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## JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf

How fast does Mashir

Rahman talk?

Finance Minister SAMS

Kibria 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 understood). 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 (Mashir'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 If not, what have you withdrawn?"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 Chakravarthi asked rhetorically.

The opposition MPs argued

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## DCC budget

From Page 1

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.

Harif 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 Bhaban 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.

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

By Reaz Ahmad

Some 100 metric tons (MT) of Bangladeshi 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 US when the country is in short supply of the export variety. Production of Kalizira was badly affected by the devastating floods in the anan 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 Bangladeshi 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 Bangladeshi 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 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

how a food deficit country

emerged as the second biggest rice exporter in the world.

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 business, traders and industrialists at the office of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI).

In the meeting, CCCI president

Camal 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.

## 4 plainclothes armed patrol teams for Agrabad

From Staff Correspondent

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## 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 repeat 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 police in front of Deputy Commissioner's office here today, reports BSS.

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.

The SNS leaders demanded active role of the Chair to stop use of such filthy language on the floor of the highest law-making body.

The Speaker told them that he repeatedly urged the lawmakers not to use such language in the House.

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 Sultana Akhter, Advocate Elina Khan, Seema Das, Shamsunnahar, Ayesha Islam, Selina Mallik, Anowara Begum, Shirin Azizi and Saida Akhtar, among others, represented the group, it added.

## 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 Kochi, 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 Jhulon Bar Lane, a narrow alley, our court correspondent said.

Police could not arrest any of the alleged killers till filing of this report last night. No case was lodged, police said.

Kafrel police said that Jahangir and Azad were leaders of terrorist groups involved in murder, extortion and other criminal activities in Kafrel and cantonment thana areas.

They also possessed illegal arms and explosives. Police said that a member of Jahangir group was murdered allegedly by Azad group in 1994.

Meanwhile, a tense situation was prevailing in Ibrahimpur area after the news of the killing spread there. Extra police force were deployed in the

area.

Samsul Haq said that the mother and sister of Azad were

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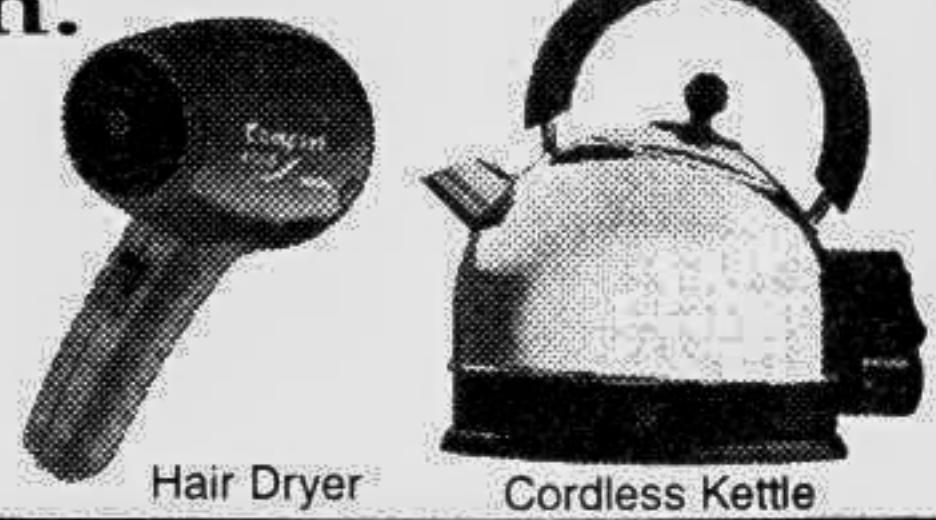
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## Question hour

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 combing operation' till June 22, reports UNB.

The police operation started on April 22.

Replies 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 administration.

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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 1