

## Litany of waste

Public Expenditure Review Commission report reveals how public money was squandered in unnecessary, low-priority projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Public Expenditure Review Commission report has revealed some of the most incredible wastes of public money on various unnecessary and low-priority projects.

For example, a Tk 675 crore rail project has been taken up to link Chittagong to Cox's Bazar although a very good three-hour road link already exists. A Tk 18 crore rail project, that too technically faulty,

was undertaken that would save only 20 minutes of journey time.

A fertiliser scheme taken 10 years back has not made any physical progress and yet Tk 2.76 crore have been spent to maintain its office.

These are a few of the string of wasteful projects taken in the last 10 years while many important schemes remain unattended, the commission report revealed.

The commission has also

analysed that it would take from 44 years to 152 years for many projects to end because of the way the governments funded them. This actually proves anything but practical necessity saw these schemes on the government's list.

In education, runaway systems loss reaches 58 per cent with bulk of the money spent on infrastructure and little on teachers and education materials. Thirty-five per cent of students cannot even cross the

threshold of class five.

The commission headed by former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan recently submitted its report to the finance ministry. Other members of the commission are former secretary Mohammad Habibur Rahman, Engineer Mohammad Abdur Rahim, Abbasuddin Khan, FCA, Dr Zaid Bakht and Dr Binayak Sen of the Bangladesh Institute of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

A gang of eleven who used to call people and intimidated them into paying toll was recently arrested by the Rapid Action Team.

## Phone gangs scare people to pay off

STAFF REPORTER

In a novel technique, organised gangs target people and force them to pay toll.

Using the names of some top criminals, these gangs ask people over telephone to pay them toll or face dire consequences.

They threaten their targets that either they would be killed or their near and dear ones, particularly children, would be abducted if they did not pay the money as asked for or went to police.

They introduce themselves to their targets as Kala Jahangir, Subrata Bain, Banga Babu, Pichchi Hannan and such other listed criminals or their accomplices.

Officials of different UN bodies, businessmen, senior government officials, private company executives, physicians, engineers and other well-off people are the prime targets of these culprits, a top police official said.

They collect various telephone directories and guides to enlist the people they want to victimise. In

most cases, they make calls from card phone booths.

This trend of crime is on the steep rise over the last few months as many of the listed criminals are still at large, the police official said, seeking anonymity.

The culprits hire poor people to gather personal and family information of their targets. Then they contact them over phone.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Historic June 7 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The historic June 7 will be observed today across the country.

On this day in 1966, 11 people including Monu Mia, Shafiq and Shamsul Haq, were gunned down by police and the East Pakistan Rifles in Dhaka and Narayanganj during the hartal called for the release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other leaders.

They were detained for launching the six-point movement.

The Awami League (AL) has chalked out a daylong programme

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Correction

Our front page story titled "Remittance flow clocks new record", run on Thursday, mistakenly mentioned the foreign exchange reserves at \$190.40 billion, instead of \$1.904 billion. We regret the error.



PHOTO: STAR

Shanties in Nilkhet go up in flames yesterday, funneling smoke skywards, while firemen and locals try to douse the fire. The fire that burnt down about 300 shanties left over 1,000 people homeless. (Story on back page)

## 3 firemen, driver die as van hits autorickshaw

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three firemen and a driver were killed when a covered van slammed into a CNG autorickshaw in Mohammadpur yesterday morning.

Mukanda Roy, 45, died instantly and his brother Nikhil Chandra Roy, 44, their cousin Sachanda Roy, 44, and CNG driver Suruj Miah died after arrival at hospital.

The firemen were moving in the auto-rickshaw toward the Gabtali Bus Terminal to catch a bus home to

Nilphamari. Their vehicle was squashed in the collision in front of the Shyamoli Cinema Hall at about 7:30am, said police.

Nikhil, Sachanda and Suruj were admitted to National Orthopaedic Hospital but later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they died.

The three fire fighters came to Dhaka to sit three-day examinations for promotion at the Mirpur Fire Training Complex, said fire brigade

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

## Young-old divide peaks in BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tension between the old guards and the Young Turks are brewing in the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and hampering the functioning of the government.

BNP sources said the young are interfering with almost all decision-making in the party and influencing government decisions on administrative, business and development issues, ignoring the old generation.

They said the old leaders, who are with the party since its launch or Khaleda Zia's joining, were not being consulted in the formation of committees of BNP and its front organisations.

The interest of the Young Turks is overwhelming. Whether foreign vessels will be exempted from

waiver certificates, who will be given with lease of gas fields, who will get the tender order for purchasing aircraft are all their concerns.

They try to line up vital postings in the administration, in BNP and its front organisations and the awarding of development work for its handicapped people, they alleged.

The conflict between the old and the young is stemming from 'personal gains', not from political ideology or party politics.

"The situation seems that people voted the BNP into office to make some people ministers, give business to some and unbridled authority to certain quarters," a BNP insider said.

A number of BNP policymakers said the "generation divide" crop-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6