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People's Right to Know

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ALERT!
Incidents of mob-execution have climbed alarmingly with 27 already dead in the last 40 days.

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Probe large tax evasions

Saifur gives NBR 15 days' deadline

INAM AHMED
Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has ordered the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to investigate large tax evasions and submit final reports within the next two weeks.
He also asked the tax officials to start an exercise to do away with supplementary duty in the next budget to streamline the country's tax system.
Saifur held a meeting with the NBR officials yesterday and bitterly criticised the performance of tax officials against the backdrop of a stagnating revenue collection which fell short of the half-yearly target by 2.32 per cent.
"Our taxation system is in a jumble," the finance minister was quoted to have said. "When a foreign investor comes here with the information of only five per cent duty on a certain import, he later finds out that the same item is slapped with between 50 and 100 per cent supplementary duty. This is highly misleading. No investor will come here with such dubious tax system."
He categorically said he would like to abolish supplementary duty in the next budget.
Saifur observed that this year's revenue target is quite modest considering

the devaluation and inflation rate, and yet this target remains unfulfilled.
There could be some problem with import duty this year because of import slowdown, but there are no reasons why value added tax and income tax should not perk up.
He blamed that the tax people are not sincere in their work and threatened that any tax commissioner who would fail in his task would be sent on forced retirement.
He categorically asked how much tax the hotels, brickfields and readymade garment manufacturers pay.
"The country's hotel sector contributed Tk 15 crore to the national exchequer last year and Tk 13 crore of it came from three hotels Sheraton, Sonargaon and Purbani. So, what happened to the rest of the hotels, restaurants and guest houses that have boomed in the country lately?" he asked. "Do you keep track of how much tax they evade? I know for sure that these establishments are running at full capacity with good profits."
In response to Saifur's salvos, NBR officials highlighted some of the difficulties they face in their tasks.

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Chinese premier arrives today to bolster ties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji arrives here at 2:30pm today on a three-day official visit to bolster the economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries.
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will receive the Chinese premier and Madam Lao Au at the Zia International Airport. His 150-member entourage will include two ministers -- Minister for Foreign Trade Shi Guongsheng and Minister for Labour and Social Security Zhang Zuojin -- several senior officials and nearly 40 journalists.



Zhu Rongji

Chinese premier's visit is seen as the beginning of a new phase of political and economic ties between the two countries.
Rongji will hold official talks with Khaleda today within hours of his arrival.
Increase in trade and investment and expansion of bilateral relations between the two Asian nations will dominate the meeting.
The Chinese premier's visit comes at a time when China is seen to be seeking to forge firmer relations with some of its neighbours. He is likely to urge Dhaka to play an

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Biman may fare poorly under discounted airfare

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The civil aviation ministry's decision to heavily discount airfare for Biman's wide-bodied aircraft on the Chittagong-Dhaka route has raised apprehensions that the ailing national flag carrier would be made to incur even more losses.
As per the new order made effective from January 7, Biman's middle-east flights that land at Chittagong will carry passengers to Dhaka at a 50 per cent discount rate.
Biman will operate a total of seven flights from Chittagong to Dhaka in five days a week with wide-bodied aircraft, the DC 10-30 and the Airbus. These flights will then fly to the Middle East from Dhaka.
Biman's usual one-way fare for the Dhaka-Chittagong and Chittagong-Dhaka routes is Tk 2000. But with the special discount rate for DC 10-30s or Airbus, Dhaka bound passengers from Chittagong will pay only Tk 1000 to travel economy class and Tk 1200 to travel business class on these wide-bodied aircraft. The new rate will

remain in force for three months till the end of March.
The fare for the usual Biman flights on this route operated with F-28 carriers will however remain Tk 2000 as before.
The ministry's order to lower the airfare nonetheless disregards a Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) directive of September 25, 2000, which actually increased the fare for the domestic route and asked public and private operators to implement the new rate from October 5, 2001.
The CAAB, the official air tariff regulatory body, had prescribed a fare of Tk 2600 for the Chittagong-Dhaka route with a 15 per cent width, which would give the operator the liberty to either raise or lower the fare up to 15 per cent beyond the fixed price.
The important thing that the Biman management or rather the civil aviation ministry somehow overlooked, is that the F-28 carriers flying twice daily to serve the

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Court orders judicial probe into case against Khatib

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday ordered judicial inquiry into the case against Maulana Obaidul Haq, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.
Magistrate Abdus Salam Miah passed the order following a complaint case filed by Advocate SM Nazrul Islam on Tuesday.
After hearing, the court took the complaint into cognizance and passed the order on the issue.
In the complaint, the complainant stated that the Khatib in his "Khutba" at the main Eid congregation at National Edigah Maidan on December 17 had stated that celebration of 'Pahela Baishakh' is unislamic.
The Khatib had also stated that US President George W Bush is a 'terrorist' and prayed to the Almighty for 'Destruction of American.'
The complainant further said the Khatib admitted his statement and claimed what he said was based on the Holy Quran and hadith.

Ticket manipulation Two Biman officials suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday ordered suspension of two officials of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines for their alleged involvement in manipulation of tickets for the Dhaka-New York route, official sources said.
State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin yesterday ordered authorities concerned to serve the suspension orders on Abdul Hai Bhuiyan, country manager of Biman's North America office, and Lutfe Jaman, commercial officer stationed in Dhaka.
The order came yesterday after an individual lodged a complaint with the ministry, saying that the two officials had cheated him. He said he was turned back eight times from the airport although his ticket had been confirmed upon prior inquiry each time.
Reviewing the complaint, the ministry on Saturday asked Biman authorities to serve the suspension order on the two officials. The state minister, however, was not available for comment.



Cost of landfill: Discarded polythene bags and garbage, with which DCC fills the low-lying areas, have choked part of the Dhaka City Embankment Road at Gabtali and pose health hazards.

Deaths in mob-beating rise as police take a back-seat

STAR REPORT

Over the last few weeks, incidents of mob-execution have climbed to an alarming level in the city and elsewhere in the country largely due to the law-enforcers' sit-back position on the issue.
With the killing of six alleged highway robbers in Sakta village in Keraniganj Tuesday night, the number of killings in mob-beatings has risen to 27 in the last 40 days.
A gang of about 12 robbers was allegedly committing robbery on the Zinjira-Nawabganj Highway near Sakta Bazaar, six kilometres off the Keraniganj Police Station.
The villagers cornered the robbers near Boalsata Bridge and beat them with sticks and shovels. In a few minutes, most of the robbers dropped dead, while some managed to escape.
The mob-execution is nothing new. Twenty-one alleged muggers and robbers were killed in December. Of them, six were killed in Sutrapur, five in Dhanmondi, five in Shyampur, two in Demra and Tejgaon each and

one in Hazibagh. Of the six, four were killed in one incident in Sutrapur.
The reports indicate that people are taking the law into their own hands rather than seeking help from the law-enforcement agencies. But the main reason behind the mob-execution is that people believe if they turn the muggers over to law-enforcers, they would be freed on bribes and might take revenge on them after their release.
Professor Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah of the Department of Psychology, Dhaka University, told The Daily Star that the lack of security and failure of the law enforcers led to these incidents.
"In most of the cases, the situation incited them to these violent incidents and some people when they gather in a group usually act beyond control and don't keep to their own behavioural mode," Prof. Shahidullah reasoned.
Human rights activist and lawyer Alena Khan said the incidents of mob-beating are taking place because

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COMMENTARY

Has BNP been elected to take revenge on AL or give a better government?

MAHFUZ ANAM

It was shocking. We watched in disbelief the Wednesday evening TV news coverage (not by BTV, of course) of the police assault on the demonstrating AL leaders. News pictures clearly showed police beating up two former ministers, one of them being a sitting MP, several leaders of Awami League and ordinary supporters trying to stage a sit-down demonstration in front of their office. Not only that, a ferocious police officer directed his men to beat the hell out of the demonstrators (maar shalader). At one stage, the officer ordered that eyes of one arrested leader be gouged out (shalar chokh tullya fala). It was the good sense of some fellow officers that prevented



further atrocities from being committed. While the AL leaders were carrying out their sit-down demonstration, an empty BRTC double-decker was called into action and ordered to run through the demonstration. Here again the disobedience of the order by the bus driver saved the AL leaders from being run over. Throughout the whole incident, numerous tear gas shells were unnecessarily fired to disperse whatever little crowd that had gathered there at the AL's call. And all this to quell a demonstration that hardly had many people backing it. The whole city was peaceful and the gathering in front of the AL office was nothing much to write about given the size of usual processions by big parties. In fact, no seri-

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Motia, Nasim sued under PSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday filed a case against former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury and two others under the Public Safety Act (PSA), accusing them of obstructing vehicular movement during the Awami League-called half-day hartal on Wednesday.
Prosecuted have been Awami League central leader Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and City Sramik League General Secretary Israfil Alam. Israfil Alam was picked up from the spot during the hartal hours.
Sub-Inspector Moinul Islam of Motijheel Police Station filed the case under section 8 and 10 of the

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Hosts sent on cherry chase

AL-AMIN

A seasoned Pakistan gave newcomers Bangladesh a demonstration on how to build an innings as they stroked their way to a 276-run lead on the second day of the first Test of Coca-Cola Series at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.
The visitors were 463 for six at close thanks to a brilliant unbeaten 114 from Abdur Razzak and an equally impressive 94 by wicketkeeper Rashid Latif.
Resuming the day on 126 for

three, Pakistan, who bowled Bangladesh out for 160 on the first day, added 337 runs losing only three wickets.
It was thoroughly a clinical display by Pakistan despite the absence of their dashing opener Saeed Anwar. Besides, champion batsman Inzamamul Haq also did not feel like to bat at his customary position of number four. Suffering from mild cold, the Multan man came to bat at number eight and scored an undefeated 22.
Pakistan batsmen grafted, then

consolidated and finally went to accelerate their innings. The visitors scored only 34 runs in the first hour and added 54 in the next hour of play before launching their assault after the post-lunch session.
For a gloomy change, there was not a sizeable crowd at the big bowl to see the home bowlers being thrashed all around the ground.
The easy flow of runs suggested that Pakistan captain Waqar Younis intends to declare by lunch today and then have a go on the Bangladesh batting to finish the match as soon as possible.
However, Bangladesh got an early success in the morning when slow-left armer Enamul Hoque dismissed nightwatchman Saqlain Mushtaq for nine.
But that did not have any bearing on the course of the match as Yousuf Youhana converted his overnight 14

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