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## AUGUST 21 BOMBING ON AL RALLY

# 'Seven-Star Group' carried out attack

Petty criminal George Miah makes confession, says 14 were hired for Tk 10,000 each to do the job

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

George Miah, a low-profile criminal, in a confessional statement before a magistrate yesterday alleged that the underworld gang -- Seven-Star Group -- led by one of the most wanted criminals Subrata Bain Shuvro, carried out the August 21

grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally.

George, nabbed from his Senbagh residence in Noakhali on June 10 by a joint force, told the magistrate that some 14 criminals, mostly belonging to the Seven-Star Group, bombed the rally. George admitted that he was one of the

attackers and said five criminals -- Shuvro, Masud, Joy, Mukul and Robin -- also played the key role in the attack that left 22 AL leaders and activists killed and more than 200 injured.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of the Criminal

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## 3 killed as train hits bus

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Three people were killed and some 20 others injured when a train hit a bus at a level crossing in city's Kuril area last night.

Police said two trains -- one Sylhet-bound and the other one Dhaka-bound -- from the opposite directions were crossing the Kuril-Biswa Road level crossing almost at the same time at 10:40pm. Moments after the Sylhet-bound train went past, the bus and a yellow cab tried to cross the rail lines, but were hit by the Dhaka-bound train.

A male passenger of the bus whose identity could not be known immediately died on the spot while several others were injured, said Sub-Inspector Naim of Badda Police Station.

The injured were rushed to local

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## TENGRATILA BLOWOUT

# Flames leap even higher, gas leakages spread

**IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet**

Flames of fire spreading around the burning relief well at the gas field in Doarabazar upazila under Sunamganj district yesterday kept the local people panic-stricken two days after the Friday's blowout and explosion there.

Roaring flame at the burning relief well went up to 200 feet while gas leakage through at least 40

points was observed in the nearby areas yesterday.

Sand and stones also came out of the well and bubbles due to gas leakage were created in marshy land around the gas field.

Gas leakage has already spread in one kilometre area, locals said.

The locals continued their demonstration in front of the main gate of the gas field against the "irrespon-

sible activities" of the Canadian company Niko yesterday.

Most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages left their homesteads after the Friday's explosion.

Meanwhile, Advisor for Energy Affairs Mahmudur Rahman accompanied by the Bapex Managing Director Jamal Uddin Ahmed visited the Tengratila gas field area yesterday.

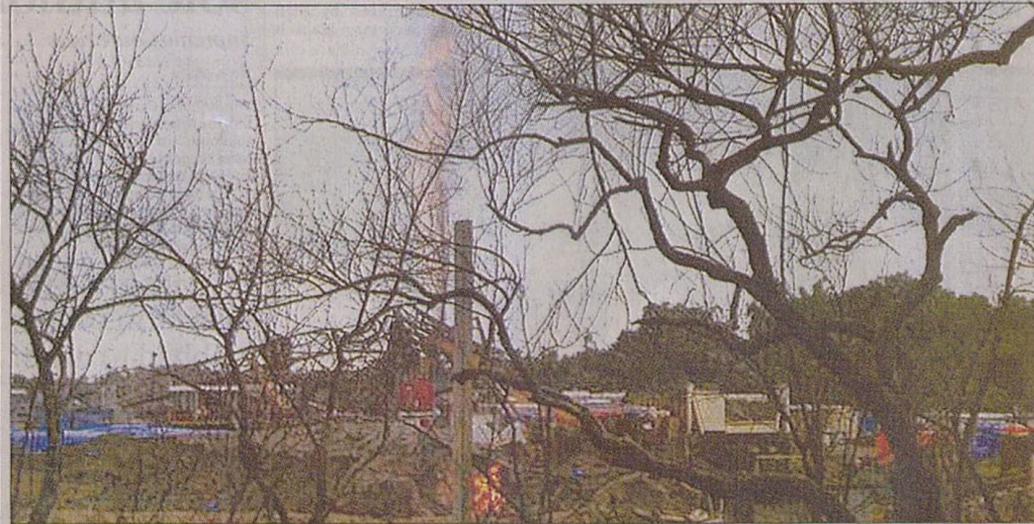
Mahmudur Rahman assured local people of compensation after a

detailed survey and asked them not to create any obstacle to Niko's works in the gas field for the sake of national interest.

He also handed over two cheques for Tk 11.75 lakh and Tk 12 lakh as compensation to some local institutions for damage caused by Tengratila gas field explosion on January 7.

A Niko official requesting

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The blaze at Tengratila gas field has left trees in surrounding areas brittle and bare, posing a serious threat to environment. PHOTO: STAR

## US asks govt to protect rights of Ahmadiyyas

Visiting under secy enquires about 'crossfire', hopes next elections will be free and fair

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas R Burns yesterday expressed concern over growing incidents of persecution of Ahmadiyyas including Friday's attacks on an Ahmadiyya neighbourhood in Brahmanbaria.

He asked the Bangladesh government to uphold the sect's fundamental rights.

He also said the United States hopes that the next general election

in Bangladesh would be free and fair.

The visiting US under secretary made the observations after separate meetings with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan.

The US under secretary while calling on State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar at his office enquired whether the government is investigating the deaths in 'crossfire'.

"He [Burns] expressed concern over the Ahmadiyya issue," Babar told reporters after the meeting, adding that he briefed the US delegate on the steps taken for the security of the Ahmadiyyas.

Burns described the 22-minute meeting with the state minister as satisfactory. He, however, did not answer reporters' queries.

Babar said the visiting US secretary assured him of increasing cooperation in various sectors

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## Ties with Dhaka not influenced by others

**Burns tells PM, hails democratic progress**

**UNB, Dhaka**

US Under Secretary for Political Affairs R Nicholas Burns held Bangladesh in high esteem as a good example of democracy in this region and said America has great admiration for democratic practice and its institutionalisation here.

Burns made the remarks when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office in the afternoon. He reaffirmed that ongoing US cooperation with Bangladesh would continue. The Dhaka-Washington relationship is direct, not influenced by others, he said.

The United States foreign office

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US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Nicholas R Burns, right, pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. PHOTO: PID

## Disqualified firms get comfy treat

Cabinet body okays advance payment to Chinese company, contract to UAE firm

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday approved advance payment to a disqualified Chinese company in the Fenchuganj power project and awarding of the contract for the Meghnaghat-2 450-mw power project to another disqualified consortium led by a UAE-based company.

Both the Chinese and UAE companies, backed by strong ruling alliance lobbies, were previously awarded two infrastructure pro-

jects.

The committee also approved a proposal to provide government guarantee on purchasing surplus power from small power plants to be built by private companies under the revised small power plant policy.

Headed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the economic affairs committee took the exceptional decision to pay 10 percent of the cost for installation of the Fenchuganj 90 megawatt plant in advance to disqualified Chinese bidder Harbin.

Two years ago, the government

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## 8 held for attack on B'baria Ahmadiyyas

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria**

Police have arrested eight people in connection with the Friday's bomb and arson attack on the Ahmadiyya community in East Kandipara and Bhadughar in the town.

The police were interrogating the arrestees until yesterday noon and will send them to jail custody today.

The arrestees are Chanchal alias Suman, 22, son of Jiban Mia, Md Siddique Mia, 38, son of Md Sadu Mia, Muhid Mia, 34, son of Dolon Mia, Md Rouf Mia, 25, son of Kulon Mia, Md Alamgir alias Joy Mia, 32, son of Kalu Mia, Jiban Mia, 28, son of Abdul Rouf, Md Sentu Mia, 25, son of Kalu Mia, and Mia Gias Uddin, 23, son of Dan Mia.

Brahmanbaria police have

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## BLACK MONEY WHITENING

# BNP MPs ask govt to scrap provision

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Treasury bench lawmakers in parliament yesterday asked the government to withdraw the proposal for continuing the provision for whitening black money.

During discussion on the proposed budget for FY 2004-05 the lawmakers from BNP and Jamaat strongly opposed the finance minister's budgetary proposal in this regard.

They said the opportunity for legalising black money will not have any positive impact on the country's economy rather it will frustrate the honest taxpayers.

"The provision of whitening black money should be withdrawn

for the sake of social and economic justice," BNP lawmaker Mahbubur Rahman told parliament.

"Unfair is always unfair. We cannot support this," he said.

Whip Ashraf Hossain and Jamaat lawmaker Abdus Subhan observed that the time extension of money whitening provision would encourage illegal income.

The finance minister in his budget speech proposed an extension of the time limit up to June 30 next year for whitening black money by paying 7.5 percent income tax.

Ashraf said, "It is not fair that corrupt people should get immunity by paying only 7.5 percent tax when honest taxpayers have to pay a

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