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Behind the blast

Star Report

The explosion at a house at Mir Hazirbagh in the city yesterday might have taken place due to accumulation of gas in the underground water reservoir.

When asked, a gas expert of Petrobangla said 'natural marsh gas' and methane may accumulate in underground water reservoir. Such gas may also come from sewerage lines nearby.

According to witnesses, there were several gas stoves in one place near the water reservoir. This could be another reason for accumulation of gas in the reservoir, the expert said.

"The whole city is full of illegal gas connection lines and we are always running the risk of such explosions," he said.

"Because the authorities no longer mix any odor with the gas supplied to houses, if gas leak

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Blast in underground water tank kills 4

By Staff Correspondent

At least four persons including three of a family were killed and 10 others injured in a massive explosion inside an underground water reservoir at a house at Mirhajirbagh near Jatrabari crossing in the city yesterday.

The dead included two children and the injured included five children.

Two rooms and a kitchen of the tin shed house turned into debris. The explosion occurred with a big bang at about 12:30 pm as soon as Ishrat Ali, a tenant at a nearby room, got inside the reservoir in the kitchen with a burning candle to clean it.

Police and hospital sources identified the dead as Rupa, 2, daughter of Ruhul Amin, Al-Amin, 12, his father Ishrat Ali, 40 and Didarul Alam, 20. Ali was the grandfather of Rupa.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Of the injured, five were admitted to DMCH. They are Runa, 5, the elder sister of Rupa, Akbar, 7, Rubel, 10, Maksuda, 13, and Sonia, 13. Most of the dead and injured bore marks of burn injury in different parts of their bodies.

Neighbours and local people recovered two bodies soon after the horrible incident. Fire Service and Civil Defense personnel rescued two other bodies from under the debris later.

Twenty-nine tenant families reside in a cluster of 29 ten-shed rooms in the compound.

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Two young women wail following a massive explosion inside the underground reservoir of their tin-shed residence at Jatrabari crossing in the city at noon yesterday that left three members of the family, including a two-year old girl, dead. At least four people were killed and ten injured in the incident. — Star photo

Maj Gen Harun takes over today: Mustafiz made General

By Special Correspondent

Major General M Harun-ar-Rashid, Bir Pratik, will start discharging his responsibilities as the new Chief of Army Staff today.

He will be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General today.

The new army chief will be adorned with the badges of Lt General at a ceremony at the Ganabhaban by Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral A Taher and Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Jamal Uddin in the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 11:20 am.

Yesterday was the last day of Lt Gen Mustafizur Rahman, Bir Bikram, as Chief of Army Staff. At a simple ceremony at the Army Headquarters in the afternoon, he handed over command of the Bangladesh Army to Maj Gen Harun-ar-Rashid.

Earlier yesterday morning, Mustafiz was promoted to the rank of General. He was adorned with the badges of a General in presence of the Prime Minister, who also holds charge of the Defence Ministry, at a ceremony at the Ganabhaban.

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10 transferred to absorb political appointees?

Resentment among JS Sectt officials

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat has transferred 10 of its officials who were on deputation from various ministries.

"They have been transferred to pave the way for absorbing political appointees in the Sangsad Secretariat," one of the officials said.

The transfer orders issued about a week ago have caused resentment also among the other officials on deputation at the Sangsad Secretariat, sources said.

In separate letters, the ministries concerned have been requested to take back the 10 officials who were working at the Sangsad Secretariat for long.

The officials are: Deputy Director (Public Relations) Azizur Rahman, Assistant Secretary (Delegation) Mahbuba Farzana, Senior Assistant Secretary (Law) Abdul Hal, Training Specialist Nikhil Ranjan Roy, Senior Legislation Draftsman Mahbub Morshed, Estate Officer Shohail Motahir, Assistant Secretary Naveed Sajjullah, Assistant Director (Public Relations) Mohammad Rezaul Haq, Training Specialist Sadia Khanam and Law Officer Mohammad Harun Rashid.

The ministries have now asked the officials to join their respective posts by January 1. However three

of them have been 'exempted' as they personally contacted the authorities concerned, sources said.

It is alleged that the Sangsad Secretariat 'absorbed' more than 10 officials including two political appointees in the last couple of years, as desired by the Speaker.

Sangsad officials noted that appointment of Class-I and Class-II officers should be made on the basis of selection by the Public Service Commission. But the Sangsad Secretariat sometimes did not follow rules and regulations in 'appointing and absorbing' officials, they alleged.

Two Assistant Personal Secretaries (APSS) to the Speaker Sirajul Islam Badsha and Samia Islam who are political appointees were 'absorbed as regular staff' of the Sangsad Secretariat in October this year. Two others were then appointed in those posts, they said.

One source said the Office of the Accountant General (AG) has objected to absorption of the two political appointees in the Sangsad Secretariat and suspended payment of their salaries.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury was not available for his comments on the issue.

PM opens digital phone exchange at Tungipara

TUNGIPARA, Dec 23: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today inaugurated a 500-line digital telephone exchange at Tungipara upazilla headquarters, reports UNB.

She talked to President Shahabuddin Ahmed over telephone.

In her telephonic talks with the President, she said the government has taken up massive programme for development of telecommunications network of the country.

The President, whose telephonic voice was being heard on the loudspeaker, said, "Personally I am very happy that Tungipara at last came under the modern telephone links."

Tam congratulating the people of Tungipara for this great achievement," he said and hoped that every underdeveloped area, including her birthplace Kendua, would be connected with modern digital lines for rapid economic growth.

The Prime Minister thanked

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Ministry's 'no' to BB plea for wage hike in NCBs

By Inam Ahmed

The Finance Ministry has rejected a proposal to increase wages and allowances of the staff of nationalised commercial banks (NCBs).

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr M Farshuddin recently proposed that wages in the NCBs be raised to give incentive for better work.

However, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria in a letter to the governor has said, there is a 'logic to raise wages and allowances of employees of the NCBs. But at the same time, we have to keep in mind our ability. On top of it, if we consider the low level of performance and financial insolvency of the nationalised commercial banks, then the existing facilities may not look that insignificant.'

The demand for a separate wage structure for the banking sector had been voiced for a long

time and many thought it might give the needed incentive to perform better.

"There are many people within the NCBs who work hard and

Kolkata not Calcutta

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: Calcutta today joined a rising number of Indian cities trying to shrug off their colonial legacy by reverting to its indigenous name, reports AP.

The capital of India's West Bengal state will now be known by the Bengali version of its name, Kolkata, the federal government announced in a statement today.

The government of India, after careful consideration, See page 11 col 6

perform well," said Dr Atiur Rahman, Chairman of Janata Bank. "Personally, I feel that at least those people who are performing well should be rewarded with better incentives. Personal performance should be evaluated and the government can set a benchmark for getting higher pay."

The finance minister in his letter has given strong support for fighting unwanted CBA activities in the banking sector.

The banks should take recourse to law enforcing agencies if the CBAs violate their legal boundaries and stand in the way of normal banking activities, he said.

"If needed, the banks can inform the ministry which will then take legal steps," Kibria said.



Tangled at Gausia... traffic congestion for hours together near places like Gausia Market is just a part of Eid festivities, believe it or not. — Star photo

A kingpin of smuggling ring from Ctg involved

250 boxes of smuggled goods dropped in Bay, police told

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 23: A kingpin of a smuggling ring who hails from the southern part of Chittagong and owns industries and palatial hotel and is a director of private bank, is reportedly involved in bringing the consignment of smuggled goods which were eventually dropped into the Bay of Bengal, sources said.

Police also received reports about involvement of the kingpin who made a fortune by indulging in smuggling of gold, heroin and other contrabands.

They said they are after more clues but declined to go into details.

A senior police official told The Daily Star that the Joint Interrogation Cell came to know from confessional statements of the Pakistani national and other

Bangladeshi crew about dropping of 250 boxes containing smuggled goods into the sea from mechanised boats.

He said that hunt was on for two other Pakistani nationals who stayed with the arrested Pakistani national, Mohammad, at Hotel Saint Martin in Agrabad area using a local address of Inam Textile Mills, which is owned by an industrialist of Chittagong, police and hotel sources said.

Police said they would go to the hotel tomorrow to check it out and get more clues. However, sources suspected that the boxes were loaded with gold, not arms.

Police also said another Bangladeshi crew was produced before the court today to record his confessional statement.

Meanwhile, Navy continued search in the Bay for the mysterious boxes, sources said.

Pintu, Laltu JCD president, secretary

By DU Correspondent

The central executive body of BNP's student wing Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was announced yesterday with Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu as president and general secretary respectively.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia announced the reconstituted central committee at her Banani office, sources said.

The other office-bearers are senior vice president Manjur Elahi, Joint secretary Munshi Bazul Basit Anju and organising secretary ABM Mosharraf Hossain.

The committee in an incomplete one and names of other office-bearers will be announced later, sources said.

Besides, the expulsion of ten JCD leaders of Dhaka University unit was withdrawn yesterday. They are Shahabuddin Laltu, Amirul Islam, Benzir Ahmed Titu. See page 11 col 7

'Use of proper tech can cut number of poor by half'

Per capita income can be doubled by 2010: Prof Yunus

By Staff Correspondent

Professor Muhammad Yunus has said that it is possible to reduce the number of the country's poor by half and double the per capita income by 2010, provided technological opportunities are utilised.

"Many said that it is not possible while some said it is possible. But I think we can do it by utilising the technological opportunities," he said yesterday at the inaugural ceremony of TechTransfer-2000: Bangladesh at the auditorium of the Bangladesh University of Science and Technology (BUET) in the

city. Vice-chancellor of BUET Professor Nooruddin Ahmed was chief guest at the inaugural session of the three-day convention, organised by TechBangla, an organisation of non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs), and hosted by BUET.

Science and Technology Minister Lt. Gen. Md Noor Uddin Khan, Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, convenor of the National Committee on IT, Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh; Dr M

Abdullah, project manager of IBM Global Application Development, USA; and Dr Sheikh Mizan, co-ordinator of TechBangla, also spoke at the function.

Welcoming the NRBs, Prof. Yunus said it was a new experience for the country that residents and non-resident Bangladeshi technologists had taken joint initiatives to do something.

A process should be initiated to provide right directions to the country, he said. Seeking advice from the non-resident See page 11 col 3



Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha

Rajuk Bhaban, Dhaka

Web site: www.rajukdhaka.org

Auction Tender Notice

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from intending bonafide Bangladeshi nationals company/institution for leasing the plot (No 38B, 38C, 37A, 36A, 35A, 34A compressing in a single plot) at Road No 45 & Road No 35, Gulshan Model Town (near Circle-2), Dhaka measuring more or less 1(one) bigha 12 (twelve) kathas on 99 years lease basis for Construction Car Parking Cum-Commercial Complex. The complex must have at least five floors including one basement to be used as car parking for public.

Interested bidders may collect tender schedule from Sonali/Agrani/Janata Bank and Cashier, RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka on payment of Taka 5,000/- (Taka five thousand) only in cash (non-refundable) from 10-1-2001 to 18-1-2001 during office hours. Tender forms must be submitted accompanied by a security of Taka 25,000 (Taka twenty-five) lakhs in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft in favour of Chairman, RAJUK, Dhaka from any scheduled bank of Dhaka city.

Tender forms will be received in the office of the Joint Secretary (Dev), Ministry of Housing & Public Works, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka Member (Finance)/(Dev)/(Admn)/(Estate), Director (Estate), Chief Engineer, RAJUK, RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka and Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Dhaka from intending persons/company/institution up to 1:00 PM 31-1-2001. Tenders will be opened at 1:30 PM in the Conference Room (3rd floor) of RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka on the same day in presence of the bidders, present (if any).

For any other information the intending persons/institutions may contact with the Deputy Director (Estate) of Director (Estate), RAJUK. Tel: 88-02-9567904/9551355; Fax: 88-02-9563951; E-mail: chmrajuk@bangla.net/serajuk@bangla.net; Website: www.rajukdhaka.org

The authority reserves the right to accept any tender or to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

Chairman

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha
RAJUK Bhaban, Dhaka.

GD-1184

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 24		5.18 pm
Dec 25	6-39 am	

Prayer Timings		
December 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-20
Zuhr	12-45	1-20
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

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Shari, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Dec	Shari	Iftar
27	24		5-21
28	25	5-14	5-22
29	26	5-14	5-23