The Daily Star

Don't make mid-term duty change

Revenue Reform Commission's report recommends tax, Vat net widening

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Revenue Reform Commission (RRC) strongly opposes any mid-term duty change, typically practised by the government through issuance of SROs (statutory regulatory orders), and recommends widening the country's income tax and Vat net.

The RRC says only parliament should have the power to change duty, excepting for in the case of disaster management. In case of such emergency duty change, that should be approved by parliament within three months.

The RRC yesterday submitted its report to Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman along with a set of nearly 500 recommendations on how to improve the meagre revenue earning and simplify the tax system so as to end harassment on the public. It also suggested forming a high-powered committee to implement the recommendations.

The 447-page report also suggests an increase in the income tax waiver slab from Tk 90,000 to Tk 100,000 a year.

The licence fee for TV, which is now collected annually, should be collected only once during the sale.

The RRC says the one-time licence should be Tk 1,500 for a colour TV set and Tk 300 for a black and white one. It also recommended no licence fee for radio.

RRC Chairman M Mustafizur Rahman along with seven other members handed over the report in presence of National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury and Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan.

"We will start implementing the recommendations in phases upon scrutiny," Saifur told journalists

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GMG gets nod for int'l flights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) yesterday issued air transport operating licence to GMG Airlines, setting stage for the country's first private airliner to operate international flights.

The Caab allowed GMG to run commercial flights on Dhaka-Colombo via Chennai, Dhaka-Male via Colombo and Chittagong-Chiang Mai routes, said Shahab Sattar, managing director of GMG Airlines.

"We will start Dhaka-Colombo flight within three months and begin Chittagong-Chiang Mai flight next," he added.

On September 25 last year, the Caab issued provisional licence to GMG, asking it to meet six criteria within six months to obtain approval to operate passenger flights on international routes.

With two 37-seater Dash 8-100 and a 50-seater Dash 8-300 aircraft in its fleet, GMG had also applied for Dhaka-Kolkata, Dhaka-New Delhi,

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offers prayers at the foundations-laying ceremony of the Asian University for Women in Chittagong yesterday.

Huge arms, drugs seized from Kafrul

CID suspects sinister motives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Police, which seized huge quantity of arms, ammunition and contraband Phensidyl from a computer shop in the city Monday night, are quizzing the arrestees.

CID detectives seized seven firearms -- a China-made AK-22 automatic rifle, three German 9mm pistols and three US and Spanish .32 revolvers -- 143 bullets and 550 bottles of Phensidyl from the JB Computers office at Kafrul.

"We are interrogating 15 suspects, taking them in groups, to ascertain the reason behind the cache of huge arms and ammunition," said Additional Inspector General of CID Masudul Hauqe.

He said they were trying to

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AL may boycott Kushtia-1 by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) is pondering over boycotting the February 29 parliamentary by-elections in Kushtia-1 constituency keeping in mind alleged rigging by the BNP in the Netrokona-3 by-polls last year.

The BNP has asked aspirants for party tickets to collect nomination forms from the party headquarters in Naya Paltan from January 14 to 17.

The seat fell vacant at the death of BNP lawmaker Ahsanul Haque Mollah.

"Netrokona-3 by polls proved that free and fair election is not

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PHOTO: STAR

Office bearers of the FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries) meet Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at the party's Dhanmondi office yesterday.

Hasina defends shift from no-hartal stance

FBCCI for fresh govt-opposition talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday tried to defend her party's budging from the no-hartal stance while in power saying that she made the announcement to seek a similar proposal by the then opposition.

"They (BNP and other opposition parties at the time) were enforcing hartals one after another to destabilise the Awami League government and at one stage, they had proposed that if the prime minister gave a no-hartal call, they would not go for such a programme," Hasina said to the new office-bearers of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI).

"And that's why I declared that the Awami League would no more call hartal even if we return to the opposition. But after my announcement the BNP and other parties responded with more hartals," the former prime minister added.

The FBCCI delegates, led by its President Abdul Awal Mintoo, met the AL chief at her party's Dhanmondi office in the city.

Mintoo urged the main opposi-

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UN team winds up CHT visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-member UN team led by top UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) official Sarah L Timpson concluded its six-day visit to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) yesterday to assess the conflict situation here centring the issue of Bangalee settlers.

The team talked to leaders and workers of different communities including CHT Regional Council Chairman and Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) Chief Jyotirindra Bodhipriyo Chakma alias Shantu Larma.

The team also held talks with other PCJSS leaders, leaders of the Bangalee community, officials and field workers of non-governmental organisations, and village headmen.

The settlers issue remains a

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PM breaks ground for Asian University for Women in Ctg

UNB, *Chittagong*

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought cooperation of all forces and individuals in maintaining the pace of development.

"Unity of all forces and individuals, the way we fought together for independence in 1971, is now the call of the hour to make independence meaningful and reach its benefits to all," she said.

The prime minister was addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of Asian University for Women (AUW) here. Asian University for Women Support Foundation, one of the sponsors of the project, estimates the construction and operational cost of the university at $100 million.

The government has already provided nearly 104 acres of land in the hilly terrain of Chittagong for the purpose. More land is likely to be acquired, sources said.

Education Minister M Osman Farruk, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, Chairman of the US Congressional Caucus on Bangladesh Joseph Crowley, Member of the Board of Directors of Asian University for Women Support Foundation Dr William Newton Smith and Senior Advisor for Campus Master-planning and Designing for the AUW Dr Elizabeth Dean Hermann also spoke.

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AL lawmaker charged with Rakshit killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal in Chittagong yesterday framed charges against ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury, a lawmaker from Raozan of the main opposition Awami League and 16 others over the killing of Srikanta Rakshit in captivity.

Justice Hasan Imam framed the charges five months after detectives submitted the charge sheet on August 12 last year against the 17, accused of their roles in abduction and killing of Srikanta in Hathazari upazila on the night of April 19, 2003.

According to the charge sheet, the blueprint for the murder was made at the AL lawmaker's office at

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Ex-KCCI chief held for 'link' with outlaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Joint forces held a local Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader and ex-president of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) at Royermahal in Khalishpur yesterday for his alleged link with an outlawed organisation.

A joint team of BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) and police arrested Sheikh Zahidul Islam for his alleged connection with Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), police said.

He allegedly financed armed cadres of the BPC, police added.

During Operation Clean Heart and Operation Spider Web, joint forces nabbed Zahid's younger brothers Zakir Hossain and Zafir Hossain, both leaders of local Islamic Chhatra Shibir, for their alleged ties with the BCP, sources said.

Bodies of 3 UPDF men recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Bodies of three United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) activists killed in Naniarchar shootout between the UPDF and a pro-Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord indigenous outfit on January 8 have been recovered.

Military forces during a drive to nab the attackers recovered bodies of Ranjit Chakma alias Tufan, 25, and Balistha Chakma, 22, Saturday and of Joar Chakma, 30, on Sunday from a reservoir.

Witnesses said up to 25 armed cadres of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) launched attacks on the UPDF activists in Shapmara village in

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Ansars Naik shot dead in Bagerhat

STAFF *Correspondent, Khulna*

Unidentified assailants gunned down an ansars and member of the joint forces at Ujalpur village at Fakirhat thana in Bagerhat Monday morning.

Police recovered the body of Naik Alamgir Hossain, 38, and four used cartridges from Wapda embankment at Rishipara.

The officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Police Station said outlaws killed Alamgir, who left the Kalkalia Camp at Fakirhat in civil dress hours before the killing.

The district was put on high alert following the murder of a member of the joint forces. Police picked up 64 persons for questioning and are on a combing operation to arrest the culprits, but no case was filed till 7:00 last evening.

Alamgir hailed from Satkhira and joined the joint forces from the ninth battalion in Madaripur. His body has been sent to Satkhira.

With the murder, four of the security forces members got killed in Bagerhat in the last 18 months.

20 DU students hurt in clash with DMCH staff

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 students of Dhaka University (DU) and five others were injured in clashes between students and class four employees and canteen staff at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and police-beating yesterday.

Twelve of the injured students were admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

Witnesses said the clashes began when a group of first year DU students went to the DMCH Welfare Fund canteen to have breakfast. One of them slapped a canteen boy for delay in serving food. The students then assaulted canteen managers Abul Hossain and Hasan Miah and started dragging away the canteen boy.

A group of class four employees at the DMCH then chased the students away, confined one of them named Faisal and beat him up.

On information, about 30 DU students rushed to the DMCH canteen and went on a rampage. The employees then attacked the

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Dazzles of the universe

Nasa's new space telescope beams back new images

NASA, *Washington*

A new window to the universe opened with yesterday's release of the first dazzling images from Nasa's newly named Spitzer Space Telescope, formerly known as the Space Infrared Telescope Facility.

The first observations, of a glowing stellar nursery; a swirling, dusty galaxy; a disc of planet-forming debris; and organic material in the distant universe, demonstrate the power of the telescope's infrared detectors to capture cosmic features never before seen.

The Spitzer Space Telescope was also officially named today after the

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PHOTO: NASA

Spitzer Space Telescope has captured dazzling images of a dusty, spiral galaxy; a planet-forming disc; a glowing, stellar nursery and a young, buried star, demonstrating the power of its infrared eyes to spy hidden objects.

B'baria bigots ask govt to declare Ahamadiyyas non-Muslims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Brahmanbaria*

Bigots held a rally at the Poura Mukta Mancha here yesterday to press home their demand for declaring the Ahamadiyya Community non-Muslims.

The rally organised by the teachers and students of Qwami Madrassahs was presided over by local community leader Ali Atahar alias Khusu Mian.

The rally adopted a seven-point demand which included a ban on activities of Ahamadiyya sponsored NGOs in the country.

A large number of participants came from rural areas of the district carrying banners and festoons.

The rally was addressed, among others, by Maulana Mufti Nurullah and Maulana Mubarak Ullah teachers of Yunusia Qwami Madrassah; Maulana Maniruzzaman Seraji convenor of Islamic law establishment committee; Maulana Sayedur Rahman, Maulana Muhammad Idris, secretary of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), Mufti Samshul Haque and Maulana Rahman Ullah.

Indo-Bangla joint tiger census starts today

UNB, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh and India jointly start a cross-border census of tigers today with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The census is a part of the first activities between the two countries under a cross-border initiative aimed at preserving the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, according to a UNDP press release.

Located partly in India (40 percent) and partly in Bangladesh (60 percent), the Sundarbans ecosystem is steadily deteriorating due to population pressures and

the weak enforcement of existing regulations on both sides of the Indo-Bangla border.

"National attempts to save this world heritage listed habitat are underway but differing management approaches in the two countries have overlooked the fact that

the Sundarbans is a single ecosystem," the UN agency said.

In 2002, top officials from both countries reached an understanding to share knowledge and techniques to protect the Sundarbans. The new tiger census is a tangible result of that commitment.

UN officials are welcoming the

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Dhaka, Seoul to sign defence agreement

UNB, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh and South Korea yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of logistics and defence industry between their armed forces.

Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq and South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Kyu-Hyung Lee signed the MoU on behalf of their governments at a simple ceremony, said a press release.

Under the MoU, both countries will help each other to improve the management of logistic services of their armed forces and develop their

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Prayer Timings

January 14

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-41
Esha	7-15	7-45

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