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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban yesterday. —PID photo

Magurchhara gasfield fire Srimangal tea gardens facing huge losses

Tea gardens in Srimangal are facing huge financial loss as production of two lakh kg green leaf and 46,000 kg made tea are being hampered daily due to Magurchhara gasfield fire...

Following the gas fire, tea production in Doloi, Madanmohon, Kurma, Champara, Arinagar, Nurjahan, Madhobpur, Chattapur, Shamsnagar, Sri Govindapur and Parakhola gardens stopped totally due to gas supply disruption.

These tea gardens owned by Bangladesh Tea and Land Company Limited, Bangladesh Tea Company, Dancan and other private organisations are now continuing the production in the nearby 12 tea factories.

The actual loss is more than that as many things, including damage of lands and saplings and loss of time needed for plant maturity, would have to be considered while measuring the total loss...

Fulbari Tea Garden, the worst affected garden, has lost tea plants along with the lands of some 30 hectares, of which 30 per cent was damaged totally and 70 per cent either severely or moderately.

A tea garden has to spend Tk 1.10 lakh for planting tea saplings on only one hectare of land which needs at least 2-3 years for plant maturity...

Proceedings produced in the court yesterday. They are: Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman, Lt Col (relieved) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, former minister of state for information...

The 15 others accused in the case are being tried in absentia and were represented by state defence.

Some of the defence lawyers suggested disposal of their petitions. The prosecution opposed this as, according to them, it might create complications.

The judge decided not to resume the proceedings till the High Court gives a decision on the criminal revision petition filed by Zobaidda Rashid, wife of absconding accused Col (dismissed) Khandaker Abdur Rashid.

Judgement perusal of record and considering relevant documents in the sensational murder case. Special Public Prosecutor Adv Sirajul Haq also submitted to the court on behalf of the state.

Gold haul to Malaysia to arrest the four absconding persons but failed due to legal complications there, the investigation officer said.

The Customs surveillance team at the ZIA seized 120 kilograms of smuggled gold worth about Taka nearly eight crore last year.

Pay scale erment transports on a full-time basis will get Tk 8,000 per month as car allowance. Besides, they could get Tk 400,000 as soft terms loans to buy cars.

The prime minister thanked the Planning Commission for preparing the preliminary draft of the fifth five-year plan within a short span of five months.

PM apprises President of D-8 launching

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon.

The Prime Minister apprised the President of the formation of the Developing-8 in Istanbul for fostering economic cooperation among the eight partner countries.

Hasina also informed the President of her forthcoming visit to Japan from July 1-6. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr SA Samad was present on the occasion.

President hosts dinner for SC, HC judges

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a dinner for the judges of the Supreme Court Appellate and High Court divisions at Bangabhaban last night.

Among others, Chief Justice ATM Afzal attended the dinner. While talking to them, the President enquired about the working of the courts and position of the long pending cases.

Earlier, President Shahabuddin welcomed the guests and exchanged pleasantries with them.

Body to probe corruption in Ctg Edn Board

CHITTAGONG, June 19: The Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Chittagong has formed a three member high powered inquiry committee to probe the alleged corruption and irregularities in the board, reports BSS.

According to a press release, signed by secretary of the board, the authority has constituted the inquiry committee following a meeting of the leaders of five teachers organisations with the chairman of the board.

The leaders of the teachers organisations in the meeting charged the Chittagong Education Board with corruptions and anomalies particularly in the affairs of conducting examinations.

While contacted, chairman of the Board, Prof Ahsanullah told BSS that the committee members are Principal Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Principal of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute Fariduddin Ahmed and Deputy Director of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Department, Chittagong region Abdur Razzak.

Fifth plan Magurchhara

The draft plan envisages an average annual growth rate of over 7 per cent and over 22 per cent of the total national income would be invested to attain this target.

Dr Alamgir also presented to the prime minister the foreword written by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself on the first five-year plan of independent Bangladesh and prepared in November, 1973, under the guidance and directive of Bangabandhu.

IPSA declared university Reduce dependence on food import: PM

GAZIPUR, June 19: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said her government has attached top priority to agriculture to reduce dependence on food import, report agencies.

"It is not at all desirable for an independent and sovereign nation to depend on others for food," she said at the 2nd convocation ceremony of the Institute of Postgraduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) here.

The demand for food will increase by 50 per cent during the first 10 years of the 21st century. The variety of food required by the people will also change simultaneously with the economic growth.

The Prime Minister said it is now a great challenge to feed the ever-increasing population of the country. Some 102 students were conferred with MS and five others with PhD degrees by the IPSA. Wearing a convocation gown, the Prime Minister led the convocation procession and handed over certificates to the degree holders.

The Prime Minister also declared the IPSA a university and instructed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to implement her announcement.

Established in 1983, IPSA has been offering modern academic programmes and conducting fundamental and applied research and out-reach activities in agriculture science at the highest level.

Japan and the United States are providing financial and technical assistance to IPSA. The Prime Minister said the government has already formed a national commission for agriculture considering the importance of the sector.

She said the production of foodgrains increased to 20 million metric tons for the first time this year for pragmatic steps taken by the government. "We have to increase the yield of crops per unit area," she said, adding that sustainable environment-friendly agricultural technology should be innovated.

Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, agriculture scientist Dr S M Hasanuzzaman and Rector of the institute Dr AM Ashraf Kamal also spoke at the function.

32 hurt as BCL factions clash in Gaibandha

GAIBANDHA, June 19: At least thirty-two persons were injured in a series of clashes between two factions of the Bangladesh Chhatra League at Gobindaganj yesterday evening.

Police lobbed tear gas shells and made baton charges to disperse the students. According to police, the clash started when a faction of BCL(S-P) brought out a protest procession which was resisted by the other faction. Two students — Muktadir Rahman Rafi and Shameem Reza Manju — who received severe injuries were removed to the Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, one group raided the local office of the Awami League and ransacked its furniture and windows. Chase and counter chase started. Police again resorted to lathi charge and lobbed several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the crowd. Thirty persons received injuries.

22 new hospitals to be set up in '97-98, JS told

By Staff Correspondent Twenty-two new hospitals will be set up in the country during the 1997-98 financial year, Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf said in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Responding to some questions, the planned new hospitals will include a health science institute and 500-bed hospital, dental college with a 200-bed hospital, a 100-bed burn unit, a national asthma centre and an eye hospital (at a new site) — all in Dhaka. In addition, six asthma centres will be set up in the six most accident-prone areas of the country, a 250-bed specialised hospital will be set up in Khulna, and nine hospitals will be set up at remote areas with 10-bed capacity each.

Besides, the number of beds in 23 thana health complexes (THCs) will be raised from 31 to 50 each, beds in five district hospitals from 50 to 100 each and beds in four medical college hospitals from 250 to 500 each in the next fiscal.

Salahuddin Yusuf said that during the period between 1991 and 1996, 18 hospitals with 100 to 250 bed capacity, one 20-bed hospital and 31 THCs with 31-bed capacity each were built. Responding to another query, the minister said that since January 1, 1991 none died of cholera but, 17,061 died of diarrhoea over the same period. He said that 2,46,918 people were attacked, and 508 of them died of diarrhoea during the period between January 1, 1997 to June 10 last.

Jatiya Sangsad snippets

Then what will happen to those belonging to the Jatiya Party Jamaat-e-Islami and JSD (Rab)? Won't they be allowed to go through that tube? asked a smiling Deputy Speaker. "Certainly, certainly, people of all categories will get the opportunity," replied the BNP MP.

Speaking on bumper production of mango in his area, BNP lawmaker from Chapainawabganj Harun-ur-Rashid invited the Deputy Speaker to have the seasonal fruit. Responding to this, Abdul Hamid said "You people only extend such invitation but never feed me."

The Deputy Speaker interrupted Shamsul Alam Pramanik of BNP as he was speaking something not contained in his notice on introduction of tube railway in the capital city. Following suggestion from the Chair to go by his notice, Pramanik commented, "Once such a railway is constructed, it will be used not only by the BNP men but also by those from the Awami League."

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The trader who was electrocuted at Maghbazar in the city yesterday. —Star photo

JS budget discussion

Former BNP minister Abdul Mannan said statistics shown in the proposed budget was not correct. He said GDP growth was due to bumper harvest in agriculture.

Termining the surcharge double taxation, Mannan said it would destroy the local industries. Ex-BNP minister Abdul Alim described the budget as the worst in this century and said the finance minister lost confidence in his own budget as SAMS Kibria himself agreed to revise some budgetary measures even before any demand has raised by the opposition.

Nurul Islam Nahid (AL) lauded SAMS Kibria for presenting such a unique budget which he said will increase investment and economic growth upto 7 per cent in coming fiscal.

Khalequzzaman (BNP) likened the budget to "the weeping of a helpless widow" and said it would only increase the nation's dependence and people's plight.

In his speech, marked with pungent criticism and humour, Khalequzzaman said the budget deficit of Tk 8120 crore would go up at the end of the fiscal year if the finance minister fails to manage revenue earning and revenue expenditure.

Ruling party member Eng Mosharrarf Hossain supported the expansion of tax-base, saying it will bring a large number of people into the tax-net, helping the country in reducing dependency on donors.

AL rally

Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to address the rally. Chaired by AL general secretary Zillur Rahman, the meeting decided to take all necessary preparations to make the rally a success and ensure participation of people from districts outside Dhaka.

A party press release said, the meeting was attended by leaders of its front organisations, city unit, Dhaka district unit, and units of 10 other adjoining districts. Meanwhile, a meeting of the Dhaka city unit of AL was also held last night at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue. The meeting chaired by city unit president Mohammad Hanif, discussed about preparations for the June 23 rally.

12 hurt as rival ghat workers clash anew in Khulna

Both sides used fire arms and hand bombs. According to witnesses, four shops were looted and ransacked during the clashes which continued from 7 to 8:30 pm creating panic in the area. Passenger launches at the JMT terminal were also hit by bombs and bullets. The two rival groups also clashed yesterday.

Nuruzzaman

gaon on June 13 without prior permission. Later, they were brought on police remand for two days and produced before the court on June 16. The court granted them bail, but police rushed Sharif to National Hospital where doctors declared him dead. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate M Habbur Rahman is also investigating the death.

Mob beating

Another press release issued from the Police Headquarters last night said police forces across the country have been instructed to take necessary steps to stop child-lifting. Taking law in one's own hand is a punishable offence, it said. A non-government organisation, Centre for Women and Children Studies, claims that over last five years at least 13,220 children were smuggled out of the country, of whom 4,700 were rescued.

One electrocuted at Maghbazar

One person was electrocuted at Maghbazar in the city when a live wire snapped from an electric pole and fell on him during the storm last night. The victim was identified as Nurul Islam, 35, a trader. The doctors declared him dead when he was rushed to a nearby clinic.

Father of two children, Nurul Islam hailed from Sonargoon under Narayanganj district.

VAT protested Shop owners call token strike on Monday

The Bangladesh Shop Owners Association has called a token strike on Monday demanding withdrawal of the Value Added Tax (VAT) on electronic goods.

The shop owners will keep their shutters down for one hour from noon and stage a sit-in on the roads in front of their business establishments, a press release of the Association said yesterday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the association at its Baitul Mokarram office. The meeting was chaired by the Association President Amir Hossain Khan and attended by representatives of different association leaders.

Speakers at the meeting criticised the new budget proposal for expanding the VAT network up to the retail level. They suggested that the government should impose one or two per cent VAT on those items at import or manufacturing level.

Manpower recruitment Permission to Rabbi In'l cancelled

Government has cancelled its permission to a local agency to recruit workers for a company in Malaysia as the papers it submitted were proved to be fake, said an official handout yesterday, reports UNB.

The Labour and Manpower Ministry approved the recruitment proposal of Messrs Rabbi International (Recruiting Licence No 258) on March 31.

On April 2, an advertisement was published in a Bangla newspaper saying the agency would recruit 100 semi-skilled construction workers for Metrobit Engineering SDN BHD in the Malaysian province of Sarawak.

Anyone having made advanced payment to the agency after the publication of the advertisement has been advised to contact the director general of the Manpower and Employment Bureau or the joint secretary (manpower) of the ministry within 15 days.

Arvind Dave to be made RAW chief

NEW DELHI, June 19: Arvind Dave, one of the senior most IPS officers, will be the new chief of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the external arm of India's intelligence, official sources said today, reports PTI.

A 1962 batch officer from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, Dave is at present the second-in-command in RAW. Dave, who has also served at the Indian embassy in Washington, will succeed Ranjan Roy, who is retiring this month.

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