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## Biman plans alliance with major airlines

By Shehab Ahmed

Bangladesh Biman is planning to enter into an alliance with major airlines to boost its passenger and cargo carrying capacity. Biman sources said.

The sources, however, would not divulge the details. But Biman's Managing Director Air Commodore M Rafiqul Islam yesterday said that the efforts are still at a preliminary stage.

"The idea is to find out a suitable partner for the alliance to raise our capacity and meet the growing demands in the next millennium," he told The Daily Star.

"We are exploring the market," the Biman MD said. He said the airline is planning to acquire at least two aircraft and undergo management restructuring in the next fiscal.

"Our target is to haul 1.5 million passengers and increase cargo carrying capacity by 50 per cent and turn out a net profit," he added.

In the current fiscal, which is ending on June 30, the airline earned Tk 1209.09 crore in revenue, which is 2.03 per cent higher against the target of Tk 1185.07.

It operated 11494 flights, carrying 1264798 passengers and 31490 tonnes of cargo between July 1, 1997 and June 24 this year, he said.

International stations contributed 55 per cent of the revenue, Islam said.

The airline operates flights in 24 destinations. "We are planning to open a new flight to Manchester in the United Kingdom, and one flight each to Jeddah, Rome and London in the next winter beginning October 1," he added.

## JS budget discussion

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had hit at the root of production.

Criticising the huge budgetary allocation on unproductive sectors, he posed a question how the rate of national growth would be raised and poverty alleviated when 63 per cent of allocation would be spent on the unproductive sectors.

Dr. Momen Khan, BNP legislator and former state minister planning, accused the government of failures in maintaining the growth rate. "The growth rate in the GDP which was 5.9 per cent last year has come down to 5.6 per cent in the present fiscal."

Dr. Khan also criticised the government for 'unacceptable' rate of inflation over the last couple of years. He even questioned the inflation figure given by the government.

Criticising the government for expanding the VAT net, the BNP legislator said that it would push up the prices of essential commodities causing further suffering to the poor.

Dr. I. M. Fazle Rabbi of Jatiya Party observed that the proposed budget clearly lacked transparency. "In his budget speech, the Finance Minister has claimed that some Tk six thousand crore have been allocated for poverty alleviation. But we see only a little more than Tk one thousand crore that has been allocated to the relevant sectors."

He also noted that there had been no allocation of funds for human resource development. "One cannot expect development in the country without spending money on human resource development."

The JP legislator questioned the finance minister's claim that he has proposed increased allocations for the education and health sector. "If you adjust

## Trains to ply

From Page 1

was the first train that plied on the dual gauge rail track over the bridge carrying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other dignitaries on Tuesday after the inauguration of the bridge.

A 19-km dual gauge rail track has already been laid on the bridge and its two sides and two new railway stations named Bangabandhu East and Bangabandhu West have been set up seven km off both ends of the bridge.

But it will take at least two years for people to travel to the capital by train from the western region of the country down the bridge as rail tracks are to be laid for this.

The Railway authorities are working on a Tk 1155 crore project for laying of a 80 km dual gauge rail track along the Joydevpur alignment in the eastern zone and a third rail along the 244 km rail track on Serajganj-Parbatipur broad gauge route on the western side to allow conversions between both the zones of the Bangladesh Railway system, an official said.

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## BNP will return to power: Khaleda

The anti-government movement will be based on national issues, BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday told a group of students and asked them to mobilise support of the masses, reports UNB.

There is no doubt that BNP will return to power again. People are with us as we are in the movement to realise their demand," she said while speaking to the newly-elected JCD leaders of Mirzapur and Nagarpur college student unions who came to her official residence to exchange views with the party chief.

Advocating for peaceful movement, Begum Zia said, "Since the people are with us, you need not shed your blood. Our programme is people-oriented and peaceful."

Leaders of JCD, Juba Dal and BNP of those thanas were also present.

The opposition leader said the government has failed in every sector. She also referred to the near collapse of law and order, extortion by ruling party musclemen, and inadequate supply of electricity, water and gas.

## City slums consume 70mw power illegally

Illegal power connections to hundreds of slum areas in Dhaka city are causing a loss of 70mw of electricity, reports UNB.

Noor Uddin Khan, minister without portfolio, disclosed this in Parliament yesterday while giving a written reply to Hajee Mohammad Selim (AL).

There are more than 3000 small and big slum areas in Dhaka city. "But none of them have legal power connections."

Khan added: The drive is on to disconnect illegal power lines. Attempts are also being taken to give the slum dwellers power connections through committees being formed with local elite and NGOs.

## City BNP

From Page 1

Rather he amassed crores of taka illegally from various sectors, Khoka alleged and brought some specific charges against the city mayor.

The BNP leader said that the whole city has turned into a big dustbin while life in the city has become insecure due to widespread terrorism.

## JS session

From Page 1

She left the House after 25 minutes after the session resumed.

Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina was not in the House on the day.

Yesterday's sitting lasted longer than those on other days in the current session.

Bangladesh Betar resumed live broadcast of parliament proceedings yesterday, following continued demand by the Opposition. The live broadcast was stopped before passage of the CHT bills during the last session.

Participating in the discussion on the proposed budget for 1998-99 the BNP lawmakers pointed out, the government's 'failures' in various sectors.

Before joining the session, a three-member BNP delegation met Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury at his chamber to discuss with him various issues relating to parliament.

The delegation comprised Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badruddoza Choudhury, Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain and BNP Vice Chairman M K Anwar, MP.

During the hour-long discussion from 1 pm, the BNP leaders requested the Speaker to prolong the budget session to enable the party lawmakers to speak extensively. In this regard, they suggested that Article 92 of the Constitution could be applied to opt for passage of the budget partially before the June 30 deadline for passing it.

But the Speaker did not consider the opposition proposal as feasible and thought the government side might not accept it. The Opposition Chief Whip told a group of reporters at his Sangsad chamber in the afternoon. The Speaker, however, assured them of consulting the Treasury Bench on the issue, Delwar Hossain said.

On allocation of time for the BNP MPs to discuss the proposed budget, the Speaker informed them that until Wednesday, the House witnessed more than four hours of discussion. During the rest of the planned 40-hour discussion, the government and the opposition would be given equal time, Delwar quoted the Speaker as saying.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included implementation of BNP's four-point agreement signed with the government, recasting some of the parliamentary committees, rescheduling the newly-introduced half-an-hour 'unshed' debate on every working day and the alleged harassment of the Opposition leader's security personnel.

He said many of the poverty indicators in Bangladesh are synonymous to that of Bihar in India, one of the most poverty stricken areas of the world, and that there is nothing to be complacent about the poverty programmes here.

Binayak Sen, the other author of the paper, said poverty programmes had demonstrated



Belgian captain Enzo Scifo (left) holds off the challenge of South Korea's Lee Min-sung during the soccer World Cup Group E match between Belgium and South Korea at the Parc des Princes in Paris yesterday. —AP/UNB photo

## Belgium out of race

From Page 1

Mexico to advance into the second round. The Dutch who needed a draw to advance from Group E.

Belgium looked to be in good shape early, taking a lead shortly after kickoff, while the Dutch led Mexico 2-0 in the second half.

A header from Gordan Vidovic was pushed off the line in the seventh minute by a South Korean defender, but Luc Nilis surged into the area to volley in the much-needed opener past diving goalkeeper Kim Byung-ji.

But Belgium's hopes were dented with 19 minutes remaining, when Ha lofted a free kick for from the left and Yoo stretched to touch the ball with his right foot, beating several diving Belgian defenders on the far side of the goal box.

Although already eliminated from the tournament, the South Koreans appeared determined to win their first match in five World Cup appearances — their last opportunity before co-hosting the next World Cup with Japan in 2002.

South Korean coach Kim Pyung-Soek — promoted after Cha Bum-kin was fired following the team's dismal 5-0 loss to the Netherlands — made few changes to Cha's starting lineup against the Dutch.

They demonstrated tight defending and an ability to shoot from distance, but also bouts of

## Japanese grant for construction of residential pry school in CHT

Japan will provide US dollar 156.641 for construction of a residential primary school in the CHT and buying "green umbrellas" for field workers in the health and family planning sector in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yoshikazu Kaneko signed two grant contracts involving the money under the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects scheme.

The contracts were signed with Kyaw Maung of Bangladesh Marma Buddhist Association and Mohammad Shahajan of Bangladesh Centre for Communication Programme.

## Comprehensive agenda needed

From Page 1

good results in the beginning, but as they increased in scale, these have faced some difficulties.

He termed the difficulties of poverty programmes as the first generation effect and said new methods have to be found for the programmes to be taken to the next stage.

Former finance minister AMA Muhit said the administration must be decentralised for obtaining results in different sectors. He said the targeted poverty programmes have proved to be effective despite the poor economic growths.

Muhit said investments in such targeted programmes should continue, but the style of investment should be changed to eradicate poverty in the shortest possible time. He added that the local governments should be empowered to implement the social investment programmes for optimum result.

Dr Atiur Rahman, one of the authors of the key-note paper presented at the dialogue, said inequality is growing fast in the country, almost twice as fast in the Scandinavian countries.

He said many of the poverty indicators in Bangladesh are synonymous to that of Bihar in India, one of the most poverty stricken areas of the world, and that there is nothing to be complacent about the poverty programmes here.

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## Rush at BJMB continues

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of people continued to swarm across the Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge yesterday, according to officials posted at the site.

The 4.8-km long bridge was opened for traffic on Tuesday last following its inauguration by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"People are walking along the bridge and the rail track," said an official, noting that it has generated tremendous curiosity and enthusiasm among people, particularly those living in the adjacent villages.

They are also indulging in vandalism," another official said. "Some telephone sets from the emergency telephone booths installed on the bridge have already been removed."

The vehicles are moving very slowly over the bridge," the official said. "Possibility of any mishap cannot be ruled out if the rush of people remains unchanged."

We have informed the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority about the problem and also suggested them to distribute leaflets and make announcements requesting people not to walk over the bridge," the official added.

A total of 1450 vehicles crossed from the westside while the 1360 crossed from the eastern side during the 24-hour period ending at 6:00 am on Wednesday, said JMB sources.

The vehicles included buses, trucks, minibuses, cars and motorcycles.

Clinton goes to the village of Xia He for what is billed as a roundtable discussion with ordinary Chinese citizens about their lives in a changing society.

Then to Beijing on Saturday, opening with the event that has stirred the greatest controversy at home: a formal welcoming in Tiananmen Square, scene of the democracy demonstrations bloodily repressed by Chinese troops in June 1989.

Clinton defends his decision to go to that symbolic site as protocol, not substance, and said he will speak America's piece for human rights and freedom. But not there; no speeches at Tiananmen.

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## Tk 26.30cr BMRE project to upgrade FDC being implemented

A BMRE project, involving Tk 26.30 crore, is being implemented to upgrade the Film Development Corporation (FDC), reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Ministry held at the Jatiya Sangsad with its chairman Abul Kalam Azad in the chair yesterday.

The meeting discussed the overall activities of FDC, including its organisational framework, manpower, formation process of its governing body, budget allocation, maintenance of machinery and progress of the ongoing BMRE project.

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## Vice President tells PM ADB keen to extend help in energy sector

Visiting Asian Development Bank Vice President Bong-Fuh Lee has praised the government initiative for progress and trend of development in last two years, reports UNB.

"We will conduct some more feasibility studies in the country for development projects," he said during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Ganabhaban official residence yesterday.

Lee apprised the Prime Minister of the ADB activities in Bangladesh.

A major development partner of Bangladesh, ADB was a main contributor to fund for the Bangabandhu Bridge.

The ADB Vice President assured best possible assistance in Bangladesh's development initiatives.

He spoke about reforms in some sectors of Bangladesh like railways and showed ADB's interest for extending assistance in the energy sector.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister mentioned the

development priorities and thanked ADB for its continued assistance.

Referring to the opening of Bangabandhu Bridge, she said this bridge will help in accelerating economic activities in the northern region of the country and reducing pressure on the capital.

The Prime Minister also emphasised the construction of Padma Bridge and Rupsha Bridge and infrastructure development in the southwestern part of the country for building a total communication network.

She said the government has taken various development measures as well as micro credit programmes to strengthen the rural economy.

Hasina said her government has also taken steps to build low cost houses for the low income and working class people.

ERD secretary Dr A K M Mashur Rahman was present at the meeting.

## Budget 'regressive'

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Bakht of the BIDS, Tanweer Akram, journalist, Zaglul A Chowdhury and Aftab-ul-Islam, President of Bangladesh Computer Samity took part in the discussion.

Saffur, in his first public appearance after the budget was placed before the parliament on June 11, categorically said turning Advance Income Tax (AIT) at source into final tax settlement was a "violation" and a "disruption" of normal tax collection practices.

"This (AIT) is a penalty on the people," he said and added that tax payment could not be a penalty on citizens.

He said the government could not take away peoples' income before knowing whether it was taxable. "This is ridiculous. It is a confiscation of peoples' property."

The former finance minister and now a BNP lawmaker said some of the proposed expenses had been deliberately over projected while some income had been under projected.

The government wants to show that their revenue earnings were duly collected, Saffur said.

He said if inflation was considered, the budgetary allocation for power, agriculture and social sectors would in fact show a declining trend.

Saffur said, "If we project a 5.60 per cent growth for the 1998-99 period, we have to achieve a real growth of 12 per cent" since the current inflation rate was estimated at seven per cent.

"This shows an ambition of the government but does not say wherefrom the money will come."

Tk 3 lakh snatched in city

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers snatched Tk three lakh from a businessman at Bhutergoli under Dhanmondi thana in the city yesterday.

A gang of about four muggers waylaid the auto-rickshaw in which Khandakar Imam Hossain was travelling at the Green Road crossing at about 7 am, Dhanmondi thana police said quoting FIR filed by Imam.

Imam was going to Gabtali from his North Circular Road's residence.

The gang forcibly snatched a briefcase, containing the money and fled away.

Tk one lakh snatched in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jun 25: A businessman was robbed of Tk one lakh today by a group of armed terrorists immediately after he withdrew the money from a bank at Jubilee road in the city, police said.

Police said the businessmen, Foyaz Ali came under attack by the muggers at 11:45 am today.

A case was filed with Kotwali thana in this regard, but none was arrested so far.

Garments worker

From Page 1

and Babul were gossiping at Textile Math at Tejgaon at about 11 pm Wednesday.