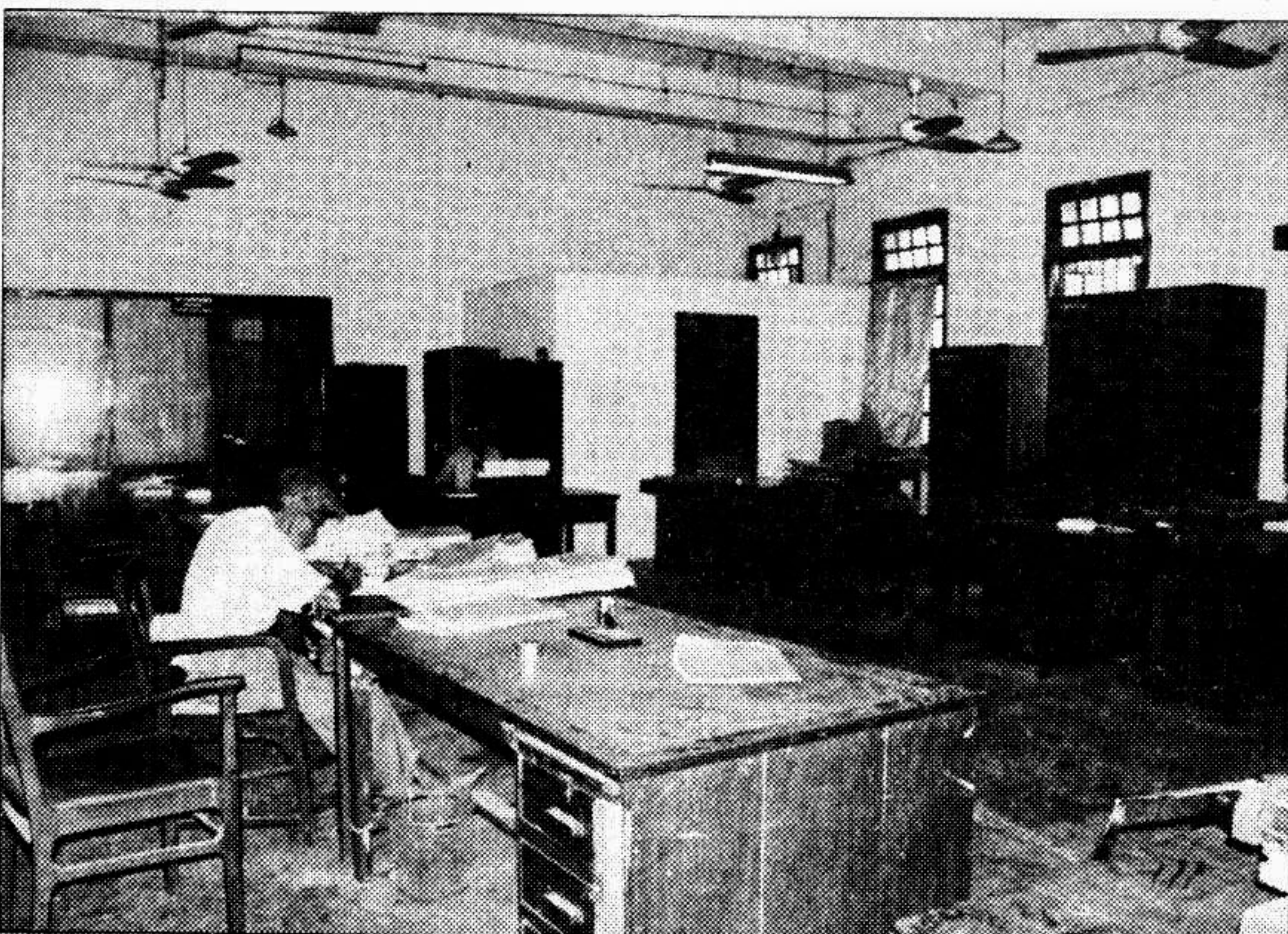
Police, who visited Azimpur market shortly after the incident, said there was 'nothing so serious'. There was a bit trouble, a police official told this correspondent at 1:30 pm.

But police at Lalbagh, Mirpur, Tejgaon thanas denied that there was anything wrong with the cattle markets in their respective jurisdictions.

Buyers reported that they were waiting for a good bargain seeing a good supply of cattle at different DCC-sponsored markets in the city.

DCC Estate Officer Ehsanul Fattah told The Daily Star Wednesday evening that he had heard of the incidents as 'you did'. But he would not say more before he goes to office Thursday and see the reports.

A large number of personnel including zonal officers with magisterial power were deployed by the DCC recently to maintain order at the cattle market. They had at their disposal vehicles and police to assist them.



Holiday mood still prevails in offices. — Star photo

## City still in holiday hangover

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The capital appeared to be in a holiday hangover yesterday, a day after the three-day vacation for the Eid-ul-Azha.

Though the holiday began on March 28 (Sunday), home-goers started leaving the city on March 25 (Thursday), virtually enjoying a six-day holiday.

All government and private offices reopened yesterday but attendance was very thin.

Attendance was very thin at the Secretariat. However, top officials followed their routine.

The small number of employees who turned up stayed in their offices barely for a few hours, exchanging Eid greetings and gossiping. There was virtually no work in offices, sources said.

No visitor was seen crowding the Secretariat gates — a usual scene on other days.

Attendance in banks was also less than normal but transaction was not affected.

Trading resumed at the See Page 12 Col 7

## Prices of hides & skin less than last year's

**By Rafiq Hasan**  
Prices of hides and skin are less following this year's Eid-ul-Azha than last year's.

Traders at Postagola, the country's biggest wholesale market for raw leather, said the market is "dull" due to less number of buyers, tight loan disbursement policy of banks and lower demand for finished leather in the international market.

"The price of an average size of cow hide is Tk 600 to 800 this year against Tk 800 to 1000 last year," Aihaj Azizur Rahman President of Bangladesh Hides and Skin Merchants Association said. The average price of a goat skin is Tk 110 to 135 against last year's Tk 125 to 150 he said.

Other traders said the prices have declined because most of the tanneries are not buying leather due to less cash flow and ban on export of wet blue leather.

If the prices go down further, huge quantities of raw leather

will be smuggled to the neighbouring country, they said.

"The Indian traders can buy raw leather at higher prices because they can export half-processed wet blue leather which we can not," said Mohammad Zafar a trader at Postagola.

"Only a few tanners exporting crust or finished leather are in the market. They also are not buying in large quantities because of lack of adequate capital," he said.

More than 40 per cent of the total procurement of leather in the country is made during the Holy Eid-ul-Azha, they said.

Hides and skin collected from Dhaka city and adjacent areas are getting prices better than those procured from districts, which are not properly salted and are vulnerable to damage, said Mainuddin of Anwar Tannery.

"The market is dull as big tanners are yet to start buying leather," said Ansar Uddin, a See Page 12 Col 7

## Sharp fall in ground water level Rajshahi exposed to serious scarcity of drinking water

**By Nurul Kabir, back from Rajshahi**

The people of Rajshahi District, especially those living in the rural areas, have been exposed to serious scarcity of drinking water as the ground water level has gone down sharply.

Arsenic contamination of ground water in some areas has added to miseries of people.

"The situation arising out of the fall of water level would not improve till the end of May," predicts Executive Engineer of the district Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) Sarwar Jahan. "Almost 60 per cent of the shallow tubewells have already been affected due to the fall."

Some 13 thousand public tubewells in the district, out of the 22 thousand capable of drawing water from a depth of

25 to 30 feet, have virtually become inoperative due to fall in ground water level. PHED sources point out.

According to a PHED estimate, the number of private tubewells in the district is about three times the number of public tubewells. So there would be some 66 thousand private tubewells. "Those have similarly been affected by the decline in ground water level," says an official concerned.

Tara tube wells, capable of drawing water from a depth 50 to 60 feet, have also started failing. There are 8733 Tara tubewells — Public and private — in the district, the official mentions.

Only Tara-2 tubewells that can draw water from a depth of 100 feet are operating now

properly. There are only 149 such tubewells in the district.

The PHED executive engineer believes that extensive drawing of ground water by a large number of tubewells to irrigate paddy fields is responsible for the decline in the water level.

The government has not yet allotted any tubewell for Rajshahi district even though nine months of this fiscal year have passed. "Usually we get the tubewells between August and September every year. We got 700 tubewells last year."

Under the government's flood-rehabilitation programmes, 497 tubewells were distributed in the flood affected areas of Rajshahi district in February this year. Mohanpur Thana, not considered flood af-

## 330 shanties, shops gutted

Some 330 shanties and shops were gutted in two fire incidents in the city's South Kamalapur and Kaptan Bazar areas Tuesday night, reports UNB.

Fire Brigade sources said the fire at Titipara slum in Kamalapur broke out at about 12:55 am and gutted at least 300 shanties.

Firemen rushed to the spot and brought the flame under control at 2:30 am.

The other fire at Kaptan Bazar burned down 12 shanties, 12 shops and five cowsheds at midnight. Fire fighters extinguished the blaze at about 23:50 hrs.

On Sunday, at least 11 shops of a market in Demra and a rubber industry at Hajjaribagh were gutted.

Fire service sources said at least 11 shops of Abdur Rahim market at Sanarpur in Demra area were gutted at about 4 pm.

In another fire, a rubber industry was completely gutted at Hajjaribagh in the afternoon.

The fire, originating from an electric short circuit of the Taj Rubber Industries building at about 4 pm, spread to the entire complex.

## Gopal still absconding Chhatak blast: CID takes over case

**From Staff Correspondent**

Police could not yet arrest Gopal, a Juba League activist and an accused in the case. Gopal has been missing since the incident.

According to a police official, Gopal had taken Arif Haider, another Juba League activist, to the house on that day for making bombs.

"Since the MP himself raised allegations against a senior police officer, it should be handled with extra care. None should have the scope to influence the investigation," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the case has been transferred to the CID. The decision was taken by higher authorities on receipt of the official report of the Army team of explosive experts which visited the house and recovered huge bomb-making materials as well as some live and inoperative bombs last week, police

sources said.

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sources said.

However, police are hopeful See Page 12 Col 7

## Eid-ul Azha celebrated

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The Holy Eid-ul-Azha, one of the greatest festivals of Muslims, was observed across the country on Monday with due solemnity and religious fervour by sacrificing animals in the name of Almighty Allah.

The festival inspires the Muslims with the ideals of sacrifice in the light of the unique example set by Hazrat Ibrahim (AH) for the gratification of Almighty Allah.

Muslims in the country offered special prayers at Eid congregations at Eidgahs and mosques and sought blessings from the Almighty for continued peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh, its people and the Muslim Ummah.

In the capital Dhaka, the main Eid congregation was held at National Eidgah, near the High Court premises at 8 am. President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed offered Eid prayers here. He exchanged Eid greetings with people after the prayers.

Chief Justice ATM Afzal, Judges of the Supreme Court and High Court, Ministers, Mayor, MPs, politicians, and people from all walks of life attended. See Page 11

## 4 murdered in Jhenidah

**From Our Correspondent**  
JHENIDAH, Mar 31: Four people were murdered and 34 houses torched in Shailakupa and Harinakundu thanas here on Monday, police said.

Zahirul Islam, 34, a regional leader of the outlawed Sramajibi Mukti Andolon, was shot dead at village Shahbajpur. The assailants opened fire while he was taking food at the house of one Ataur Rahman after exchanging Eid greetings.

Soon after Zahir's killing, his supporters set 34 houses of nine families ablaze. The fire gutted property worth Tk 25 lakh.

Zahir hails from village Bhabanipur of Shilakupa thana.

In another incident, Abdul Ghani, a UP member of Mirza- See Page 12 Col 2

## Chicken vendor killed in police firing in city

**By Staff Correspondent**  
A chicken vendor was killed and two others were injured when police opened fire during a clash with hawkers at Captain Bazar in the city on Sunday.

Police described the victim, Ripon, 22, as a snatcher, who was shot when police and Ansars tried to foil an attempted snatching.

Earlier, a story fed by police to official news agency BSS on March 30 said that he (Ripon) was beaten by people.

But sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital said he died from a gun shot injury in his right arm.

Vendors in Kaptan Bazar area said the trouble began when some policemen and Ansars allegedly demanded 'toll' from them.

When they declined saying that they had already paid 'toll' to the local thana, the law enforcers tried to forcibly take away the chickens. This resulted in a clash, they said.

Two cases have been filed in connection with the incident, police said.

## Hunger strike: Prisoner dies in Rajshahi

**From Our Correspondent**  
RAJSHAHI, Mar 31: A prisoner died and another fell critically ill while observing hunger strike in Rajshahi jail.

The dead was identified as Ibrahim Mollah, 40, of Biraldaha village in Puthia thana.

According to the jail sources, Ibrahim Mollah and Akbar Ali was awarded three years' rigorous imprisonment in a case of theft on March 22. They went on hunger strike from the day the verdict was pronounced.

On Friday, they were taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital after their condition deteriorated.

Ibrahim Mollah died on Saturday. The body was handed over to his relatives after autopsy. Condition of Akbar Ali is still critical, RMCH sources said.

**Two shot dead in Jessore**  
**From Our Correspondent**  
JESSORE, Mar 31: Two JCD activists were shot dead in front of WAPDA garage in the town by a group of armed assailants on Sunday evening.

The victims were identified as Kazi Tarikul Islam, 32, and Moshuddin Khokon, 34.

According to police and witnesses a gang of three equipped with arms opened fire on them at a tea stall. Both of them died on the spot.

None was arrested till filing of this report tonight.