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BNP leader and Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury addressing a public meeting in front of the party's central office yesterday. — Star photo

BNP: Withdraw taxes

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and gas valued Tk 17 crore is being destroyed every hour. "This unprecedented loss is solely due to government's negligence," he added.

Mannan Bhuiyan demanded immediate formation of a parliamentary committee to probe into the incident whether it was 'conspiracy' or 'sabotage'.

Former Energy Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain said the fire was due to fault in government management and monitoring system.

Turning to budget, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said no essential item was exempted from tax. Even patients were not spared from tax burden in the proposed budget.

He said the miseries of commonman would aggravate because of the tax-laden budget.

The deputy opposition leader said earmarking only Tk 700 crore in the new budget was for a hoax to government officials and employees in the name of pay-scale.

"On the one hand, the government is offering wage hike

of the government servants and on the other, it has imposed new taxes to snatch the money," he said, adding this budget has been designed to "snatch everything" from the people.

Mannan Bhuiyan said Bangladesh would turn into a market of India completely if the budget is passed. He demanded of the government to immediately jettison its budget or face tough movement.

Quoting a statement of a political leader on budget, Bhuiyan said not even the beggar exempted from tax as the government imposed surcharge on salt and cloth.

Referring to submission of income return by the telephone holders, he said telephone is not a luxurious item, it is now very much essential for majority people. Telephone cannot be a criterion for income tax, he said and demanded withdrawal of the new measure on phone.

The BNP secretary general blasted at further reduction in security personnel from the residence of Begum Khaleda Zia and demanded immediate reinstatement of previous security.

Budget discussion begins

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Deputy Minister for Shipping Dhirendra Deb Nath Shambhu praised some proposals that included setting up of Employment Bank for the unemployed youths and introduction of allowance for aging people.

Terming the proposed measures epoch making steps, the Deputy Minister said in his 20 minutes speech: "The proposal of Employment Bank has already generated hope among three crore unemployed youths of the country, while the old-age pension will substantially help unburden the miseries of our aging population."

He also defended the proposal for imposing higher rate of tax in certain areas arguing that it would help create a 'tax giving culture' among the people and thus contribute to raise the rate of taxes.

Jatiya Party MP. Wahiduzzaman Sarker, praised the proposals for introducing old-age pension and creation of Employment Bank. But he criticised the budget for increasing the rate of taxes.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury adjourned the House at 10:00 pm to resume again at 2:00 pm today.

Dacoity at city house

Armed miscreants looted cash and ornaments worth over Tk 1 lakh from a house at Siddeswari in the city Tuesday night, reports UNB.

Police said two men stormed the house on the first floor of Rashida Begum at 14, Siddeswari Road when she was at a neighbour's house at about 9 pm.

She went out locking the house leaving a son and a dumb maid inside. On her return, she found the lock broken and the door closed from inside.

Two youngmen came out as she knocked at the door. They asked her not to shout and said they are only taking away cash and ornaments keeping her son and maid servant a bed sheet.

Rashida's husband, Syed Mohammad Shahjahan, lives in USA and elder son studies in India.

A case was filed with Ramna Thana. None was arrested.

2 female students

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because they had mistakenly left the identity cards inside the dormitory before leaving for home for summer vacation.

The superintendent kept the two sisters outside the hall gate throughout the night even though they showed the written permission of the proctor.

A showcase notice was served to the hall super. Mahmuda Khatun asking her to give reply in 7 days.

New edn policy soon : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that formulation of a national education policy on the basis of Kudrat-e-Khuda Commission report will be completed soon, reports BSS.

Speaking at the prize giving ceremony on the concluding day of the Primary Education Week '97 at the Osmany Memorial Hall yesterday she said the new policy, which is being formulated, would be the state guidelines in the field of education.

Education Minister ASHK Sadeque, Deputy Minister for Primary and Mass Education Prof Jinnat Nessa Talukdar and Secretary, Primary and Mass Education Division Dr Saadat Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

The Prime Minister said that highest allocation of Tk 3,992.70 crore has been made for the education sector in the proposed national budget for 1997-98. The allocation is 3.56 per cent higher than that of the previous year, she said.

She further said that there is proposal for three experimental arrangements in the proposed 1997-98 budget for attaining higher excellence in the field of education. The proposal includes giving grants to the schools set up by local people and non-government organisations (NGOs), she said, adding allocation of Taka 25 crore has also been proposed in this sector.

The Prime Minister later gave awards and certificates to 119 students, teachers, schools, mass education officials and organisations for their contribution to promotion of education in the country.

7 to die for killing one in Kushtia

BHERAMARA, June 18: District and Sessions Judge, Kushtia, today sentenced seven persons to death in the sensational Bulu murder case, reports BSS.

District and Sessions Judge Ayeenul Huq pronounced the 32-page judgement before a crowded court ordering the seven accused persons to be hanged till death.

The persons are: Abu Taleb, Shafiqul Islam Majnu, Amir Mastan, Mokbul Hossain, Toz Ali and Abdul Jalil. Of them, the first three are in custody while the rest four are absconding.

The prosecution case, in brief, is that Mahabubul Alam alias Bulu Biswas, ex-chairman of Ambaria Union under Mirpur police station in Kushtia district, was shot dead in his bedroom on April 9, 1991, while he was taking rest after iftar.

After hearings from both the prosecution and the defence, the judge found the accused persons guilty and ordered capital punishment.

Occidental

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night said they had enough time to run to the exit gate before something ignited the gas.

The drill man and the tool man shut off the lights to prevent an ignition as the gas gushed out of the ground. The drill man also activated the diverter to send excess fluid down a pipe to a pit away from people and equipment, Coyner said.

Coyner also said the area was still dangerous because the wind could shift the flames, other pockets of gas could erupt and shrapnel could fly through the air.

During a walk through the forest he said, he found bricks thrown 300 meters away by the blast and a six hundred pound chunk of pipe tossed by the velocity.

Coyner said this was the first well Occidental drilled in the region and refuted allegations that the company had broken any rules.

The only thing unexpected was the sheer volume of gas, he said.

Humayun Zahir murder : 4 witnesses examined

By Court Correspondent

Four witnesses were examined yesterday at the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's court in the Humayun Zahir murder case.

Humayun Zahir, a prominent businessman, was shot dead at his Dhanmondi residence in the city on April 8, 1993.

His business partner, ex-Awami League MP Aktheruzzaman Babu is one of the accused in the case.

The witnesses are Sharif Zahir son of Humayun Zahir, M A Kuddus, ex-chairman of Janata Insurance Company, its auditor Moniruzzaman Biswas and Anwar Hossain.

But Judge Kazl Golam Rassol, who took note of the examination of the prosecution witnesses, asked Public Prosecutor (PP) Altaf Hossain and defence counsel Serajul Huq to take care of the proceedings for the sake of fair trial.

Earlier Mohammad Borhanuddin, the lawyer hired by Zahir's family to help the prosecution, objected the way examination in chief was being conducted by the PP.

Aktheruzzaman Babu is currently detained at a cabin of the Suhrawardy Hospital where he was admitted after his ball was cancelled by the High Court which asked him to surrender before the Third Additional Sessions' Judge, Dhaka on July 15 last year.

The officer-in-charge alleged that these 40 persons had attacked guards inside the Barisal district jail on December 19, 1996 with deadly weapons and sticks. About 100 people were injured in this revolt.

The jailor A Mannan Khan filed case against the prisoners involved in this revolt on December 20, 1996, the source said.

Barisal jail revolt

40 prisoners chargesheeted

BARISAL, June 18: Kotwali thana police submitted chargesheet against 40 prisoners in connection with the Barisal jail revolt case to the Sadar thana magistrate on Tuesday, reports BSS.

According to police source, Kotwali thana officer-in-charge framed the chargesheet after verifying the cases lodged against them.

The officer-in-charge alleged that these 40 persons had attacked guards inside the Barisal district jail on December 19, 1996 with deadly weapons and sticks. About 100 people were injured in this revolt.

The jailor A Mannan Khan filed case against the prisoners involved in this revolt on December 20, 1996, the source said.

The minister said that in many cases bank loans were sanctioned under 'partisan influence and out of sympathy'.

Kibria said the present government took up some steps to realise the default loans including formation of a task force, legal reforms, amendment to Bank Company Act, 1991 and enacting the Bankruptcy Act, 1997.

The minister told the House that the amount of default loans in the banking sector was Tk. 14,159.64 crore till March last year and the amount was reduced by Tk. 2002.98 crore during the period between January 1 and April 30 this year.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria disclosed this yesterday in response to two separate questions by ruling party MPs, Nurul Islam Nahid and Sheikh Md Nurul Haq in the Jatiya Sangsad.

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The minister told the House that the amount of default loans stood at Tk 12,652.76 crore on April 30 this year. He explained that the huge amount of default loans caused liquidity crisis in the banking sector and posed hurdles in loan recycling. As a result, fall of in-

vestment in trade and commerce has led to decrease in total production and increase in unemployment thereby leaving a negative impact on the economy, he said.

Responding to another query by BNP MP Md Fazul Aziz the minister told the House that letters of intent were given to five institutions to operate merchant banks while giving certificates of registration to another 14 applicants for the same purpose was now under process.

UNB adds: Kibria said the government has taken measures to raise the forex reserve, currently at 1.6 billion US dollars.

The balance of foreign ex-

change reserve stood at 1,622.51 million US dollars, equivalent to Tk 7,066.03 crore, on May 27, he told Mohammad Selim of Awami League.

The closing balance of for-

ign reserve in fiscal 1995-96

was 2,038.56 million US dol-

lars, equivalent to Tk 8,490.59 crore, he said.

Kibria said four steps have

been taken to increase the for-

ign reserve.

They include removal of

the problems of exporters to

step up export activities, in-

creasing remittances from ex-

patriate Bangladeshis and netting

foreign investment.

In response to a question by BNP legislator Md Shahajahan, the finance minister said that during the first six months of the 1996-97 fiscal, Tk. 607.41 crore and Tk 3040.90 crore were sanctioned as term loan and working capital loan respecti-

vely in the industrial sector.

Answering to a query from Treasury Bench deputy Abdul Kalam Azad, the minister said the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) and other financial institutions waived Tk 321.77 crore interest against 50,720 loan cases during the pe-

riod between March 1, 1996 and April 30, 1997.

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