

SUGAR PRICE
Altaf faces criticism in House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The commerce minister yesterday faced criticism from both Awami League (AL) and BNP lawmakers in parliament for the price hike of essentials, especially sugar, and the government's failure in the recent WTO meeting in Hong Kong. As the lawmakers, mostly from the opposition bench, were trying to raise more supplementary questions on the issue, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar apparently came to help the minister by not entertaining more questions to him. Responding to the lawmakers' criticism, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury justified the

RU TEACHER KILLING

Shibir leader not yet held

DB takes up case
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday took over the investigation of Prof S Taher Ahmed murder case as per directions of the monitoring cell for sensational cases in Dhaka. Meanwhile, Sub-inspector Ashanul Kabir of Boalia Police Station was transferred to DB as the investigating officer of the case. Sources said Rajshahi University Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) President Shalehi, suspected mastermind of the murder, is yet to be captured. Sources said police deliberately let Shalehi go into hiding since

2 cops sued for mugging

COURT CORRESPONDENT
A mugging case was filed with a Dhaka court yesterday against two policemen under the Speedy Trial Act. The accused are Sub-Inspectors (SIs) Syed Nasir Ali and Abdul Hamid from Ramna Police Station. Rafiqul Islam Swapan, owner of the Banga Islamia Super Market, filed the case against the policemen with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. In his complaint, Swapan mentioned that the accused often demanded tolls from his mother Momtaz Islam and threatened her after being refused. At about 11:00pm on February 10, the accused entered their house and snatched away Tk 1.5 lakh and a

Anger flares up as toxic laden ship heads for Ctg

Environment ministry sits today for decision

STAR REPORT

In the face of raging protests from environmentalist organisations, the government is likely to make a move to prevent the toxic ship SS Norway from entering the country. Following the media reports in the last few days, the environment and forest ministry sits today to discuss the issue. "In the meeting I will raise the issue of barring the ship from coming in," shipping department Director General AKM Shafikullah told The Daily Star yesterday. He expressed the hope that "The government may cancel the letter of credit of the ship's buyer to prevent it from entering the country's waters," adding, "Once a ship reaches the shore for scrapping, we don't have much to do about it." Meanwhile, two environmentalist bodies in a notice to the authorities concerned demanded that they

bar the vessel from entering Bangladesh. The notice was sent to the ministries of environment, shipping, commerce, industries and labour, director general and Chittagong division director of environment department, director of labour department, Chittagong Port Authority chairman, Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association (BSBA) president and the proprietor of Jiri Subedar Ship-breaking Yard who has purchased the ship. Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) and Unnayan Bikalpa Nitinirharani Gabeshana (Ubinig) in the notice also warned of legal actions against the recipients unless they take appropriate measures to prevent the vessel's entry and inform them about it within 10 days of receiving the notice. In Chittagong, Jana Udyog, Save Chittagong, Barnali and several other organisations jointly

red alert against the vessel containing highly toxic gases like carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, and is made of asbestos, which may cause lung cancer in humans. The BSBA also had issued a notice against purchasing the vessel. But Jiri Subedar Ship-breaking Yard Proprietor Haji Lokman Hossain bought it for scrapping, defying the Green Peace alert and the BSBA notice. The authorities should deny entry to the SS Norway in light of the Basel Convention for the sake of public safety and healthy, said a Bela press release yesterday. Several other environmentalist organisations yesterday staged demonstrations, demanding a ban on the entry of SS Norway to Bangladesh. In Chittagong, Jana Udyog, Save Chittagong, Barnali and several other organisations jointly

War hero shot dead in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Unidentified criminals gunned down a veteran freedom fighter Monday night at Mazla in Kushtia Sadar upazila while police recovered two bodies from different places in the district on Monday night and yesterday. The criminals shot freedom fighter Sheikh Safiqur Rahman, 55, around 10:30pm as he was approaching his home. Five bullets pierced his face, chest and abdomen leaving him dead on the spot. Police sent the body to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy but could not say why he was murdered. Kushtia police recovered a decomposed body of a 12-year-old boy from Chechua field. Police said one Sayed Ali discovered the body yesterday morning as he was working on his plantations and informed the police. Police recovered the body and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy. Police could identify the body or give any details on the killing. Mirpur police recovered



Facing an acute supply crisis of power, agitated Bangladesh Krishok League activists lay siege to the Rural Electrification Board headquarters in the city yesterday demanding electricity to irrigate farmlands during the current peak boro season.



Unaware of the health hazards of the toxic waste from tanneries flowing around them into the Buriganga, two kids play on the riverbank at Rayer Bazar.

M'SINGH POWER PLANT
Summer looks darker for graft-ridden project

SHARIER KHAN

The country's costliest power project--the \$120 million 70 megawatt third phase Mymensingh power plant of the Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL)--is lagging behind schedule due to financial crisis caused by severe corruption of Lahmayer, the former consultant of the company. The project being implemented

at a cost three to four times higher than similar sized project of the Power Development Board (PDB) was supposed to come online last December. But now the RPCL is saying it will not start before April, while insider sources said it might take several months more beyond that deadline. In any case, this failure will add to the projected load shedding of at least 1000MW this summer.

So far the ruling party could add only 80MW new power under its own initiative in the last four years. This is why the Prime Minister's Office is putting pressure on the RPCL to finish the job before the elections by all means, sources added. Compared to the 120 million-dollar profile of this 70MW

Saddam in 'hunger Strike' protest

AFP, Baghdad

Ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein yesterday told the court trying him on charges of crimes against humanity that he and his co-defendants have launched a hunger strike. "We have been on a hunger strike for three days," Saddam declared as the trial resumed for its 12th hearing since its opened in October. "Long live the great Arab

nation" and "long live the Mujahideen," he shouted. The start of the hearing was again marked by heated exchanges between defendants and presiding judge Rauf Abdel Rahman, who has taken a tough line since taking over the trial after his predecessor resigned in January. "You kick out our lawyers, you bring in witnesses by force and those that testify against us are

Nepal govt frees Deuba

AP, Katmandu

Nepal's royal government freed a former prime minister jailed on graft charges by an anti-corruption commission that was annulled this week by the Supreme Court, an aide said yesterday. Sher Bahadur Deuba was released from a jail in Katmandu, said Dip Kumar Upadhyaya, a senior leader of Deuba's Nepal Congress Democratic party. King Gyanendra sacked Deuba before seizing direct control of the government, arresting leading politicians and declaring emergency rule on Feb. 1, 2005. The king later created the Royal Commission for Corruption Control, saying it would bring corrupt politicians and government bureaucrats to justice.

Musharraf must give up dual role by 2007

Says Commonwealth

AFP, New Delhi

Commonwealth chief Don McKinnon said yesterday that General Pervez Musharraf must give up either the presidency or control over Pakistan's armed forces by 2007, when his current presidential term ends. McKinnon, secretary-general of the 53-nation club of mainly former British colonies, said Pakistan has made great strides towards democracy but much "more progress" was needed. "We particularly want you (Musharraf) to deal with this issue of the uniform," McKinnon told AFP. Commonwealth officials said McKinnon was expected to meet with Musharraf in Pakistan as part of his South Asia tour this week that also includes Bangladesh.

Moderate tremor hits Bangladesh, India

2 soldiers killed, 500 buildings damaged in Sikkim; 11 injured in Gaibandha

STAR REPORT

A moderate earthquake hit northern and southeastern districts of Bangladesh and northeastern states of India yesterday morning, triggering panic among people. Eleven people were injured when they were coming out of their house hurriedly at Gaibandha during the tremor that occurred at 6:56am.

The magnitude of the earthquake was 5.7 on the Richter scale, according to officials of the Geophysical Observatory in Chittagong, says a BSS report. The tremor lasted for seven to 10 seconds. Our correspondents from Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Thakurgaon and Noakhali said the tremor created panic among

Shrinking Kabadak wreaks havoc on people in southwest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Once a mighty and potential river, the Kabadak has now turned into a problem for over 50 lakh people in five southwestern districts, creating waterlogging and environmental hazards. The river flowing through Sathkira, Khulna, Jhenidah, Kushtia and Jessore districts was navigable back in the 1960s and steamers, launches and boats used to ply it carrying merchandise. It was also a good source of fish. The loss of navigability due to continued silting up, decreased water flow caused by the construction of the Farakka barrage on the Ganges in India, and encroachment of the riverbanks over the years have left the river almost dried up, reducing it to stagnated water pockets at several points. Encroachment can be seen all along the river from Mathabhanga to Paikgachha in Khulna as encroachers have built houses, shops, clubs, factories and fish farms on both the banks of the river. The river is now almost dead from its entry



Once a mighty river, the Kabadak has become a victim of encroachment, and reduced water flow and heavy siltation.

Iran's nuke crisis mounts

Tehran confirms limited enrichment despite UN appeals

AFP, Tehran

A defiant Iran confirmed yesterday it had resumed limited uranium enrichment despite a mounting international crisis over its controversial nuclear activities. "The work has resumed (at the Natanz enrichment facility)," said Javad Vaidi, a member of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and a senior member of the country's nuclear negotiating team. The move came despite an appeal from UN chief Kofi Annan

for Iran not to take action that might escalate its tense dispute with the West over fears it is seeking the nuclear bomb. But Vaidi said it was "unacceptable" for Iran to halt its research on uranium enrichment, a process which makes reactor fuel but can also be extended to make the core of a nuclear weapon. "There is no reason for the moment to return to the suspension (of activities at Natanz)," he added.