

Tk 448cr to be spent to buy battle tanks

BNP lawmaker 'taking commissions' on procurement

SHARIF KHAN
The government has in principle approved purchase of 28 main battle tanks (MBTs) worth Tk 448 crore for the army under a five-year procurement plan with Tk 90 crore to be spent in the next fiscal year, highly placed sources said.
This procurement plan is in addition to the plan to upgrade the army's existing 232 old tanks under two projects. The upgrading will cost nearly Tk 1,000 crore. The government has primarily decided for a Tk 350 crore Chinese soft loan to finance one of the two projects

while financing for the other project has not yet been decided.
Side by side, Bangladesh Navy is also procuring two US-made maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) at a cost of Tk 130 crore. Singapore-based King Air is supplying these aircraft.
The sources also said a lawmaker close to the prime minister's family is allegedly drawing commissions on different defence procurements, including the MPAs.
But the army headquarters deny having any influence of this lawmaker or any other outsider on their procurements.

The army authorities at a meeting on March 2 noted that though the army is authorised to have 308 MBTs, it now has 232 tanks. Of these, 50 have been declared obsolete.
The meeting said most of the tanks are very old and have outlived their operational life. All these tanks lack modern fighting capacity. In such a situation, the government has taken up a project to upgrade 58 tanks under a Chinese loan for Chinese expertise.
To upgrade the remaining tanks, the army requires around Tk 600 crore, which may be met either

from budgetary allocation for the army or a separate allocation by the finance ministry. Contract may be awarded to vendors on deferred payment for a period of five years, the meeting decided.
The army headquarters also decided to procure two squadrons (28) of tanks. These tanks of Warsaw or Chinese origin will cost approximately Tk 15 to 16 crore each. The payment of Tk 448 crore for the two squadrons of tanks may be made in instalments in five years.
On April 6, the Prime Minister's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

GAS PIPELINE Dhaka's terms not acceptable to India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dinsha Patel said no progress has been made in securing Bangladesh's nod for a gas pipeline to transport gas from Myanmar through Bangladesh.
"Bangladesh wants the inclusion of certain bilateral issues in the trilateral MoU which is not acceptable to India," he said in Rajya Sabha yesterday.
Dhaka is demanding, among other things, reduction of trade deficit between India and Bangladesh and transit for trading goods to and from Nepal and Bhutan.
"India is pursuing the option of a gas pipeline from Myanmar through the north-eastern states of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

GDP growth may hit new high

BBS projects 6.71pc growth in FY06

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) may accomplish a record 6.71 per cent growth in the current fiscal year, with manufacturing sector showing a robust performance, projects Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).
The BBS last week also set its final estimation of GDP growth rate in FY2004-05 at 5.96 per cent, which was 5.38 per cent in its provisional estimate.
A planning ministry source said the bureau has prepared these projections and calculations to help design the next national bud-

get.
To Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Director Zaid Bakht the provisional estimate of FY06 GDP growth appears to be achievable.
However, he expressed doubt about the final BBS estimation of FY05 GDP growth and the revised FY04 GDP growth rate, which shows a huge rise from 5.52 per cent to 6.27 per cent.
Zaid said last year agriculture production suffered due to floods, but this year the production in this sector has been good. Since agriculture plays a major role in the GDP, this year it has risen.

According to BBS, the agriculture and forestry sector, which represents 17 per cent of the GDP basket, this year posted a 4.67 per cent growth, compared to 1.80 per cent in FY05.
The manufacturing sector also performed well, Zaid noted, which is evident from the import volume of capital machinery and industrial raw materials. The export from this sector marked a healthy 19 per cent growth this year, he mentioned.
The BIDS research chief however expressed doubt about the sustainability of this year's growth rate, given the ongoing power

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Rehana applies to HC to stop handing over her house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Rehana, daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, yesterday filed an application with the High Court praying for injunction on handing over any part of her purchased house in Dhanmondi to former chief justice KM Hasan.
She filed the application following newspaper reports that a portion of the property has been allocated to Justice Hasan who is supposed to be the chief adviser of the next caretaker government.
Mentioning her earlier writ petition filed in last February which is still pending in the HC, Rehana also prayed for injunction on changing the nature and character of any part of the property till disposal of that petition.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Alamgir Kabir transferred to women affairs ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday transferred State Minister Alamgir Kabir from the housing and public works to the women and children affairs ministry with the same status.
The decision was taken in the wake of a longstanding dispute over sharing of power between him and Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.
Highly placed sources said the conflict between Alamgir Kabir and Mirza Abbas surfaced on many occasions. Both of them complained against each other at the policymaking level, but the government did not take any action in the past.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



JS BODY ON PRICE HIKE Govt mechanism ineffective against food syndicate

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Members of a parliamentary body yesterday blamed the price hike of essentials on a syndicate of importers and asked the ministry to make a list of the traders who import the essential goods.
At a meeting, the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry also observed that the government's mechanisms are not

working against the price spiral "engineered by a section of importers".
"Not all businessmen are honest. So, the government must practise some kind of control over the market in the interest of the people," Committee Chairman and BNP lawmaker Redwan Ahmed told reporters after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.
"We have asked the ministry to

place a list of importers of essential goods by the end of this month and details about their business activities," he said adding that the committee will again meet to discuss the issue after getting the dossier on importers.
Commerce Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and committee member and Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil did

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

RMG workers block Dhaka-Ctg highway for hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Angry garments workers yesterday barricaded the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway for two and a half hours and damaged several vehicles following the death of a fellow worker in a road accident on Monday.
The barricades created a huge traffic jam on the highway causing great distress to thousands of commuters, especially the HSC examinees, in sweltering heat.
On Monday morning, Shahabuddin, 28, a sewing operator of Haidari Composite Knitwear Ltd at Bandar area, was killed and 11 others were injured when a truck hit a three-wheeler that was carrying them.
The locals immediately held the driver of the truck, Nasiruddin, and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

US authorities admit mistake to bar Biman

Aircraft was okay to land in NY, Biman mulls legal option for compensation

UNB, Dhaka

The US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) has admitted its mistake in barring Biman's New York-bound flight from entering the US airspace and Biman authorities are considering legal options to seek compensation from the FAA.
Bangladesh mission in USA quoting a State Department official confirmed that there is no restriction for Biman to operate its flights to and from New York.
According to a Biman press release, the FAA has mistakenly barred the New York bound BG-011 flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines

from landing at the JFK Airport for security reasons on Sunday.
Later, the flight carrying 257 passengers landed at Montreal Airport where the Canadian authorities inspected it and they did not find any flaws in it.
Biman says the FAA has violated international civil aviation rules by not allowing its flight to land in New York, which damaged its image and caused financial loss to the national flag carrier.
A foreign ministry handout quoting the US State Department official also said the FAA's flight operation centre in Boston had

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

REFORM TALKS BNP to ask AL to drop conditions

PM discusses with colleagues to appoint 2 election commissioners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP in its reply to the Awami League's letter will soon announce that the government will not sit in a dialogue with the opposition if the latter does not withdraw its condition for the proposed talks on electoral reforms.
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at a meeting with her senior cabinet

colleagues last night also talked about appointing two election commissioners in a short time, said sources.
Water and power crises, price hike of essentials, electoral reforms, and potential strategies to face the opposition's June 5 Dhaka siege programme were among the topics at the meeting, added the sources.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Uphold liberal image of country PM asks imams

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has urged the country's religious leaders and imams to play their pivotal role in brightening Bangladesh's image as a liberal, non-communal and democratic state.
The prime minister made the call while inaugurating the UNFPA-assisted National Conference of Imams 2006 on Human Resources Development Affairs at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre yesterday.
"You are the leaders of our society and live in close proximity to the common people. Your acceptability to them is much more than others. Therefore, your

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

ACC files graft case against DG of VAT

Finds Tk 1.65cr account

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a first information report (FIR) against ATM Mizanul Haque, the director general (DG) of VAT Audit, Intelligence and Investigation Directorate, for amassing wealth beyond his known income sources in connivance with his wife.
In the FIR filed with Dhanmondi Police Station, ACC Inspector Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan stated that Mizan has a fixed deposit of Tk 1.65 crore against his wife and daughter's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

We Mourn

This is to announce with profound sadness and grief that director of Pubali Bank Limited and renowned social worker **Mr. M.A Raquib** (69) expired on 16 May, 2006 at 4 p.m at Renesa Clinic, Dhanmondi (Inna Rajeun).

Mr. M.A Raquib was one of the sponsor director of the Pubali Bank Limited. He was ex-upazilla Chairman of Kanaighat, Sylhet and life member of Jalalabad Association. Mr. M.A Raquib actively participated to organize the Bangladeshi in London during the liberation war.

We extend our sincere condolences and heart-felt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family. May the departed soul of the deceased rest in eternal peace.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 2