



A room of the flat in Ashulia where five members of a family suffered burns in an explosion caused possibly by a gas line leak yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Infant, four others burnt badly

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Police have detained the building owner, said Rezaul Haque, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station. The fire broke out on the ground floor of the building in Manikganjpara around 7:00am when someone attempted to light a gas stove. Mukta Begum, a resident of the neighbourhood, said she heard a loud bang and then saw the entire flat on fire. "The victims were screaming for

help. We rushed them to a local hospital," she said. The doors, windows and most of the things in the flat were damaged. Several residents of the building alleged that gas pipes used illegally by their landlord were of bad quality. Before he was detained by police, Abdul Hamid, the building owner, told reporters that he paid "a group of people" hefty sums for the unauthorised gas connection. According to Bangladesh Fire

Service and Civil Defence, 4,236 incidents of fire from stoves took place last year, which accounts for 23.40 percent of the total incidents. Six residents of a building in the capital's Uttarkhan died of burn injuries after leaky gas pipes caused a fire in a kitchen on October 13. Earlier this year, four students of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology died of burn injuries in a similar incident in Mymensingh.

Oikyafont

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said, "The dialogue initiative had generated hope among the public, but it has started fading away after the talks." Besides, Dr Kamal Hossain on Thursday said he did not find any "specific solution" in prime minister's speech while BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir added that his party was not satisfied with how the talks went. "We have placed our demands but sitting on the driving wheel the government did not accept those," Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya, told The Daily Star. The government did not show any positive attitude, rather it circulated the pictures of snacks and drinks to malign the Oikyafont leaders, he added. The seven-point demand of the alliance includes a neutral polls-time government, dissolution of parliament before the election and deployment of army with magistracy power during the polls. Briefing reporters on the talks outcome, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said they would not go beyond the constitution. BNP standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, who did not take part in the meeting despite being on the list of delegates, said, "The result of talks is zero. They [the government and the ruling alliance] will not accept any demand of Jatiya Oikyafont." "So", he added, "there is no alternative to waging a movement to ensure a free and fair election."

Vote for AL

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General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Joint Secretary Dipu Moni, among others, spoke at the rally. Arriving at the venue, Hasina inaugurated 101 development projects and laid the foundation stones of 94 others in different areas of four districts under the Mymensingh division. Raushan Ershad, opposition leader in parliament and Jatiya Party senior co-chairman, was present on the occasion. Of the 101 development projects, 31 are in Mymensingh, 19 in Netrakona, six in Jamalpur and 45 in Sherpur. Among the projects whose foundation stones were laid, 44 are in Mymensingh, 17 in Netrakona and 14 in Sherpur. The mega projects include the proposed modern divisional city, offices of divisional commissioner and range DIG, divisional circuit house, Mymensingh Secondary and Higher Education Board, Mymensingh FM Radio, Mymensingh Women Polytechnic Institute, Sheikh Hasina University in Netrakona, Netrakona Medical College, Netrakona Stadium, Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University in Jamalpur, Sheikh Hasina Composite Jute Textile Mill, Sheikh Hasina Textile Engineering College, Sheikh Russel Textile Institute, Bangabandhu Novo Theatre, new embankment to protect the city from the Brahmaputra river erosion, divisional stadium and construction work of a bridge over the Brahmaputra river in the city's Kewtakhali. The PM declared Mymensingh as the eighth administrative division of the country on October 13, 2015.

EU threatens

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The Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme has proved to be vital for the economic and social development of the country. The preferential exports from Myanmar to the EU have risen sharply from €535 million in 2015 to €1.3 billion in 2017. The EU expressed serious concerns about the disproportionate use of Myanmar military and security forces against Rohingyas. Over 720,000 Rohingyas fled violence in Rakhine since August last year. Last week, UN investigators said genocide against the Rohingyas was "ongoing" and that as many as 400,000 Rohingyas still remaining in Myanmar live under severe restrictions and repression. Earlier, the US had imposed targeted sanctions against Myanmar military commanders and army units, while Australia slapped sanctions on five generals responsible for human rights violations. **HALT REPATRIATION, URGES HRW, ASEAN MPS** Human Rights Watch has demanded immediate suspension of the proposed repatriation of Rohingyas starting from mid-November, arguing it would put the refugees in dire conditions in Myanmar. "Myanmar's government keeps talking about returns, but it has done nothing to allay the Rohingyas' fears of being returned to the same violence and oppression they fled," said HRW Refugee Rights Director Bill Frelick in a statement yesterday. "If Bangladesh moves forward on repatriations without the UN, it will squander the international goodwill it has accrued over the past year as a host to Rohingyas refugees," he said. Bangladesh and Myanmar officials, after a meeting in Dhaka on October 31, announced a "very concrete plan"

to begin repatriations in mid-November. The 2,000 Rohingyas identified to take part in the initial returns were selected from a list of 8,032 refugees that Bangladesh presented to Myanmar in February. In June, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and UN Development Programme signed a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar to facilitate the returns. They have since begun limited assessments in Rakhine, HRW said. Yet Bangladesh and Myanmar officials did not consult with UNHCR or Rohingyas refugees if they volunteer to return. "This repatriation plan is just Myanmar's latest attempt to deflect international criticism from its brutal ethnic cleansing campaign for which no one has been brought to justice," Frelick said, urging donors not to fund this "dangerous plan". The UNHCR spokesman, Andrej Mahecic, told Voice of America: "Because we consider that conditions in Rakhine state are not yet conducive to voluntary return in the conditions of safety, dignity and sustainability, UNHCR will not, at this stage, facilitate any refugee returns to Rakhine state." The refugee agency reported this week that it was not involved in preparation, transmission or receipt of the list (of Rohingyas returnees) nor in its verification and clearing. Meanwhile, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Parliamentarians for Human Rights also urged Bangladesh and Myanmar to halt the repatriation at this stage. "This is a poorly-thought plan," said Malaysian MP Charles Santiago, head of the body, reports Reuters, adding that Myanmar is not safe enough for the Rohingyas yet.

Dr Kamal more worried

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alliance would contest the upcoming election under the present government if a favourable environment was ensured, he said they had to be sure that steps were being taken every day for holding a free and fair election. "If the government ensures it, we will [take part] for sure." On Thursday, a 20-member delegation of Oikyafont, led by Kamal, had a discussion with the Awami League-led alliance at the Gono Bhaban. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, led the team of the ruling alliance. The dialogue was focused on reaching a consensus over holding the next general election in a fair, credible and inclusive manner. After the three-and-half hour long talks, Kamal said they found no specific solution in prime minister's speech. At yesterday's programme, the eminent jurist said the process for reaching a consensus was still underway. "Everything is possible if talks are held with an open mind." He said Oikyafont members went to the Gono Bhaban after making a proposal for talks with the PM. All the participants of the dialogue were pro-

independence individuals and believers in Bangabandhu's ideology. "What we expected from her is an assurance for ensuring an environment for fair polls so that no one can get an opportunity to commit any wrongdoing." Holding a free and fair election was not a matter of the government's will, but its constitutional duty, he added. Kamal said the election had to be free and fair and ensuring this was the government's prime task. He said there was misconception that a movement means torching of properties, but in true sense it meant unity and power of the people. The veteran politician criticised excessive spending by lawmaker aspirants during campaigns, saying it was unnecessary in a country like Bangladesh. About the Jail Killing Day, he said those who had plotted the killings thought that the country would not be able to make a turnaround, but they have been proved wrong. On November 3, 1975, national leaders Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, AHM Quamruzzaman and M Mansur Ali were assassinated inside the erstwhile Dhaka central jail.

Spain prosecutors seek up to 25 yrs jail for Catalan separatists

AFP, Madrid

Spanish prosecutors yesterday called for Catalan separatist leaders to be jailed for up to 25 years on charges of rebellion or misuse of public funds over last year's failed secession bid. In a statement ahead of an upcoming Supreme Court trial, the prosecution service said it was seeking prison sentences against 12 Catalan leaders ranging from seven to 25 years, the latter jail term being sought for former Catalan vice-president Oriol Junqueras. Prosecutors want two influential Catalan civic leaders, Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, and former regional parliamentary speaker Carme Forcadell jailed for 17 years. In a separate case, they said they were also seeking four to 11 years jail against former regional police leaders including Catalonia's then police chief Josep Lluís Trapero, whom they also accuse of rebellion. In its statement, the prosecution service said pro-independence leaders planned to use all possible means to achieve secession in October 2017, "including -- knowing that the state wouldn't accept this situation -- any violence needed to secure this criminal result."

It said separatist leaders had instigated "big citizen mobilisations" that represented an "intimidating force" and had also used the regional police force, with its 17,000 agents, which followed their orders. The charge of rebellion, which implies "rising up in a violent and public manner," has caused controversy in Spain where some say the independence bid went ahead without any violence, but that waged by Spanish police on the day of a banned independence referendum.

China challenges US to provide 'evidence' in trade secrets case

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday challenged the United States to show evidence to support charges that Beijing backed a scheme by Chinese and Taiwanese companies to steal trade secrets from a US-based semiconductor firm. US Attorney General Jeff Sessions accused the companies on Thursday of stealing an estimated \$8.75 billion worth of know-how from semiconductor giant Micron. The Justice Department unveiled criminal charges against Chinese state-owned Fujian Jinhua Integrated Circuit Co., and United Microelectronics Corporation (UMC) of Taiwan, along with three UMC officials. It said they conspired to steal US-based Micron's advanced designs to turn Fujian Jinhua into a major player in the global computer chip market. "If the US side is really concerned, they should provide concrete examples that can withstand the test of evidence and facts," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a regular press briefing. The charges were the latest in a series of cases targeting what Washington calls an ongoing Beijing programme to steal valuable US industrial and commercial secrets in order to advance the Chinese economy.

"Taken together, these cases and many others like them paint a grim picture of a country bent on stealing its way up the ladder of economic development and doing so at American expense," Sessions said. "This behaviour is illegal. It is wrong. It is a threat to our national security. And it must stop." US President Donald Trump has cited China's alleged theft of US technological know-how among a litany of grievances in his trade war with the Asian power. Trump and Xi spoke on the phone about trade and other issues hours after the charges were announced, and the US leader tweeted that the pair had a "very good" conversation. Xi said he was "very happy" to talk to Trump again and that he would like to see him at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires later this month, adding that the two countries should "push for a mutually acceptable solution to China-US economic and trade issues", according to state media. The indictment released in the US district court in San Jose, California alleges that three former Micron employees in Taiwan -- Stephen Chen Zhengkun, He Jianting and Kenny Wang Yungming -- joined UMC in 2015 and 2016 with the express plan to hand over to the company Micron's design and manufacturing processes for specific dynamic random access memory (DRAM) semiconductors.

Assam tense

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weapons reached Kherbari village on motorcycles, dragged the five out of their houses around 8:30pm, lined them up on the dry portion of the Brahmaputra riverbed near Bhupen Hazarika Bridge and shot them dead, according to Prashant Sagar Changmai, superintendent of police in Tinsukia district. The assailants fled the scene taking advantage of the dark after shooting indiscriminately at people, injuring two others, he said. The five deceased are Shyamal Biswas, 60, Ananta Biswas, 18, Abinash Biswas, 23, Subal Das, 60, and Dhananjay Namasudra, 23. Assam Special Director General of Police Pallab Bhattacharya said, "We suspect the hand of ULFA [Independent] or some combined militant group in the incident." However, the ULFA (Independent) issued a statement yesterday denying its involvement. "We, the United Liberation Front of Asom [Independent], would like to make it clear that our organisation does not have any involvement in the firing incident that occurred on 1st November 2018 at Sadiya Saikhowaghat in Tinsukia district," the ULFA statement reads. The killings came a few days after a low-intensity blast left three people injured in Guwahati. ULFA insurgent group chief Paresw Barua claimed responsibility for it saying it was a warning to "Hindu Bangla-speaking organisations which are conspiring against Assam despite living in the

state and are protesting against the National Register of Citizens [NRC] aimed at identifying illegal migrants from Bangladesh". Barua is one of the most wanted persons in India and is suspected to have taken shelter in hideouts in Myanmar and adjacent China. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee condemned the attack and wondered if it had anything to do with the exercise of updating the NRC, which excluded 4.7 million people from it. The final draft of NRC was published on July 30. "Terrible news coming out of Assam. We strongly condemn the brutal attack in Assam... Is this the outcome of the recent NRC development?" Mamata said in a Twitter post. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also condemned the killings and said firm action would be taken against the perpetrators. He appealed to the people to maintain peace and harmony and asked all district authorities to remain alert. Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh also condemned the attack and asked the Assam chief minister to take strict action against the killers. "It is a reprehensible act of mindless violence. Spoke to Assam CM Shri Sarbanandonsowal regarding the incident and asked him to take strict possible action against the perpetrators of this heinous crime," he said. Meanwhile, West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress yesterday held demonstrations across the state in protest against the killings.

Tigers look to dominate

FROM PAGE 1
in most estimations it's most picturesque.

The city is all set for the auspicious occasion and the excitement is palpable -- a huge crowd is expected at the 18,000-capacity stadium to witness their very first international red-ball game. Amid all the enthusiasm and joy there will be some concern about how Bangladesh capitalise on favourable conditions to test the visitors, who have already been whitewashed in the three-match ODI series. Head coach Steve Rhodes will surely have their lowest ever Test score of 43 runs against the West Indies in July this year at the back of his mind and the need for marked improvement should be at the top of his list of priorities. In the absence of two of their most experienced cricketers in Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan and opener Tamim Iqbal, the team think tank however is not willing to experiment too much and is rather banking on their strength, which is the spin department. The pitch is still a mystery for many -- despite having a grass covering even two days back the surface looked dry yesterday. It was learned that the team management has decided to rest their best fast bowler in Mustafizur Rahman as the left-arm seamer is dealing with a niggle. According to sources close to the team, the team management is split into two segments with one thinking of playing two seamers in local boys Abu Jayed and potential debutant Khaled Ahmed. Khaled has already caught Rhodes's attention after coming into the side on the back of a 10-wicket haul in first-class cricket. On the other hand, another segment is more keen to bank on spinners and want to pick three spinners. Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Taijul Islam are the two sure shots, while uncapped

left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam may be the third one. Apart from Nazmul and Khaled, seam-bowling all-rounder Ariful Haque -- picked in the Test squad to score quick runs in the lower middle order -- is almost certain to make his Test debut and he will give the team an extra bowling option. In the batting department, Liton Das is expected to open the innings along with Imrul Kayes. Both are in good form, with Imrul striking two centuries in the ODI series and Liton hitting his maiden ODI century in the final of the Asia Cup in September, before following it up with the country's fastest first-class double-hundred. Mominul Haque is expected to play at the specialist number three position while young Nazmul Hossain Shanto -- who played his only Test against New Zealand last year -- is likely to bat at number four. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, will be looking to utilise the opportunity in the longest format since last playing a Test back in December 2017, when they were beaten within the first two days of an experimental four-day Test against South Africa. **UPDF man** FROM PAGE 16 Contacted, Niron Chakma, a member of UPDF's information and publicity unit, denied the allegation. Mehedi Hasan, sub-inspector of Dighinala Police Station, said police recovered the body from the spot. Sukhendu was shot in his head by a pistol around 5:30am. This year, 38 people have so far been murdered due to inter-party conflicts between UPDF, UPDF democratic faction and Jana Sanghati Samiti (JSS-MN Larma) in the district, said sources. Of the victims, 15 belonged to the UPDF, 15 to the JSS-MN Larma and three to the UPDF democratic faction. Five others were common people.

Khashoggi's body

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published yesterday.

"According to the latest information we have, the reason they cut up the body is it was easier to dissolve it," said Aktay, an advisor to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who was close to Khashoggi. "They aimed to ensure no sign of the body was left." Turkey's chief prosecutor on Wednesday confirmed for the first time that Khashoggi was strangled as soon as he entered the consulate on October 2 as part of a planned hit, and his body was then dismembered and destroyed. **'BRUTAL, RUTHLESS'** The Turkish official quoted by the Washington Post said that "biological evidence" found in the consulate's garden indicated the body was likely disposed of near where Khashoggi was killed. Saudi authorities have denied Turkish police permission to search a well in the consulate's garden, but did allow them to take water samples for analysis, according to local media reports. US State Department spokesman Robert Palladino on Thursday called for Khashoggi's remains to be located and returned to his family for burial as soon as possible. Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz, who waited outside the consulate as the journalist entered to obtain docu-

ments for their upcoming marriage, said what was done to his body was "brutal, barbaric and ruthless". "It is now up to the international community to bring the perpetrators to justice. Of all nations, the United States should be leading the way," Cengiz said in opinion article published in the Washington Post, The Guardian and other media outlets yesterday. "The Trump administration has taken a position that is devoid of moral foundation," she wrote, adding that "there will be no cover-up". The murder has strained the decades-old alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia and tarnished the image of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the ultra-conservative kingdom's de facto ruler. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has indicated that sanctions would soon be imposed on the individuals responsible. "I'll take us probably a handful more weeks before we have enough evidence to actually put those sanctions in place, but I think we'll be able to get there," he said on Thursday, adding that President Donald Trump had vowed accountability for all involved in the "heinous crime". Trump has called the affair "one of the worst cover-ups in history", but warned halting a Saudi arms deal would harm US jobs.