

Elderly woman burnt to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An elderly woman was burnt to death and six shanties were gutted in a fire at East Dholaipar in the city yesterday.

Sixty-year-old Rokeya was sleeping in her shanty when the fire broke out at about 3:45am.

Firefighters suspected that an electrical short circuit sparked off the blaze.

Two units of firefighters from Postogola extinguished the blaze at 4:30am. They estimated the loss at Tk one lakh.

Police sent the body of Rokeya to Midford hospital for autopsy.

Test of Azam Reza in Jayanti murder Jan 4

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed January 4 as the test date of Azam Reza, accused of killing his wife Jayanti Munshi alias Jayanti Reza.

Judge AR Masud of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 set the date following the cross-examination of 13 prosecution witnesses. .



Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil exchanges New Year's greetings with Sajib Wazed Joy at Sudha Sadan yesterday while Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and AL President Sheikh Hasina videos the scene and her daughter-in-law Christine, *extreme left*, looks on.

Delhi's attitude hampers ties with Dhaka

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite India's enormous contribution to the independence of Bangladesh, Dhaka-New Delhi relations have failed to reach optimal level, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said this failure could be attributed to diplomatic inefficiency, lack of expertise on bilateral issues and New Delhi's inclination to impose conditions on various treaties with Dhaka.

The roundtable on 'Indo-Bangladesh relationship: Political and economic context' was organised by Bangladesh Policy Forum at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Speaking as chief guest, Prof Muzaffar Ahmed said after 1960 India's policy and administration were dominated by politicians and bureaucrats of South and South-West India who were not interested in strengthening relations with Bangladesh.

He said Bangladesh also had not enough experts at political, administrative and academic level who could really go for tough negotiations with India on bilateral issues.

Prof Muzaffar however said Saarc could play a vital role in establishing a green belt in South Asian region to save its ecology from the threat of natural disasters like tsunami.

Former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) Yusuf Abdullah Harun said there has been a huge trade deficit of Bangladesh with India because of its

unjust tariffs and taxes on the export-oriented products of Bangladesh.

"If India even gives us access to its full market in exchange of transit, it is not possible for Bangladesh to have more than \$500 million business with that country yearly," he added.

Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University said Indo-Bangladesh relationship was seriously hindered due to unbalanced water resources management.

Refuting Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri's comment at a recent seminar that the Indian River-Linking Project was at a conceptual stage, he said an official report of National Water Development Agency of India published in March 2003 stated that feasibility studies of six links had already been completed.

"India has many other alternatives for water and energy but Bangladesh does not have," he added.

Brigadier General (retd) M Sakawat Hussain called for close cooperation between the administration of the two countries, and creation of think tanks for scientific studies on bilateral and multilateral treaties.

Senior Policy Analyst Sk Tawfique of Neeti Gobeshona Kendro, a research centre, said the dispute over India's occupation of 27,000 acres of Bangladeshi land is yet to be solved, he noted.

DU Prof Dr Md Akhtaruzzaman and IT Consultant Muzibul Islam also spoke.