

Customs graft costs Tk 19 cr in FY01

RAFIQ HASAN
Corruption and irregularities at various offices under the Internal Resources Division caused Tk 19.01 crore in revenue loss during financial year (FY) 2001. An annual audit detected 38 major causes of revenue loss at various customs houses and excise and Value Added Tax (VAT) commissioner offices under the division. Non-realisation of supplementary duty, improper collection and assessment of VAT and incorrect exemption and assessment of duty, tax and value of imported goods are some of the reasons that also led to the losses. Moreover, non-realisation of license fee, fine and service charge; calculation of foreign currency at lower rates; release of goods with-

out pre-shipment inspection; telephone calls beyond limits and non-depositing of government money to the exchequer are responsible for the losses. Ten offices of superintendents of customs and one of deputy commissioner did not realise Tk 11.09 crore in VAT, supplementary duties, excise and fines from different organisations. In response to the audit objections these offices said efforts are on to collect the money. But the auditors were not convinced. The Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Kamapur released goods, in many cases, either without collecting supplementary duties or realising it at lower rates leading to Tk 2.14 crore in loss during the year. It also miscalculated Tk 6.24 lakh in regulatory duty. The government suffered Tk

72.41 lakh in revenue loss as many companies showed lower than actual production figures. The auditors found the anomalies by checking register books and price quotations at six offices of superintendents of customs, excise and VAT. The superintendents of customs, excise and VAT at Segun Bagicha and Patuakhali circle gave clearance certificates to two cargo ships at lower than the government fixed rates, leading to Tk 36.72 lakh in loss. Nine excise and VAT offices allowed tax exemption on advertisement, power bills and tariff values wiping out Tk 55.25 lakh in revenue. The customs houses in Dhaka, Mongla and Khulna and land ports at Sonamajid and Hily together caused Tk 40.39 lakh in loss by not

imposing supplementary duty on imported items. The commissioner of customs house in Chittagong did not realise Tk 26.46 lakh as income tax from three pre-shipment companies against payment of bills. The Chittagong customs house also paid beyond its limit an additional Tk 2.08 lakh in telephone bills. The Dhaka and Chittagong customs houses also did not deposit Tk 3.81 lakh to the exchequer, withdrawn in excess of the salaries of the employees. The Chittagong customs house illegally paid Tk 1.35 lakh in tiffin allowances to preventive officers who fall in the salary scale of Tk 3400-Tk 6625. Staff of this category are not eligible for any such allowances, the audit report mentioned.

Speaker terms AL agitation in JS unlawful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday told the House that the opposition-sponsored demonstration with black flags in the Jatiya Sangsad was unlawful. He would later look into the matter since there was nothing clearly stated in the rules of procedure about demonstrations by lawmakers. The Speaker's observation came after treasury bench lawmakers termed the black-flag protest a "political blackmailing" and sought his ruling. Awami League lawmakers brought out a silent procession in the parliament building on Monday and held a procession at the South Plaza, protesting what they said denial to speak in the House. Rising on a point of order, Whip Rezaul Bari Dina alleged that the opposition violated the rules of procedure by bringing out processions as Section 144 was imposed during the session in and around the



Riot police pull up an Awami League supporter who stumbled while fleeing police chase on the Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday during the opposition-called eight-hour hartal.



Gas, power price hike Six-monthly formula worked out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government yesterday agreed to the World Bank's recommendation for increasing the price of gas and power every six months starting from September next. The energy ministry, in consultation with Petrobangla, Power Development Board, Rural Electrification Board (REB) and other organisations concerned, worked out a formula for a half yearly price hike and sent it to the finance ministry last night for its consent. A team of World Bank negotiators, now on a visit to talk about the terms and conditions for a 300 million dollar loan, yesterday met Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman and state ministers for power and energy, and high-ups to discuss the energy pricing

policy. Under this policy, the government would assess gas price in every six months, sources said. If the assessment reflects the need for increasing the gas price considerably, the government would go for a gradual raise in price. On no occasions would the government go for a steep price hike, the policy outlines. If the policy gets the seal of approval by the finance ministry, gas price is likely to go up by 5.77 per cent from September, sources said. The government feels the price of power is reasonably high already. So, a rise by 2.3 per cent is likely this time. Petroleum price would not go up for now. The government would

refix the petroleum price on half yearly basis only if it shoots up in the international market. The finance minister meanwhile discussed the policy with chamber leaders at a pre-budget discussion at the ministry. "We are not doing anything under anybody's pressure," he said. "The newspapers are misinterpreting the issue. We have not decided to increase the price. We are trying to formulate a policy to increase the price." The state minister for energy has sent a proposal to me suggesting an increase in gas price. I asked him who is he to increase the gas price. We (policymakers) do have difference of opinions on such issues. We have not taken any decision as yet."

India appoints ambassador to Pakistan

REUTERS, New Delhi
India yesterday named a new ambassador to Pakistan in the latest sign of a thaw between the nuclear-armed neighbours which came close to war last year. The foreign ministry said in a statement the new ambassador, named after both countries announced plans this month to restore full diplomatic ties, would take up his assignment shortly, but gave no dates. Shivshankar Menon, currently ambassador of India to China, has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the foreign ministry said. India and Pakistan scaled back ties after an attack on India's parliament in December 2001 which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Kashmiri rebels. Islamabad denied involvement. The parliament raid triggered a huge military buildup, which brought the countries to the brink of their fourth war. Last month Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said he wanted to extend a hand of friendship to Pakistan, prompting a series of reciprocal measures to build trust. The appointment of Menon, a career diplomat, should pave the way for low-level discussions in an effort to build enough mutual confidence to work towards eventual summit talks.



A yacht is seen in front of the 'Palais des festivals' yesterday on the eve of the opening ceremony of the 56th Cannes film festival. Twenty films are in competition for the Golden Palm.

Khaleda's govt 'ousted' in mock JS session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A resolution 'tabled' by Deputy Leader of the Opposition and former speaker Abdul Hamid for immediate ouster of the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was 'unanimously passed through voice vote' at an impromptu rally of opposition lawmakers and members of the public in the city yesterday. Lawmakers belonging to the main opposition Awami League (AL) brought out a hartal-hours procession led by the former speaker from the Sangsad Bhaban, which stopped at the Russell Square. Quite a number of people including pedestrians and political activists spontaneously gathered around the AL lawmakers. The former speaker then made a street rehearsal of parliamentary practices much to the entertainment of the gathering. Describing the government as 'a failure in all fields', Hamid asked the people present to say 'yes' if they agreed with him over immediate ouster of Khaleda-Nizami's government.

Verdict in Sutrapur double murder case today

COURT CORRESPONDENT
Judgement in the sensational Sutrapur double murder case will be given today. Shaded Noor Uddin, Judge of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka Division, will pronounce the verdict at 12:30 pm, court sources said. Both prosecution and defence sides completed their hearing on arguments in the case on Sunday. The tribunal framed charge against Rahid Hasan Sumon, son of Nasibun Ahmed, president of Dhaka city Mahila Awami League, and 33 others on November 13, last year. The trial of the case began on December 11 last year and was completed in 131 working days. Twenty-five out of 40 prosecution

witnesses gave depositions during the trial. In the case filed with Sutrapur police station, it was alleged that Mohammad Mohsin, 18, and Mohammad Salam, 19, of Sharat Kumar Das Lane under Sutrapur police station, were abducted from their houses by a gang allegedly led by Rahid Hasan Sumon, on September 15, 2000. The members of the gang took the two to Gandaria Rifle Club and tortured them for a ransom of Tk 50,000. Later, the gang killed the victims, cut their bodies into 12 pieces and dumped those into a manhole at Purgitola. Police recovered the pieces from the manhole the following

'No bar on business by NGOs'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government will not impose restrictions on business activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. The NGOs have to follow rules and regulations to run their activities, he said. However, he said, "Welfare activities should be the main task of NGOs, not business." The statement came in response to a supplementary question of ruling BNP lawmaker ASM Shahadat Hossain. Some NGOs meddled in political activities during the last general polls that went "in favour of and against" some political parties, Bhuiyan said. "For that, a cabinet committee recommended a ban on political activities of the NGOs," he said. As many as 1,591 local and 176 foreign NGOs are registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau, the minister said in reply to a question of BNP lawmaker Giasuddin Ahmed.

SC Bar slates reinstatement of accused in jail killing case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday condemned reinstatement of a convict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case and an accused in the Jail Killing Case to government posts. The government has appointed the two violating the law, the Bar said in a statement. "Our country has no laws or rules and regulations on reinstatement of such persons. We don't know whether any country in the world has the practice of posthumously reinstating any convict to government job," says the statement. The Bar demanded cancellation of the appointments. Meantime, former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru alleged that the BNP government had all along helped the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

BB staff's ultimatum to drop voluntary retirement plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Officers and employees of the Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday gave a seven-day ultimatum to the central bank governor as part of their movement against a possible job cut move. The ultimatum was issued in a memorandum after a joint meeting of the BB Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) and the Officers Welfare Association. It urged the governor to cancel the voluntary retirement scheme and appointment of foreign consultants in seven days. The association's general secretary, Obaidul Huq, promised support to the CBA movement in his address to the meeting. The protestors will push ahead with their movement in line with the CBA rules, said CBA General

Secretary Joinal Abedin. He blamed the governor for tarnishing the image of the government and vowed to resist the job cut. The meeting also decided that all officers and employees would gather at the gate to the central bank building every day for some time as a mark of protest. Security was tightened at the BB headquarters in Motijheel in the wake of simmering tension over the voluntary retirement move. Additional police forces have been posted on the third and fourth floors of the building, which house offices of the governor and the local International Monetary Fund. BB Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed has decided to brief newsmen on the latest this morning.

No trace of Khosru yet, family worried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
The family of Sitakunda-based journalist Atahar Siddique Khosru is greatly concerned about his safety now that two weeks have gone since his abduction by miscreants. "We know nothing about the fate of whereabouts of Khosru and we don't have any information about if he is alive or dead," Anwar Siddique Chowdhury, Khosru's younger brother said. Additional Superintendent of Police (north) Hasib Aziz spoke to the local (Sitakunda) journalists and others yesterday about the abduction of Khosru. Hasib has been assigned to look into the matter. The journalists observed a half-day hartal in the upazila protesting the abduction. Miscreants abducted Khosru, a correspondent of Daily Ittefaq, on April 30. He is believed to have been

NOTICE
As the offices of The Daily Star will remain closed on Thursday on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi, The Star Weekend Magazine will come out on Saturday instead of Friday.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 14	4-15	6-33 pm
May 15	5-16 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-38	6-42
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bus kills college girl, 2 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Three people including a college girl were killed when a passenger bus hit a rickshaw at Jatrabari in Demra yesterday afternoon. The college girl has been identified as Nilima, 20, a first-year student of Ideal School and College. The other passenger was identified as Shuvo, 25, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and technology (BUET). The rickshawpuller aged about 35 could not be identified. The incident took place when passenger bus 'Sundarban' hit the rickshaw from behind opposite Badhuya community centre at Sayedabad at about 2:30pm. The bus ran over the three people. They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared them dead. After the mishap the bus driver managed to get away leaving the

Historic WI chase

AFP, St John's
The West Indies beat Australia by three wickets in the fourth and final cricket Test at the Recreation Ground on Tuesday. Vasbert Drakes hit the winning boundary off leg spinner Stuart MacGill to achieve a record chase by the West Indies early on the final day of an absorbing Test and avoid an unprecedented series whitewash. The West Indies were set 418 runs to win and beat the previous record fourth innings winning score of 406 for four when India beat the West Indies in Trinidad in 1976.

Woman gunned down over land dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A woman was gunned down by an armed gang following land dispute at her Niribila village in Savar. Fatema, 45, was shot in the forehead in the early hours of yesterday. The seven attackers also stabbed and slit her throat. The victim and her brother Nabi Hossain were returning home after meeting her son Billal at the Savar Police Station. Piyar Ali and his four sons were allegedly behind Billal's arrest. When the miscreants attacked, Nabi managed to get away unhurt. Police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy yesterday. Sources said the killing followed a land dispute with her neighbour Piyar Ali since 1991. The dispute started when Piyar Ali occupied a piece of Fatema's land and forged documents to claim the land as his. After a legal fight, Fatema regained possession of the land following a court order two weeks back. Billal Hossain, the victim's son, filed a case with the Savar Police Station accusing Piyar his four sons and three others. Police could not attest anyone till yesterday.