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Today's issue
20 pages

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Speaker will
send letter to
Khaleda today

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury decided to write a letter to Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia requesting her to join the coming parliament session.

Talking to UNB, he said he did not contact any BNP leaders over phone yesterday as he decided to write to the BNP chief changing his earlier plans.

"I am writing a letter and would send it to Khaleda tomorrow requesting her to join the coming parliament session," he said.

Earlier on Saturday, the Speaker said that he would ring Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Saifur Rahman or other leaders requesting them to join the parliament session.

Khaleda's Saudi visit cancelled

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia has cancelled her planned visit to Saudi Arabia in the last week of this month due to political reasons.

"Certainly, I will go to Saudi Arabia but not this time."

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Inside Today

Article

Chasing Osama: A Dangerous Obsession

Column: Perspectives by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

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Supplement

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains a 3-page supplement on Launching of Communication Campaign on Arsenic Mitigation' Pages 17, 19

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
11	20	-	5:19
12	21	5:11	5:20
13	22	5:12	5:20

Prayer Timings

December 20		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:58	5:17	
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:42	4:00
Maghrib	5:16	5:22
Tarabi	7:00	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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The Daily Star

Today's issue
20 pages

Twin blasts in Colombo kill 33, injure 180

Miracle saves Chandrika



COLOMBO, Dec 19: Sri Lanka's government began investigation today into the security lapses that enabled a suicide bomber to blow himself up at President Chandrika Kumaratunga's rally, leaving her wounded in the face, report agencies.

The government announced that the bomb blast, believed to have been carried out by Black Tigers — the suicide unit of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, would not affect the schedule of the Dec 21 presidential polls in which Kumaratunga is seeking reelection.

Editorial on page 4

Police took 15 suspects into custody. Two investigation committees were formed to probe the twin blasts which killed 33 people and injured at least 180. Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera told reporters.

The second blast took place at the rally of the main opposition party at Jaela, 15 kilometres north of Colombo, and also was set off by a suicide bomber, police said. The president's main rival, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was not present at that rally.

Mrs Kumaratunga was treated for shrapnel injuries in

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A carbon copy

COLOMBO, Dec 19: The assassination attempt on Sri Lanka's President yesterday was a chilling replay of the attack that killed India's former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi eight years ago, reports AP.

"It was a carbon copy. The only difference was that in this case it was a man dressed as a woman," a police officer said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga was wounded in the blast last night as she wrapped up an election rally in downtown Colombo, ahead of next week's presidential election.

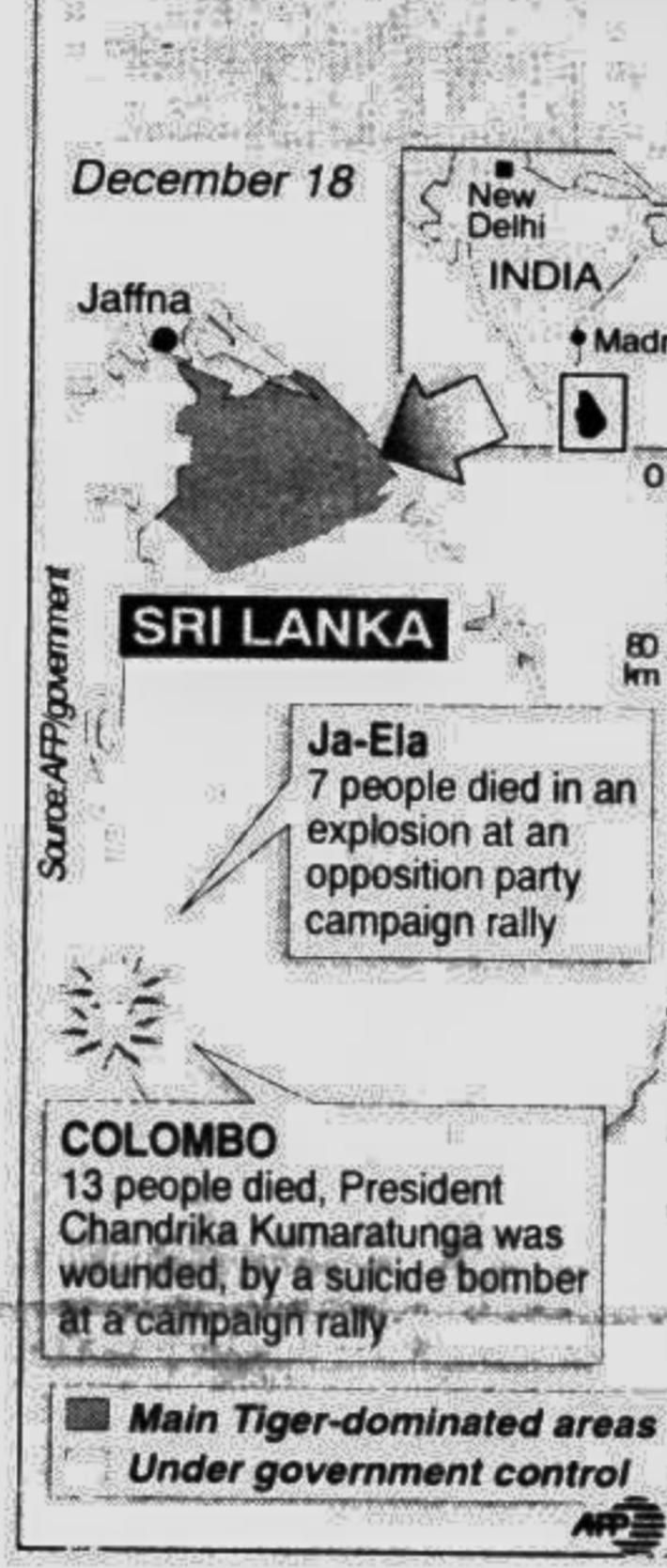
The attack was similar to the one in 1991, when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated as he was winding up an election campaign in southern India during a comeback bid. A woman tried to touch his feet

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A vandalised poster of Chandrika, snapped on the day of the assassination attempt.

— AFP photo



Ramadan longest in 300 years

DUBAI, Dec 19: This year's Muslim fasting month of Ramadan will be the longest in more than three centuries, a newspaper said today, quoting a meteorologist in the United Arab Emirates.

David Naughton said the moon would take some seven hours longer than usual to complete one revolution, making this Ramadan the longest since 1672, the Gulf Today reported.

The dimensions of the lunar orbit and its relation to our sun are factors which combine to cause the month's orbit to be slower than normal. It is really a complex gravitational interplay," he said.

The lunar calendar determines the start and end of Ramadan, during which Muslims abstain from food, drink, smoking and sex from sunrise to sunset.

mittee.

AL leader Nurul Islam B Sc called it a "dacoity", party sources said.

The plots in the project under the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) were supposed to be allotted through lottery. But only 30 plots were learnt to be allotted through lottery and the rest 152 were given dividing the applicants into 13 groups of different categories where some 'special quotas' were created violating rules.

Moreover, most of those who got the plots already possess plots in the city area or in other CDA housing projects in their names or in the names of their

See page 11 col 7

Police question detained students.

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday continued questioning 42 of 44 student leaders and activists taken on remand on Saturday, according to police sources.

Of the 42, 14 are from the BNP's student wing JCD, while the rest are from Jatiya Party-backed Jatiya Chhatra Samaj and Jamaat-e-Islami's front Islami Chhatra Shibir, police said.

Habib Nabi Sohel and Nasiruddin Pintu, president and secretary of the JCD, were also on a two-day remand, but the court sent them to jail on grounds of their illness.

Party workers, lawyers, and MPs were seen yesterday visiting the Motijheel Police station, which remained out of bound for all including lawyers of the detained from Friday night till yesterday morning.

MPs Amanullah Aman and Nazimuddin Alam, among those at the thana, told The Daily Star last night that Sohel and Pintu were tortured by po-

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CWHEC rejoinder

China National Water Resources & Hydropower Engineering Co (CWHEC), the land-site developer of the 450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant has issued a rejoinder against The Daily Star report. "Meghnaghat Plant: Handing over of project site delayed again," on December 14.

The CWHEC clarified its position regarding delays in im-

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Two killed at CU in BCL-Shibir gunfight

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: Two students were killed and eleven others injured today in gunfight between activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) at Chittagong University.

The dead were identified as Abdur Rahim, a third year honours student of Bengali and Mahmudul Hasan, a fourth year honours student of Finance. Both of them were reported to be leaders of Islami Chhatra

Shibir.

Of the injured, Abdus Shukur, Rustum Mian and Forkan Ali were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The clash erupted at around 11 am when Forkan, a BCL ac-

tivist, was beaten up at the Suhrawardy Hall reportedly by Shibir activists. Police later arrested three Shibir leaders — Didarul Alam, Zahed Hossain and S M Liwakat — from the zone-5 of DCC that covers the Chittagong University area.

At least 11 people were inured when armed activists of the factions had a shootout with police on the Nagar Bhaban premises on December 12.

Heavily armed members of both the groups — known as 'Rokkata' Shamim group and Five Star group — were seen yesterday at the Nagar Bhaban. No uniformed policemen were seen during their presence at the entrance of the DCC office building.

Abdur Rahim was killed on the spot during the gun battle while Mahmudul Hasan, who sustained bullet wounds, died on way to the hospital.

The university opens on January 15 after the vacation of Ramadan and holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

Meanwhile, the authorities

See page 11 col 7

DCC fears clash
Gangsters still move around
Nagar Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials fear more fight between two feuding factions of Chhatra League may break out any time over awarding of work involving about Tk one crore in the zone-5 of DCC that covers the Chittagong University area.

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The university opens on January 15 after the vacation of Ramadan and holy Eid-ul-Fitr.

Meanwhile,

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Govt to keep 5pc free quota for garments export to US, Canada

By Staff Correspondent

The government has changed its decision on free quota for garments export to US and Canada, a BGMEA press release said yesterday.

According to the release, the government agreed to keep five per cent quota as free for distribution among the new garments entrepreneurs at the request of the BGMEA. The government had earlier decided to cancel the free quota system due to abuse of garment quota.

The five per cent free quota would again be distributed from 2000, the press release said.

The government also agreed to provide flood and cyclone coverage to the garment sector for the greater interest of the export-oriented business. The decision would be effective from January 1.

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