

# Fire breaks out in Multiplan Centre

*Blaze lasts for about two and a half hours*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge quantity of electronic and computer accessories was damaged as a fire ripped through the second floor of a multi-storey shopping centre on the capital's Elephant Road yesterday.

The blaze lasted for about two hours and a half before 12 fire fighting units finally put out the flames at Multiplan Centre, which mainly sells electronic and computer goods.

Fire officials suspected that the fire originated from the restaurant on the second floor where the employees used to cook using a kerosene burner.

No human casualties were reported and damages could not be estimated immediately as most of the 635 shops in the 14-story shopping plaza were closed.

A shopper from Dhanmondi, Taher Elahi, said, "It was around 10:15am. I

was on the second floor. Suddenly I heard that a fire had broken out and within moments I saw heavy black smoke coming out through doors and holes. I quickly ran down and came out of the building."

One man was trapped on the second floor, while 20 people took refuge on the roof.

Transport movement on the road in front of the building was suspended for about two hours for the fire.

Zahurul Abedin, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Dhaka, said a restaurant and a shop of computer accessories were damaged totally, and almost all the electric cables in the building were burnt, causing huge smoke and heat.

He said a three-member committee was appointed to find the source of the fire and value the losses.

New Market Police said the market would open today.



**Smoke produced by a fire in the capital's Multiplan Centre yesterday. Inset top, people crowd in front of the computer market. Inset bottom, shop owners cry fearing possible damage in the fire, which lasted for about two hours and a half.**

PHOTO: STAR

## Hefajat threatens to bring govt down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hefajat-e Islam yesterday threatened to launch a movement to overthrow the government if its demands, widely criticised as conflicting with the constitution, are not met by May 5.

The Islamist group labels some bloggers "atheists" and demands their hanging through enactment of a blasphemy law and scrapping of the women development policy.

Rallying in Khulna city, the Hefajat leaders accused the government of "propaganda" that the Islamist group, created by teachers and students of Qawmi madrasas, was anti-women.

Addressing several thousand activists and followers at Dakbangla Chattar, Hefajat central Nayebe-e-Ameer Nuruddin Kasemi said the 13-point demand was rather aimed at "ensuring" women's rights.

BNP-led opposition alliance leaders, Khulna Peshajibi Somonnay Parisad, and a section of Khulna University teachers and employees expressed solidarity with the rally, while some organisations supplied food and drinks to the protesters and pro-BNP Doctors Association of Bangladesh and National Doctors Forum provided medical care.

**Arrest, punish 'atheist bloggers'**  
*Demands Islami Andolon Bangladesh ameer*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Accusing the ruling AL-led government of siding with atheists, Islami Andolon Bangladesh Ameer Mufti Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, the pir of Chormonai, yesterday demanded arrest and punishment, by enacting a law, of atheist bloggers for "insulting Islam".

The incumbent and previous governments nurtured corruption, violence, nepotism and other different evil practices in the last few decades, he told a rally on Barisal city's Fazlul Huq Avenue.

The rally is part of a road march the IAB initiated from Jessore and set to end in Kuakata over a five-point demand, including restoration of the phrase "Absolute trust and faith upon Almighty Allah" in the constitution.

## Non-partisan govt must for next polls

*Roundtable told*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A non-partisan government, no matter it is called "caretaker" or "interim" government, must conduct the next general election to make it fair and credible, speakers told a roundtable yesterday.

They stressed dialogue among the political parties to reach a consensus on which form the government should take.

Noted jurist Barrister Rafiqul Haque said it was the responsibility of all political parties to negotiate a formula to make the election acceptable to all and democracy continue.

He also recommended introduction of two rules--a person shall not be able to be the prime minister more than twice and the election will be staggered over a period of time instead of a daylong voting.

Prof Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonnoy Nagorik (Shujan), which organised the roundtable on the prevailing political realities at Jatiya Press Club, viewed that a joint charter of all political parties could be formulated as in 1991 to overcome the crisis.

He said the charter would enunciate some pre-election duties, election-time activities and post-election activities for a fair election and good governance.

Majumdar proposed formation of a search committee comprising retired chief justices to select a chief adviser of the polls-time impartial government.

The committee will also propose 15 names for advisers, and the chief adviser will pick up 10 of them, he said.

For creating a congenial atmosphere for dialogue, the opposition leaders should be released from jail and the opposition party should refrain from violence, Majumdar said.

## 30pc of govt housing projects should be for urban poor

*Says Sir Fazle Hasan Abed*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government housing projects should be designed in such a way that 30 percent of all its facilities be reserved for the rapidly increasing number of poor people in urban areas, said Sir Fazle Hasan Abed yesterday.

All housing projects, including the private ones, should be planned in such a way, he added.

The founder and also chairperson of Brac was addressing a symposium titled "Urban Space: Integrated action on health, rights and poverty reduction" held at the Brac Centre in the capital. It was organised by Brac University and Columbia University.

"Children grow up with no future and the grown-ups live with no present," he

said, commenting on the landless migrants living in the city.

Although the country claims to have universal primary education, the children of urban slums do not get any schooling, he added.

"Neither BNP nor the Awami League-led government has ever adopted any pro-poor policies aimed at urban areas," he said.

Highlighting that the population growth rate in the city is 6 percent while it is less than 1 percent in rural areas, other speakers discussed different issues of urbanisation.

Planned urbanisation makes people more efficient and can have positive effects on the economy, said Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, former adviser to a caretaker government.

## Ctg journo place demands to 8th wage board commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist leaders yesterday called upon the 8th Wage Board Commission to ensure implementation of its award in the newspapers of Chittagong.

They placed a 24-point demand to former Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque, also chairman of the commission, at a views exchange meeting at Chittagong Circuit House.

The demands included paying dearness allowance (DA) to journalists, employees and workers of the dailies in Chittagong, and allocating Tk 20 lakh as risk allowance for journalists in case of death on duty.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Information Ministry Deputy Secretary and also Secretary of the Wage Board Commission Nazmul Hossain Khan, Chittagong Press Club President Ali Abbas, Chittagong Union of Journalists President Shahidul Alam and its General Secretary Reaz Haider were also present at the meeting.



Participants at an advisory and awareness session on pregnancy and birth planning at Malibagh Wireless Gate slum in the capital on Friday. It was organised by Junior Chamber International (JCI) Dhaka Cosmopolitan with support from Eskayef Bangladesh Ltd and Ekattor TV.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Road accidents kill 5, hurt 10

METRO DESK

Five people were killed and ten others injured in road accidents in Khulna, Chittagong and Gazipur yesterday.

Our Khulna correspondent reports, three people were killed and ten others injured in a three-vehicle pile-up on Khulna-Satkhira highway at Ghilerdanga in Dumuria upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were Aminul Islam, 60, Ghantaram Mondol, 48, and Abdul Aziz, 45.

The accident occurred when an engine-run three-wheeler, a pickup and motorbike collided with each other.

Police said Aminul and Ghantaram, the three-wheeler passengers, died instantly while Abdul Aziz, the motorbike rider, at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

The injured were admitted to the KMCH and a local health complex.

Locals blocked the highway for about two hours from 7:00am.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports, a CNG-run autorickshaw passenger died after the vehicle rammed a battery-run rickshaw in Noapara area of Raozan upazila yesterday noon.

The deceased was Md Badal, 50, of the area.

A correspondent from Gazipur reports, a garment worker died as a human hauler, Leguna, hit him on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at No-2 C&B in Shreepur yesterday morning.

The victim Abdul Qaiyum, 21, of Sunamganj, worked at SQ Garments Ltd in Shreepur.

## Obituary

METRO DESK



Niranjan Kundu, father of Mediacom Ltd Director Ajoy Kumar

Kundu, died in the capital's Square Hospital on Friday night. He was 83.

Mediacom Ltd expresses deep shock at his death and prays for the salvation of the departed soul, says a press release.

It also expresses profound sympathy for the bereaved family members.

## Political unrest discourages Japanese investors: Envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has expressed serious worries over the prevailing situation in Bangladesh and called for dialogue among the political parties to settle the problems peacefully.

Speaking at a diplomatic talk yesterday, Japanese ambassador Shiro Sadoshima said he was frustrated about the current spate of hartal-violence that scared away Japanese investors but he was not pessimist about Bangladesh, which overcame many difficulties in the past.

"Yes, I am frustrated, but not pessimist," he told the talk organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at Jatiya Press Club.

The ambassador said he wanted to see more Japanese missions making investments but the reality was reversed. "I joined in Dhaka one and a half years ago with the main mission to expand business

horizons and increase trade and investment, but the current situation has created a sense of frustration within me."

The envoy said an important business delegation of young businessmen and researchers from Japanese giants like Sony, Canon, Toyota, and Rico came to Dhaka last month, but they got scared and flew back to Japan when a bomb exploded during their stay in a Chittagong hotel. "They just flew off after staying in hotels in Dhaka and Chittagong."

Sadoshima said many Japanese teams, including senator overseas development assistance committee, was supposed to be here in mid-March but they cancelled visits due to hartal.

In reply to a question, the ambassador categorically said there would be no Japanese fund for Padma Bridge. He said Tokyo had decided to refocus on other projects in Bangladesh.



Bundles of internet and television cables hang hazardously in the capital's Dilkusha. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON