

Proposed pay scale may be implemented in phases

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday hinted that pay of the civil servants might not be raised at one go and the Pay Commission recommendation could be split for implementation, reports UNB.

"We have no pledge to fulfil everything at a time," he said of the proposed pay-hike for the government officials and employees at a post-budget press conference at the NEC auditorium.

The national budget for fiscal 1997-98, placed in parliament last week.

Ctg port users won't join today's talks

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 13: Port Users Forum (PUF) at a meeting here yesterday decided not to join the fresh round of talks with the government scheduled to be held in Dhaka tomorrow.

Forum sources said, the port users have rejected the invitation by the political advisor to the Prime Minister and the decision was communicated to him yesterday.

The forum meeting demanded implementation of the Prime Minister's commitment on the use of private equipment at the Chittagong port, forum sources added.

The PUF members have decided to boycott Chittagong Port from June 15 if they are not allowed to use the private equipment.

3000 vehicles stranded at 3 ferry ghats

MANIKGANJ, June 13: Several thousand passengers were stranded at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ferry ghats, where nearly 3,000 vehicles waited to be ferried across the river in the evening today, reports UNB.

BWTC sources said ferry services were disrupted as four ferries of Aricha-Nagarbari and Aricha-Daulatdia routes went out of order.

They said despite shortage of ferries, some 3,000 vehicles, including bus, truck, microbus and car, were ferried across the river in the last 24 hours till this evening.

Witnesses said the long queue of vehicles at Aricha ghat has gone up to nearly five kilometres, causing untold sufferings to passengers, particularly women and children.

Hasina to address rally in city June 23

By Staff Correspondent
Prime Minister and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina will address a rally in the city on June 23.

The rally, to be held at Pantha Path at 3 pm, has been planned to celebrate the completion of one year of the present government, says a press release.

After the parliamentary election on June 12, 1996, AL had formed a government of 'national consensus' on June 23 the same year.

Meanwhile, AL presidium member Abdul Mannan will act as the acting president at the party during Sheikh Hasina's visit to Turkey, the press release added.

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Kibria defends budget proposals

Surcharge imposed to alleviate poverty

By Special Correspondent



Finance Minister SAMS Kibria addressing a post-budget press conference at the NEC auditorium yesterday. Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed (C) and State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir (R) are also seen.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria yesterday strongly defended the 2.5 per cent surcharge on imports and fresh duties in the budgetary proposals for fiscal 1997-98, saying they aim at mobilising resources to cut across poverty lines, reflecting Awami League's commitment to the electorate for social justice.

"The infrastructure development surcharge is directed towards alleviation of poverty in rural areas. We want to harness resources from it to use for specific projects," the Finance Minister told reporters in his post-budget press conference at the NEC building.

He dismissed suggestions that he had proposed something in one hand for the people and taken it away by the other hand.

The Finance Minister, who faced a volley of questions from reporters, received helping hand from cabinet heavyweights Abdur Razzak, Tofael

Ahmed and Begum Motta Chowdhury. State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir also answered queries from journalists.

Kibria brushed aside criticisms that the new budgetary measures would choke the local industries and everyone barring beggars has been burdened with taxes.

"You should understand the modern system of taxation (the new surcharge and duties and tariffs). It has been simplified and rationalised. It would help spur the growth of local industries and open ways for the government to provide services efficiently," Kibria said.

Lending a hand to him Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed added: "The local industries are still gasping under liberalisation policies of the previous government. The effects of zero VAT had its anomalous effect on the industry as a whole. The

Cinema fire kills 60 in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 13: At least 55 people were killed and about 200 injured in a stampede triggered by a devastating fire that raged in a packed 1050-capacity cinema hall in posh South Delhi area today, report agencies.

Most of the victims were brought dead to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Safdarjung Hospital, additional DCP S B K Singh told newsmen at the site.

United News of India news agency said 60 people had been killed. Police said there were at least 18 women and two children among the dead.

Fire officials said 60 people were brought out unconscious from the smoking 1,000-seat theater.

Most deaths were by asphyxiation caused by the dense smoke from the burning ceiling insulation, said Maxwell Pereira, additional commissioner of police.

The fire started soon after the intermission of a Hindi movie and many viewers thought the smoke was part of special effects of a war scene, said Balram Sharma, who was on the lower floor, from which most people rushed out unharmed.

Most of the dead had been trapped in the balcony when the false ceilings in the hall caught

Boat capsizes 50 feared drowned in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, June 13: At least 50 persons were feared killed in a boat capsizing today in the river Dhanu at Kajlagor point about 35 kilometres east from here.

S R Barai, SP of Netrakona, told BSS that an engine boat carrying 250 passengers left Sasna Bazar of Sunamganj district early in the morning for Inna Bazar of Kishoreganj district via Kajlagor Bazar. The boat capsized in the river due to strong currents.

About 200 passengers swam ashore. Local people recovered the body of a minor boy from the river. However, they could not salvage the boat or rescue the missing passengers.

A police rescue team led by Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Chandra Kumar Chakma rushed to the spot immediately after the incident. Rescue operation was going on till 10 pm tonight.

MCCI, DCCI express mixed reaction to proposed budget

By Staff Correspondent
Two leading chamber bodies have expressed mixed reaction to the proposed budget for 1997-98 placed by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria in the Jatiya Sangsad on Thursday.

President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Samson H Chowdhury, in a statement yesterday, welcomed the new budget for reduction of corporate tax, emphasis on infrastructure development, allocation of funds for the poor and the destitute and decision to privatise 65 state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

He, however, expressed concern at the 'decline' in industrial growth, imposition of 2.5 per cent surcharge and lack of 'new incentives' to export-oriented industries.

"We are disappointed that no new incentives have been given to boost export," Samson H Chowdhury said adding that raising revenue through 2.5 per cent infrastructure development surcharge on imports and local products were retrograde steps.

The MCCI president appreciated reduction of corporate tax

Economists' reaction

By Staff Correspondent
Leading economist Prof Muzaffar Ahmed has said allocation for health and qualitative education is not sufficient in the proposed national budget for 1997-98.

"We cannot ensure the quality of education only by increasing total allocation for the sector. Increased allocation is an old idea to develop human resources. We need a qualitative change in the education system to have a breakthrough," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Ahmed said productivity of the civil servants must be determined for the betterment of national economy and the nation as a whole.

He criticised Tk 700 crore allocation for the implementation of new national pay scale and said "The actual requirement should not be less than Tk 2,000 crore."

Prof Ahmed said the government should ensure fair price of farm output and make a policy decision on how to develop the agricultural sector.

Dwelling on levying of tariff on some domestic industries, he said "We have done too little to late in giving protection to our home industries."

He further said "We have killed our industries and now we are trying to protect it. I regret."

PM leaves for Istanbul today D-8 identifies 8 areas for cooperation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves Dhaka this morning for Istanbul to attend D-8 Summit scheduled for tomorrow, reports UNB.

The summit of eight OIC countries, called D-8, will adopt the "Istanbul Declaration" generating a new economic bloc, originally initiated by Turkey.

Eight partners of the planned economic alliance are from two continents - Asia and Africa. They are Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt and Nigeria.

The new bloc will work mainly in eight areas of cooperation for the promotion of socio-economic condition of nearly 800 million people of the member countries.

The areas of cooperation are: trade, industry, investment, banking, tourism, culture and rural development.

The eight countries have already signed a declaration for developing cultural cooperation among themselves.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury left Dhaka yesterday for Istanbul to attend the ministerial meeting to be held today. The ministers will finalise the draft declaration for approval of the summit. Chowdhury will also join the Prime Minister at the summit.

The Prime Minister will be accompanied by her Principal Secretary Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan and Secretary of Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of the LGRD Ministry Ayub Quadri.

Budget for the rich: CAB

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) has criticised the proposed national budget for 1997-98 fiscal year and called it a "unprecedented tax-laden budget," reports UNB.

Giving its reaction in a statement yesterday the CAB said the proposed budget offered protection to the interests of rich people, bureaucrats and industrialists.

It said the lower middle class people would be affected more as the budget imposed new

13 alleged dacoits, 8 terrorists held in city

Police have arrested 21 persons including 13 alleged dacoits from different parts of the city and recovered some arms and ammunition from their possession during the last two days, reports BSS.

A team of Demra police yesterday arrested six alleged dacoits from Jurain and Postagola areas. The arrested are Abdur Rahim alias Gokakata Rahim, Akhter Hossain, Chandu alias Alam, Shahid, Jahangir and Khalil.

Police said the arrested persons are allegedly involved in dacoity at different parts of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Maa.

A team of detective branch of police also arrested six alleged terrorists from South Musuridi area and recovered two revolvers, 17 bullets, two daggers, and six cocktails from their possession. The arrested are

VC tells The Daily Star Dissolution of DUCSU body, fresh polls schedule soon

By Aminul Islam
The schedule for DUCSU election will be announced within a week or two, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof A K Azad Chowdhury told The Daily Star on Thursday.

Dissolution of the DUCSU body and the fresh election schedule will be announced simultaneously, he said.

The BNP-backed Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) is opposing the idea of dissolving the DUCSU body before holding a fresh election.

The last DUCSU election was held on June 6, 1990. Despite repeated attempts by the university authorities, DUCSU election could not be held due to

Holzman named new US envoy to Bangladesh

John C Holzman has been nominated as the New US Ambassador to Bangladesh, said a US Press release yesterday, reports UNB.

President Bill Clinton on Thursday announced his nomination of Holzman as a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counsellor, to be ambassador to Bangladesh.

Holzman will replace David N Merrill.

Holzman of Hawaii, began his career in the US Foreign Service in 1972, when he was posted to Guinea. He later served in the Netherlands, Cameroon, India and Ghana.

His State Department assignments include the Office of Development Finance, the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs, and the Office of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh Affairs, where he was the Director. He has served as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Pakistan since 1994.

Support to UF govt to continue: Kesri

NEW DELHI, June 13: Newly elected Congress President Sitaran Kesri said here today that his party would continue to support the United Front government led by Prime Minister I K Gujral, even as he pleaded for agitational programmes against non-Congress governments in various states, reports BSS.

Addressing his first formal press conference after his landslide victory in the party presidential election he said support to the United Front government would continue in view of their better behaviours towards Congress Party. There was no question of withdrawing the support at present, he added.

However, observers said Kesri's reference to the party-men urging them to launch agitational programmes against the non-Congress governments in the states does not bode well for the Gujral government.

Thus Kesri's contention that



Artistes performing dance at a cultural programme at the Russian Cultural Centre in the city yesterday, organised to mark the National Day of Russian Federation. Star photo

3 young men crushed by train

NARSINGDI, June 13: Three young men were killed by a speeding train at a village two miles west of Narsingdi rail station here, on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the Noakhali Express crushed them as they were playing three characters of "Arabian Nights" on the rail line at village Dakuria at about 10:30 pm after watching the serial on BTV.

The dead were identified as Jaisal Mish, 30, Afliuddin, 25, and Mamun, 22, sons of three brothers Afazuddin, Jahrudin and Shafiuddin.

Railway police recovered the bodies and sent them to Sadar Hospital for autopsy today. An unnatural death case was filed with Sadar police.

Alleged smuggler killed in clash with BDR

COMILLA, June 13: An alleged smuggler was killed and five BDR jawans were injured in a clash early today at a village, some 250 yards south of Shashild railway station in Brahmanpara thana, reports UNB.

The clash started at about 3 am, when the BDR jawans tried to arrest the smugglers who were loading smuggled Indian sugar on a local train.

BDR sources said they raided the area acting on a tip, but sensing their arrival, the smugglers, numbering more than 300, started throwing stones towards the border guards.

To bring the situation under control, the BDR fired two rounds of bullet that injured Amir Hossain, 20, of Anandapur village in the same thana.

Critically injured Amir Hossain was rushed to the Comilla Medical College Hospital, where the attending doctors declared him dead.