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A devastating fire broke out at the Narayanganj DIT market last night, turning to ashes over 1,000 shanties, killing two minor girls, injuring 15 others and leaving hundreds of families like this one (right) in tears and despair.



Star photo

N'ganj slum fire: Two killed, 4000 homeless

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 20: Two minor girls were burnt alive and 15 others injured in a fire at Jimkhana Railway Basti (slum) behind DIT market in the town on Tuesday night.

More than 1000 shanties were gutted in the fire that broke out at around 9 pm.

Four fire fighting units with the help of local people extinguished the fire at 11-45 pm.

According to witnesses, the fire originated from an earthen oven at a shanty and soon engulfed the entire slum.

The fire fighting units from Mandalpara and Hajiganj rushed there at around 9:20 pm but failed to reach the spot immediately due to congested roads around the slum.

Later, another two fire fighting units from Demra and Postogola joined operation and extinguished the blaze at around 11:45 pm.

In the mean time, about 1000 shanties of the slum were gutted, leaving at least 4000 people homeless.

Two minor girls, identified as Nurjahan, 6, and Shabmeher, 3, were burnt alive as their parents were not at their shanty during the incident.

The homeless slum dwellers have now taken shelter at a nearby high school.

Of the 10 people injured, Rangnala, 60, Monir, 12, and Mintu, 12, were admitted to N'ganj General Hospital.

23 held from Thai trawler: 1040 bullets seized

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 20: Bangladesh Navy recovered 1040 rifle bullets from a Thai fishing trawler on Tuesday from the Fairway buoy in Bangladesh territorial waters.

Twenty-three crew arrested from the trawler were later handed over to Mongla thana police.

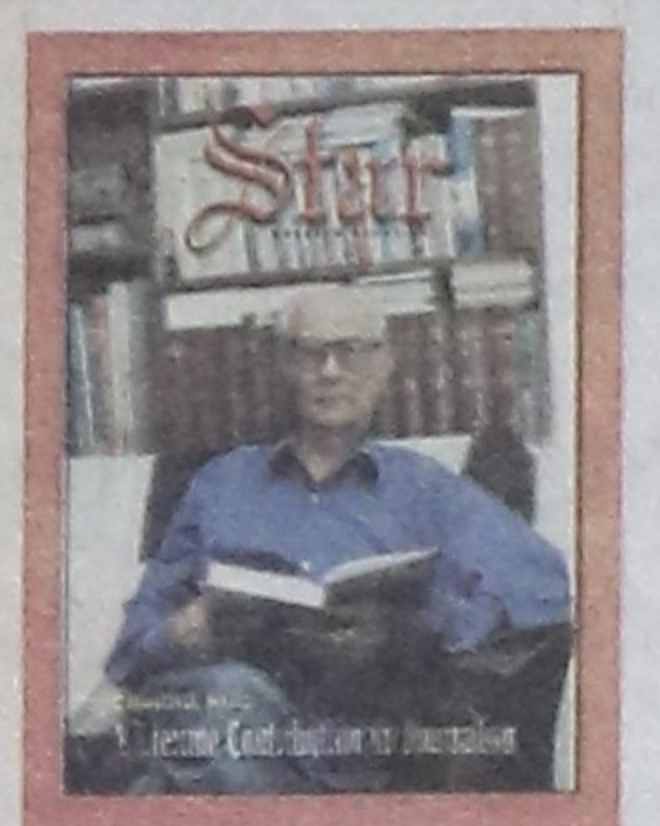
The crew threw the rifles into the river during the raid on the trawler, police said.

One of the crew was injured when naval forces opened fire during the chase, said Mongla thana OC today.

Another Thai trawler, however, managed to escape while fishing illegally.

Two separate cases have been recorded with Mongla thana against the Thai crew one case was recorded for illegal possession of arms, while another for illegal entry into Bangladesh territorial waters, police said.

Announcement



This week's cover story of the Star Magazine focuses on the multifarious achievements of Obaidul Huq and his unrivalled contributions to Journalism.

OC, 2 cops hurt in clash with terrorists near Sundarbans

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 20: Three policemen including OC of Mongla thana received bullet injuries during a clash between police and a gang of terrorists at Sundaratala near the Sundarbans at midnight on Monday.

Police and the terrorists (Bellal Bahini) traded fire for near an hour.

Police arrested five terrorists and recovered two foreign-made guns, one shutter gun, 21 gun cartridges and 3 bullets from their possession.

The arrested were identified as Bellal Sarder, 35, Abdul Malek Sarder, 33, Alam Sheikh, 30, Raju Mia, 32, and Kohinor, 28. Kohinor is the mistress of Bellal Sarder, ring leader of the notorious 'Bellal Bahini', Mongla thana OC said.

The injured police officers are OC Badrul Alam, SI Golam Mostafa, SI Humayun Kabir and ASI Abdullah Al Saeed.

Three separate cases were filed

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Maj Huda's close associate held on charge of dacoity

MEHERPUR, Dec 20: A close

associate of Maj Bazul Huda was arrested today for alleged dacoity in a house of village Darmachakir in Gangni upazila, reports UNB.

Abdur Rab, taken to custody from his house in Gangni, was political and security adviser of Maj Huda when he was a Member of Parliament during the Ershad regime. Huda is now in condemned cell for killing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975.

Police said a group of about 15 armed men committed dacoity in the house of Golam Rahman. When leaving, the dacoits faced resistance from the villagers. Sensing trouble, the dacoits opened fire indiscriminately resulting in injuries to five villagers.

Of the injured, Jahangir and Ayub were rushed to Kustia General Hospital in critical condition.

A case was filed in this connection with Gangni police.

Teenage boy injured in bomb blast

By Staff Correspondent

A teenage boy was injured when an abandoned bomb exploded near the Chhapra mosque at Azimpur in the city yesterday morning.

The victim Shahidul Islam, 12, son of one Sirajul Islam, received burn injuries in his hands, legs and some other parts of the body. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said, the cracker exploded while Sirajul, a resident of Kamrangirchar slum, was collecting papers in the area at about 10:30 in the morning.

SEC green signal now a must for capital issue

By M Shamsur Rahman

Any public limited company (PLC) will now require consent of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to go for a capital issue in the country.

The decision was taken at a SEC board meeting on Monday.

The meeting also decided that any PLC having a minimum of Tk five crore capital will face compulsory listing, SEC officials said.

The Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969 provides that without the consent of SEC, no company will be allowed to go for capital issue or make public offer for sale of securities.

But till now, companies were mostly allowed exemption from this provision following a number of SEC notifications for further liberalising restrictions on capital issue, a senior official of SEC said.

Only the companies making Initial Public Offering (IPO) were to seek permission from the SEC, he pointed out.

As regards compulsory listing of PLCs having a minimum of Tk five crore capital, SEC officials said

there was a notification in the late 80s by the then Controller of Capital Issue (now SEC) directing all the PLCs having more than Tk one crore paid up capital to get enlisted with the stock exchange.

However, the directive was not complied with.

They said that the latest decisions were taken in view of a number of factors. They often found companies coming for IPO lacked transparency and submitted doctored balance sheets when they needed funds from the market.

There was no monitoring at primary stage. So once these companies managed funds from the market, they failed to keep their commitments made in the prospectus which affected investors confidence, one official mentioned.

He said the new policy will help SEC to keep the companies under strict monitoring as they will be required to submit audited balance sheets time to time along with other documents.

The decisions of SEC board will be published in newspapers, inviting comments, before those are sent for gazette notification, the official added.

Dull contest, admits CEC

By Nazmul Ashraf, back from Khulna

The virtual absence of contest during yesterday's parliamentary by-election in the Khulna-5 constituency, a fact admitted by all concerned. Nevertheless, voting at the constituency comprising Dumuria and Phultala thanas was unusually peaceful amidst a very low turnout of voters.

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed put down the low turnout to lack of contest among candidates and public awareness and boycott of polling by the major political parties.

Besides, people are now getting busy with the next general elections, which is not far away, added the CEC.

"Still, it was our constitutional obligation to hold the election," Syed told a group of reporters who accompanied him during his visit to some polling centres. The CEC estimated the turnout at the

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Turnout of voters very low AL candidate wins Khulna by-polls

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 20: By-election in Khulna-5 constituency (Dumuria-Phultala) was held peacefully today.

The voters were found exercising their franchise in all the polling centres including nine in Khulna city under Khanjahan Ali thana.

Voters turnout was very low in the polling centres, said presiding officers of 20 polling centres in

AL candidate Narayan Chandra Chanda was unofficially declared elected in the by-election. After counting ballots of all the 91 polling centres, the EC declared him winner.

Chandra bagged 92,400 votes while his nearest rival Krishak Mohammad Sadek of Krishak Samik Mukti Andolon polled only 1,479 votes, reports UNB.

Dumuria and eight in Phultala upazilas.

The percentage was not more than 30 on an average, said an official of the district election office.

Polling agents of four other contestants were not seen at the centres. Only agent of Awami League candidate was found at every centre, the official added.

No case of casting false vote was reported from any of the 91 centres in the constituency due to tight security measures, said an official of the district administration.

Three hundred and fifty out of 3,661 voters cast their votes in the Ula Primary School centre of Dumuria, said presiding officer Shamsul Huq.

Only 15 to 20 per cent voters cast their votes in the Andulia

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Smugglers, extortionists clash in Feni: Ten shot

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Dec 20: At least 10 people were injured by bullet in a gunfight between a group of smugglers and extortionists at Chhagalnaiya bazar last night.

Of the injured, Noor Nabi, Babul, Baduzzaman, Abu Sayed and Ayub were admitted to local health complex while others to different clinics.

Police said both groups clashed over 'payment of tolls'. No case was filed and none was arrested in this connection till filing of this report at 6 pm today.

Additional police force from Feni rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.



Adieu, Barlow... it was an emotive end to the former South African Test cricketer's tenure as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Director of Development. With his health not permitting the rigours of the job demands, Eddie Barlow, who suffered a stroke in April this year, yesterday opted out of his contract with the BCB. Story on page 13.

--Star photo

Draft Public Admin Training Policy approved

The 6th meeting of the National Training Council yesterday approved the draft Public Administration Training Policy (PATP) with certain amendments providing for training of officials of various segments and people's representatives, reports UNB.

The meeting at the PM's office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair also discussed various aspects of the policy for ensuring better training of government officials.

Addressing the meeting, the prime minister emphasised on training of government officials so they could effectively put in their best to serve the nation and the interest of the people.

She said that in conformity with democratic principles, people are regarded as the most important resources of Bangladesh.

The meeting was told that the administrative training policy inter alia would enhance the capacity of public administrative system to analyse, develop and implement national policies, plans and programmes.

This policy will help build up an effective, innovative, accountable and transparent, honest and committed public service capable of delivering quality and cost effective services to the people.

The existing training institutions will be strengthened by developing appropriate infrastructure facilities and capacity of the faculties and research activities so that the government institutions become competent enough to provide quality train

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Autonomy for Radio, Television

Draft proposal to be sent to PM soon for approval

By Staff Correspondent

The government's plan to give autonomy to the state-run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television is at final stage now. A draft proposal in this regard is expected to be sent soon to the prime minister for her approval.

It was disclosed yesterday at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Government Assurances. The committee reviewed some other government assurances concerning the Information Ministry.

The meeting noted that the Awami League government took up the issue of autonomy to radio and television immediately after it assumed office in June 1996. A commission formed in this regard recommended autonomy to radio and television in a report.

The government draft was made in the light of the commission's recommendation. The draft would be placed before the cabinet with the prime minister's recommendation, meeting sources said.

But, they added that various complications stood in the way of implementation of the government's

crucial election commitment.

The ministry officials informed the meeting about the implementation status of after ruling party lawmaker Dr. Mohammad Selim raised the issue in yesterday's meeting.

Presided over by Committee Chairman Rezul Karim Hira, the meeting suggested that the appropriate authorities take immediate steps for speedy implementation.

In the seventh parliament, a total of 28 assurances were given by the ministers concerned, of which 13 were completely fulfilled. Four of the pledges are yet to be kept while nine others are under implementation.

Attended by committee members Dewan Farid Gazi, Alhaj Mohammad Tazul Islam Chowdhury and Mosarraf Hossain Mungu, the meeting also reviewed 12 assurances made in the fifth parliament. Nine of those have been fulfilled.

Information Secretary M. I. Chowdhury and senior officials of the ministry were also present at the meeting.

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