

Christmas celebrated

UNB, Dhaka

Members of the Christian community in the country celebrated the holy Christmas yesterday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ amid festivity and religious fervour.

Christmas, the biggest religious festival of the Christian community, is a celebration of rebirth, new beginning, forgiveness and peace, and renewing relationship with God and human beings.

The celebrations started on the eve of the day with singing of carols at public places like lobbies, restaurants and lounges.

Christians offered special prayers, illuminated churches, decorated Christmas trees at homes and places of worship and missions while Santa Claus gave Christmas gifts to the children.

The day was a public holiday.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia greeted members of the Christian community on

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Santa Claus and Mickey Mouse entertain kids on Christmas Day at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

4 hurt while making crude bombs in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Four people sustained injuries when one of the crude bombs they were making exploded in Dattarapara Himardighi of Tongi in Gazipur yesterday.

One of them, Shahidul Islam, 35, is critically injured and has been taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Tongi Government Hospital.

Ismail Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station, said a bomb exploded when Shahidul and his three accomplices were making bombs at his rented house.

The other three were not hurt badly and managed to flee, the police officer added.

Police recovered four bombs and three bullets from the scene.

Police also detained Shahidul's wife Rina and daughter Laboni for questioning.

RU teacher, trainer fired over sexual abuse

Retirement age of officials, employees extended from 60 to 62 years

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi University authorities have sacked a teacher and a trainer after a yearlong investigation found them guilty of sexually harassing female students.

The official orders regarding the dismissal of Shaon Uddin, lecturer of the management department, and Sarowar Hossain, music instructor at the Teacher-Student Cultural Centre (TSCC), will be issued within a couple of days, said

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AL starts campaign today to ensure voter turnout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 17 teams comprising Awami League's (AL) senior leaders and lawmakers who have been already elected unopposed to start a countrywide tour today to ensure a spontaneous turnout in the January 5 10th parliamentary election.

A team led by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim and Kazi Zafar Ullah will visit Gopalganj, Faridpur, Shariatpur, Madaripur and Rajbari.

Syed Ashraf Islam, Matia Chowdhury and Abdur Razzak will lead a team to Mymensingh Jamalpur, Sherpur, Tangail, Netrakona and Kishoreganj.

Tofael Ahmed and Sahara Khatun are among others guiding a team in Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Gazipur and Dhaka.

In Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira, Tofael Ahmed and Jahangir Kabir Nanak will lead different teams while Mahabub-ul Alam Hanif and Abdur Rahman are among others who will visit Kushtia, Chuadanga and Narail.

Abdul Latif Siddique, Asaduzzaman Noor and Khalid Mahmood Chowdhury are likely to visit Dinajpur,

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POLITICAL UNREST

ADP implementation rate likely to go down this fiscal

Fears leading economist

UNB, Dhaka

Although the implementation rate of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) hit 96 percent in the last fiscal year 2012-13, its progress in this fiscal is likely to suffer a major setback due to the ongoing political unrest and violence, said a leading economist.

Dr Mustafa K Mujeri noted that there was marked improvement in the last fiscal year in the ADP implementation progress compared to the previous few fiscals. "But, under the present political circumstances, implementation is being hampered in various sectors, especially at the field level, for which the country is likely to witness lower implementation rate in the last five months of the ongoing fiscal."

According to sources at the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED), the implementation progress is likely to witness lower rate during the July-November period of the current fiscal compared to the same period of the last fiscal although the official data is yet to be revealed.

The implementation progress except the self-financed projects in the first four months (July-October) of the current fiscal (2013-14) stood at 15 percent compared to 20 percent during the same period of the preceding fiscal.

Saying that a congenial atmosphere is not prevailing in the country to reach the desired level of expenditure in the infrastructural sector, Dr Mujeri, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), observed that

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Dhaka agrees to send more troops to S Sudan

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Responding to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's call, Dhaka has agreed to send one battalion of additional troops for peacekeeping in the UN Mission in South Sudan, which is rife with bloody ethnic strife.

"We have already taken an initiative to send a battalion of infantry of the Bangladesh Army, and hopefully we will be able to send the peacekeepers in the next eight to 10 weeks at the maximum," said Dr AK Abdul Momen, ambassador and permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday by phone, he said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave the commitment to the UN chief when he (Ban) called her on Tuesday.

The number of personnel varies in battalions, but usually one infantry battalion comprises 750 plus troops, according to Bangladesh Army sources.

This fresh one battalion is in addition to 1,450 troops, which are being sent to Mali for the UN peacekeeping, he added.

"We are considering an inter-mission transfer...as there is urgency and thus we can immediately transfer some equipment and Bangladeshi troops from the Congo mission,"

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Severe traffic congestion in front of the Prime Minister's Office in the capital yesterday, a day after the end of the opposition's 83-hour blockade. Such a huge number of passenger vehicles were not seen on the city streets in the past few weeks due to rounds of blockades and hartals.

PHOTO: STAR

15 Benin crash victims remembered on 10th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members and friends yesterday commemorated the 15 army officers, who were killed in a plane crash in Benin a decade ago while journeying back home from the UN peace missions a decade ago.

The crash stands out as one of the most tragic chapters in Bangladesh army's history, they said at a memorial meeting in the auditorium of Retired Armed Forces Welfare Association in the capital, organised by Rhythm Cultural Society and DefLog Event Management.

Speaking as chief guest, Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman said Bangladeshi peacekeepers were always recognised for their integrity wherever they went around the world.

"There was a time when

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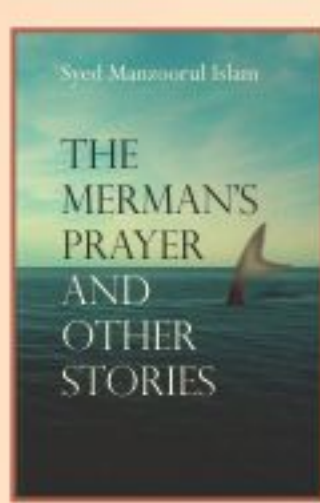
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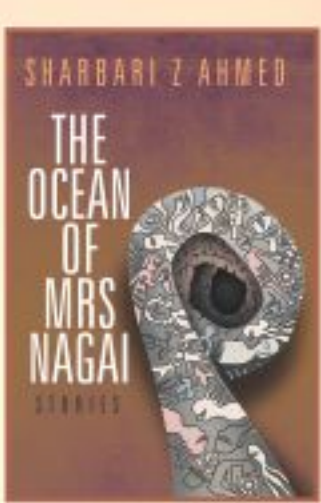
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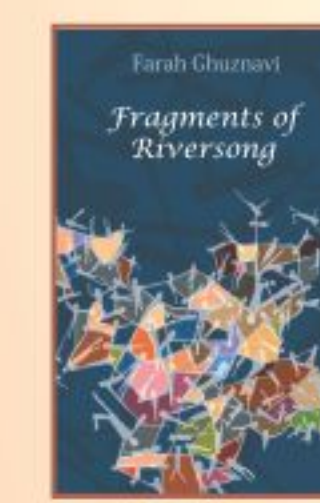
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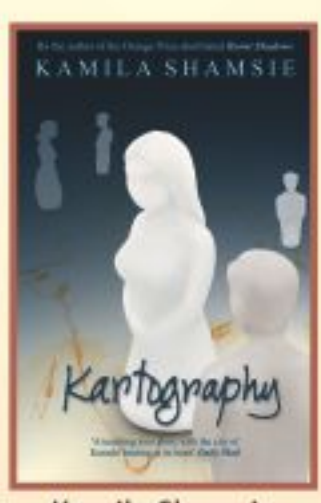
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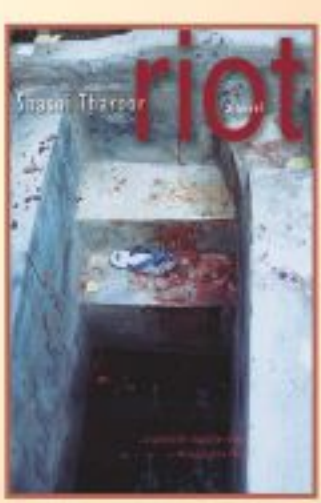
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