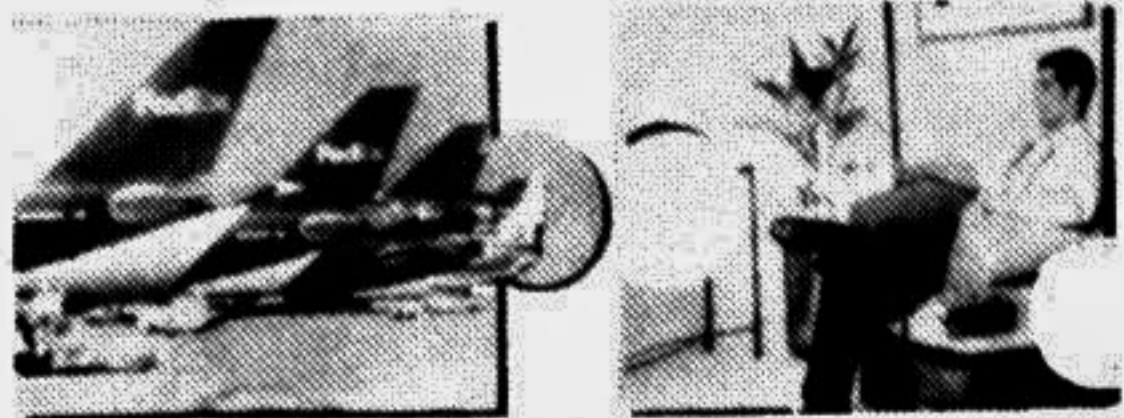
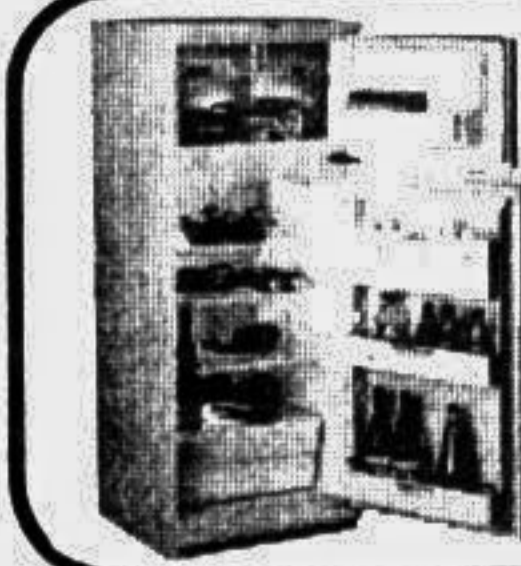


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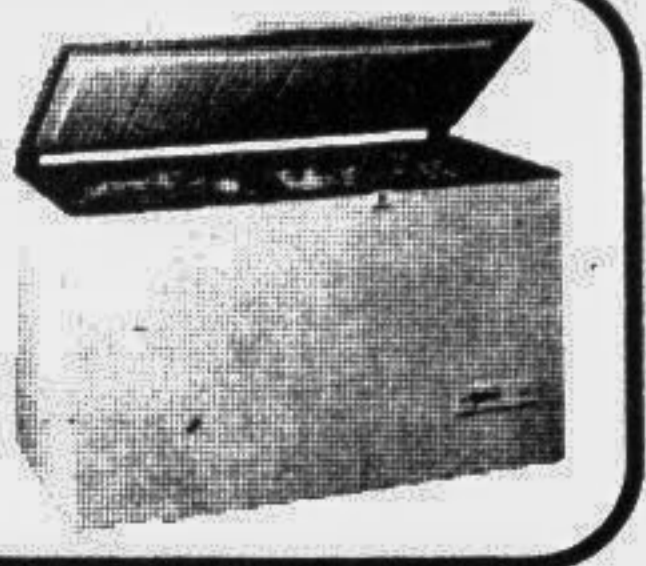


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# Down to Earth

## City's Vanishing Playgrounds

By A S M Nurunnabi

One of the deplorable aspects of the fast urbanization of Dhaka is the increasing depletion of playgrounds. Several playgrounds and city parks, once flourishing, have already 'vanished'. At present, there are reportedly 32 parks and limited open spaces in isolated pockets in the city.

Because of absence of sufficient open spaces in most areas of the city, children are often seen playing in the open streets. This obviously entails hazards, but children, being what they are, hardly listen to the counsel of caution. School children also suffer greatly on account of the dearth of playgrounds.

In the city, a good number of kindergarten schools have come up, but most of them are in such limited space that provision of playground for the students is out of question. The same is true in respect of other educational institutions. This constraint makes it impossible to provide for the need for the children's outdoor games for their physical and mental developments.

The proliferation of high-rise buildings in the city has accentuated the problems of children residing in the apartments of those buildings. In most cases — because of the absence of playing area within the periphery of the compounds of those buildings — the children

lead a cooped-up life within the four walls of those apartments. In the forest of such tall buildings, we find provisions for such facilities as security arrangements, car parking space, standby electric generator, etc., but some open space for children's playing activities.

In some of the municipal wards, the city corporation maintains some small parks for children. Most of these parks are in a state of dereliction. The equipment for the children's games, such as slides, see-saws, swings which were initially installed have broken down and are no longer in use. These places are now mostly filled with weeds and litter, and they have become haunts of undesirable elements.

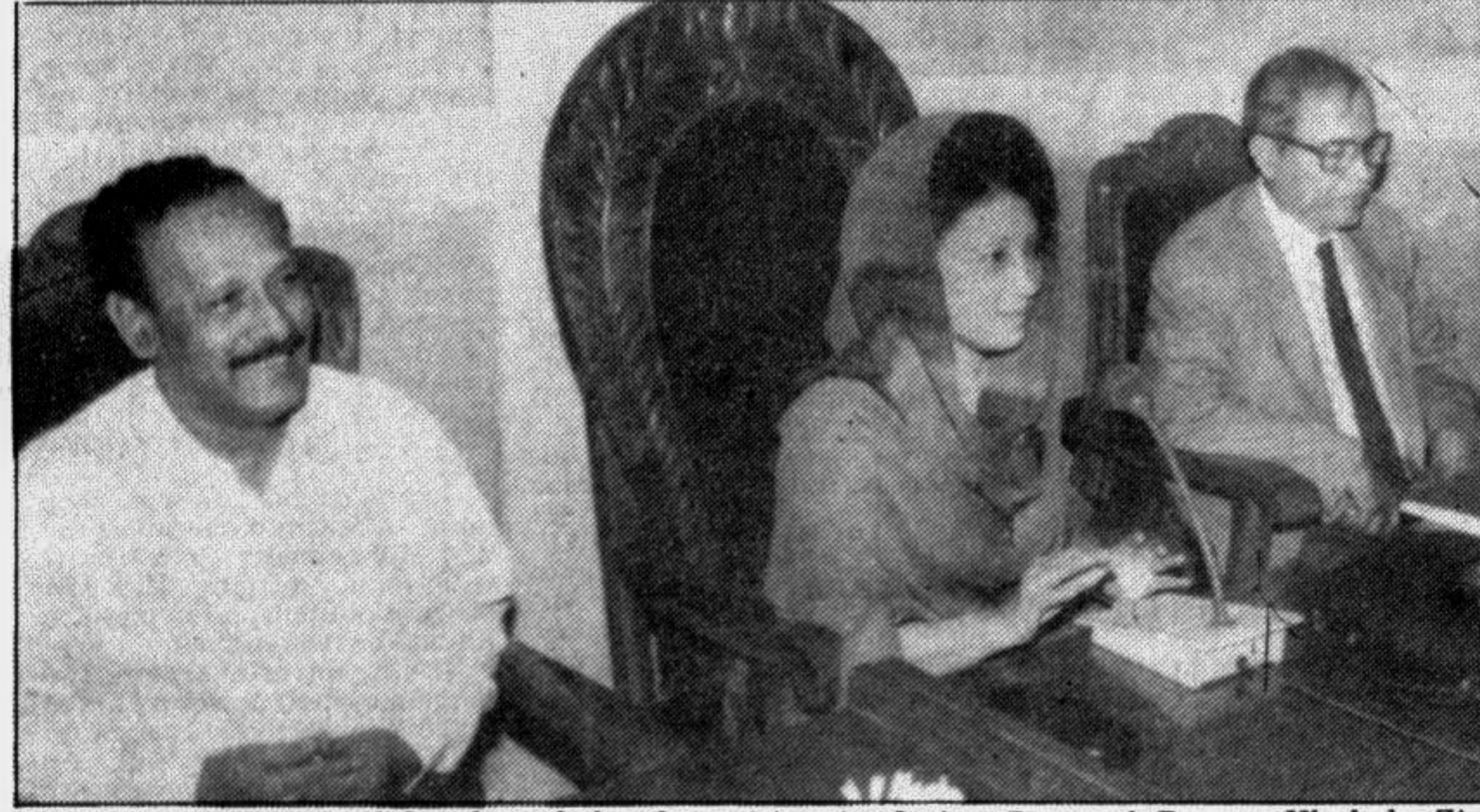
The ominous aspect of the current picture is that the few parks, playgrounds and open spaces which the city still retains are being inexorably swallowed up by different authorities and unauthorised projects. According to observers, any vacant land still in existence can be said to be enduring precariously before being acquired for construction of market or any other environmental blight. The process is said to be alarming.

Lately, there have been some disquieting developments in this context. A major casualty in the apparently never-ending

process of constructing markets is reportedly the playground at Shaheed Park at Mohammadpur. According to the report, a market is going to be sited on the park. The market is being built by none other than the Dhaka City Corporation. It is further gathered that the Corporation is planning 14 or 15 such markets in the city. In other words, it means that an equal number of parks and playgrounds are going to disappear in the process.

There is another disturbing example. It has been reported that a public park at Gulshan Section I, has been turned into a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sweepers' colony housing around 400 families in makeshift dwellings. Gulshan residents around the park complained of all kinds of undesirable activities by anti-social elements.

In the opinion of knowledgeable observers, if this process of swallowing up playgrounds and open spaces continues just because some agencies need to enhance their earnings, the future of the city has to be viewed in lurid light. A critic has bitterly observed that Dhaka which we fondly call a metropolis is becoming a development wasteland where the basic rules of urbanisation and city planning are abandoned.



BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia speaking at a BNP Parliamentary Party meeting at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday. — Star photo

### Rieper's header

From Page 1  
fense, fired well wide from close range.

The Saudi defence failed to clear a free kick a minute later and Rieper almost scrambled the ball in from four meters out. The Saudi strikeforce made little impression in the opening 40 minutes of the game but Danish keeper Schmeichel made a diving, fingertip save from a free kick by Saeed Owairan just before the break, although the ball appeared to be going inches wide of the post.

Another chance dropped to Jorgensen 13 minutes into the second half when the Saudis were caught out by a leftwing cross. The ball ran through to the striker who got in a left-foot shot which keeper Mohammed Al Deayea managed to block.

But the Saudi goalkeeper was beaten in the 68th minute after punching out a cross. The ball was fed in to Jorgensen, who laid it off to Brian Laudrup with the Saudi defence trying to catch the Danes offside.

Laudrup floated in a cross from the right and Rieper climbed above a defender to head home from eight metres.

Michael Schjonberg forced Al Deayea to make a scrambling, diving save and then substitute Per Frandsen fired across the face of the goal as the Danes pressed for a second other goal.

### Indian proposal

From Page 1  
"We note that our view that the bilateral dialogue process should proceed ahead for mutual benefit is finding acceptance in Pakistan.

"We hope they will continue on this path."  
Foreign Ministry spokesman K C Singh said: "Pakistan has accepted the part of bilateral dialogue. We have made an official invitation and it is for Pakistan to respond."

But a Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman today said India's proposals for resuming talks were 'not acceptable' and 'totally unrealistic' and reflected a negative approach by India.

India had not responded 'positively' to an offer made by Pakistan yesterday that talk should be resumed on the basis agreed upon by the two countries on June 23 last year, he said.

### BNP standing body meets today

A meeting of the BNP Standing Committee will be held at 29 Minto Road, official residence of the Leader of the Opposition, at 7:30 pm today, reports UNB. All concerned have been requested to attend the meeting.

### BNP: Budget

From Page 1  
Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia the BNPP meeting started at 8:10 pm at the opposition's conference room at the Sangsad Bhavan and ended at 10:40 pm.

The BNP lawmakers criticised the government for the present high rate of inflation and increased burden of per capita foreign debt. They also criticised expansion of the VAT net, imposition of fresh taxes and other "anti-people acts," Delwar said.

"We'll discuss all nitty-gritty of the proposed budget on the floor of the House," he said. The meeting also condemned the "government-sponsored attacks" on the opposition long-marchers and blamed the authorities for the "worsening power, water and gas supply situation."

### UNGA chief

From Page 1  
The Home Minister is now in New York to attend the UN Special Session on World Drug Problem at the United Nations. During the meeting, Rafiq welcomed the efforts of Ukraine to abolish nuclear weapons. He informed the UNGA President that Bangladesh has already signed the Landmine Convention on May 7, 1998. The two leaders also discussed wide-ranging bilateral and multilateral issues, including UN reforms.

## Tangail-Joydevpur rd

From Page 1  
places. The road has remained neglected ever since a direct road to Mymensingh was built through Bhaluka and Trishal, cutting off the Mymensingh road through Tangail.

A top official of the Roads and Highways Department said, after construction of the new Mymensingh road there has never been any initiative to repair the Dhaka-Tangail road because it only led to a 'small district town'. The government has however decided to keep the Aricha ferry services running in view of the poor condition of the Dhaka-Tangail road.

Officials also fear that expected earnings from toll-collection on the Bangabandhu bridge are also going to be effected if road users opt for Aricha to avoid congestion.

R&H engineers said, the moment work on the Bangabandhu bridge started, the government should have thought about the road. One top engineer blamed the authorities for lack of foresightedness. "Neither the authorities concerned nor the political leadership thought about the most vital component of the bridge," he said.

R&H sources said the government has just approved a Tk 300 crore project to 'rehabilitate the road' which may take up to three years to be completed. They said four by-pass roads will be built at Mirzapur, Korotia, Tangail and Kaliakoir on an urgent basis.

"We are also building a temporary bridge beside every single-lane bridge to ease congestion. The bridges will be completed soon," said an engineer of the R&H Department.

"We are not telling people to use the Aricha ferries but instead, we are telling them that ferry services at Aricha, Nagarbari and Dauladdia would continue in full swing," replied the official when asked whether any type of vehicles would be asked to use the Aricha road instead of the Bangabandhu

## Police-outlaws gunfight in Khulna: 8 held

KHULNA, June 12: Police arrested eight members of an outlawed party and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession in Damodar area under Phulata thana after a gunfight last night, reports BSS.

Five members of a police team, who acting on a tip-off conducted a raid on a house, were also injured during the gunfight.

The arrested are: Pervaz Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Rashel Khan, Shaiful Islam, Shaheen Molla, Ibrahim Molla, Nazrul Islam and Nasir Ahmed.

## Sangu gas

From Page 1  
installed a metric measuring unit which, Petrobangla said, was in violation of the contract it had under the production sharing system.

Cairn has now agreed to install a measuring unit which logs the flow of gas in cubic feet instead of the metric system. Cairn said the 'old system' has become 'obsolete'. Petrobangla said it would make it difficult for them to measure the flow and pay to the Cairn as 'conversion' would make some difference.

"Sangu is expected to deliver 20 per cent of Bangladesh's gas production. Completion at such speed in world terms shows the effectiveness of our alliance policy. We look forward to continued growth in Bangladesh," Bill Gammel said in a statement yesterday.

Cairn, which discovered the field, holds 56.25 per cent of the stakes, the rest is held by US company Halliburton (25 per cent) and Dutch company Holland Sea-Search, a subsidiary of Shell (18.75 per cent).

In a press release issued in Dhaka, Cairn said, "Sangu is the first project to develop and supply gas from the Bay of Bengal into the domestic market of Bangladesh. It is only eighteen months since the Sangu field development was approved by the Bangladesh authorities and just over two years since the discovery by Cairn of the Sangu field. Cairn and its co-venturers were able to remain on schedule with the field development notwithstanding the problems caused by the difficult operating conditions."

## G-8 stops loans

From Page 1  
ploys nuclear weapons on missiles.

By inviting leading countries from all parts of the world, the United States and its allies were hoping to amplify the appeal and discourage others from following the lead of India and Pakistan.

India and Pakistan said after setting off nuclear devices last month that they had no plans for more tests.

## Soccer fans

From Page 1  
attacked the sub-stations at 11 pm and damaged some furniture. A security guard of Pahartali sub-station was also injured.

They also damaged a number of vehicles on Dhaka-Chittagong highway, disrupting traffic movement for two hours. Security measures have been stepped up in all 11 sub-stations by deploying police and BDR.



Bulgarian Ivaylo Iordanov (R) is challenged by Paraguayan Miguel Benitez at the 'Stade de la Mosson' in Montpellier during their World Cup Group D first round match yesterday. The match ended in a goalless draw. (See story on page 13) — AFP photo

## Increase in defence budget

From Page 1  
signed the CHT treaty, it had argued that the treaty would reduce military expenditure. Kibria said Britain does not have any tension or conflict with its neighbours but yet it modernises its military establishment.

The budget envisages a big 13.38 per cent jump in defence expenditure over this year's original outlay. If defence related expenditures are taken into account, this goes up by 18 per cent.

Explaining the highlights of the budget, Kibria said it aimed at protecting the local industries side by side maintaining the principle of free-market economy.

He said the agri-industries have been given a booster which will impact the agriculture as well.

He said the budget also takes into account the backward section of the society, the women, children and the disabled, by forming the social welfare fund. Talking about the special measures for sick industries, he said such measures will not be taken in the future anymore.

"Sickness must be done away with from the industrial culture," said the finance minister. "It cropped up because of politically induced loan sanctioning and the mismanagement of the banks."

industrial raw materials has been proposed in the budget which had never been done before.

"I have given special facilities to many industries like computer, leather, ready-made garments," he said. "I hope they will come up to take the challenge to perform well."

He said massive reforms have been suggested in the tax system to simplify it and to stop harassment of tax payers.

He also said the budget envisages a modern transport system for a "modern industrialised economy."

Talking about inflation, he said, the government is keeping constant watch on it. "A five per cent inflation is allowable for non-inflationary growth."

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razak, Agriculture and Food Minister Motia Chowdhury, State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed also spoke on the occasion.

The finance minister's attention was drawn to his budget speech in which he said the drive against loan defaulters has been intensified. But in reality, a defaulting group, Beximco, was still enjoying high-level patronisation.

In reply, the minister advised the journalists to keep on

writing on the default issue and watch what the government does.

Kibria said the VAT net has been expanded to some items normally used by the well-off section of the society.

Replying to a question, he said, the overall deficit remained under control during the last couple of years compared to records of previous financial years.

The budget deficit was 7.2 per cent of GDP in 1990-91, and ranged between 5.9 per cent and 6.8 per cent till 1994-95. "We have brought it down to around five per cent," he observed.

About subsidy for the agriculture sector he said, although direct subsidy is not a good practice and should not be made permanent, Tk 129 cr has been earmarked for subsidy in the sector in the proposed budget.

Addressing the press conference Tofael Ahmed said the incentive given to the leather sector is aimed at making it as much promising as the garments sector.

"We are also giving top priority to agri-industries and anybody willing to invest here would receive government help," he said.

Motia Chowdhury said the government is aiming at modernising the agriculture sector. She said the price support given to agriculture is one of the highest in South Asia. It is aimed at welfare of the farmers.

## Transport strike in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent  
RAJSHAHI, June 12: Movement of buses and trucks to and from Rajshahi remained suspended since this morning as District Motor Sramik Union called for an indefinite strike demanding security of transport workers.

The strike was called following the death of a transport worker in a bomb blast yesterday.

Rajshahi Motor Sramik Union blamed Rajshahi Truck Sramik Union for the bomb attack.

## Shazneen murder

From Page 1  
about 10 pm on April 23.

The CID in its prayer for remand said Humayun Kabir, security guard at Rahman's residence, in his confessional statement on May 28 named Parveen as an abettor in the killing. Humayun Kabir is another accused in the murder.

The prayer added that there were inconsistencies in Parveen's statements to the investigators.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, was the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Ltd.

Parveen had started working at Rahman's residence about a week before the murder. Parveen was brought there by her sister Minu who had been working as a maid at the house for about one and a half years, CID sources said.

Meanwhile, police interrogated another woman known as Kulsium's mother who had brought Minu to Rahman's residence.

The investigating team earlier questioned Fazul Huq, a cousin of supervisor Badal, an accused in the murder. Fazul Huq works as a security guard at an office in Dilkusha Commercial Area in the city.

CID sources said the investigators were collecting information and examining statements of the accused persons, concentrating on the confession of security guard Humayun Kabir.

In his confessional statement Humayun named six persons including himself who, he said, were directly involved in the murder. The five others were confessed killer Shahid, contractor Hasan, his supervisor Badal, carpenter Shoni Ram and maid Parveen.

## Rubi murder

From Page 1  
that two gatekeepers at the building were also 'directly involved' in the brutal killing.

Meanwhile, police quoting a chemical examination report said, there were stains of blood in Samad's lungi which he was wearing while stabbing Rubi.

Soon after the incident, Samad washed the lungi, according to police.

The detectives could not compare the finger prints on the kitchen knife with that of Samad as those were not clear.

A police official said last night charge sheet could not be submitted earlier as investigators found on Wednesday that Arif, one of the accused gatekeepers, had earlier given a false address of his village home.

Arif and three other accused — Samad, Emdad and Sharifa — were now in Dhaka Central Jail.

Samad and the two gatekeepers, Emdad and Arif, gave judicial statements confessing their involvement in the murder.

Besides, Sharifa, a former maid at Rubi's flat, gave a judicial statement that she had provoked Samad to kill the housewife.

## Gas pipeline

From Page 1  
Korean company Hyundai is the contractor for the bridge.

RGR Tappin of engineering consultant firm RPT, appointed by the BJMBa for the project, will visit the site today or tomorrow.

The 30-inch diameter 4.8 km long gas pipeline broke down and fell into the river when water was run through the pipe for testing its capacity to withstand internal pressure.

"Clamps were hung underneath the deck of the bridge and over 1200 segments were used to construct the deck. Provisions were made for hanging these clamps at the end of each of the segment," an expert said.

Another expert, however, said collapse of the gas pipeline "reflected gross negligence in designing and approval process." "It is an engineering failure."

Meanwhile, the government has strengthened security around the BJMB and deployed about 200 military personnel at the site, in addition to the armed Ansars and private security men, sources said.

## MCCI hails budget

From Page 1  
translates into an improvement in the deteriorating law and order.

"Also welcome are the measures to boost the capital market but it is hoped that the previously allowed tax exemption up to Tk 30,000 dividend income will continue for the benefit of the small investors."

"Measures to improve public transport and contain environmental pollution from two-stroke engines are steps in the right direction."

"While reduction of corporate taxes on listed financial institutions is welcome, general reduction in corporate tax was expected."

"Imposition of VAT on cement, CI sheet and MS products as infrastructure building materials is counterproductive for development and should be reviewed."

"A major area of concern is unabated revenue expenditure increase on unproductive heads which leads to stagnant ADP contribution from domestic resources. We hope that the substantial increase in allocation for the police will not be spent on manpower alone but also for much needed improvement in logistics so that the investment

translates into an improvement in the deteriorating law and order.

"Also, fiscal incentives to boost economic growth will be negated unless reforms are strengthened and drainage of resources through SOEs is stopped through privatisation, and close watch is kept on monetary policy and interest rates."

"With increasing and large foreign investments in the oil, gas and electricity sectors, there will be huge and growing foreign exchange outflows in the coming years. Therefore, rapid export earnings growth is badly needed, particularly in view of the already fragile reserves position."

"There is not much in the budget to indicate a major export thrust, particularly in view of the loss in competitiveness due to continued appreciation of the Taka against the South Asian and South East Asian currencies. In particular, it is imperative that the existing exchange rate policy be reviewed to directly address the issue of the competitiveness of our tradeables against Indian goods," MCCI said.

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