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Their dream in tatters

Arson victims fighting for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rubel is the eldest son in the family. At 24, he has taken the responsibility of a family of six that includes his one-year-old daughter.

He is now lying in the burn unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, fighting for his life. A victim of Friday's Jatrabari arson attack, he was admitted to the hospital with 30 percent burns.

He sustained injuries to his respiratory organs, according to a doctor at the burn unit.

His family members are utterly distressed about his recovery. Settled in Chandpur, they could not even travel to Dhaka to attend him with the blockade going on uninterrupted. Ismail Hossain, one of his relatives, is attending him in their absence.

"He's really an ill-fated boy," said Ismail.

Rubel has managed a job at and oxygen company. On the night of the arson, he was returning to his mess where he lives alone in Rugganj of Narayanganj, said Ismail.

If anything bad happens to him, his whole family will be devastated as he is the breadwinner, he added.

Rubel's colleague Mohammad Sumon was travelling in the same bus that night. He was admitted to the DMCH with 11 percent burns.

He too is the eldest son and the breadwinner in a family of seven, his uncle said.

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Unai looking at the burnt face of his father Khokan at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. Khokan got burnt when criminals hurled a petrol bomb at a bus in Jatrabari Friday night.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Ershad wants to bring PM, Khaleda together

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia inviting them to a convention in a bid to find a solution to the current political crisis.

Abul Hasan Ahmed Jewel, joint office secretary of JP, told The Daily Star that he handed over a letter to the Khaleda's special assistant Shimul Biswas at her Gulshan office in the evening. Later, Jewel delivered the second letter to Hasina's Dhanmondi office.

Ershad in the letters said, "Let us all say no to this polluted politics. So, we all political leaders need to meet in a convention to solve the crisis."

"In terms of age, I am the most senior political leader of the country...if you agree

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Fatwa must not violate laws

SC says in full verdict

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Supreme Court yesterday released the full judgment in a case regarding fatwa, (Islamic religious edict) in which it said properly educated people could issue fatwa without violating the laws of the land.

"Fatwa on religious matters only may be given by the properly educated persons which may be accepted only voluntarily but any coercion or undue influence in any

form is forbidden," it said in the 138-page judgment.

"But no person can pronounce fatwa which violates or affects the rights or reputation or dignity of any person which is covered by the laws of the land. No punishment, including physical violence and/or mental torture in any form, can be imposed or inflicted on anybody in pursuance of fatwa," the SC said.

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Mymensingh division soon

PM for speedy public service

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the Dhaka Division would be split into two divisions -- Dhaka and Mymensingh -- to take public services to the people as quick as possible.

"This has to be done speedily because the longer it will take time the greater complexities will be there," she said at a meeting with senior officials of the public administration ministry at its conference room yesterday.

About splitting the Dhaka Division, Hasina said this division with 17 districts is densely populated and it is very

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FEAR OF ARREST, FURTHER ATTACK

Dinajpur Santal men flee home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

All Santal men have deserted Habibpur village to evade arrest following a clash over a disputed piece of land which left one dead in Parbatipur on Saturday.

Mahmudul Alam, a relative of slain Sohag Islam, filed a murder case with Parbatipur police against 50 people. Police have arrested 19 Santal inhabitants, including school-going children, in connection

with the incident.

"Men and young girls are not staying in the village fearing arrest and further attacks," said Bimal Mardi of Chirakutipara. He alleged that their girls were physically abused during the attack.

Villagers said a band of Bangalee criminals had taken away their cattle, land documents, tube-wells, cash and kitchen utensils following Sohag's death. They added the

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FLOUTING RULES THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO ENFORCE ... Two policemen on a motorbike near Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday defying the government ban on carrying a pillion passenger on motorcycles.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Confiscate all properties of 10 accused

Orders Habiganj court in Kibria murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Habiganj court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate all the movable properties of 10 fugitive accused, including former prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, in SAMS Kibria murder case.

The nine others are Moulana Taj Uddin, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Mufti Abdul Hai, Badrul, Mohammad Ali, Muhibur Rahman, Kajol Mia, Moulana Yahia and Abdul Jalil.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Rashid Ahmed Milon of Habiganj Sadar Court, however, acquitted three other accused -- Yousuf Bin Sharif, Abdul Jalil and Ahsan Ulla Kajol -- of the case.

The court came up with the order as the Criminal Investigation Department in the 3rd supplementary charge sheet prayed for withdrawing the names from the case.

The court also set February 10 for the next proceedings of the case.

Earlier, mayors of Sylhet City Corporation and Habiganj municipality were sent to jail on surrender. Eleven men, including the two BNP leaders, were named in the 3rd supplementary charge sheet submitted to Habiganj District and Sessions Judge's Court on November 13 last year.

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REBEL ATTACK ON KEY POWER LINE

Blackout in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

An apparent rebel attack on a key power line plunged around 80 percent of Pakistan into darkness yesterday, the latest reminder of the country's crippling energy crisis.

The power failure, one of the worst Pakistan has experienced, caused electricity to be cut in major cities nationwide, including the capital Islamabad, and even affected one of

the country's international airports.

It came as a fuel crisis grips the country, forcing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to cancel his trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Consumers often fail to pay already low state-mandated power prices in Pakistan, meaning state utilities lose money and cannot upgrade infrastructure.

The latest power failure began after midnight when a transmission line

connected to the national grid was damaged in an explosion, officials said, apparently carried out by a separatist group in restive Baluchistan province.

A senior official at the national grid station in Islamabad said around 80 percent of the country was hit by the power outage, while an AFP reporter in the eastern city of Lahore said the city's international airport also suffered a

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Gadget allows blind mom to see baby

AFP, Washington

A video that went viral this week showed a legally blind mother in Canada getting to look at her newborn child for the first time thanks to vision-enhancing glasses.

The video posted to

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