

One killed in AC explosion

Subsequent blast injures six

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mechanic was killed and at least six were injured in an air conditioner explosion and another subsequent blast in a high-rise at the capital's Gulshan yesterday.

The deceased -- Azizul Haque (35) -- was working at the AC chiller plant on the roof of a 14-storey commercial building "Empori Financial Centre", said fire service.

The explosion took place around 1:45pm on the roof, caused another blast in the UAE visa processing centre on the ground floor, said Abul Kalam Azad, senior station officer of Baridhara Fire Station.

He said they have to find out whether it was another AC explosion that also caused a fire, said the fire official.

Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the same.

The injured, whose identities could not be known immediately, were receiving treatment at a nearby hospital, said police and fire officials.

The explosions shattered the building's glass, damaged the furniture the visa processing centre's wall.

Two firefighting units rushed to the spot and were seen removing debris from the area.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Abdul Quader (in helmet), former ward councillor of Chattogram City Corporation and 'rebel AL' candidate for the upcoming polls, was produced among others before a Chattogram court in a case filed over the clashes on Tuesday night that left one person dead. The court granted three-day remand for 11 accused in the case.

CLASH OVER CCC POLLS CAMPAIGN

Citizens, cops wary of further violence

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The furious clash between activists of two councillor candidates at Mogoltuli Mogpukur Par area in the port city on Tuesday evening has made both the city dwellers and law enforcing agencies worried over further clashes in different areas ahead of polls day.

Their worry is mainly over the Awami League (AL)-backed councillor candidates and their rival candidates from AL who did not get party support in different wards.

A man identified as Azgar Ali Babul (52), was shot dead and another was hit by a bullet during a gunfight between activists of Nazrul Islam Bahadur, an AL-backed councillor candidate in Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) ward-28, and that of former councillor of the ward Abdul Quader, a Jubo League leader who failed to get party support for candidacy, on Tuesday. Police and local sources said both the deceased and injured men were activists of Bahadur.

A joint team of police and Rapid Action Battalion during a drive on Tuesday night detained 26 people including Quader following the clash, said Sadip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Double Mooring Police Station in the port city.

Sources in the area said the clash on Tuesday ensued over removing posters of Quader by some of Nazrul's activists on Monday evening. Quader lodged a complaint with the Returning Officer (RO) against Nazrul's men over removal of his posters on Tuesday morning, said sources in the RO office.

The clash erupted on Tuesday evening when both the candidates went to same area for campaigning, said locals.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Rab arrests 'bitcoin trader mastermind'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab arrested 29-year-old Raihan Hossain, an alleged mastermind behind an illegal bitcoin operation on Tuesday night.

In a special drive, members of Rab-1 arrested Raihan from Gazipur last Tuesday.

Col Tofail Mostofa Sarwar, additional director general (operation) of Rab, disclosed the arrest and spoke about Raihan's activities yesterday, while talking with a group of reporters at the elite force's headquarters in the capital's Uttara.

Rab recovered 19 fake national identity cards, 22 SIM cards, Tk 1,275 and USD 25 in cash, a computer, three mobile phones, three fake invoice books, a trade license, a TIN certificate, a recording microphone, a camera, a router, a headphone, a modem, and four check books of different banks from Raihan's possession.

Sarwar said Raihan has been involved in "online sourcing business" for the last eight years.

Rab officials said he became involved in illegally earning through bitcoin with the help of a Pakistani national named Sayed.

Now, he has around 250 bitcoin accounts.

He used to buy bitcoin after hacking credit cards. So far, Raihan has swindled over 30 thousand US dollars by monitoring local and foreign online bank accounts using different smart devices.

Col Sarwar said that they have found transaction history of USD 35 lakh in Raihan's account in just one month. Meanwhile, about Tk 35 lakh was found in one of his bank accounts, he said.

Raihan, the alleged mastermind behind online bitcoin trading and fraud, has recently bought an Audi worth Tk 1.8 crore, said the Rab high official.

Raihan has been stealing from ordinary people by colluding with Pakistani, Nigerian and Russian smugglers, credit card hackers and illegal smugglers through bitcoins, according to Rab officials.

He would use the banner of a fake company named MRH Software Development to lure people.

Col Sarwar further said that they are working to trace another racket of bitcoin trading, and illegal bitcoins will not be allowed to take root in Bangladesh.

Want to see boats plying Rupnagar canal: Mayor Atiq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday said authorities want to see boats plying from Rupnagar canal to Turag river.

He made the comment while observing cleaning activities of Rupnagar canal.

Atiqul, who walked around one kilometre beside the canal, said there was huge solid waste in the canal and they cleaned it. Around 50 workers cleaned the canal, working for 15 days.

The canal is 2 km long and 60 feet wide, and now authorities are planning to beautify both sides of it, he said.

Atiqul said primarily, they will plant trees on the sides and create cycle-lane later. If they can make cycle-lanes and walkways running along the canal, then pressure on roads will reduce.

"We have already started planting trees for its greenery," said Atiqul, who also planted a mango tree beside the canal.

Urging all encroachers to remove illegal structures beside the canal, the mayor said otherwise, they will evict them with help from locals.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

CHATTOGRAM CITY POLLS Rebel candidates a headache for AL

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Failing to get support from Awami League, the ruling party's rebel councillor candidates are desperately trying to get the support of BNP-Jamaat to win the election race of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) polls scheduled for January 27, sources in Awami League and an intelligence report of police say.

Anxious of the prospect of losing the mayoral race due to division of voters following rebel councillor candidates' leaning into BNP-Jamaat, the AL high command is desperately trying to neutralise its rebel candidates and work united in favour of party-supported candidates in the local body polls, sources in AL said.

Admitting that the party is facing problems due to rebel candidates in the CCC elections, AL joint general secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star that the party's vote bank and voters are divided in elections, due to presence of rebel candidates.

"It becomes difficult for party-backed candidates in the mayoral and councillor posts. That's why we are working hard so that rebel candidates leave the election field and work in favour of party-supported candidates," he told The Daily Star.

Although he admitted that they are finding it difficult to manage rebel candidates, Hanif said whenever the party high-ups talk with them, the rebel candidates assure them verbally that they will not stay in the election field.

"But the reality is different," Hanif also said.

Asked whether AL's "rebel" candidates are trying to get support of BNP-Jamaat, Hanif said, "We are careful so that BNP-Jamaat voters cannot ride on the shoulders of rebel councillor candidates of AL, and come to the polling stations paving the way for BNP candidates to win in the election," he also said.

AL party insiders said several meetings had taken place at the residence of AL-nominated mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury where senior leaders of AL in Dhaka and Chattogram were present to resolve the rebel issue and the party's internal feuds ahead of the polls.

Former minister and AL presidium member Engineer Mosharrar Hossain and Mahbulul Alam Hanif were present in an emergency meeting. The party's central leaders warned to take tougher organisational action if rebel candidates do not leave the election race and work in favour of party-backed candidates.

Despite the warning, rebel candidates are yet to step down from the election race. Due to the situation, election campaigning of AL is also being disrupted, according to sources.

A field-level intelligence report of police recently also said AL's rebel candidates are trying to get support from BNP-Jamaat to win the election race.

In the report, it was also apprehended that clash and violence might take place among rebel candidates before election, as well as polling day.

This newspaper has a copy of the report, that states details of current political unrest in two blocks of Chattogram AL, pointing to some serious issues.

According to the report, AL-nominated councillor candidates and rebel candidates will be desperate to collect votes for themselves on polling day, leaving AL mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury alone in the election battle.

Due to severe rift and feud within the party, violence may also break out before or on election day.

Sources said former councillors of 13 wards failed to get party nomination for election. Of them, 12 are contesting the election independently. Only in ward-13, former ward commissioner Mohammed Hossen Hiran withdrew his candidacy.

The report stated that the 12 rebel candidates for ward councillor are followers of Chattogram city unit AL's General Secretary AJM Nasir Uddin, adding that immediate-past mayor of CCC AJM Nasir has been doing his best to make his followers win, which will go against mayoral candidate Rezaul.

According to AL insiders, a rift is prevailing between Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel and AJM Nasir. On Tuesday night, a clash between two councillor candidates -- AL-backed Nazrul Islam Bahadur and AL rebel candidate and former councillor Abdul Quader -- left one person dead and another with bullet wounds.

Several people were injured in five prior clashes surrounding the election.

Party sources said activists and leaders backed by AJM Nasir were frustrated as Nasir did not get the party ticket for mayoral post of CCC. His followers believe that Nowfel is responsible for that.

Apart from that, a number of followers of late Mohiuddin Chowdhury, father of Nowfel, got party tickets to contest ward councillor posts. As a result, leaders and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Exam dates for 41st and 42nd BCS announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Preliminary exams for the 41st and 42nd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) will be held on March 19 and February 26 respectively, Bangladesh Public Service Commission said in a statement released yesterday.

For the 41st BCS, exams will be held across centres in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna, Sylhet, Rangpur, and Mymensingh. The two-hour exam will be held from 10am to 12pm.

Meanwhile, the test for the 42nd Special BCS will be held in Dhaka from 3pm to 5pm, the statement said.

Information regarding exam venues, seat plans, and other instructions will be available at the BPSC website: www.bpsc.gov.bd.



DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam takes time out of his work to play a friendly game of cricket, while onlookers cheer him on at Rupnagar area. He also visited Rupnagar canal to observe its cleaning yesterday, inset.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Kabiraj arrested for rape in Dhamrai

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A kabiraj (uncertified village doctor) was arrested on charge of raping a woman in Dhamrai upazila on the outskirts of Dhaka on Tuesday night.

The arrestee was identified as Salam Kholzar (45), son of late Warej Mia of Dokkhin para village of Chouhat union in the Upazila, said police.

Dipok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station yesterday told The Daily Star they arrested Salam from his house on Tuesday around 11pm, hours after a woman filed a rape case against him.

Quoting the case statement and the survivor, the OC said the woman had paid a visit to Salam as she superstitiously believed that he could help solve her personal problems with her partner.

On Tuesday, Salam called the woman saying that he would give her a tabiz (amulet) to help her reconcile with her boyfriend. The woman rushed to Salam's house around 4pm to get the amulet. She was raped there. Salam threatened to take her life if she disclosed the matter to anyone, said the OC.

The woman was sent to One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital for medical screenings.

'UNREST OVER RECRUITMENT' VC, wife leave HSTU campus in the dark

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The vice-chancellor of Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) left the campus on Wednesday dawn, allegedly in fear after some job seekers in presence of high officials of the university allegedly mounted pressure on him to finalise a recruitment before the end of his tenure on January 31.

Dr Abul Kashem and his wife left the campus at around 3:40am Wednesday by his official vehicle.

All of this unfolded in presence of the university's treasurer Dr Bidhan Chandra Haldar and registrar Dr Fazlul Haq, the VC told the Daily Star over the phone.

The jobseekers allegedly confined the VC and his wife for seven hours. He said the jobseekers stormed his official residence at the campus on Tuesday morning. Around 30 people got inside his residence and mounted pressure on him to finalise the human resources recruitment, but the VC turned them down as he could not do so.

Later, raged jobseekers cut off the power line of his official residence at around 3:30pm Thursday. "I was in complete darkness for hours and without water," he told the newspaper.

Till 9:30pm, the situation continued, he said. Informed, a police team rushed to the campus and kept monitoring the situation. Mithun Sarkar, ASP of Dinajpur Sadar circle, said, adding police personnel were deployed to keep the situation calm.

"I left the campus as I was feeling unsafe there," said the VC over the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A woman loses her cool, after her rickshaw was hit by an empty ambulance near the capital's Central Shaheed Minar. Though the passenger managed to jump off the vehicle unhurt, the rickshaw puller sustained minor injuries in the accident. Reckless driving is an all-too-common scene in the capital, and minor accidents are an everyday occurrence.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON