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No salary for BTRC staff as 5 top posts remain vacant

STAR REPORT

Officials and employees of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) could not draw their salaries for the month of February in absence of its chairman and commissioners.

Top five posts of the telecom regulator have remained vacant since last month and there is still no headway for appointment to those posts, sources said.

Keeping such posts vacant for over a month is contrary to the country's Telecom Act that insists on appointment against any vacant

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Court finds Kuril arms probe flawed

2 get 31 yrs, 3 acquitted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court while passing judgement in the Kuril arms and explosives haul case yesterday described the investigation as flawed and inadequate in tracing the source of the arms.

Judge Mohammad Abu Hanif of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 jailed two people for 31 years and acquitted three others. The convicts are

Azizur Rahman alias Rubel and Mehedi Hassan Manik, while the acquitted are Jahangir, Shamsul Alam alias Nuru, and Mokbul Hossain alias Mukul.

Rubel and Manik were present in the court, while the rest were tried in absentia.

Police seized four AK47 rifles, 990 rounds of ammunition, two foreign-made revolvers, seven revolver bullets, 20 grenades, two 2kg of

plastic explosive bombs, four time-bombs, half a kilogram of gunpowder, six electric detonators, four-and-a-half yards of detonation wire, two firing devices with a charger, two time devices and a walkie-talkie from a signboard shop at the city's Kuril Badda on November 29, 2003. They also arrested Rubel and Manik, owner of the signboard shop, at the scene.

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Search offices of Jamaat, Shibir

Amini responds to govt's Kawami madrasa raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Fazlul Haq Amine expressed his indignation yesterday over the searching of Kawami madrasas by intelligence agents and demanded that similar actions be taken against the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and its student wing Islamic Chhatra Shibir.

"Why should they only search Kawami madrasas? They had better search Jamaat-Shibir offices," Amine, whose party is a component of the four-party ruling coalition that also includes Jamaat, told The Daily Star by telephone yesterday.

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A destructive dig for deeper waters

Wasa starts installing 1,000ft tubewells in Dhaka; experts warn of ominous consequences

ASHIQUIR RAHMAN

As the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) digs deeper into the ground in search of extractable water, as part of a new high depth tubewell initiative, the consequences for the environment and the public are becoming more and more grave, a WASA official and an expert warned.

Dr ANH Akhter Hossain,

Managing Director of Wasa, said a total of 10 tubewells of a 1,000-foot depth have already been installed recently in the city's Mirpur area, with 35 more to be installed in the near future.

Wasa authorities have been compelled to undertake such an initiative because the existing 1,500 wells, whose depth reaches only 600 feet, can no longer extract water due to a serious depletion of the under-

ground water level, he pointed out. Other Wasa officials have asserted, however, that Wasa will not be able to keep the number of 1,000-foot tubewells under 45, and may continue to increase the number by an indefinite amount in the future.

The move has caused concern both within and outside of Wasa, with officials of the water authorities as well as experts saying it could

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Spewing out eco time bomb

Raising chimney heights of brick kilns fails to stop grave air pollution



PHOTO: STAR

Dark billows of smoke spiral skyward from chimneys of brick kilns in Aminbazar yesterday, spelling grave environmental hazards.

PINAKI ROY

Bricks are made for building. But the country's brick kilns are churning out the basic ingredients for construction in a way that is doing more harm than good.

The government recently ordered the brick kiln owners to raise their chimneys to a height of 120 feet in a move to limit the kilns' destructive pollution emissions.

But on a visit to a village in Gazipur, where brick kilns have sprung up like mushrooms, this correspondent found that the ministry of Environment and Forest's 2003 directive had done little to help improve the environment.

"I cannot cultivate any vegetables here anymore where the air is so polluted. Last year I sowed some pumpkin seeds in my yard but could not produce a single one," said Jobed Ali, a farmer of Katka village of Gazipur where hundreds of brick kilns are located.

He even said that the greenery has disappeared from his village because of the harmful emissions

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Historic March 7 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the historic March 7, the day when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation, called upon Bangladesh to wage a decisive struggle against the Pakistan junta, setting the tone for the 1971 War of Liberation.

On this day in 1971, Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech before a capacity crowd at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyan (then Race Course Maidan).

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JS in crisis as BNP, AL turn to streets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the ruling and the main opposition parties have taken to the streets ignoring their responsibility to make the Jatiya Sangsad a centre of all political activities.

As the BNP has announced political programmes such as rallies in the face of the main opposition Awami League's street agitation, its

lawmakers are now busy with the party programmes.

Most lawmakers of the ruling alliance are avoiding parliamentary proceedings to take part in party programmes, resulting in almost regular quorum crisis in the House.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is also busy with different political programmes and she does not

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BNP urges AL to join Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party yesterday from a rally in the capital asked opposition Awami League to join the parliament shunning the 'politics of anarchy on the streets'.

Addressing the rally called to protest against 'anarchic politics', BNP Secretary General Abdul

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Narcotics guardians go into long hibernation

NNCB fails to meet in 2 years; lack of policy guidelines, graft cripple drug control drive

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The National Narcotics Control Board (NNCB), which is supposed to provide policy direction to the Department of Narcotics Control, has apparently become non-functional crippling the anti-

narcotics drive across the country. The high-powered NNCB was supposed to meet quarterly, but did not sit in last two years.

The government enacted laws in 1990 setting up the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) and formed a national Narcotics Control Board

(NNCB) in 1998 to provide policy direction towards the intervention programme undertaken by the DNC.

But, all the government's efforts have been proved inadequate and ineffective due to rampant corruption and ignorance of the officials

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Jamaat leader's diatribe against The Daily Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As The Daily Star runs regular reports on religious militants, its editor along with other like-minded editors should be quizzed about Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman, said Assistant General Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Md Kamaruzzaman yesterday.

"How do they know so much about them while we don't know anything," Kamaruzzaman asked at a rally organised by the city Jamaat to protest the anarchy created by the

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