

Labour leaders not opposed to privatisation

GAZIPUR, June 29: Union leaders of state-owned industries (SOEs) in Tongi today said they were not opposed to privatisation as desired by the government, reports UNB.

"What we want is due compensation on retrenchment from job and alternative job opportunity," said a labour leader at a meeting with Privatisation Board.

The meeting was arranged jointly by the Privatisation Board and the Department for International Development of British Government to ascertain if workers stood in the way of privatisation.

SOEs have been incurring around Tk 2,500 crore annually. A group of bureaucrats at the top of SOEs enjoying power and perks are also often blamed for delaying the process of privatisation in collusion with a vested group of labour leaders.

Presiding over the meeting, Privatisation Board Chairman Kazi Zafar Ullah said the government is bound by its pledges to sell out SOEs in phases as part of the reforms programme.

He assured the labour leaders that workers retrenched would be rehabilitated through the Safety Net project of the government. He said industries given to the private management would absorb the efficient workers.

City AL EC meet tomorrow

A meeting of the executive council of Dhaka City Awami League will be held at the party office at 6.30 pm on July 1, reports BSS.

General Secretary of the city Awami League and State Minister for Shipping Mofajjal Hossain Chowdhury Maya (Bir Bikram) has requested all office-bearers and members of the executive council to attend the meeting on time, a press release said.

BFUJ, DUJ for immediate reopening of APB

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday demanded reopening of the Associated Press of Bangladesh (APB) news agency in 48 hours, payment of all arrears and withdrawing transfer order of its four journalists, reports BSS.

A joint meeting of the BFUJ and DUJ held in the APB office warned that unless the office was opened for the journalists and employees, and withdrawal of transfer order of four journalists and payment of four months of arrears salary are carried out, a countrywide campaign would be launched against the management.

The meeting also condemned reported "harassment" of journalists in other media run by the BEXIMCO group saying the "repression on journalists will not yield good results in future as it did not in the past."

BFUJ secretary general Akhtar Ahmed Khan, DUJ president Altaf Mahmud, general secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, BFUJ vice president GM Yakub, senior journalist Sheikh Rakibuddin, journalist leader Gulshan Ara, Shamim Siddiqui, KBM Waliur Rahman Miraz and Nazrul Islam Mithu, among others, spoke at the meeting, chaired by unit chief Nesar Ahmed.

Poets Foundation Sultana Nahar nominated representative

Poet, researcher and columnist Sultana Nahar has been nominated Bangladesh representative of the "Poets Foundation" based in India. The foundation has centres around the world, says a press release.

Sultana Nahar has a number of publications in poetry both in English and Bengali. She received Golden Poet Award from USA and her poems in English have been included in the "Great Poets of Western World" and in "Anthology of Love Poems of South Asia" published by Jawaharal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is also a lawyer in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Interested poets are invited to join the foundation at 2/G, Shamoli, Road No-1, Dhaka-1207. Telephone Numbers - 813157, 816405.

Daisy second among girls

Tahmina Akhter Daisy, a student of Bindubashini Girls' High School, Tangail, obtained 6th position on the combined merit list of Science Group under Dhaka board in this year's SSC examinations. She also became second among girls, says a press release.

Daisy, who got 936 marks with letters in 9 subjects, aspires to become a computer engineer in future. She is the daughter of Dr Md Shah Ali Mian, heart specialist.

India should help implement SAFTA decisions: FBCCI

India should be requested to complete all formalities to give effect to the implementation of the decisions of 3rd Round of SAFTA negotiations, reports UNB.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo raised the point at a briefing meeting with Mostafa Faruque Mohammad, Bangladesh High Commissioner designate to India, at the Federation yesterday.

Welcoming the official, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) also raised some other points, which included:

- 1) Request the Indian side to remove all non-tariff and para-tariff barriers.
- 2) Indian side is to be requested to remove all bureaucratic and procedural obstacles.
- 3) India should consider set-

ting up of joint ventures in areas like chemical fertilizer, composite textile, industrial chemicals and leather products, luggage, toys, sports goods, machinery tools and spares, cement, paper and pulp, computer software and information technology, jewellery and diamond cutting and polishing, sericulture and silk industry, frozen food, hotel and tourism complex, agro-based industry and artificial flower making.

4) India should allow Bangladesh entrepreneurs to set up business offices and service organisations at important centres with a view to promoting trade and investment.

5) India should improve the infrastructure facilities on their side of the border to facilitate entry of Bangladeshi products.

6) Harmonisation and sim-

plification of customs by India. Multiple visa should be made available to businessmen to facilitate travel to India.

Representatives of different Chambers and Associations were present in the meeting. They said the new High Commissioner to India should try to promote products of Bangladesh, explore expansion of market, convince the Indian side to remove all trade barriers.

The business leaders assured the newly appointed High Commissioner of all cooperation for promoting trade and investment.

The High Commissioner said that he had received very useful information from FBCCI, which would help him in carrying out his responsibilities in New Delhi.



Bangladesh Chhatra League brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the remarks of BNP leader Badruddoza Chowdhury. —Star photo

JS body for making banking sector more dynamic

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance Ministry at a meeting yesterday emphasised the need for making the banking sector more dynamic for facing the challenges of the 21st century, reports UNB.

Presided over by Committee President Prof Ali Ashraf, the meeting also discussed overall economic situation of the country, said a press release of the Parliament Secretariat.

The meeting was informed that careful steps in collecting classified and default loans have yielded positive results and that the government had given permission to set up nine new banks in private sector, four of which have already started functioning.

Committee members Sayed Masud Reza and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury attended the meeting.

Rangamati taxi drivers go on strike

RANGAMATI, June 29: At least 10 people were injured in a clash between Taxi drivers and a group of workers in the town today, reports UNB.

Communication in the town was disrupted for more than five hours. Taxi drivers association claimed that their drivers were the victims in the clash and announced a taxi strike for an indefinite period. It demanded adequate punishment to the offenders.

Taxi is the main mode of transport in the hilly roads of the town.

JUJA to boycott VC's programmes

By JU Correspondent
Jahangirnagar University Journalists' Association (JUJA) yesterday decided to boycott the programmes of Vice Chancellor of the university for his "non-cooperation with journalists and for issuing order prohibiting journalists to attend the Senate session" held yesterday, says a JUJA press release.

The journalists also boycotted the annual senate session as they were not invited to cover the session on the ground of "sanctity." Journalists of the university are generally invited to cover the annual senate session of the university.

Earlier, the administration communicated to the JUJA that "sanctity of the senate session would be damaged" if journalists were allowed to attend it.

Arju's death condoled

A condolence meeting at the death of renowned cultural activist and Programme Secretary of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTFF) ASM Arju Rahman was held at the Mohila Samity Auditorium yesterday, reports BSS.

President of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote (SSJ) Ramendu Majumdar chaired the meeting, jointly organised by the BGTFF and SSJ.

Among others, leading celebrities of country's cultural arena and cultural organisers Ali Zaker, Sara Zaker, Asaduzzaman Noor, Gulam Qudus, SM Solayman, Deb Prasad Debnath, Liakat Ali Luki, SM Mohsin, Hasan Arif, Tariq Anam Khan addressed the meeting.

They paid rich tribute to late Arju and said, at his death, the nation has lost a dedicated activist of the cultural movement.

Seminar on Budget '99 at NSU Call for reducing wastage of natural resources

Speakers at a seminar on Budget '99 yesterday called for evolving means to stop wastage of natural resources instead of imposing new taxes to bolster economic development, reports BSS.

Organised by North-South University (NSU) on its campus, the seminar was addressed by Pro-Vice Chancellor of the NSU Prof Hafiz GA Siddiqui, Director of MBA programme Prof Shamsul Huq and Chairman of Economics Department Dr Salahuddin Ahmed.

Prof Siddiqui emphasized the need for streamlining the tax administration by making it free from corruption to achieve the target of revenue collection. Otherwise, he said, revenue income of the government would continue to suffer set back.

Appreciating the reduction of import duty on some industrial raw materials, tools and

machinery, he said that this budgetary measure would help the country's industrial sector to accommodate itself more effectively in the international market. He, however, apprehended that the imposition of supplementary tax will increase the prices of the end products.

Prof Shamsul Huq made plea for reducing public expenditures by cutting down expenses in unproductive sectors, effecting transfer of state owned enterprises and selecting productive development projects.

Dr Salahuddin Ahmed said the budget had not addressed the issue of the impact of World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s measures on Bangladesh economy. He said preparations must be taken to face the challenges of these measures particularly in textile sector.



Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy accorded a reception to folk singer Nurunnahar on Monday. Nurunnahar, who started her career back in 1944 with the All India Radio, was awarded a crest and Tk 10,000 in cash for her contribution in the field. Photo journalist Monowar Ahmed is her son.

What's on today . . .

Dialogue: A public dialogue on "Public Interest and the Judiciary: Towards the next Millennium" will be held. Organiser: Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum (YEP forum), British Council and The Daily Star. Venue: British Council Auditorium. Time: 5.00pm.

Film show: Two films, *The Elephant* and *The Bicycle* and *Close-up*, will be screened as part of the 13th founding anniversary programmes of Zahir Raihan Film Society. Venue: Goethe Institute, House No 10, Rd No 9, Dhanmondi R/A. Time: 5.00 pm and 7.00 pm respectively.

Seminar: A seminar will be held on "Tofazzal Hossain Manik Miah and Contemporary Journalism." Organiser: Tofazzal Hossain Manik Miah Smriti Sangsad. Venue: VIP lounge, Jatiya Press Club. Time: 4.30 pm.

Film show: *Le Colonel Chabert* by Yves Angelo will be screened. Organiser: Chalchitrom Film Society in association with Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Venue: Auditorium of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 6.00 pm.

Weather

Rise in day temp likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Chittagong, Barisal, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and at few places over Dhaka and Khulna divisions till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderately heavy falls is also likely at one or two places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions during the period. Met Office said adding that slight rise in day temperature is expected over the country.

The country's highest temperature 33.1 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and the lowest 23.0 degrees at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets in the city today at 6:50 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:14 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	in Celsius		percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.0	26.6	88	90
Chittagong	31.0	25.5	88	95
Rajshahi	31.0	26.2	92	90
Khulna	32.5	25.0	82	77

US businessmen

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Business Council for International Understanding in New York.

A number of leading US investors and businessmen attended the luncheon. They included Carter Booth, Managing Director of Chase Manhattan Bank, Joseph Hillings, Vice President and General Manager of Enron Corporation, Sheikh Anwar Hossain, President, Metallurgic Marine Corporation, Peter Howell, Group Marketing Executive of the Asia Pacific Region of the Citigroup, Charles Pierce, Vice President, UNOCOL Bangladesh and Ambassador International Group.

Syed Tanvir Hossain, Additional Secretary and F A Shamim Ahmed, Deputy Permanent Representative also attended the luncheon.

The minister drew their attention to the growth potential in the Asian region in the coming years and highlighted the unique business opportunities that Bangladesh offers to US companies. He mentioned in particular the huge reserve of gas in Bangladesh, which could be utilised for building power plants and other gas based industries.

In this connection, he also stressed his satisfaction over the growing interest of the US companies to explore the business potential in the country. He assured them that the government of Bangladesh would further expand the incentive regimes for foreign investors.

Earlier, the minister attended a discussion at the Stevens Institute of Technology, New Jersey where he was briefed about a new inexpensive method to treat the arsenic contamination problem in Bangladesh.

Cairn

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concerns to Shell. At that time, it sought government permission for 50 per cent of operatorship transfer. However, the law ministry late last year sought Cairn's clarification saying that the PSC did not have room for operatorship transfer.

But Cairn went for full operatorship transfer. Several meetings regarding the issue has taken place to date between Cairn and the government. "But the ultimate decision would come once the law ministry clears the matter regarding full operatorship transfer," commented one source.

Besides PSC-related legal issues, there are other vital yet unresolved issues lying with Cairn, including the Sangu budget.

Cairn and its partner in Sangu gasfield, Halliburton Brown and Root which has a 25 per cent stake, carried out the erection work of unimproved platform at the Bay of Bengal, laid 50 km pipeline under the sea and constructed the gas processing plant at Chittagong, Chittagong. They earlier submitted a budget of 188 million US dollar with an element of 25 million dollars as contingency fund. But later the companies submitted a revised budget of 264 million dollars and Petrobangla rejected it, terming it "grossly inflated and false". Cairn has not given up its budget claims as yet.

Besides, Petrobangla has accused Cairn of unauthorised and excess expenditures and putting across inflated and distorted statement of expenditure and accounts. It also charged Cairn with buying a 25-year old rig at a much higher price without prior approval of Petrobangla and re-furbishing it at an enormous cost.

Bus run delayed

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buses. There will be two armed Ansars in the buses for security.

Regular commercial operation is likely to begin on July 5. Two buses will leave Dhaka and another two will leave Calcutta six days a week barring Sunday.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will run one of the buses and the other will be from a private tour operator — Shamoli Paribahan — which had leased its bus to BRTC for the trial run on April 6.

The private sector will be given most of the business after three months following an evaluation of the service by the communication ministry.

Customs checking of passengers will be done at the Kamalapur terminal in Dhaka and at Salt Lake terminal near Calcutta.

West Bengal Transport Minister Subhash Chakravarty is expected to receive the Bangladesh passengers.

Immigration formalities will be done at Benapole border in Bangladesh and at Petrapole in West Bengal. Officials said formalities at the two border posts will not take more than an hour.

The direct bus service follows an agreement signed between Bangladesh and India on June 17 in Dhaka.

Father kills son in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, June 29: A 65-year-old man was arrested on charge of killing his son at Aatarkhali village of Ikra union under Bhandaria thana of Pirojpur district yesterday.

The victim was identified as Belayet Hossain, 32. His wife was also injured when she tried to resist her father-in-law from hitting her husband with an axe.

According to police, Belayet was sleeping in his house at noon when his father, Moazzem Hossain, chopped him to death. Hearing a hue and cry, villagers rushed to the spot and caught Moazzem. Later, he was handed over to the police.

The motive behind the killing could not be known.

OIC summit in Burkina Faso beings Bangladesh pledges support to dev of Muslim Ummah

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso, June 29: Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad has said Bangladesh is deeply committed to the ideals of the IOC and is continuously supporting its programmes for development of the Islamic Ummah, reports BSS.

He said this while addressing the 26th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at the International Centre here yesterday.

Azad said, "Social and economic backwardness of a large majority of the Muslim countries stand in our way to compete with the outside world. The challenge has become even more formidable with the globalisation of the world economy. We are finding it difficult to rely on trade as an engine of growth unless our efforts are backed by special provisions in the WTO, UNCTAD and other international forums."

He regretted that the LDCs are receiving a very small share of the shrinking international financial resources from private sources.

He said, poverty continues to be the primary impediment to the development process of the LDCs. The situation in many of the member states, including those in Africa, is grave and needs special attention.

He said, twenty-five years ago in 1974, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leading the first delegation of Bangladesh to the historic Lahore Summit of the OIC, had declared that "a concerted and well planned action on our part can remove the historic injustices which have been inflicted on our brethren. By the grace of

Allah, today we are in a position to consolidate our resources behind a strategy which can secure peace and justice for all of us. I pledge that seventy-five million people of Bangladesh are fully committed to contribute in every way possible to the success of this strategy."

Azad said, the people of Bangladesh have remained true to the pledge. The pledge was renewed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the 8th Summit of the OIC held in Tehran in 1997, this time on behalf of 120 million people of Bangladesh.

The Foreign Minister also said, "Our rights, including the rights of women, are guaranteed in Islam. We must therefore step up our efforts to bring the strength of the women population of the Ummah into the mainstream of all spheres of society. Our Prime Minister, the only woman head of government of a Muslim country, had highlighted this aspect at the Tehran Summit."

In his statement, Azad reiterated Bangladesh's total support to the Palestinian peoples struggle for self-determination and called for the early resumption of the Middle East Peace Process on all tracks. The Foreign Minister condemned the Serbian regime for its policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Kosovar Muslims and demanded their repatriation under the purview of the Security Council Resolutions.

He said the tension between our two neighbouring countries over Kashmir is a matter of deep concern. We hope that the

two sides would be able to find a solution on the issue through negotiations."

Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, inaugurated the 26th ICFM in the morning and urged peace and partnerships for development among the member states of the IOC.

The opening session was chaired by the Chairman of the 25th ICFM, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar Ahmed Abdullah Al Mahmoud.

In the first session, the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, Youssef Onedrago, was elected Chairman of the 26th ICFM.

OIC Secretary General Dr Azzeddine Laraki also spoke on this occasion on various problems and prospects of OIC, with special reference to its development projects and financial constraints.

Soon after the first session was over, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad had a meeting with Burkina Faso Foreign Minister Youssef Onedrago at his office chamber at the conference centre and discussed various issues of the OIC and its future programmes.

Azad held a meeting with Foreign Minister of Brunei Darussalam Prince Mohamed Bolkiha at the conference centre and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister of Iraq Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf had a meeting with Azad at the meeting room of the conference centre. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf explained the economic situation of Iraq and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Wheels of change? Mirza Abbas, four others

By Staff Correspondent
Warrants were issued against former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and BNP leader Mirza Abbas and four others by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, today. The order followed a charge sheet by the Anti-Corruption Bureau on June 28.

Departmental action is being initiated against seven government officials including a deputy secretary for their collusion with Abbas. The charge said Abbas and his relatives in collusion with some government officials had acquired land in 1994 from the government illegally causing a loss of Tk 99 lakh to the government. Abdullah-hil-Zaid, Anti-Corruption Officer, who is leading a task force investigating the incident, is the plaintiff on behalf of the government.

The four other accused are Zahiruddin Babul, Mozammel Huq Bhuiyan, Mirza Khairul Hossain and Mirza Ekramul Hossain. The charge said Abbas decided about giving transit facilities to India in routes Delhi want. During his recent trip to Dhaka, India, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was assured that Bangladesh would study India's proposals and the *modus operandi* for providing facilities for movement of cargo to its seven eastern states. There has also been talks on opening up rail links.

The outcome of the Dhaka-Calcutta bus operations will point out in the not too distant future, the directions and modes in which there could be opening up of surface communication between Bangladesh and India.

For both the countries, prudence and caution should dictate the pace and speed of change. The slow but gradual opening up of Dhaka-Calcutta bus service is a good index to go by.

47 outlaws surrender

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, June 29: Forty-seven outlaws of four thanas in Khulna district surrendered to police laying down 38 illegal arms on Sunday and Monday.

The thanas are Rupsha, Batiakata, Dakop and Paikgachha. Khulna police super said that the firearms deposited to police by the outlaws included 303 rifles, home-made guns and pipeguns.

The second referendum was held on March 21, 1985 on whether HM Ershad should remain as President.

It was shown that 94.47 per cent votes were cast in favour of "Yes" while only 5.53 per cent for "No."

Hasina said the third referendum was held on September 15, 1991 on whether the President should give consent to the 12th Amendment of the Constitution.

A total of 83.64 per cent voters said "Yes" while 15.39 per cent said "No."

Ocalan

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killed in fighting with the who were waiting to hear the verdict in Mudanya, the embarkation point for the prison island of Imrali.

"Death to Apo (Ocalan's nickname), Imrali will be a grave for Ocalan," they shouted, applauding and waving Turkish flags.

"Today is a great day for us," a teary-eyed woman, bearing a photograph of her slain son, said.

In his final statement to the court, Ocalan declared: "I do not accept the treason charges," Anatolia said.

He also accepted all charges, laid against him, but called on the court to spare his life so that he could help find a peaceful end to the Kurds' long and bloody struggle with the Turkish state.

Turkish authorities brushed aside his call, refusing to negotiate with what they call a "terrorist organization".

The sentence came amid heightened security measures by Turkish troops and threats of retaliatory attacks by the PKK if their leader is executed.

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Question hour

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ministration.

The recommendations would be implemented as soon as the government received the report, she said.

Replying to Kazi Sekandar Ali (AL-Khulna) she said the recommendations of the National Wage Commission have already been implemented.

Both the commissions were constituted in 1996.

Referendum

Hasina also said that so far three referendums were held in the country.

The first referendum was held on May 30, 1977 through which the then Chief Martial Law Administrator and President Ziaur Rahman entered into active politics.

It was shown that 88.05 per cent voters took part in the referendum and about 99.88 per cent votes went in favour of Ziaur Rahman, said the Prime Minister.

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Bangabhaban scam

Bail prayers of 7 rejected

By Staff Correspondent
Bail prayers of seven people, including an accounts' officer of Bangabhaban, Abdul Mannan Siddiqui, were rejected by the court yesterday