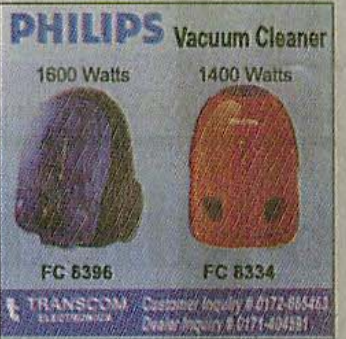




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Govt faces music in JS for fuel crisis

BNP lawmakers ask Saifur to stop making 'irresponsible' statements

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling coalition and Ershad-led opposition Jatiya Party (JP) lawmakers in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday launched a broadside against the government for the ongoing fuel crisis.

They asked the treasury bench to resolve the problem immediately, as otherwise, they said, the

country would face an acute shortage of food.

The current session of parliament resumed yesterday after a five-day recess. Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, who chaired the session, said people of his constituency told him what an acute fuel crisis they were facing and that farmers would be the worst affected if it is not resolved

soon. He directed the LGRD, finance, home and energy ministers to sit together without any delay and find ways to overcome the crisis.

Following a recent remark of the finance minister that a fuel price hike is near at hand, some unscrupulous traders, especially in the northern districts, started to hoard

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NCBs asked to open fuel LCs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of the prevailing fuel crisis, a meeting between the finance and the energy ministries yesterday asked the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) to open letters of credit (LC) for petroleum import without any hesitation.

The meeting presided over by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman assured the NCBs that Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the Finance Division will solve their liquidity problems and help them overcome the dollar crisis.

After the meeting Saifur told reporters that the government has adequate foreign exchange reserve for fuel import.

The banks which have liquidity crisis will be supported by the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Boro farming badly hurt for diesel crisis

REAZ AHMAD with HASIBUR RAHMAN

Thousands of irrigation pumps have remained idle across the northern region due to an acute diesel crisis, forcing millions of farmers to stop planting in the peak Boro season and casting a shadow over farm production this year in the country.

With diesel price shooting up to Tk 70 per litre in the rice-rich northern region, distressed farmers laid siege to filling stations and barricaded roads at several places, demanding immediate solution to the crisis.

Officials at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Dhaka claimed to have been monitoring the situation closely along with the district administration concerned.

"This is the planting season of



Motorcycle users scramble for fuel selling on a limited scale at a Kurigram filling station yesterday.

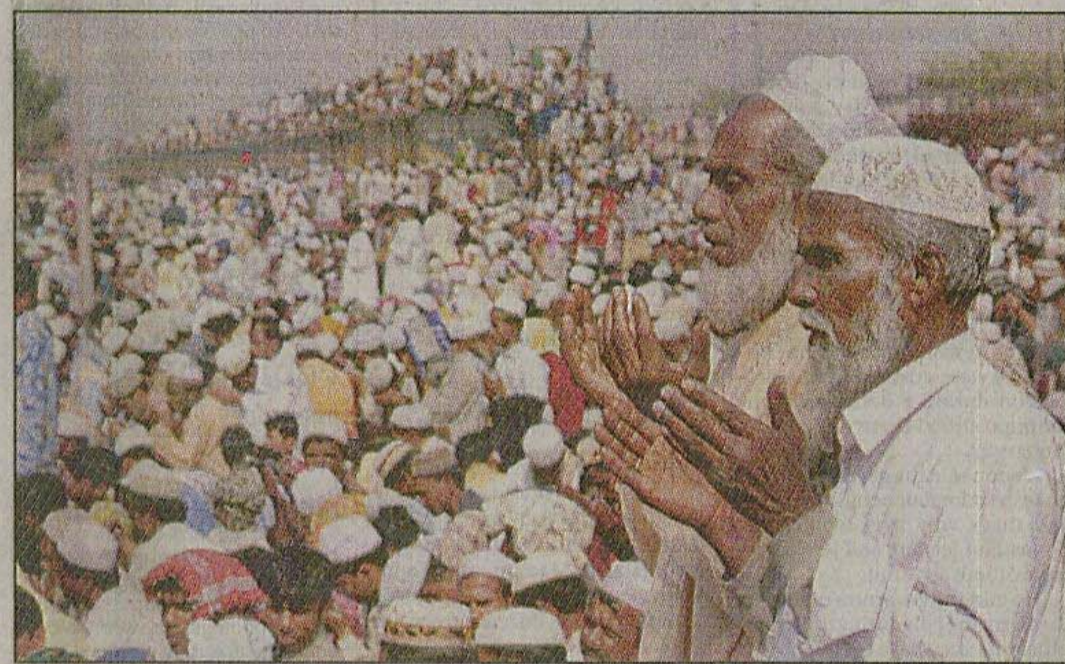
Boro rice and if the farmers have to buy diesel at high price, we fear a huge crop loss will result in. We have informed the ministry concerned of the situation," said Shamsul Alam, director in-charge of Field Monitoring at the DAE.

Meanwhile, as vessels carrying fuel stuck up due to silting up of river channel, a floating depot was opened at Kazirhat, 25km downstream Baghabari river port in Sirajganj yesterday, reports our Netrakona correspondent.

The floating depot will distribute 750 tonne fuel against a daily demand of 22,000 tonne in the northern districts.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation officials were apprehensive of the consequences after their 12-day reserve in the depot exhausts.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Devotees take part in the concluding prayers of the Biswa Ijtema in Tongi as the three-day congregation ended yesterday.

15 killed as bus, truck collide

UNB, Natore

At least 15 people were killed and 25 injured, 12 critically, as a bus and a truck collided head on in Mahishbanga in Baraigram upazila last night.

Three of the dead are Zahir Biswas, 60, of Kanaikhal village, Yusuf, 35, of Mominpur village and Jalil, 40, of Brahmanpur village in the sadar upazila.

Police said the accident took place around 8:30pm as a Rajshahi-bound bus of NP Elegance collided with a cow-laden truck on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway.

Thirteen people died on the spot and two others on way to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital.

The injured are receiving treatment at the RMCH, Natore Sadar Hospital and Amena Clinic at Banapara.

PHOTO: STAR

Biswa Ijtema ends with prayers for peace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation of the Muslims on the bank of Turag river, ended through Akheri Munajat (final prayer) at 12:40pm yesterday seeking divine blessing for the peace, welfare, and prosperity of the Muslim ummah and country.

During the 15-minute munajat conducted by Maulana Jobayerul

Hasan from New Delhi at the World Tablig Jamaat's 42nd annual gathering attended by more than two million devotees including some 4,000 foreigners from around 60 countries, thousands were moved to tears.

In his munajat in Urdu and Arabic, Maulana Jobayer called upon the Muslims to follow Islam in everyday life and dedicate them to establishing Islamic values in

society. He also urged the Muslims to struggle hard to spread Islam all over the world.

The government deployed 22,000 law enforcers for security and provided adequate utility services for the devotees in the Ijtema.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition and Awami

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Schoolgirl dies hit by police van

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A schoolgirl was killed as a police van rammed her in Adabar in the city, just 27 hours after a schoolboy was killed in front of his father in another road accident in Naya Paltan.

The victim six-year-old Aklima Akhter is a student of Class 1 of a local NGO-run school.

Witnesses said Aklima was killed as a police van hit her on Mohammadpur Embankment

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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SEPARATION OF JUDICIARY Govt to seek 4 more months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will appeal to the Supreme Court (SC) for the 22nd time on February 1 to extend the deadline for separation of the judiciary by four more months, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said yesterday.

Addressing a press conference at the Secretariat, he said, "It's a practical problem to replace 600 administrative cadres by the same number of judicial magistrates, and we need some time to work it out."

The SC on October 20 last year rejected the 21st appeal, expressing disgust at the government's doing 'nothing' to address the issue.

A six-member full bench of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain, set February 1, 2006 as the date for hearing on two cases regarding separation of the judiciary.

Of the cases, one deals with contempt charges against nine bureaucrats while the other one deals with a petition for bringing contempt proceedings against the government for not separating the judiciary as per the SC verdict.

The law minister yesterday said he is hopeful that the government will succeed in separating the judiciary within the four-month time frame (if granted).

Asked if this would be the last

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

60 officials called back to Dhaka 4 days into transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only four days after their transfer to district-level posts, 60 senior assistant secretaries were called back to the establishment ministry yesterday.

They were transferred from various ministries on January 25 Wednesday to the districts as additional district magistrates, additional deputy commissioners and secretaries to district council. These posts are usually held by deputy secretary-level officials.

A source at the establishment ministry said, the 60 officials, all belonging to the 1985 BCS administration cadre, have been brought back to Dhaka, as they were not among the senior assistant secretaries who were promoted to the rank of deputy secretary last Thursday.

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