

# The Daily Star

## Bus fares to be readjusted

### Road accidents kill 2607 in 11 months

The government is considering to re-adjust the fares of public transport services like bus, minibuses, coaster, taxi and motorised three-wheeler, reports UNB.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain said this in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday in reply to Prof Panna Kaisar of Awami League.

He also disclosed that, although road accidents kill thousands and injure lakhs every year, route permit of no vehicle was cancelled on charge of road accident from 1991-92 fiscal year till date.

In reply to M Shahidul Islam of BNP, he said that a total of 4,721 road accidents took place across the country in just 11 months from June 1996, killing 2,607 people and injuring 4,554.

The minister, however, informed the House that to check road accidents, the government took various steps at different times which included constitution of Driving Testing Boards to give licences only to eligible drivers.

He said Accident Report form has been introduced in the Dhaka Metropolitan area to collect information about road mishaps in order to analyse by computers the causes of accidents.

The former and present parliament members, who applied for housing plots at 'Nikunja', will be given allotments by July 31, reports UNB.

Stating this in parliament yesterday, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim assured the parliament members that those who applied for plots at 'Nikunja' would get allotment.

Amidst clapping, the minister also announced that the lawmakers would be given priority in allotment of plots at the proposed Yusuiganj satellite town.

Nasim, however, said the government has decided to free 3,000 acres of land, earlier earmarked for acquisition to set up the satellite town.

At this stage, leader of the House Sheikh Hasina took floor and said that exemplary punishment will be given if death in custody is proved.

The Prime Minister said, the matter would be investigated properly and post mortem report of the deceased would be taken into consideration.

She proposed that investigations could be made on all political murders, death of students on campus, and killing of people in processions and rallies and that a parliamentary committee could be formed for the purpose if the Opposition agreed.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visiting the Magurchhara gasfield yesterday. —PID photo



Foreign fire-fighting experts at the Magurchhara gasfield yesterday. —Star photo

### Undetected gas pocket

From Page 1  
Skip Coyener, an engineer of Occidental, says seismic surveys only provides information about rock structures and do not detect gas.

The TNO of Srimangal, Wadudul Bari Chowdhury said they were preparing a list of people affected by the blast. "We know about 50 families of Khashia Punzi tribe fled their homes and their betel leaf cultivation has been damaged. Occidental will compensate their loss and will also bear all other costs," he said.

An Occidental official said the company would compensate for the loss and plans were underway to relocate the adjacent railway line away from the site.

"The tracks were warped by the heat and its no longer safe here," he said.

Forest officer of Lauchhara beat, Siddiqur Rahman estimated that about 500 mature trees were damaged by the intense heat from the well. He said the monsoon contained the fire. Steps were being taken to wipe out possibility of a forest fire, he said.

Rail and road communication is still suspended indefinitely as both routes cross only yards away from the inferno.

### Heated debate in JS

From Page 1  
Hossain blamed the government's mismanagement and wrong policy for a downturn in economy.

He alleged that the government reduced development budget of the outgoing fiscal for revenue and non-development sectors.

Those who took part in the discussion were Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed, Khan-daker Asaduzzaman, Prof Khaleda Khanam and Makbul Hossain of Awami League, Syed Manzur Hossain, Shahidul Islam, Rezaul Karim and Ziaul Haq Zia of BNP and Noor Mohammad Mondal of Jatiya Party.

Winding up general discussion on the supplementary budget for 1996-97 fiscal, Kibria said the BNP had opened the doors of the banks and financial institutions for the plunderers that deepened the default culture.

"They had indulged in politics of blunder by handing out crosses of taka to their party supporters ... the present government salvaged the economy from a total mess," he said.

Furnishing detailed statistics about the credits by the past government, he said they sanctioned Tk 2263 crore in 1991, Tk 2619 crore in 1992, Tk 3550 crore in 1993, Tk 5449 crore in 1994 and Tk 6493 crore in 1995.

Referring to default culture, the former Finance Minister claimed that he had taken steps against the loan defaulter and dismissed chairmen, directors and members of different banks.

The private sector must be given bank loan for growth in this sector, Saifur said. "If you don't want to give them loan for fear of defaulter, let the shops be closed," he added.

Earlier, taking part in the discussion former BNP minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar

### PM : Steps taken

From Page 1  
The gasfield on June 2. "Everything is progressing and teams of experts have arrived to suggest ways to fight the fire" that broke out early Sunday, Occidental President Nigel L Hopkins told UNB on the spot.

He said two teams of experts from Alert Disaster Control of Singapore and International Oil Control of Houston, USA, arrived here to take steps to control the fire.

About the extent of damage, the Occidental president said, "It is not possible to assess it before receiving the expert opinion. But there was no casualty so far."

The Prime Minister had an aerial view of the fire and dropped at Shamsnagar, six kilometres off the spot, and went to Magurchhara by a Pajero jeep to see the intensity of the fire.

On her way back to Shamsnagar, the Prime Minister addressed a spontaneous gathering at Kamalganj College ground and said the government is taking all steps to control the fire at the earliest.

She said experts are coming with fire extinguishing equipment to control the flame immediately.

There was no casualty in the fire, she said, adding, "It is a blessing of Almighty that the people are safe."

She gave the assurance that the government will take steps to solve the local problems, including the problems of the local college and the tea workers.

### Load-shedding in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, June 17: There was a load shedding of over 160 MW in the port city today. The city needs 330 MW power daily.

Most of the areas in Chittagong are expiring load shedding for the past few days.

Today, 291 MW of electricity was generated at the Raozan power plant and at Kaptai and of this only 167 MW was supplied to Chittagong, PDB sources said.

The rest was put into the national grid line to feed other areas.

### JCD-BCL clash at Sirajganj: 5 injured

SIRAJGANJ, June 17: Five people were injured in a clash between pro-Awami League Chhatra League and BNP backed JCD here today, reports UNB.

Police said the clash occurred in front of the office of the Road and Highways in the town over tender at 12.05 pm.

Of the injured, JCD leader Arju Mia, 24, was admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital with head injury, and a case was filed with Sadar police in this connection.

### PM : Punishment

From Page 1  
Standing on a point of order, former minister and BNP legislator M Shamsul Islam tried to draw the attention of the House yesterday to the incident.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid did not entertain it as a point of order.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury then took floor and demanded formation of a parliamentary committee to probe the incident and submission of its report within 48 or 72 hours.

He regretted the Deputy Speaker's refusal to entertain a point of order on the issue.

Arrest of a person on charge of trespassing into Prime Minister's Office and his alleged death in police custody deserves discussion in the House, he said. "It's a matter related to fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. I expect the Home Minister and Law Minister to give statements on the issue."

He also quoted an English language daily to give details of the incident.

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### Power in Ctg region

From Page 1  
KV Comilla-Chittagong transmission line which is needed to connect the Chittagong sub-system to the main load centre.

Unfortunately, work on the 230 KV transmission line has not progressed in tandem with the setting up of Raozan plant and will not be able to transmit its power before November 1998, the report mentioned.

The study also found some faults in two power plants at Raozan and said that under the prevailing circumstances one of the 210 MW unit should have been constructed in the Siddhirganj/Ashuganj/Ghorasal power plants or any other suitable place located near the main load centres.

The report said that one of the major defects of the 210 MW power plant was that it could not be re-started immediately after being tripped or stopped due to a fault in the system or otherwise. It takes about 72 hours to cool down and restart the power plant once it stopped.

Though there has been periodic loadshedding in the country, the power plant had seldom been operated at its full capacity of 210 MW.

Inadequate gas supply is at present one of the major constraints for the uninterrupted generation of electricity in the country.

The depletion in the produc-

### Muggers stab woman in city

By Staff Correspondent  
Some muggers stabbed an elderly woman while trying to snatch bangles from her in the city's Kalabagan area yesterday afternoon, said police.

Sayecta Chowdhury, 50, wife of retired government official, AHNA Chowdhury, was attacked at Bashiruddin Road at 1:30 pm. A gang of four to five muggers riding motor cycles stabbed her while she was going to Kalabagan.

The injured woman, mother of a journalist, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, was rushed to a city hospital and underwent an operation there, said family members.

Dhanmondi police said, a case was filed but none was arrested till late last night.

### BNP condemns attack on Jamaat rally in Rajshahi

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has condemned the attack on a Jamaat rally in Rajshahi and demanded release of those arrested in a "conspiratorial" case in this connection, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, he said the government was snatching the people's democratic rights by unleashing attack on political programmes in a "fascist" style.

Bhuiyan strongly protested the filing of "conspiratorial" cases following the attack on a Jamaat meeting recently. "The attack is part of the autocratic activities of the government."

The BNP leader called upon the government to refrain from making such attacks on political meetings and processions.

Meanwhile, BNP Publicity Secretary Fazlur Rahman Patal MP in a separate statement expressed deep concern at the death of a youth, Nuruzzaman Sharif, in police custody.

Termining the incident as violation of human rights, he said people are losing confidence in the law enforcing agencies as a result of such incidents.

### 3 hacked to death in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, June 17: Two old women and a teenage boy were hacked to death by unidentified assailants in a house in Sadar thana on Monday night, police said, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Kalpana Rani Bhat-tacharyya, 65, her neighbour Kaldasi Halder, 60, and Ujjal, 13, a domestic help of Panch-dona village.

Villagers said only the three was in the house at night as Kalpana's only son, Kajol, was in Chittagong.

They died on the spot as some miscreants chopped them with sharp weapons sometime in the night.

In the morning, some neighbours called them from outside the house, but getting no response, they entered into the house and found three bodies lying on the floor.

### JS snippets

By Nazmul Ashraf

Both the Treasury and Opposition bench members in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday welcomed the announcement by Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim that housing plots will be allotted for the MPs irrespective of their party affiliations.

As Shamsul Haq of Awami League asked if the government had any plans to allot housing plots among the MPs, a smiling minister said, "I was awaiting this question."

All the MPs who applied for plots at the Nikunja housing project will be confirmed by July 31 next, he said. "Besides, MPs will get preference for plots at the Yusuiganj housing project," Nasim added amid applause from both the benches.

The House also cheered the minister who spoke about the politicians' sacrifice for the nation and criticised the industrialists and bureaucrats.

BNP MP Ziaul Haq Zia rose to demand change in the criteria of getting such plots to enable those who reside in a house owned by their spouses. Although the minister did not accept Zia's demand instantly, he advised the Opposition member to try for a plot in Yusuiganj.

Referring to repeated attempts to get the floor by raising hands by the MPs, AL lawmaker Mohammad Selim told the Chair, "Due to my practice of continuously raising my hand to get the floor in the House, my hand is erected even when I am asleep at home."

Back benchers like Selim, who are found raising their hands to get the floor, cheered the Treasury Bench member.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, while correcting himself, told Selim, "Your question number will be 128 instead of 228 as I mentioned. One hundred will be deducted."

"Please, don't deduct anything from my life," Selim pleaded.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju advised Abdul Mannan Talukdar of BNP to meet him at his office for the answer of a question the latter raised.

Communicating the minister's reply to Talukdar, a smiling Deputy Speaker remarked, "Honourable minister has invited you to his office. There, he will not only give you the answer but also offer you tea."

### Terrorist held from Sayedabad bus terminal

Police yesterday arrested a terrorist along with a foreign-made revolver from Sayedabad bus terminal in the city, reports UNB.

Police said Dipu, widely known as phenisid lord, had been wanted in eight cases filed with Motijheel, Sabujbagh, Demra and Sutrapur thanas.

Dipu fired on a mobile police team as they chased him while collecting tolls from Sayedabad bus terminal at about 6:45 in the morning.

The police team, however, caught him red handed along with a Spain-made revolver loaded with four bullets. Dipu was an associate of terrorist Nazim of Sayedabad area.

### One held with counterfeit currency notes

From Our Correspondent  
SATKHIRA, June 17: BDR arrested one smuggler with 12 counterfeit 500 Tk currency notes in his possession at the Satani customs corridor today.

Sources said, the smuggler — Atiar Rahman — of village Kuskhali was carrying the forged currency notes to Bangladesh from India. A case has been lodged with Satkhira thana. He has been sent to Jail Hajat.

### Bill placed

From Page 1  
The bill proposed rigorous imprisonment extending to two years or fine of upto Tk one lakh or both for cheating people through malpractices in the name of medical treatment and for publishing exaggerated advertisements.

The objective of the bill is to protect public health by publishing the names of those cheating people in the name of medical treatment through obscene advertisements.

Earlier, MK Anwar of BNP opposed the introduction of the bill saying it was incomplete. He, however, said his party would support the bill if it was brought with further amendments.

The health minister requested Anwar to withdraw his objection since there would be scope for both sides in the House to discuss the bill once it was placed.

The minister also said suggestions by the Opposition could be accommodated before passing the bill.

### Death of Nuruzzaman

From Page 1  
Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Nuruzzaman's wife Sabina Hq Shilpi said that she took food for her husband at about 3 pm. "I saw him almost nude when I met my husband in custody. He could not even talk to me as he was looking very pale and weak," Shilpi said. Nuruzzaman's younger brother accompanied her there, she added.

Family members of Nuruzzaman claimed that marks of injury were found in his shoulder, back and some other parts of the body. They added that Tejgaon thana police did not even allow him to contact them after he was arrested on Friday.

According to them, Nuruzzaman's wife first got the information about his arrest from one of their relatives Sunday night. Bitan office informed the relative that Nuruzzaman was in police custody.

Mother of a 10-year-old boy, Shilpi demanded proper investigation into the incident. She added that they would seek help of some human rights organisations in this regard.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh JMB will be open for traffic ahead of schedule

The Jamuna Bridge will be open for vehicular traffic ahead of stipulated time on August 1998, Communications Minister Anwar Hossain said yesterday, reports UNB.

He told the Jatiya Sangsad during the question-hour session that the bridge will be open for traffic along with rail track.

The minister said the government is examining the feasibility of constructing meter and broad gauge rail tracks in the bridge.

### Hundreds flock

From Page 1  
check-point. Many of the onlookers walked down the railway tracks to get as close to the fire as possible. Some used their umbrellas as a shield against the intense heat.

The guards and officials at the check-point seemed unable to stop the human tide. They could only ask people to stop smoking because a lit cigarette might ignite any lingering gas pockets.

People came from near and far. One man drove his truck from Sylhet this morning to see the fire while Waled and his friends arrived on the night train from Dhaka.

The eager crowd combined with heavy machines brought in to build fire walls created traffic jams on the narrow forest road.

While the flames appeared to inspire awe in some, local people were not so eager to take a look. "I didn't go near it," said Abdul Malek of Radhanagar. "I am so scared."

### Brawl averted

From Page 1  
Soon after Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid adjourned the House for the Magreb prayer, Mashur Rahman of BNP and Sharif Khushruzzaman of AL were seen shouting at each other. Shouts and counter-shouts between the two lawmakers drew several others in each side when Mashur was seen rushing towards Abdul Latif Mirza in the Treasury bench, creating noise.

At one stage, several angry MPs in either side were attempting to come to blows but their senior colleagues stopped them.

Before the Magreb break, Mashur Rahman was seeking the floor on a personal explanation. But he was denied.

Later some BNP lawmakers told newsmen that Mashur wanted to reply to Sharif Khushruzzaman who made some personal attacks the previous day.

Some AL MPs however alleged that Mashur had hurled abusive words at Khushruzzaman.

### Equipment

From Page 1  
absence of oxygen. Then special chemical is sprayed so that fresh fire cannot ignite from the heat, the officials noted.

Once the fire dies down the trapped gas comes out automatically. If the quantity of trapped gas is too small it is allowed to come out on its own. But if the quantity of gas is enormous then the well is killed and sealed with special cement, they added.

Asked about the possible cause of the fire experts observed that gas is inflammable compressed air which needs only a spark to catch fire.

That is why all the lighting system and cable used in and around the rig has to be fire resistant.

About the height of the flame, the experts observed that in the initial stage of the blowout gas was coming out in high pressure through five holes around the drilling rig.

The height of the flame increased as oxygen was available. As the gas was burnt out and pressures decreased the flames also reduced.

### KR Narayan

From Page 1  
group in the national parliament. The presidential elections are due next month.

The soft-spoken Narayanan, 75, who began his career as an English lecturer before switching to journalism, joined the respected Indian foreign service in 1949 before taking to politics in 1984.

He will be the first member of the so-called Hindu "untouchable" community to hold the post of the president, India's head of state and commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces.

The "untouchables," now known as Dalits or "oppressed," were once widely despised by Hindu upper castes and ostracised due to their low standing in the caste-ridden Hindu society.

### Riyadh to fund

From Page 1  
back. But, he said, the Saudi authorities had assured him of showing sympathetic attitude towards Bangladeshis nationals.

While exchanging views of international issues, they mainly focused on the present Middle East situation and expressed concern over the slow process towards establishing a peace in the region, the PM said.

The two ministers also took up the activities of the Al-Quds Committee of which Bangladesh is a member. The committee, formed in 1981 in the Taif OIC summit, is responsible for working out strategy to liberate the Israeli occupied Arab territories.

Referring to the discussion on activities of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) with his Saudi counterpart, Azad said, "Our common stand is the welfare of the Muslim Ummah."

"But, the newly born economic bloc (D-8) comprising eight Muslim countries, is in no way a parallel to the OIC," the Foreign Minister told a questioner.

### Local experts

From Page 1  
river were situated in high pressure geographic zone and when Occidental began drilling, it was well aware of this fact.

"If they (Occidental's operators and government's representatives) were careful, they must have had received indications of entering in the high pressure zone of the well. That would have helped them to stop proceeding with drilling and avert the explosion," he noted.

He alleged that both Occidental and the Joint Review Committee (JRC) consisting of representatives from the government and Occidental had long been violating the rules and procedures of operation under the Production Sharing Contract (PSC).

The Petrobangla expert contradicted his view saying that in order to take any precautionary measure, the flame must be stopped first.

"As a precautionary measure, they (Occidental) can drill a relief well in the same site. But to do that one must control the fire — otherwise it will be impossible to implement any plan there," he noted.