

## BSP slams new import duty on newsprint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) yesterday expressed its deep concern over imposition of 100 per cent LC margin on import of newsprint.

Bangladesh Bank on Tuesday imposed 100 per cent LC margin on import of 56 luxury items including newsprint in view of the declining foreign exchange reserve in the country.

In a statement BSP protested inclusion of newsprint in the list of luxury items. Newspaper is not a luxury item. It is a low cost essential item which plays a vital role in consolidating democracy and ensuring transparency in governance, it said.

The BSP mentioned that the information minister earlier assured newspaper editors and publishers that any decision involving newspaper industry would be taken after consulting them. It said certain quarters in industries and finance

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Zimbabwean batsman Grant Flower stands his ground as Bangladesh players rejoice his dismissal on the first day of the second Test at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

## Spl drive at Feni 25 BNP, JCD, Jubo Dal men picked up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A total of 25 leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations, Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), were arrested from three constituencies of the district on the first day of a special drive yesterday.

The police-BDR joint drive began on Wednesday night following a government directive.

Sources said three platoons each of police and BDR led by 10 magistrates have been launching the drive in a bid to curb terrorism in various places of Feni, the most violence-prone district of the country.

The arrested BNP men are former Sonagazi thana Jubo Dal convener Mofiz Patoary, Sadar thana JCD president Zakir Hossain, former UP chairman and BNP leader Amir Hossain, Zafarullah, Abdul Haq, Imam Hosain, Monir Uddin, Abdul Alim, Abdul Kader, S i r a j i

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## NBR misses revenue target as public sector delays payment

Tk 770cr duty outstanding with BPC, Tk 600cr VAT with gas distribution cos

RAFIQ HASAN

Non-payment of value-added tax (VAT) and customs duty by public-sector companies have caused the shortfall in revenue target during the first four months of the current fiscal, National Board of Revenue (NBR) sources said.

Nearly Tk 770 crore remains in arrears with the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) in customs duty on import of petroleum products and Tk 640 crore with gas distribution companies in VAT.

"They have collected VAT from the consumers but are yet to pay it to the public exchequer," said NBR Chairman Dr. Shoeb Ahmed.

Had the public-sector companies paid customs duty and VAT regularly, the revenue target could have been surpassed, he said.

However, the NBR chairman hoped that the target would be achieved by the year-end because "they (the companies) would definitely pay VAT and duties, only they are delaying it".

Besides non-payment of duties and VAT, there are

some external factors that affect revenue collection but "are beyond our control", Dr. Shoeb said.

"For example, revenue collection declines if import reduces due to global economic recession and we have nothing to do in this regard," he explained.

Around Tk 200 crore usually comes from the petroleum and gas sector every month. However, no amount has been realised from these sectors since the beginning of the current fiscal, the NBR sources revealed.

On the other hand, revenue collection from telecom sector also remains unrealised due to problems related to telephone billing system, the sources said.

Revenue collection has fallen Tk 445 crore short of the target in the first four months of the 2001-02 fiscal. Total collection for the July-October period stands at Tk 5,425 crore against a target of Tk 5,870 crore.

Revenue target for the current fiscal has been fixed at Tk 20,730 crore in the budget proposed by the immediate-past Awami League government.

However, upon taking over as the finance and planning minister of the BNP-led government, M Saifur

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Probe into alleged scam in Mig-29s, frigate purchase on

Minister tells Jatiya Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A minister told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the government was investigating the alleged scam in the purchase of Mig-29 fighter planes and a frigate by the previous Awami League government.

Responding to queries by members of both treasury and opposition (Jatiya Party) benches, Minister in charge of Defence in parliament Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Bir Bikram, said the probe report will soon be placed before the House.

He also assured the House that there was no bar on further investigation into the matter by a judicial committee or by a parliamentary one should the House find the probe report to be prepared by the Bureau of Anti-corruption inadequate.

On a question from Prof. Shahidul Islam of Kustia-2, the minister said the government had procured eight Mig-29 aircraft on June 28, 1999 through an inter-government contract between Bangladesh and the Russian

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Shipu's family under threat from accused in murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An accused in businessman Iftekhar Ahmed Shipu murder case, released on bail by the High Court on November 5, is now threatening the victim's family.

Family members alleged yesterday that Joy Hasib, one of the six accused in the case, is now threatening them over telephone. He has also embarked on raising 'funds' from businessmen at Banani and Gulshan area, to secure release of two other accused in the case who are still behind bars, they said.

Three gunmen shot dead Shipu, 38, at UAE Market on the night of May 24 last year. His brother

Ishtiaque Ahmed filed a case with Gulshan thana accusing Ziauddin Ahmed Jewel, son of former MP Kamal Majumder, Naimuzzaman Jubair, son of Director of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), Safiul Alam, Joy Hasib, Arif Ahmed Sagar and Kazi Sharif Sakil.

Inspector of Detectives Rezaul Karim submitted chargesheet against all the six on October 2 last year. Of them, police arrested Joy Hasib, Arif Ahmed Sagar and Kazi Sharif Sakil. The three others have been absconding since the murder.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia listens to Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Harun-ar-Rashid (L) as Rear Admiral Abu Tahir and Air Vice Marshal Rafiqul Islam look on during a meeting at her office yesterday.



Rouful Hassan

## Journalist Rouful Hassan no more

STAR REPORT

Rouful Hassan, a renowned sports writer and Special Correspondent of The Bangladesh Observer, died at a city hospital yesterday evening. He was 54.

Rouful had suffered a stroke last Saturday.

He died in his sleep at the Shamorfa Hospital at 6:50pm.

A career-journalist, Rouful fell ill while covering the first Test between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. He suffered a severe stroke at his Shaymoli residence in the early hours on Saturday and was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later to the private hospital.

His body was kept at the BIRDEM mortuary last night and would be brought to the Jatiya Press Club for his press colleagues to pay their last respects today.

His namaj-e-janaza will be held at the Baitul Mokarram

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



A traffic snarl-up at Paltan crossing in the city yesterday during the half-day hartal called countrywide by the Left Democratic Front (LDF).

## Hartal observed in greater Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

The half-day hartal enforced by Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad in the greater Chittagong district protesting violence against minorities was observed peacefully yesterday.

The hartal coincided with another six-hour nationwide shutdown called by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) protesting the government's reported move to sell gas to India and the US attacks on Afghanistan.

All educational institutions and business establishments remained closed during the hartal hours. All modes of vehicles, except rickshaws, stayed off the roads but train services and air traffic were not stopped.

Although loading and unloading of goods were carried out as usual in the port, delivery of goods was disrupted due to hartal. Production in industrial areas was also partially disrupted.

## 7 jewellery shops looted in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Dacoits looted gold ornaments worth Tk 7.50 lakhs from five jewellery shops at Kawan Bazar in Lohagara upazila on Wednesday night.

Police said, the dacoits start looting the shops at around 10.00 pm. They also beat up two night guards and some businessmen before leaving the scene.

## City BNP leader shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A BNP leader was shot by armed miscreants in the city early yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam Babu, vice-president of ward no 51 unit of BNP, was seriously injured when unidentified miscreants shot him in front of his house at Sukrabad in the early hours of yesterday. They called Babu out of his house at about 3:30 am and shot in his hand and chest.

He was operated upon at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). His condition was stated to be critical.

The reason behind the attack could not be known.

## Attacks on minorities, AL men Hasina plans all-party nat'l convention

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina plans to hold an all-party National Convention on pre-and-post-election "atrocities" on general people, Awami League workers and religious minorities across the country.

The planned convention styled "crimes against humanity" is likely to be convened by end of December or early January.

Talking to some senior journalists of news agencies and national dailies at her Dhanmondi residence yesterday, Sheikh Hasina said all democratic and progressive political parties, professional groups, civil societies, intellectuals, journalists and cultural activists from across the country would be involved in organising the grand meet.

Expressing deep concern over the way the "BNP-Jamaat terrorists" have been unleashing torture, killing, rape and looting in a systematic manner, she said, the atrocities surpassed even those during 1971.

Hasina observed that the people of this country witnessed the change of power in 1990 with the fall of Ershad and in 1996 with the fall of Khaleda Zia through mass movement, but there had not been any such crimes against humanity.

Killing of innocent people, raping of Hindu, Christian and even Muslim girls and women continued indiscriminately, she alleged, adding that many could not tell their story of tragedy to avoid further victimisation.

"We had also been in power, but

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## JS told Over 3 lakh cft timber allocated to ministers, MPs during AL rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 3,06,681 cubic feet (cft) of timber was allocated from the country's forest resources among ministers, parliament members and eminent personalities during last five years of Awami League rule, Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

He was replying to a question from ruling party lawmaker Md Shahidul Islam.

Fourteen ministers, 164 parliament members (both from the then ruling and opposition parties) and 475 eminent personalities were given the permits for the timber between July 1, 1996 and June 30, 2001.

But two ruling party MPs Abdul

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## No scope for gas export thru' pipeline in PSCs

Speakers tell roundtable in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called upon the government not to export gas through pipeline and to explore its various use in the country.

As per Article 143 of the Constitution, people are the owners of all resources including gas and any decision on this should be taken through a referendum, they said.

The speakers including experts were participating in a roundtable on "Role of Civil Society in Using and Protecting Valuable Gas Asset of Bangladesh", held at the IDB Bhawan in the city.

They included Prof Mossain Mansur, former chairman of Petrobangla, Nuruddin Kamal, former chairman of PDB, Awami League MP Col. (Rtd) Faruq Khan, columnist ABM Musa, Khandaker Majharul Karim, Prof Hamida Banu of Chittagong University, Prof Selina Akhter Jahan, Abul Bashar, former president of Workers Party, Masuda Banu and Advocate Delwar Hossain Bhuiyan.

Former UN consultant Akber Shah Koreshe moderated the discussion, organised by Sadhana Sangsad.

Prof Hossain Mansur said the gas reserve is around 11 trillion cubic feet (TCF) which can meet the local demand for 23 years only. Power plants and fertiliser factories might have to be shut down after 10 years if Bangladesh exports gas.

He gave a brief comparison of Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) signed during the rule of both BNP

export of gas in the PSCs signed during the AL regime." He said the former BNP government allocated eight blocks to multinational companies on the basis of negotiation without any international tender.

"The (former) BNP government handed over the Jalalabad gas field along with blocks 13 and 14 to Occidental on January 11 in 1995.

"All the agreements signed during BNP rule was in the interest of foreign multinational", he claimed. "The AL government, after taking over power in 1996, made a model PSC keeping the country's interest", he said.

Most of the speakers contradicted Energy Minister AKM Mosharraf's recent remarks that electricity could be imported from India, which wants to import Bangladesh's gas through pipeline.

"Will the electricity produced by India with our gas be cheaper than that produced in the country?" Hossain asked.

There is no mention about gas export in the PSC signed by Unocal on Block 7 last year. But now it is desperately lobbying for export of gas to India through pipeline, Hossain said.

He focused on the success stories of BAPEX, Petrobangla's exploration unit, saying it has discovered nine gas fields by digging 18 wells.

Nuruddin Kamal said Unocal is spreading controversy by giving wrong information regarding gas

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## 'Bridge gap between agro-tech, field-level application'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Country's leading agricultural scientists yesterday called for bridging the gap between available agro-technology and its field-level application.

While addressing the award distribution ceremony of a photography exhibition titled 'Rice and Life in Bangladesh' at the National Press Club yesterday, discussants noted that many scientific inventions and newer technologies were not being applied to the fields due to lack of initiatives.

Forum for Information Dissemination on Agriculture (FIDA) organised the photography exhibition

Some 25 photographs depicting rice culture in Bangladesh including the processes of sowing, planting, harvesting, husking, sun drying and milling were exhibited at the Hall Room of the club.

FIDA President, Dr Golam Rahman presided over the award distribution ceremony which was attended by representative of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Dr MA Hamid Miah, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh

Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Dr Nurul Alam, Director General of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) Dr Nurul Islam Bhuiyan and representative of IRRI to Bangladesh Dr Sadiqul Islam Bhuiyan as guests of honour.

Representatives from different agricultural and agro-business institutions, scientists, farmers, amateur as well as press photographers and members. FIDA general secretary Reaz Ahmad delivered welcome address.

Dr Hamid Miah, in his speech,

emphasised on existing gaps between available technologies developed in the country and their practical applications in the farmers' fields. He drew journalists' attention on bringing into public focus the actual achievements attained under agricultural research system in the country.

He noted that it was because of the agro-scientists' dedication to the field that the country's food production had risen to from 11 million MT in 1971 to 25 million MT last year.

Executive Chairman of BARC Dr

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8