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## Probe body formed Ships carrying sugar collide at Ctg outer anchorage

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 15: The Chittagong Port authority today formed a one-member committee to probe Sunday's collision between two sugar carrying foreign vessels at the outer anchorage in a stormy weather and high tide.

Deputy Conservator of Chittagong port Capt Amirul Islam will probe the incident and submit a report, port sources said.

The two vessels, MV Shanon and MV Python, were carrying sugar imported by Bangladesh Food and Sugar Industries Corporation.

Harbour Master of the port, Qamrul Islam, told The Daily Star that sea water leaked into hatch No 3 of MV Python through the cracks caused by the collision and 3067 tonnes of sugar were damaged.

Lighterage of the ship is continuing.

The other ship also suffered slight damage.

MV Shanon had arrived at the outer anchorage on June 10 and MV Python on June 13.

The vessels carried 27,400 tonnes of sugar worth about Tk 50 crore.

## Kibria

From Page 1

development budget," said the finance minister.

Kibria maintained that he had said that the additional tax would be collected through expanding the network and reforming and rationalising the existing tax system. "Those who were supposed to pay taxes much before have been brought into the network. Is it new tax?"

About Saifur's views on expansion of the VAT net, Kibria said he regrets the change of his Saifur public position.

"He is the initiator of VAT in Bangladesh. I am complementing him by completing his work," Kibria said criticising Saifur Rahman's stand against expansion of VAT network.

He urged the BNP leader not to be involved in mudslinging only for achieving political ends and maintain the standard of a political debate. "It is not fair to misguide people. VAT was initiated in 1991-92 fiscal year. We can't wait for generation to generation to implement it."

"I never believe in political mudslinging and I hope he will stop it although I know he is under tremendous pressure from the tough liners of his party."

Refuting Saifur's claim that tax has been imposed on investment, he said, "Buying a car is no investment. It's consumption. Isn't a buyer an eligible taxpayer if he can buy a car? He was supposed to pay tax much earlier. We have brought him under tax network."

The Finance Minister said that the new budget proposes major reform and rationalisation of the tax system. "We went for systematic changes in the tax system," he said referring to budgetary steps to put pre-shipment inspection system in action.

About supplementary tax on some import items, he said that it too was not a new tax. "It has been proposed on some items only to avoid revenue loss due to difference of tariff value and actual transaction after the introduction of PSI."

He expressed his surprise at Saifur's statement that a lock-in system has been imposed on local investment in the share market, saying, "I don't have any knowledge about it."

On budgetary provision for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to submit tax return of their income at Bangladesh embassies, he said, "It's an additional facility to Bangladeshis living abroad, but the former finance minister has 'distorted it only to agitate people living abroad against me."

Kibria clarified that NRBs will not have to submit tax return on their income abroad. "The opportunity has been given to facilitate the NRBs or Bangladeshis living abroad who pay tax on their income in Bangladesh. From now on, they will not have to keep any lawyer or visit Bangladesh to settle their tax payments."

He also refuted Saifur's allegation that he was not acknowledging that fiscal and monetary policies of BNP government helped to save the economy from any financial market disaster.

It is not true. Rather, on many occasions, even at international seminars, I said the policies followed by the previous government and the present policies have saved the economy," Kibria said.

On allegations of the highly ambitious target of tax increase during the next fiscal year, he said, "It's definitely an optimistic target. But we have to try it."

## General debate on budget in JS Welfare-oriented, says AL No social justice: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

find the growth rate higher than 5.2 per cent."

Razzak also criticised the BNP for its recent political understanding with the autocratic Jatiya Party and razakar Jamaat-e-Islami and found the alliance to be an "unholy" one. The minister was, however, reminded of the Awami League's past honeymoon with the JP and Jamaat by many BNP backbenchers.

BNP lawmaker Mohammad Abu Hena found the proposed budget to be devoid of social justice. Hena accused the finance minister of trying to rob the poor by "indiscriminate imposition of VAT and other indirect taxes".

Observing that the finance minister has actually exploded a "tax-bomb" on the down-trodden people of the country, Hena argued that he proposed a huge amount of indirect tax which directly affects the poor. In this regard, the BNP lawmaker gave a few examples that included imposition of VAT on soybean oil, small hotel and restaurants using only one electric fan, utensils made of plastic and so on.

Explaining reasons behind such a revenue drive, the BNP lawmaker said that the government had gone for lavish expenditure on various unproductive sectors, without ensuring any significant earning.

"You have to learn to earn before you go for spending," he advised the finance minister.

Rejecting Kibria's claim that measures have been proposed to protect local industries, Hena said: "The minister must learn that local industries could be

protected by imposing or increasing custom duty - not imposing VAT."

State Minister for Textile KM Jahangir Hossain hailed the budget as "it has given a clear guideline to make the country self-reliant". Textile sector would be self-sufficient by the year 2002 with the setting up of backward linkage industries."

The state minister appreciated Kibria for proposing Tk 100 crore subsidy for the agriculture sector, ignoring the World Bank's usual dislike of such steps.

BNP lawmaker Lt Col (retd) Akbar Hossain said that the government of Sheikh Hasina did not have any moral right to propose the national budget, as it has lost public support.

Interpreting a recent statement of the PM that general elections would be announced only when her party would feel confident of winning the polls, Akbar said, "the statement clearly indicates that she is not confident about winning the polls now, which means she has already lost public support that brought her to power."

Akbar found the government claim of 5.2 per cent economic growth in the current fiscal "funny". The prices of almost all essentials have gone up amidst the government claim of growth."

He also found the recent surrender of illegal arms in Jessor to be a "stage managed game" aimed at establishing ruling party hegemony in the areas. "Had the drive for illegal arms recovery been a genuine one, what about the surrender of arms by my Treasury Bench brothers --- Jaijal Hazari and Shameem Osman, or what about those in the home minister's constituency?"

Abul Kalam Azad Siddiqui, a BNP legislator from Tangail, termed the proposed budget to be a lullaby for sleep and dream. Challenging Kibria's claim that no fresh tax has been proposed, Siddiqui said that the finance minister has imposed new taxes amounting to some 10,060 crore taka.

He claimed that the people had already rejected the proposed budget by responding spontaneously to the opposition hartal on June 11.

Besides, he accused the prime minister's relations of various corruption. "Her brother-in-law has grabbed land around the Gulshan lake," the MP claimed, while he questioned her sister's source of money for buying house in London.

Ruling party MP Khan Tipu Sultan observed that the opposition was opposing the budget without realising its message.

Claiming that the proposed budget has provided adequate sense of direction towards building a "Sonar Bangla



A colourful procession was brought out in the city yesterday on the occasion of tree plantation campaign '99.

—Star photo

## NAM centre

Team leaves today  
for Beijing to  
meet developers

By Staff Correspondent

A six-member team will fly to Beijing tonight to meet the Chinese developers who will build a convention centre at the Osmany Udyan for the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) summit scheduled to be held in Dhaka in 2002.

The team includes Public Works Department (PWD) chief engineer Muktidur Rahman, chief architect Amir Hossain, additional chief engineer Matiur Rahman, executive engineer Ahmed Ali Khan, sub-divisional engineer Abu Sadek and senior assistant secretary of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing Jalal Ahmed.

The decision to select a city park to build the centre has sparked instant controversy among the city dwellers. A citizen's campaign, led by Dhaka University professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury was launched immediately after the decision was taken. The campaign under the banner "Save the 11,000 trees at Osmani Udyan Movement" gathered momentum and several protest rallies and marches including a human chain were organised at the site.

A member of the Beijing bound technical team said they were going to finalise the design of the convention centre. Asked whether there was any chance that the government would shift the venue of the centre to Western side of the park which is now a slum area, the official replied that he was not aware of it.

"Our concern is to finalise the design as per our requirement. It is up to the policymakers to select the venue. After the design is finalised the centre could be built anywhere," he said.

Besides, he accused the prime minister's relations of various corruption. "Her brother-in-law has grabbed land around the Gulshan lake," the MP claimed, while he questioned her sister's source of money for buying house in London.

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