

# The Daily Star

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People's Right to Know

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## 15 tons of explosives seized at Lalbagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police seized about 15 tons of explosive materials from a house at Jagannath Saha Road in the city's Lalbagh area in the early hours of Tuesday.

Lalbagh police raided the six-storey building and recovered 839 sacks of barium sulphate, 99 sacks of barium nitrate, 30 drums of aluminium powder and 1,729 kilograms of iron dust.

Police said two persons – Jamal and Siddiqur Rahman – were arrested for their alleged involvement in trade in explosive materials. They are investigating the matter to track the racket.

Other sources said the CID had come to know about the explosives earlier but they kept mum for reasons best known to them. When this came to the knowledge of Lalbagh police, they seized the items.

A case has been filed with the Lalbagh Police Station.

## 'Corruption is a ghost with thousand hands'

A CORRESPONDENT, from Nalitabari

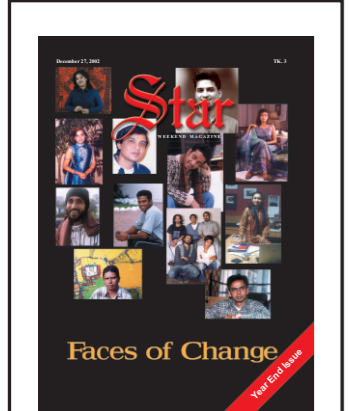
Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman has described corruption in the socioeconomic context as a ghost with one thousand hands.

The constitutional system of checking corruption in the country has almost collapsed, said the former chief of the caretaker government.

Even the election system to establish the right to participate in people's activities is mired in corruption, he said in his address to a citizens' rally on human rights and corruption at the Taraganj Pilot High School in Nalitabari, Sherpur, yesterday.

The local Conscious Citizens' Committee organised the rally in collaboration with the Bangladesh chapter of Transparency International.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

Positive change is the consequence of the creativity of individuals. In its year-end issue, to be published this Friday, SWM introduces to its readers some of these refreshing new faces of change.



PHOTO: AFP

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia shares a light moment with Chinese President Jiang Zemin during a meeting in Beijing yesterday.

## Khaleda, Jiang discuss ways to deepen ties further

UNB, Beijing

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday met Chinese President Jiang Zemin and other top leaders discussing ways of intensifying bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

On the third day yesterday of her five-day official visit to China, Khaleda Zia had important meetings with President Jiang Zemin, Chairman of NPC and ex-PM Li Peng and Vice President Hu Jintao.

She called on the Chinese president in the morning when she discussed with him issues of bilateral, regional and international concern.

Referring to the historic ties between the two countries and a deep bond of friendship between the two peoples, she said: "Recent exchanges of high-level visits have

taken our relations to new heights."

Khaleda Zia highly appreciated the Chinese president's significant contribution to the strengthening of relations between Bangladesh and China.

President Jiang Zemin expressed his admiration for the dynamic leadership of Khaleda Zia in promoting sustained economic growth in Bangladesh.

Officials said during the meeting, which was held in a very friendly atmosphere, the PM invited President Jiang Zemin to visit Bangladesh. The Chinese president accepted the invitation.

Later, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia met with the Chairman of the National People's Congress Li Peng at the Great Hall of the People. She congratulated him on the successful conclusion of the 16th Congress of

the Communist Party of China.

She conveyed the greetings of the people of Bangladesh, as also of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, to Chairman Li Peng and briefed him about the socioeconomic development programmes being implemented by her government.

Chairman Li Peng stressed further "deepening cooperation" between Bangladesh and China -- the two friendly Asian nations who struck several deals at bilateral talks on Tuesday for strengthening cooperation in economic, technical and defence fields.

The prime minister met Vice President Hu Jintao, one of China's rising top leaders, in the evening and congratulated him on his election as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

She expressed the hope that

under his leadership "China will make further strides in the economic field and new dynamism would be infused into Bangladesh-China relations".

The Bangladesh premier also invited Vice President Hu Jintao to visit Bangladesh at his convenience. Accepting the invitation, Hu Jintao said he looks forward to working in close cooperation with Khaleda Zia to further strengthen Bangladesh-China cooperation.

Earlier in the day, Minister of International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Dai Bingguo called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the State Guesthouse here and conveyed to her the "warmest greetings" of Chinese people.

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## Interest meter ticks as Rajuk mega scheme sits duck

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an unprecedented move since its inception 50 years ago, Rajuk has borrowed Tk 220 crore from three nationalised banks to implement the third phase of Uttara Model Town project, sources said.

Rajuk has borrowed the money to pay a total of Tk 392 crore for acquisition of 1,500 acres of land for the third phase of the project. The rest Tk 170 crore comes from its own funds.

The entire amount has been given to the deputy commissioner of Dhaka for payment of compensation to each individual owning the land.

Sources pointed out that implementation of the project now remains suspended due to allegations of corruption but Rajuk contin-

ues to pay Tk 7 lakh a day in interest on the loan.

In the face of alleged corruption in payment of compensation, the authorities recently suspended payment and ordered an investigation. It could not be known when the investigation would end and payment would resume.

In all cases of developing plots for residential and commercial purposes in the past, Rajuk procured funds by selling the plots in advance.

When contacted, Rajuk top officials said the borrowing might pose a serious problem for Rajuk because it would take a much longer period than expected to ready the plots for sale. Rajuk will not be able to pay off the loan till that is done, they added.

Moreover, during the tenure of the immediate past government, Rajuk acquired 675 acres of land under the project for developing 6,000 plots measuring three kathas each. So far, Rajuk has temporarily allocated about 2,500 plots and now it is able to allocate 3,000 more. A total of about 2100 acres of land are being acquired for the project.

Asked about this, sources concerned could not explain why Rajuk defied official warning and went for borrowing to acquire an additional 1,400 acres of land.

A five-member inquiry committee formed by the housing and public works ministry recommended not to acquire any more land for the third phase of the project.

## Fog spell to last for a day or two

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A thick fog has blanketed the country, crippling the public transport system and stranding hundreds of thousands of commuters and essential goods.

Within hours of the sun disappearing in the west, visibility on the roads and waterways becomes restricted to a few feet. The thick winter fog in the city smells chemical as the smoke from the vehicles hanging in the air during daytime descends with moisture in the atmosphere.

Weathermen say such a thick fog is unusual in urban areas. But due to a low easterly pressure from the Bay combining with a westerly 'trough' cooling in the atmosphere, the fog is becoming thick. An expert at the Met Office said the dense fog would prevail for another day or two before colder spell sets in.

At 9:00am yesterday the lowest temperature was recorded at Ishwardi at 11.0 degrees Celsius. The highest was measured at 6:00pm at Tekna at 28.1 degrees Celsius.

Our Barisal correspondent reports that at least 40 motor

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## AL council kicks off today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League has finished all preparations to hold its triennial national council this morning, to elect its new leadership for the next three years.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the party's 17th national council at 10.00 am at the Paltan Maidan in the city. Hasina will also preside over the inaugural session.

In line with the global changes over the last decade, especially the new economic order, the 53-year old party is expected to bring about some changes in its economic policy and organizational structure.

AL insiders hinted that the new leadership would be a combination of senior and junior leaders, capable of facing the challenges that the nation is facing today.

A number of amendments proposed by various sub-committees are expected to be approved by the national council where some 5,738 councillors from the party's 71 organisational districts and six city committees will vote for electing the new leaders of the party.

The party has identified the energy, gas and manpower sectors as deserving the highest priority.

On energy and gas the party manifesto says, "Natural gas should be utilised in the interest of the country and surplus gas could be exported after meeting the national requirements." Poverty alleviation, education, agriculture, basic rights, rural electrification, health, and information sectors are also in the priority list.

Meanwhile, the AL Central Working Committee meeting ended yesterday. The meeting approved proposals by the sub-committees, the manifesto and general secretary's report. These will be placed before the council today.

The AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman briefed the newsmen about the preparations for the council. "We have finished almost all the formalities and the majority of the councillors arrived in the city today (Wednesday)."

The presidents and general secretaries of all the political parties, except

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## Tribal criminal killed in gunfight with security forces: 3 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

An alleged member of a tribal gang of criminals was killed during a gun battle with security forces and three other members of the gang were arrested at Vasainnyadam in Longdu upazila of the district in the early hours of yesterday, police said.

The dead was identified as Gobinda Chakma, 35. A boatman, identified as Shahidul Islam, 30, was also injured by a bullet during the gunfight between the security forces and the criminals.

The three arrested tribal men were identified as Prottyasoy Chakma, 27, Shohag Chakma, 29, and Shumon Chakma, 26.

Sources said a gang of tribal criminals forced boatman Shahidul Islam to ferry them over to a certain place in Longdu to kidnap a contractor engaged in the construction of a school following his refusal to pay them a toll of Tk 3 lakh.

But security forces, acting on a tip-off, had already laid an ambush to round up the criminals and challenged them when their boat reached Vasainnyadam. Subsequently, the gang opened fire

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## British-era sedition law contradicts constitution

Dr M Zahir tells The Daily Star

REZAUL KARIM

Eminent lawyer Dr M Zahir has said that in applying all laws dealing with sedition charges, the government should at first uphold the fundamental rights and freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Dr Zahir said that Section 124A of the Penal Code that deals with sedition issues is clearly overridden by Article 39 of the Constitution.

"The British colonial rulers formulated the law dealing with sedition in 1889 to arrest or harass anyone who opposed the British rule. But it contradicts the Bangladesh constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and



Dr M Zahir

expression as well as freedom of the press," he pointed out.

Explaining the provisions of the Penal Code and the Constitution, he said, sections 121 to 124 of the

Penal Code deal with waging of war and rebellion against the State, while section 124A alone deals with sedition.

Section 124A says, "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added or with fine."

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## World Editors Forum wants Shahriar, Saleem, Muntasir freed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Association of Newspapers and the World Editors Forum have urged the government to immediately release from jail freelance journalist Saleem Samad, writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir and Professor Muntasir Mamun.

In a letter to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the association and the forum also called for dropping all charges against them.

The letter mentioned that if their jailing is simply related to their journalistic activities, it would constitute a clear violation of their rights to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by numerous international conventions.

Moreover, the UN Commission on Human Rights considers that 'detention' as punishment for peaceful expression of an opinion is one of the most reprehensible ways to enjoin silence and, as a consequence, a grave violation of human rights, said the letter sent recently.

## Rejoinder & our reply

Jahangir Mohammad Adel, owner of Adel Properties Limited, in a rejoinder to a report published in The Daily Star on December 20 under the headline "Rajuk crosses the limit again," said Adel Square at Dhanmondi Road 13 is being constructed according to the plan approved by Rajuk.

He said the then East Pakistan Government acquired 150 to 200 bighas of land of Moulana Abdus Sobhan at Dhanmondi in 1954. Of this, 12 to 14 bighas of land have been de-requisitioned in favour of the heirs of Moulana Sobhan after his death. Adel brothers are grand sons of the late Moulana.

Some heirs of Moulana Sobhan

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