

Fire at gasfield
Cabinet takes stock of latest situation

The cabinet yesterday took stock of the latest situation of the blaze that broke out at the Magurjhara gas field in Moulvibazar district, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the cabinet meeting held in the Sangsads Bhaban in the afternoon.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan, who visited the spot, told the cabinet that urgent steps had been taken to combat the fire, ignited by a gas well explosion late Saturday night.

2 alleged child traffickers beaten to death in Joydevpur

GAZIPUR, June 16: Two people, including a woman, were beaten to death and two others injured at Chapulia in Joydevpur thana today, reports UNB.

Police said the incident occurred when a group of people were passing by Chapulia, near Gaziupur Ordinance Factory, in three scooters at about 11:30 am.

Some local people present there at that time chased the scooters and caught four people along with two scooters, suspecting them either child or cat-

See Page 12 Col 3

Biman fare in domestic routes up by 15 pc

Fare of Bangladesh Biman in the domestic routes has been raised by 15 per cent from March 15, State Minister for Civil Aviation Dr Moinuddin Khan Alamgir said in parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

Replies to M Mashirul Rahman of BNP, he said the fare was raised due to operational loss in the domestic routes caused by increased expenditure for fuel and other operational expenses.

Sayeedi's election

SC rejects leave petition against HC stay order

The full bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday refused to grant the leave petition preferred by Shudhanshu Shekhar Halder against ad-interim stay order of High Court on the judgement of the election tribunal of Pirojpur-1 constituency, reports BSS.

The Appellate Division comprising Chief Justice A T M Afzal, Justice Mustafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf and Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury passed the order after hearing both the peti-

See Page 12 Col 2

3 Shibir activists held in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, June 16: Three activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir were arrested today in connection with the April 25 violence on the Rajshahi University campus, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Joynal Abedin, AGS of Islami Chhatra Shibir RU unit, Aminur Rahman, a student of Shah Makhsum College and Shafiqur Rahman, a 2nd year student of Rajshahi Law College.

See Page 12 Col 2

Inside Today

Article

Why not a Budget for Industrial Growth?

Column: Window on Asia by Shahid Latif Page 4

Focus

"ASEAN 10", Bangladesh and SAARC Page 5

Business

CSE may start on-line trading system by Dec 106 issues incur loss Pages 6,7

Supplement

One-page supplement on Tree Plantation Campaign Page 9

Flames remain steady, fire fighting team arrives



The flame in the Magurjhara gasfield in Moulvibazar. The photo was taken at 8:45 am yesterday from a distance of about 100 yards.

—Star photo by Iqbal Siddiqui

GSP facility for garments exporters EU to ease Rules of Origin requirement on condition

European Union (EU) has agreed in principle to give derogation of 'Rules of Origin' to Bangladesh in getting Generalised System of Preference (GSP) in garment export to EU countries from July under certain conditions, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed at a joint meeting with the leaders of BGMEA, BMEA and BTMA in Dhaka yesterday.

According to Rules of Origin, three-stage transformation — fibre to yarn, yarn to fabric, and fabric to garments — for knit garments and two-stage transformation for woven garments is necessary in Bangladesh to get GSP.

The exporters are enjoying 12.5 per cent tariff concession from EU. Derogation of Rules of Origin means EU will provide GSP to two-stage local trans-

formation in knit garments also.

Quoting the latest remarks of EU official concerned the minister informed the meeting that the conditionalities of EU included the cancellation of irregular GSP certificates that had been issued by the Export Promotion Bureau from the late 80s to 1996.

Meanwhile, a EU team visited Bangladesh last year and detected gross anomalies in issuing GSP certificates. Many exporters got GSP certificates without complying to the Rules of Origin criteria.

The GSP rules of EU provide action for withdrawal of GSP from countries who do not take action when 'irregularity' in certification is detected and established.

The minister said EU felt that Bangladesh's garment industry had been well-established.

lished and cancellation of the irregular GSP certificates would mean payment of duty by the European importers and it would not affect Bangladesh in the long run.

EU also feels that Bangladesh as LDC has no quota restrictions for garment export to EU which is an added advantage over other garment-exporting countries.

The minister said EU indicated that if Bangladesh could not cancel the irregular GSP certificate, EU would withdraw GSP for Bangladesh and it might affect GSP in exporting other goods to EU.

The government will definitely look into the overall interest of the people on GSP issue," said the minister, adding that previous government had issued these irregular GSP certificates and present government.

See Page 12 Col 8

Bid to enter PM's office

Arrested man dies after getting bail

The man, who was arrested three days ago for his alleged illegal bid to enter the Prime Minister's office, died in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Police arrested Nuruzzaman, 35, on June 13 as he tried to enter the PM's office at Tejgaon in the city without prior permission.

Later, police brought him on one day's remand after producing him in court.

Nuruzzaman was brought to court yesterday as his lawyer moved a bail prayer.

The court granted the bail, but police rushed Nuruzzaman to National Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead at about 4 pm.

Shah Alam, the lawyer of Nuruzzaman, alleged to a human rights organisation that his client had died following torture by police.

Bangladesh Society for En-

Showcause on govt Absconding in case file but functioning as dist PP

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the government to show cause as to under what legal authority Golam Abbas Chowdhury, allegedly an absconding accused in a criminal case, is functioning as the Public Prosecutor of Barisal district.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Moazzam Haque and Justice Md Hassan Amin upon a writ petition filed by Ahsan Habib Kamal, Chairman of Barisal Pourashava, issued the rule nisi upon the government. District and Sessions Judge, Deputy Commissioner and the Public Prosecutor of Barisal.

The matter is subject to investigation, but preliminary enquiry indicated that he died of cardiac failure," Das told UNB when reached by telephone at Tejgaon thana.

The ADC of DMP said no injury mark was found when he was produced before the court by police and the court also received him without any objection.

He quoted a brother of Nuruzzaman as saying that the victim was suffering from var-

See Page 12 Col 7

Dhaka likely to host 3-nation summit in Nov : PM

By Staff Correspondent

The huge fire in Magurjhara gasfield in Moulvibazar is still out of control and the flame remained steady for the second consecutive day yesterday, according to reports reaching here till last night.

A fire fighting team from Alert Disaster Company (Pvt) Ltd of Singapore arrived Dhaka last night, official sources said. Another team from Houston US, is expected to arrive today. The teams will visit the spot this evening.

Experts told our staff photographer during a visit to the spot that the flame which had leaped upto 500 feet initially, came down to a height of 150 to 250 feet yesterday.

"This has happened because the hole of the well has now become a crater and gas is coming out through an expanded area," said an expert.

The heat of the fire can be felt from a distance of one kilometre and at night, the flames illuminate an area of at least five kilometres. The flame is visible from Moulvibazar town, 26 kms away from the gas field, our staff photographer said.

See Page 12 Col 3

Fire won't affect gas reserve: Noor Uddin

By Staff Correspondent

The massive fire in the Magurjhara gas field in Moulvibazar has caused no loss of life, Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan said in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

The minister, who visited the gas field yesterday morning said that the fire which leaped upto 600 feet on Sunday last, lost its intensity yesterday and came down to a height of 100 to 150 feet.

The fire has damaged half a kilometre rail track and the drilling rig and other accessories of the US company, Occidental, he said. Occidental is drilling a well in the gas field.

Noor Uddin Khan said, Bangladesh Air Force has been asked to remain prepared for any emergency and the Civil Aviation Department, Immigration and NBR (National Board of Revenue) have been asked to extend all cooperation.

The minister said, the gas field caught fire at 1:45 am on

See Page 12 Col 5

Minister explains in JS

Fertiliser price 'adjusted' to check smuggling

By Staff Correspondent

The government will have to spend Tk 344 crore as fertiliser subsidy in the coming fiscal year despite a recent price increase of urea, said Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury yesterday.

The minister was responding to questions and supplementaries during question-answer hour in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Motia Chowdhury said the price of urea was 'adjusted' with that in neighbouring India. She explained that as the price of urea marked a 10 per cent rise in India, it would not be possible for the BDR to check smuggling of fertiliser unless the price was 'adjusted'.

There persists tremendous pressure from the donors to withdraw agriculture subsidy," the minister said.

Replies to a question from Shahidul Islam of BNP, the agriculture minister said, MPs would be included soon in district level committees for implementing agricultural rehabilitation programmes.

See Page 12 Col 8

JS debate on suppl budget

Govt, Opposition blame each other for economic failure

By Nazmul Ashraf

In a bid to silence the noisy Opposition Bench, Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury quoted from Bankim Chandra's novel saying, Dheerey Rajonee, dheerey (go slow, night).

The minister's recitation came as BNP lawmakers were shouting to back their party colleague in the House Prof Shahidul Islam who demanded involving the MPs in the agriculture rehabilitation programmes at the thana and district levels.

"I see your government did not do the job in its five-year rule" when you people so loudly and frequently claimed of being democratic. "I did not know the MPs were not there," Motia said sarcastically and assured the BNP legislators of implementing their demand.

They said the government had to take a series of measures to bring back discipline in the financial sector which had been weakened by rampant corruption and over-lending during the five years of BNP regime.

Taking the floor first, BNP lawmaker Zafrul Islam Choudhury read a lengthy notice on the cyclone-affected people of his area blaming the government for what he said

See Page 12 Col 6

As the general discussion on the supplementary budget began in parliament yesterday, Opposition MPs criticised the government for, what they said, its total failure in improving the country's economy during the last one year, reports UNB.

The ruling party lawmakers, on the other hand, accused the previous government of leaving behind a shattered economy and said the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has put the economy on the right track.

They said the government had to take a series of measures to bring back discipline in the financial sector which had been weakened by rampant corruption and over-lending during the five years of BNP regime.

Taking the floor first, BNP lawmaker Motiur Rahman claimed that the government had totally failed in every sector and said the picture has been reflected through its performance in last one year.

The growth in the gross domestic products (GDP) was 5.7 per cent during the outgoing 1996-97 fiscal because of the growth in the agriculture.

And credit goes to the country's farmers community, he added.

Mashirul Rahman noted that the GDP growth was 5.3 per cent in fiscal 1995-96 and said the growth was only 0.4 per cent higher in 1996-97. It is the result of a total stagnation in all other sectors, including the industry, he said.

The BNP lawmakers said the tariffs of power, gas and water were raised in extra-budgetary ways in last one year. The over-due in the power sector also rose to Tk 1288 crore from Tk 958 crore.

Prof Ali Ashraf of Awami League said the government had taken a number of steps to deal with the default culture and restore discipline in the financial sector.

The growth in the agriculture

See Page 12 Col 1

'97 Human Development Index Bangladesh ranks 67th among 78 developing countries

By Staff Correspondent

Planning ministry officials, representatives of the ILO, World Food Programme, UNESCO and NGOs were also present.

Bangladesh also stood first among the South Asian nations in the Human Poverty Index (HPI) of the UNDP.

According to the report, Pakistan ranked 64th in the HPI while Bhutan 62nd, India 47th and Sri Lanka 22nd.

The conference was held at the auditorium of the Centre for Integrated and Rural Development in the Asia-Pacific (CIRDAP). It was addressed, among others, by UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Michael Constable, Economic Relations Division Secretary Dr. Mashirul Rahman, development activist Khushi Kabir and education specialist Farash Uddin.

It said all the major financial and international agencies must do more than just cheering on the sidelines about the virtues of globalisation.

Prof Muzaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University said denial of basic human rights to the lower class is largely responsible for the country's widespread poverty. He said the country's

population of these countries live in poverty.

The report mentioned that the globalisation was largely benefiting the more dynamic and powerful countries in the North and the South. It further said annual losses to developing countries from unequal access to trade, labour and finance had been estimated at 500 billion US dollars 10 times what they receive in foreign aid.