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JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf

How fast does Mashur Rahman talk?
Finance Minister SAMS Kibria's assessment is that it is of an express train.
Kibria's accolade found the young BNP lawmaker, grinning. "I've learnt the art of swift-talk from Tofail Ahmed (commerce and industries minister). Tofail is my teacher; he has the speed of a aeroplane," the promising parliamentarian responded.
"I see) My analogy is well taken (although understated). In future, (to make him happier) I'll compare him with the plane," a smiling Kibria said, appreciating the opposition deputy's sense of humour.
But the minister's comparison did not satisfy Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, whose unusual (fast) speed of talking sometimes generate laughter in the House. "I think the minister has come up with a wrong comparison. Your (Mashur's) speed can only match that of a hurricane."

Several BNP legislators yesterday ridiculed the finance minister for his "contradictory" statement regarding the national budget for 1999-2000.

By your withdrawal, you've proven that you had imposed new taxes. If not, what have you withdrawn? Goutam Chakravartey asked rhetorically.

The opposition MPs argued

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DCC budget

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182.77 crore.
In the last fiscal, revenue expenditure was estimated at Tk 99.11 crore but actual expenditure was Tk 90.68 crore. In the 1999-2000 budget Tk 99.66 crore has been earmarked for the same account.
The highest earning of Tk 106 crore will come from holding tax while the highest revenue expenditure of Tk 48.50 crore will be spent on salary, honorarium and allowance of the corporation's staff.

In his budgetary speech, the Mayor said that four sectors would get priority. They are: Road construction and repair, street light, mosquito control and conservancy (waste disposal).

He admitted that the current budget has a reduced expenditure for public parks. It came down to Tk 25 lakh this year from Tk one crore last fiscal.

Responding to queries after the budget announcement, the Mayor again emphasised the need for a metropolitan government. He said, he failed to eradicate terrorism as he had no authority over police.

Hamid was taken aback when a journalist pointed at the MP of Lalbagh area, Haji Selim, sitting by the Mayor, and said: "Mr Mayor, how can you eradicate terrorism when a confessed terrorist is sitting beside you? He himself has recently confessed in a newspaper interview that he has lot of cadres under his command."

The Mayor replied rhetorically, "Why do you always consider 'cadre' in a negative sense? A cadre can be a person who comes forward selflessly, risking his life to help society. Thanks to Haji Selim, Lalbagh area today is free of terrorism."

The Mayor Mohammad Hanif presented the last budget of the century at the recently renovated conference hall of the Nagar Bhavan yesterday. City ward commissioners were also present at the conference. The budget was earlier passed unanimously at a meeting of the ward commissioners on June 22, the mayor said.

A Summer To Look Out For

Why wait till winter to be well dressed and chic? Summer is the longest season of the year and the hottest!

The Daily Star has an exciting surprise for all fashion conscious men and women. Take on summer with style and flair. Look out for more details in the next few days.

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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Demand for fine rice abroad 100MTs to be exported this year

By Reaz Ahmad

Some 100 metric tons (MT) of Bangladesh quality rice are being exported this year under private initiatives, market sources said.

"Although in terms of money, it would be small, fetching around Tk one crore — it would be a big boost to export of non-traditional items," said a leading exporter.

The bulk of the rice being exported is Kalizira — a fine brand of fragrant rice produced in the northern region of the country. Export price of Kalizira is around two US dollars per kg.

After three years of small scale experimental rice export, the import order in bulk has been received from US when the country is in short supply of the export variety. Production of Kalizira was badly affected by the devastating floods in the aman season last year.

Freshland Foods Limited in Dhaka has been exporting Kalizira to US market for over three years. But this year, it has already exported some 50 MT and is now facing shortage of supply to meet export commitment.

Freshland's managing director MG Murtaza could not say who are the other rice exporters but said the export volume would be over 100 MT this year.

Availability of home-grown rice in a foreign land has already become a 'symbol of national pride' for thousands of Bangladeshis there, who had to buy Pakistani Basmati rice previously, people involved in export said.

Freshland exports Kalizira in eight-pound bags to Eastland Seafood Inc., a New York-based food trading house. From there, the Bangladesh rice finds its way to other major US cities including Los Angeles, Florida, Chicago, Boston and Delaware Valley.

Murtaza said that besides Bangladeshis, many Indians, Filipinos and Caribbeans living there are also fond of Kalizira. Restaurants owned by Bangladeshi nationals also purchase it.

Freshland procures the rice from wholesalers in Dhaka markets. Quality of rice becomes a major concern for the exporters as, they noted, unscrupulous traders try to mix poor quality rice with Kalizira.

They said if the government departments concerned come up with market promotion initiatives and farmers' interest in quality rice cultivation is sustained, rice export to US would rise to over 500 MT.

Syed MD Abider Rahman, proprietor of Nabob Traders, one of the biggest wholesalers of quality rice, feels that if private sector exporters get patronage from the authorities and Export Promotion Bureau takes active interest in this regard, "the country's tremendous potential for rice export can be utilised."

Farmers lose interest in producing quality rice as a stable market and reasonable price for it is uncertain, he said.

"If more foreign markets are explored and farmers are given price incentives, Bangladesh would be able to earn a substantial amount of foreign exchange by exporting rice," he said confidently.

Meanwhile, a recent study carried out by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute said that Bangladesh should start exporting rice to attain self-sufficiency in food production. It cited Vietnam as an example to how a food deficit country emerged as the second biggest rice exporter in the world.



A sack of Kalizira rice ready for export.

—Star photo

4 plainclothes armed patrol teams for Agrabad

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 29: Four plainclothes armed patrol teams have been formed to maintain law and order in Agrabad commercial area.

Besides, three police officers will be engaged in each thana of the city with full-time telephone facilities to record crimes and complaints.

This was stated today by the commissioner of Chittagong metropolitan police A T Ahmedul Huq Chowdhury while exchanging views with the businessmen, traders and industrialists at the office of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI).

In the meeting, CCCI president Kamal Uddin Ahmed pointed out that in the past six months 54 murders, 15 cases of abduction, 54 incidents of mugging, 31 dacoities and 13 cases of women repression took place in the city due to deterioration of law and order.

The chamber president called upon the police administration to take appropriate measures for curbing crimes in the city.

Religious groups ask B Chy to apologise

Several religious groups yesterday blasted Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury for comparing the educational background of Prophet Mohammad (SM) with that of the BNP chief, Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

Jatiya Ulema Parishad in a statement demanded that Prof Chowdhury to repent and apologise to the people for his "unpardonable offence".

The Ulema Parishad also staged a protest rally in front of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque and marched through the city streets.

Greater Faridpur Ulema Kalyan Parishad president Maulana M A Alim Faridi in a statement demanded withdrawal of the comments of Prof Chowdhury during his budget speech in Jatiya Sangsad in which he said "Rasul himself was not an educated man."

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) also staged a protest march in the city and held a rally at the Madhur Canteen at Dhaka University.

"He not only committed a sin by his utterance, but also hurt the sentiment of the Muslims of the country," a BCL statement said.

The statement urged the religious experts to declare the BNP leader a "murtad" unless he publicly apologises for his comments.

JCD workers clash with police in Ctg: 50 injured

CHITTAGONG, June 29: At least 50 people were injured in a series of clashes between JCD workers and policemen in front of Deputy Commissioner's office here today, reports UNB.

Police resorted to lathicharge to disperse JCD workers who went there to stage a demonstration and submit a memorandum to the DC at about 11 am. The JCD workers also exploded bombs, witnesses said.

Of the injured, four JCD workers and a policeman were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The court activities came to a halt due to the clashes.

JCD blamed the police for attacking them without any provocation. It said eight JCD members were arrested but police said they didn't pick up anyone.

Earlier, JCD held a rally at Zila Parishad Market.

Murder near court

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Shamsul Haq said they, along with five others, went to the court at around 10.30 am yesterday in connection with hearing of a case filed with Cantonment Thana in 1993 under the Explosives Act. Nine others were also accused in the case, they said.

After the hearing, Azad, his brother Koichi, uncle Shamsul Haq and five others started walking on the Court House Street towards the chamber of advocate Shah Alam.

Suddenly, some people appeared and closed in on Azad. He then started running towards the north end of the crowded Court House Street and at one stage he tried to escape through the Julon Bari Lane, a narrow alley, our court correspondent said.

But, one of the killers intercepted him at the entrance of the alley. At this, Azad changed his direction and again started running towards the south end of the Court House Street where the assailants shot him.

Samsul Haq said that the mother and sister of Azad were



Traffic jam has become a regular phenomenon in the city. This picture was taken from in front of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday.

—Star photo

Electrical association says New taxes to cripple small industries

By Mustak Hossain

Bangladesh Electrical Association has said supplementary taxes on electrical goods proposed in the budget for 1999-2000 will "destroy" small industries manufacturing these items.

"The move will also increase smuggling of electrical goods from the neighbouring country," Mosharraf Hossain, Chairman of BEA, the apex body of electrical goods manufacturers, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the proposed taxes will cripple the local electrical industries now in a developing stage.

He urged the government to withdraw the proposed VAT and supplementary taxes on electric products including register, capacitor, ballast, circuit breaker, fuse, relay, switch, plug and socket, lamp holder and electrical wire etc.

Most of the units producing these items are like cottage industries and VAT will severely affect those, he said.

The BEA Chairman said Pre-shipment inspection will increase harassment of importers by customs. The government should ensure that there will be no harassment during PSI.

The association hailed the government decision to reduce import duty on copper cathode and aluminium ingot to 5 per cent from 7.5 per cent. But reduction of duty on copper wire rod and aluminium wire rod to 15 per cent from 30 per cent will affect small industries making those items, he said.

"This will force closure of small metallurgical factories which produce primary raw materials for electrical goods manufacturers" the BEA Chairman said.

But he said his authority was limited compared to speakers of other parliaments and added that his options were confined only to switching off the mike and urging the lawmakers to use decent language, the release said.

Farida Akhter, Dr Naila Khan, Advocate Elinor Khan Akhter, Advocate Elinor Khan Seema Das, Shamsunnahar, Ayesha Islam, Selina Malik, Anowara Begum, Shirin Azizi and Said Akhter, among others, represented the group, it added.

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Question hour

1215 terrorists held in 2 months till June 22: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in Parliament yesterday that 1215 terrorists were arrested under the 'special combating operation' till June 22, reports UNB.

The police operation started on April 22.

Replying to Meher Afroz (AL) during the PM's question hour, Hasina said besides the arrested terrorists, some 59,320 wanted persons were also nabbed during the operation.

She informed the House that a total of 1151 arms were recovered from the possession of the arrested.

PARC

The Prime Minister said that the Public Administration Reforms Commission is finalising its recommendations to ensure discipline, efficiency and accountability in the ad-

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CSM workers call hartal in Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 29: The agitating workers of Chittagong Steel Mills called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong tomorrow demanding withdrawal of pay-off decision.

The government took the

The proposed hartal was called off following a fruitful discussion between the CBA leaders and the government representative last night, according to a late night BSS report.

pay-off decision to close the mills for BMRE as it was incurring huge loss, official sources said.

But the workers have been agitating opposing the government decision for the past few months.

Earlier the agitating workers enforced a hartal in Chittagong demanding reopening of the mills.

Barricade

From Page 1

cade programme after mill authorities failed to pay their dues as per the agreement signed with the authorities.

There are about 10,000 workers and employees in the three mills. Workers of Anwara-Kashem are not getting their salaries for six months and that of the Mokbulur for five months.

Railway sources said train service between Chittagong and other parts of the country was suspended due to barricade programme.

Seven trains — Subarna, Provati, Paharika and Karnaphuli departing Chittagong and Down train Tarna and Dhaka-Chittagong mail from Dhaka and Udayan from Sylhet — remained stranded.

The trains which reached Sitakundu from Dhaka and Sylhet went back failing to move to Chittagong, the sources added.

Senior police officials and Thana Nirbahi officers, Sitakundu had a meeting with the union leaders of three jute mills, but failed to resolve the dispute. The agitated workers vowed to continue their programme till the demands were met.

About five platoons of police were deployed at Barabankunda to foil any attempt of violence.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum (YEP Forum) in cooperation with **The Daily Star** and **The British Council** will hold a meeting on 'Public Interest and the Judiciary'. Eminent Judges, Lawyers, Jurists, Social Activists and Young Professionals will participate.

Date : 30 June, Wednesday

Time : 5 p.m. (sharp)

Venue : British Council Auditorium

You are cordially invited to attend and participate. Please register your name through Phone (9883161, 885214), Fax (863035, 886061, 9554160 or E-mail (dstar@bangla.net, monjurulkabir@usa.net).

We also invite you to send in a small write-up on the issue (250 words) which we will publish in the YEP page of The Daily Star.

We look forward to seeing you!