

40pc less import saved \$800m

Mahmud claims no diesel crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy and Mineral Resources Advisor Mahmudur Rahman claimed that he has saved US \$800 million this fiscal year (FY) by importing 40 percent less petroleum than the previous FY and there is no diesel or kerosene crisis in the country.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of a seminar on 'CNG safety, codes and standards' organised by Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited (RPGCL), a company of Petrobangla and sponsored by Dhaka Clean Fuel Project at a city hotel.

"I have visited 1,100 kilometres to the northern part of the country

Communalism in education powered bigots

BEA general secretary says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professor Abul Barakat, general secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) yesterday said 'communalism' in education has led to the strengthening of economic power of religious fundamentalism since the country's independence.

"During this period, the number of mainstream primary schools has doubled but the number of Dakhil Madrasas has increased eight times," he said at a seminar on 'Education for Development' on the occasion of World Federation of Teachers' Unions (WFTU/FISE) executive committee meeting at

the national press club in the city. Over the same time, enrolment in primary schools has doubled but those in Dakhil Madrasas increased thirteen times while per head public expenditure on students of the government middle class educational institutions is Tk 3,000 as against Tk 5,000 in madrasas, he added.

The government as well as donors want to show Bangladesh as a showcase where 'attaining social indicators is becoming possible without much economic development', Abul Barakat viewed.

"What does high enrolment ratio mean when enrollees fail in the

minimum competency test? And why two out of every three children from disadvantaged socio-economic background remain non-literate or semi-literate even after completion of five-year primary education?" he posed questions.

Barakat also expressed his concern at the fact that the allocation in primary education has decreased from 54 percent of total education allocation in 1993-94 to 40 percent in 2003-04.

Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former caretaker government chief, said weak teaching, insufficient teacher-pupil control

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Khaleda seeks duty-free access of Bangladeshi goods to US

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought duty-free access of Bangladeshi products, including readymade garments (RMG), to the US market.

"Duty-free access of Bangladeshi goods to the US market will not only help the country's industrial sector but also improve social status of women, since they work in millions in garment factories," she said when the visiting US Congressman Joseph Crowley call on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday afternoon.

Joseph Crowley, co-chair of congressional Bangladesh Caucus,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Crowley hopes govt will settle reform issues

Says free, fair polls key to flourishing democracy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Visiting US Congressman Joseph Crowley yesterday hoped the ruling alliance would respond to the main opposition's reform proposals placed in parliament and settle the issue to facilitate credible elections.

"I know the minority [the main opposition] have made their case or [are] attempting to make their case in parliament and I hope that response from the majority [the government] will be done in a way to settle the issue," he told a wrap-up press conference.

He termed the general elections

slated for January "an important moment in Bangladesh history" and said the US wants to see free, fair and transparent elections, where all eligible voters would be able to vote without any hindrances.

"Elections must appear to be free and open," he told the crowded press conference at the American Center, capping his three-day visit to Bangladesh when he met a number of government, opposition and religious leaders.

"We in the United States respect Bangladesh for democracy... We want democracy here continues to develop and flourish. It is important

to have free, fair elections for flourishing of Bangladesh's democracy," he observed.

Joseph Crowley, also a co-chair of the congressional Bangladesh Caucus, said many people from abroad would be here to monitor the next general elections. "The election process would once again prove that Bangladesh is a vibrant democracy."

On his meeting with the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, Crowley said he did not discuss any

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

100 injured in hartal clashes in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 100 people were injured, including eight policemen, in two clashes between AL and police followed by AL and BNP in Kazipur upazila and in Sirajganj yesterday.

More than 90 people were injured in a clash between AL and BNP activists on EB Road near AL office and on Eliot Bridge in Sirajganj over a police onslaught on AL activists in Kazipur upazila during the dawn to dusk hartal there.

The two groups engaged in an hour-long fight, police sources said. Fifteen shops and two houses were damaged in the incident.

Police used truncheons and two tear gas shells to get the situation under control. Eight policemen were also injured in the incident as they tried to calm the two battling parties.

The injured were taken to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital and local clinics for treatment.

Earlier 10 AL activists were injured, four of them critically, when Kazipur Police charged truncheons on them at Shimul Dair Bazar around 7:00am yesterday. Police went into action as AL set up a roadblock on Sirajganj-Kazipur highway demanding release of partisans who were arrested on Tuesday. Police arrested 19 activists

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Risking injuries, pedestrians jump across a gaping chasm dug by Titas Gas for pipeline installation on a street in Pirjongi Mazar area in the capital.

Pirates kill cop, injure 4 in Meghna

UNB, Chandpur

A policeman was gunned down and four others were injured in an attack by pirates on the river Meghna yesterday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Constable Dulal Mia, 45, of Daudkandi in Comilla district.

Sources said a police squad of Sadar river outpost headed towards Zahajmara area in a speedboat following a tip-off about a pirate gang.

"When the boat reached the spot around 12:45pm, pirates on board another speedboat opened

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Two to die for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced two people to death and two others to three years imprisonment in the sensational Ameer Hossain murder case.

District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Abul Mansur handed the verdict down.

Didar, chief of the notorious gang Dider Bahini, and his accomplice Mukul received death sentences while the two other accused Sayem and Raja were sentenced to jail.

Sources said Didar's gang put a billboard on the land of Ali Akbar

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
February 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

