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Budget: BNP to intensify agitation

By Rezaul Karim

BNP is planning to further intensify its current anti-government agitation centring the national budget for fiscal 1999-2000, likely to be placed before the Jatiya Sangsad on June 10.

"Although we are yet to finalise any fresh programme for street protest, we have decided to launch an all-out movement both inside and outside the Sangsad. Our MPs will take up the issue in the House while our activists will continue demonstration on the streets," a top leader of the main opposition party told this correspondent.

He said BNP policy makers have already advised party lawmakers to prepare for the coming session of the Sangsad so that they can strongly protest 'anti-people measures' in the national budget and government.

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Afzal Khan held

Supporters block Dhaka-Ctg road at Comilla

By Staff Correspondent

Road communications between Dhaka and Chittagong remained cut off till late last night as supporters of arrested Awami League leader Afzal Khan barricaded Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Comilla.

According to police, bus and truck workers placed trucks on the highway blocking it to traffic yesterday evening.

Hundreds of buses and private cars were stranded on the highway due to the blockade.

Chairman of Bangladesh Cooperative Bank Limited and former general secretary of Comilla district Awami League Afzal Khan was arrested on charge of corruption on Tuesday.

When contacted, the SP of Comilla told The Daily Star that they could not take any action.

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Politicians play their game with cricketers

By Nazmul Ashraf

Political leaders have again faltered in their response to a national achievement as they bickered yesterday over honouring the cricket heroes who come home tomorrow morning.

While the entire nation was singing the same tune celebrating Bangladesh's triumph over Pakistan, politicians refused to share a common platform to greet the national cricketers.

The government has planned a public reception for the cricketers at the National Parade Square at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar tomorrow at

10am while the main opposition BNP has decided to greet them at Zia International Airport.

BNP also plans to arrange a public reception for the team when they will return after the June 20 World Cup final, party sources said. The players are coming to Dhaka to attend tomorrow's reception and due to go back to England on June 8.

Dhaka Mayor Mohammad Hanif called an all-party meeting at 7:00pm yesterday at his Nagar Bhaban office to discuss the reception preparations, but

none from the major opposition parties including BNP, Ershad's Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami turned up.

The representatives of Mizan Chowdhury-led Jatiya Party and other smaller parties including CPB, JSD came to the meeting that decided to shift the venue - from Paltan Maidan to Parade Square. The meeting began at 7:30pm and continued till 9:00pm.

On Tuesday, state minister for sports Obaidul Quader had announced that the reception

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BTTB's Tk 263 cr rip-off

By Gobinda Bar

At least Tk 263.21 crore went down the drain because of corruption and malpractice by officials and employees of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) during 1991-97, according to a special audit.

The recently concluded audit covered 18 offices of BTTB in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi regions.

The irregularity and malpractice detected include purchasing redundant material, embezzlement of huge sums of money in the name of 'correcting' subscribers' telephone bills, giving fake telephone connections, non-adjustment of money and administrative inaction and negligence.

A large number of telephone bills have also remained outstanding due to inaction of officials.

The audit was conducted by the office of Comptroller and Auditor General and the report was submitted to the President on Thursday, May 27 last.

Authorities concerned failed to reply, satisfactorily, in most cases when auditors asked them to clarify.

Materials, worth at least Tk 75.19 crore, were non-functioning because they had been dumped for long in BTTB's central warehouse. Most materials are out of order because those were bought without any need assessment.

As much as Tk 37.453 crore was categorised as 'store suspense' after the store controller (CTS) failed to receive imported material within the stipulated time. The authorities did not reply when asked why the material was not received on time; when authorities received it; and why it was shown as 'store suspense' instead of enlisting it under the proper head.

A sum of Tk 23 crore was found to be misappropriated as acknowledgement of imported telematerials sent from Chittagong SDE Store to different teledeposits could not be found. It was impossible to take account of purchase and distribution of imported material as accounts were not properly maintained

by the Chittagong store. BTTB suffered a loss of Tk 19.50 crore as the authorities of 1.3 lakh digital telephone line project did not distribute telephone sets among subscribers. The contract with Alkatel says, the telephone sets were procured for distribution at Tk 1500 each. But they were not distributed but dumped in the store.

An amount of Tk 17.15 crore remained unadjusted with the BTTB for long which is a violation of rules regarding advance and adjustment. The money was paid in advance by the office of director (procurement) of BTTB to the Telephone Shilpa Sangstha, Gazipur and

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Monsoon in town

The road linking Motijheel with Biswa Road has been extensively damaged, making it difficult for the vehicles.

— Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

AL golden jubilee celebrations

Violent schisms mar festivities

By Reaz Ahmad

Internal feuds in most units have reduced the ruling party to a weak state at a time when Awami League is all set for a big bash on June 23, the day it turns 50 years old.

Occasional flare up of internal conflicts in different parts of the country has become a common phenomenon for the party-in-power which is all party facing a combined agitation by opposition political parties.

In a series of meetings over the last couple of weeks, two of which were held at party chief's prime ministerial residence, Awami League leaders discussed its 'tarnishing public image' because of internal feuds.

The recent moves and remarks of party 'rebel' Kader Siddiqi was an additional reason for concern.

The party that was formed in Dhaka on June 23 1949 plans a three-day golden jubilee celebration at the city's Paltan Maidan from June 23 to June 25. Besides, similar programmes are also being organised in the divisional towns.

The day Sheikh Hasina kicked off the golden jubilee celebration of the party in the port city of Chittagong, a banner was hung at the venue by a party front organisation's local unit, calling for resolution of local organisational problems. She retorted: Some agents of conspirators had infiltrated the party to create confusion.

AL politics in Sylhet is no different. Heavyweight AL leaders from the north-eastern division are not on good terms with each other. It is common

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NBL directorship

HC rejects prayer for vacating injunction

Star Report

The High Court yesterday rejected FBCCI chief Abdul Awal Mintoo's prayer for vacating an injunction barring him from acting as a director of National Bank Limited (NBL).

On March 16 this year, a Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Ebadul Huq and Justice Moazzam Hossain ruled that Mintoo would not act as a director of NBL.

The injunction followed a petition by a depositor of the bank accusing Mintoo of continuing to act as a director violating an HC verdict on July 1, 1997.

In 1995, the central bank had served notices on defaulting directors of different banks saying they must repay their overdue loans, failing which they would lose their directorship.

Twelve of them including Mintoo went to the HC to challenge the Bangladesh Bank order.

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2 ward commissioners murdered in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 2: Two ward commissioners were murdered in two separate incidents in the city within a span of 13 hours.

They are Iskander Hossain, 35, and Liakat Ali Khan, 48.

Iskander Hossain, Ward Commissioner of Razoan Municipality was chopped to death by some unidentified assailants at a house at Halishahar under Doublemooring thana at around 9 pm yesterday.

Police are yet to find out the reason behind the killing. Four persons were arrested in connection with the murder.

Liakat Ali Khan, Commissioner of Ward No 3 of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and local Awami League leader was gunned down by a group of unidentified assailants near Chaldatoli bazar under Panchlaish thana this morning, police said.

Liakat came under attack

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Released from jail at last

By Staff Correspondent

An elderly Indian woman, who had been serving a two-year imprisonment despite a CMM's Court order for her release in June 1997, was finally released from Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Her release followed another order from the CMM's Court on May 25.

The woman was identified as Putul Mamoi, 60, wife of Nita Mitra alias Mithu of Jahajia Bazar, Kosba, Chabish Pargana district in India.

Putul was arrested by Dhamrai police on suspicion on June

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Early monsoon portends moderate flood

By Shehab Ahmed

Monsoon has set in at least a week earlier than normal, triggering fears of another round of flooding in the wake of last year's worst deluge in a century. Experts believe that it would not be severe.

This time, monsoon rains began from May 29, instead of usual second week of June or the Bangla month of Ashar.

The meteorological department says the early arrival of the wet winds from the Arabian Sea may result in a 'slightly above normal' monsoon, the season of rains which is crucial for the country's main aman

rice. But met experts do not foresee any severe impact due to the extra rains, said Met Office chief Ershad Hossain.

Already before the arrival of the rains the major rivers showed a rising trend, which a Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) expert said was not alarming as the rivers remained much below their danger level.

Ershad Hossain said there were chances of extra rains as a result of 'above normal' monsoon activity. But he disagreed with suggestion that there could be severe flooding as a result.

The floods are normal in monsoon but it would not be so much severe like last year's, he maintained.

Variations in the flow of the Brahmaputra, which take the name of Jamuna in Bangladesh, had been noticed in the early May leading to one metre rise in the river level.

In late May, the Brahmaputra, cutting across the north-eastern India taking the snow-fed streams of Manas Sarobar high in the Himalayas in China's Tibetan plateau, recorded a half metre rise again. After a pause it swelled again on May

28-29 but remained below the red mark.

At the same time the Ganges, which becomes Padma in Bangladesh, also spurt a sudden rise on May 29.

Earlier, the Monu, one of the prime sources of the Meghna river, went into spate above danger level on May 9. Soon afterwards, however, it slid down to normal. But the arrival of the early monsoon on May 29 saw the Monu and Kushiya systems in spate again. The FFWC noted. The heavy pre-monsoon rains all over the

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Battle of the heavyweights starts tomorrow

A cocktail compelling

LONDON, June 2: McGrath against Tendulkar, an early confrontation between tournament heavyweights South Africa and Pakistan, buoyant Zimbabwe battling to reach the semifinals for the first time.

These are among the appetising ingredients that make up the compelling cricket cocktail which is in prospect for the second stage of the World Cup when the Super Six matches start on Friday, says Reuters.

The stakes are raised as the six teams to have qualified from the 12 who competed in the two first-round groups now contest a nine-match schedule in front of sell-out crowds at England's test grounds.

With a new format for this tournament, under which teams who reach the Super

Sixes carry forward points gained against fellow qualifiers from their group, there is a heightened sudden-death element to the competition.

Nowhere is that better illustrated than in Friday's opening Super Six match between India and Australia at The Oval.

India lost to South Africa and Zimbabwe in group A while the Australians went down to Pakistan and New Zealand in group B, so with no points

brought forward, the two sides can ill afford an immediate defeat.

It is a situation designed to bring out the best in Australian strike bowler Glenn McGrath, who produced his most potent form in the deciding group game against West Indies on Sunday, and Sachin Tendulkar.

India breathed a collective sigh of relief when Tendulkar returned to the tournament after

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For Long Lasting Fresh Breath and Sparkling White Teeth

Greenidge says it again

LONDON, June 2: Gordon Greenidge, sacked as Bangladesh's cricket coach on Monday for speaking his mind, repeated his view today that the country was not good enough to play Test matches, reports AFP.

The former West Indian Test opener was given his marching orders before the team's final league match against Pakistan — a match Bangladesh won in the biggest upset of the tournament.

"It takes more than a couple of one-day wins before you're ready for Test cricket," he said.

"The coaching needs to be rejuvenated, the facilities need to be upgraded and there's a lot of work to be done developing the youngsters, before they go on to the next stage."

"There's no point rushing. If they played against Test sides now they would be swamped. What they need is to play

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Beyond the boundary

Loneliness at long-on

By Shakil Kasem

Cricket is no longer the game it used to be. Gone are the red balls, the cream flannels and the billowing white sight-screens. Take away, too, the genteel, sedate crowds given to the odd ooh or aah and the very tongue-in-cheek "Well hit, sir," and the even more discreet clap or two.

Replace all these with white balls that swing wildly, erstwhile flannelled fools now in coloured pyjamas, sponsor's logo on black(!) sight-screens. Add beer-bellied rowdies stripped to the waist (if the weather is right) to pass off as spectators, painted faces (all weather) and raucous bawdy language to approve suitable bits of action, out in the middle. This is the spectacle that greets the eye at the ongoing carnival of cricket in England. England, you say?

Certainly this is not the England we knew nor is this the

cricket that used to be played. Changing times, changed needs, more sociological dictat than mere cricket. We live and learn. One does not talk of buckskin pads or linseed oil anymore, the talk centres around speed guns and as such like. The gentle pace of English summer and the game it gave birth to, is now a misnomer. One is flying madly over the cuckoo's nest.

My only tenuous link with cricketing sanity rests with Mishu Kabir. Like me, I suspect, he too is struggling to come to terms with life after the Cowdrees, the Comptons, the Pataudis and the Bobby Simpsons. We do talk (somewhat surreptitiously) of the halcyon days of the Old Taverners, the Free Foresters or the Wagons, but clearly we are the untouchables among the current crop of cricket aficionados. In keeping with the prevalent societal trait

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A view from the Gully

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

The unceremonious exit of the 1996 World Cup Champions Sri Lanka is a very painful aspect of the first round matches of 1999 World Cup. Sri Lanka were a ghost of their former self and could manage only two wins against Zimbabwe and Kenya. Three times runners up (1979, 1983 & 1992) hosts England, after three wins under their belt, lost to India in a do or die battle and were thrown out of the competition.

The unpredictable West Indians had to bow out despite machinations of the Aussies to keep the Kiwis out of the Super Six. Their scheme backfired as the black caps overpowered the Scotsmen in a thrilling encounter. Kenya, Scotland and Bangladesh were not favourites to book a place in the second stage but surprisingly enough the ICC Champions brought off two spectacular wins against Scotland and a powerful Pakistan.

Though Pakistan's defeat to Bangladesh did not matter much to the losers because they were already through to the Super Six, it was a tremendous victory for the Bengal Tigers and a major upset in the competition. This has worked as a wakeup call for Pakistan who were reminded not to underestimate an enemy however weak he may appear. For Bangladesh this victory was a much needed shot in the arm for the forward march of cricket which has by now established itself as the most popular game in the country.

The Super Sixes stage gets underway tomorrow with India taking on Australia at The Oval. This is going to be a 'fish unto death'. Both teams start from a scratch as they have no points from the first

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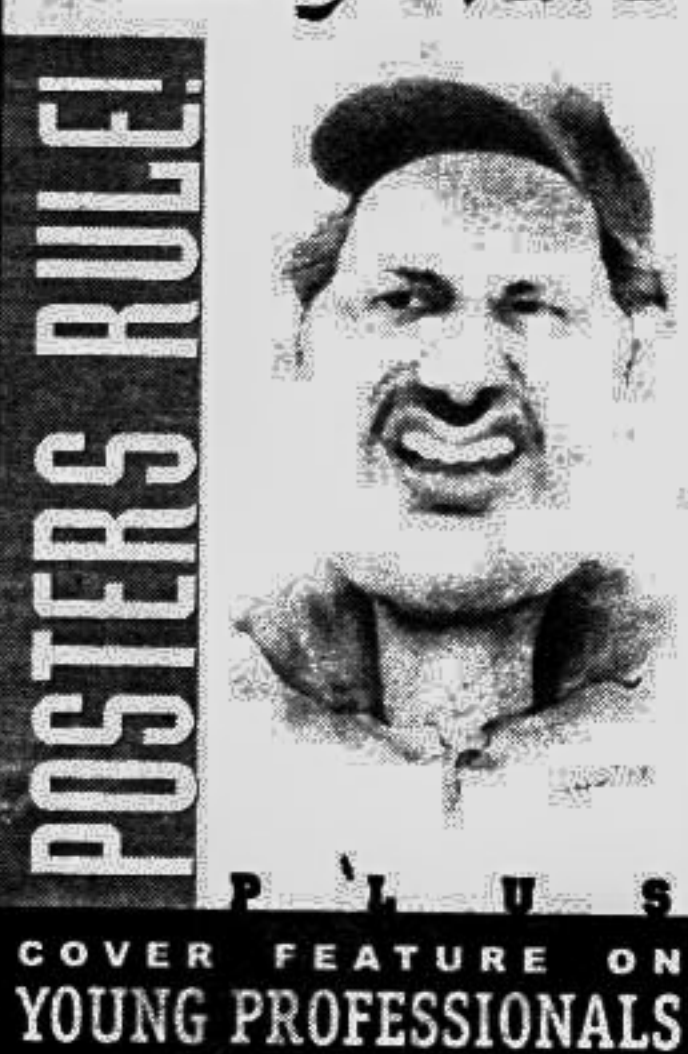
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Time to Ponder Some Personal Reflections

Column: Currents and Crosscurrents by M M Rezaul Karim Page 4

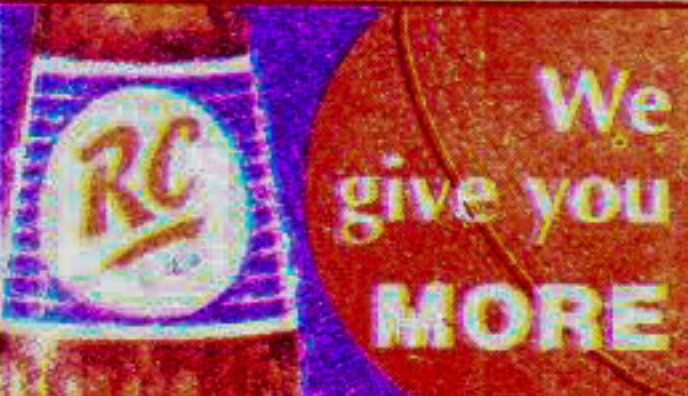
Focus

Between Milosovic's barbarity and NATO's high-altitude bombing campaign; and How do our politicians think? Page 5

Prayer Timings

| June 3 | | |
|---------|-------|------|
| Fajr | 4:15 | 4:20 |
| Zohr | 12:45 | 1:30 |
| Asr | 4:45 | 4:55 |
| Maghrib | 6:40 | 6:43 |
| Esha | 7:40 | 8:10 |

Source: Islamic Foundation



Tomorrow's match

India will take on Australia as Super Sixes starts tomorrow. The match begins at The Oval at 3:45 local time. BTV and Star Sports will cover the match live.