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High-rise buildings vulnerable to fire

Most do not have adequate fire-fighting equipment

TAWFIQUE ALI

Most of the multi-storeyed government and private office buildings in the capital remain vulnerable to any potential fire with no or inadequate safety measures posing a threat to public life, revealed an investigation by The Daily Star.

The 22-storey Navana Tower at Gulshan intersection-1 lacks a workable fire-fighting system except for some hydrant boxes, date-expired fire extinguishers and alarm bells.

Md Saiful Islam, maintenance engineer of its office complex from 5th to 14th floors, said, "I am not sure whether the safety measures are in a workable condition, as there has never been any fire fighting drill at this building commissioned in 2001."

Manager of Navana's apartment owners' association, Abul Kalam Azad said that all except three flats in the residential floors from 15th to 22nd have been turned into offices.

Hydrant boxes at the 13-storey Titus Gas head office at Karwan Bazar were found in a rundown condition and under lock and key. Hydrant box at the first floor is broken and empty. No extinguisher was spotted on any floor. The alternative exit is without any fire resistant doors.

AKM Saiful Islam, an assistant legal officer of Titus, said, "I am not very aware of the fire safety measures here, as I have not seen any demonstration on fire drill."

Mir Moshir Rahman, deputy general manager (civil), declined to reply without managing director's consent.

ASM Ismail, chief Architect, depart-

ment of architecture of public works ministry, said that a fire escape at a non-residential multi-storied building has to be fitted with fire resistant doors and have easy access, unhindered route and safe refuge as per Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC).

BNBC requires a standby hydrant system for fire fighting and a dedicated lift meant for both fire fighting and exit with alternative power supply, he said. BNBC makes it mandatory to have a regular fire drill every three months.

Site engineer Zakir Hossain at the 22-storey Jabbar Tower on the Gulshan Avenue claimed, "We have all the fire fighting arrangements but I will not let you see them."

Wajed Ali, general manager of the

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Ministers and civil and military high officials bid Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina farewell before she left for Saudi Arabia last night on a five-day tour of the kingdom.

PHOTO: PID

KHALEDA'S HOUSE US favours talks, legal procedure

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Responding to the issuance of a notice upon Khaleda Zia to vacate her cantonment house, the US embassy in Dhaka yesterday said the issue is for Bangladesh to solve through dialogue and established legal procedures.

"There are many important

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Local admin asked to check graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government asked all deputy commissioners (DCs) to prevent corruption at grass-roots level, ensure proper services of government agencies to rural people and improve the quality of education in primary and high schools.

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Chennai thrash Bangalore

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Cricket 'golden oldies' Matthew Hayden and Muttiah Muralitharan powered Chennai Super Kings to a 92-run win over Bangalore Royal Challengers on Monday in the Indian Premier League.

Australian Hayden, who departed the international

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PHOTO: STAR

Outbreak of diarrhoea in the city sends patients crowding the Institute of Cholera and Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B). The photo of this child was taken yesterday.

CID quizzing arrested NSI officer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Investigators of the sensational Chittagong arms haul case yesterday started interrogating National Security Intelligence (NSI) field officer Akbar Hossain, now on remand.

An investigator seeking anonymity said Akbar claimed that whatever he had done was on instructions of some officials of higher authority. Akbar also named some of the officials and the investigators were yesterday busy verifying those names, said the investigator.

The NSI field officer was arrested and placed on a two-day remand Sunday reportedly for hiring seven out of the 10 trucks and a crane for

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RMG workers torch truck after road accident

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Enraged garments workers set a truck on fire and barricaded the Gazipur-Tangail highway for about two hours following a road accident that killed one of their fellow workers at Naojore in Gazipur.

The deceased Ashu Miah, 22, from Dobaura, Mymensingh met his tragic death while crossing road. He was a knitting operator of Diganta Sweater factory.

Witnesses and police said a Kushtia bound truck ran over

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Govt fixes edible oil prices

Soybean Tk 73, palm oil Tk 59; retail prices to be Tk 5 higher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday fixed the mill gate rate of unpacked soybean oil at Tk 73 per litre while palm oil at Tk 59 to keep the prices of this essential item stable in the local market.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan announced the fresh prices of the edible oil after a meeting with Bangladesh Edible Oil Refiners' Association (BEOR) at his secretariat office.

Khan said price of per litre edible oil may be Tk 5 higher in retail markets than the mill gate rate because of other costs like carrying cost.

"The government would strictly monitor the market situation constantly so that no one can make a brisk business on higher demand of the item pushing the consumers under pressure," Khan warned.

The commerce minister called the meeting with the edible oil importers and refiners to know the reason behind the sudden price hike of edible oil.

He said the government would import edible oil through state-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) to keep

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Faridpur 'Al Badr leader' sued for war crime

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A case was filed yesterday against Moulana Abul Kalam, alleged commander of Al Badr Bahini in Faridpur during the Liberation War, and his brother-in-law on charge of committing war crimes.

Bhakta Ranjan Biswas, son of Madhab Chandra Biswas of Purura Namopara village, filed the case with a Judicial Magistrate's Court against Kalam alias Bachchu Mia, 65, of Saltha upazila and his brother-in-law Mohammad Kazi, 60.

Kalam, the chairman of non-governmental organisation Bangladesh Masjid

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Lanka gives Tigers 24 hours to surrender

35,000 people crossed the lines into govt-held territory

AFP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government gave Tamil Tiger fighters and their leader 24 hours to surrender yesterday, after tens of thousands of trapped civilians managed to flee rebel-held territory.

The ultimatum to Tigers supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran and his cadres would run out midday (0630 GMT) Tuesday, said the government's defence spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella.

"We warn Prabhakaran and his cadres to surrender within the next 24 hours," Rambukwella told reporters, without specifying what action would be taken against the cornered rebels.

The warning came as aerial video footage provided by a Sri Lankan spy plane showed more than 35,000 civilians pouring out of the sliver of jungle territory where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are making a final stand.

The presence of the civilians has been cited by the Sri Lankan military as one of the main reasons preventing a final, all-out assault on the Tigers' position.

Thousands of civilians Monday escaped from the area still held by Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers, signalling that the rebels' "complete defeat" was imminent, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said.

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BCL men go on rampage at Sher-e-Bangla University

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) ransacked the administrative building of Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University in the capital yesterday demanding postponement of the Masters in Sociology (MS) final part examinations scheduled for April 21 and 22.

Around 40 BCL activists led by Oliul Alam alias Tuel, Saiful, and Ovi attacked the first floor of the administrative building of the university at around

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WARI-BATESHWAR Fresh discoveries show signs of ancient city

EMRAN HOSSAIN, back from Narsingdi

Fresh discovery of structures and artefacts traces signs of contemporary satellite settlements outside the fort city in Wari-Bateshwar, reinforcing last year's indication that the place was a Janapada or Mahajanapada, one of the earliest kingdoms or states in the Indian subcontinent.

Archaeologists say recent discoveries at three sites surrounding Wari-Bateshwar have confirmed that the settlements were contemporary to the ancient city dating back to 600 BC to 100 BC.

"Since we began claiming Wari-Bateshwar as a fort city in 2000, many were raising questions over indications to the existence of the fort. The recent discovery of brick structures established that urbanisation had flourished in Wari-Bateshwar," says Prof Sufi Mustafizur Rahman, who led the excavation team from the archaeology department of Jahangirnagar University.

"We think Wari-Bateshwar was the capital of the

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PHOTO: STAR

This unique brick-built structure in the fort city Wari-Bateshwar confirms that urbanisation flourished here around 2,500 years ago.

HISTORY DISTORTION HC issues rule on govt

Asks why some books should not be banned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks why it should not be directed to ban the set of books that distorted the fact regarding the declaration of independence.

The court in the rule asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to take legal action against the individuals who changed the history of declaration of independence as stated in the Proclamation of the Independence.

It also directed the government to produce all the newspapers published from March 1, 1971 to March 25, 1971, kept in the national archive of Bangladesh, before the court

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Prayer Timing		
April 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-27	6-31
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation