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2 grenades, arms seized in Feni, Rangamati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday in separate raids recovered grenades, firearms and ammunition from different areas of Feni and Rangamati districts.

The Rab members recovered two grenades, two firearms and some ammunition from Mohipal in Feni district in the early hours yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from the Feni camp of Rab-7 of Chittagong arrested notorious criminal Abul Kashem Milon, 35, from Mohipal at around 9:00pm on Saturday, sources said.

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MISUSE OF BONDED WAREHOUSE FACILITY

Tk 240cr revenue loss in 11 months

Customs cancels over 300 licences in 2004-05

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

A section of dishonest businessmen allegedly abused the bonded warehouse facility in readymade garment and backward linkage industries, causing the government a revenue loss of about Tk 240 crore this fiscal year.

After detecting the wholesale misuse and irregularities, the Customs Bond Commissionate

cancelled and suspended more than 300 bond licences in the first 11 months of 2004-05, official sources said.

A total of 1,274 bond licences have been cancelled and suspended since 2000 for the fraudulent practice, Customs sources said. Businessmen however said Customs officials are also involved in the irregularities.

"Some businessmen are mis-

using the bonded warehouse facility by selling the imported duty-free raw materials and finished goods in the local market," a high official of the commissionate told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

He said the licence holders sometimes use fake addresses to escape the monitoring mechanism of the Customs authorities.

Also, the dishonest businessmen

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Mosharraf's Resignation Mixed reaction within BNP

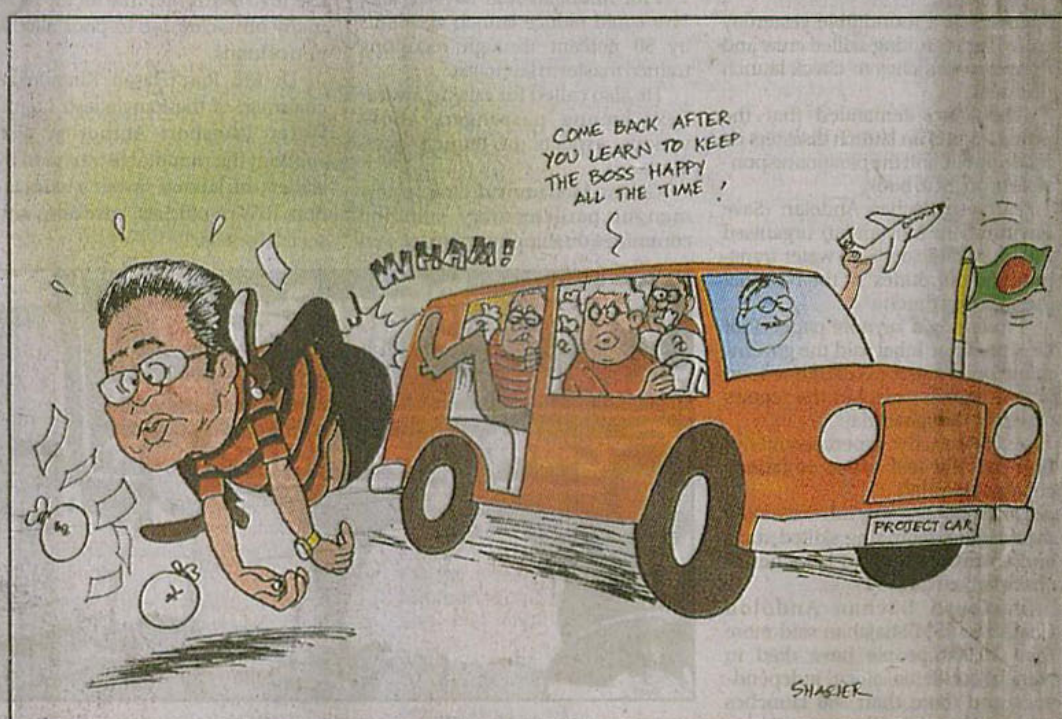
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mixed reactions swept the rank and file of the ruling BNP over the removal of state minister for energy and mineral resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

Many BNP men, including some policymakers, think that the prime minister has rightly taken the decision of removing Mosharraf from the cabinet for damaging the image of the government by accepting an expensive vehicle from a foreign oil company. The decision has brightened the image of the government and clearly shows its seriousness about curbing corruption in the country, they said.

However, the majority BNP policymakers, ministers, leaders

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Shaheed Minar to be erected in Tokyo

Khaleda may lay foundation

BDNEWS, Tokyo

Shaheed Minar, a monument to the martyrs of the historic Language Movement for establishing the dignity of the mother tongue, Bangla, will be erected at Ikebukuro Nishiguchi Park at the city centre.

The sacrifice of the language martyrs -- Salam, Rafique, Jabbar and Barkat -- has achieved world recognition with the Unesco declaring February 21 as the International Mother Language Day.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to lay the foundation stone of the Shaheed Minar during her visit to Tokyo next month.

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STATE OF BANGLADESH ECONOMY CPD identifies six major challenges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has pointed out six major challenges for the Bangladesh economy in the next fiscal year and said macroeconomic stability will depend on how the government tackles the challenges.

The challenges are slow progress in revenue mobilisation, inability to implement public investment programmes, upsurge in inflation rate, delicate balance in external payments situation, failure to undertake complementary reforms for improving micro-conditions for private investment, and the widening disparity in income distribution.

CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya cited the challenges while presenting the independent think tank's observations on the state of Bangladesh economy and the budget responses-2005, at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Addressing the dialogue, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said the country's economic condition could not be improved only by budget, it is the issue of governance in which the nation witnessed

a "collective failure."

He stressed the need for political dialogues to overcome the failure.

Saifur claimed the proposed budget was the reflection of the philosophy of the current political government. "This is a political government, we have the people's mandate and it is normal that our commitment will be reflected in the budget."

The minister claimed that whatever measures were proposed in the budget were in the right directions. "We know very well what people want and what are their requirements because we move around the country," he noted.

"But it is very difficult to understand people's norms sitting in a five-star hotel and living in the capital," the minister said pointing at the city-based economists and researchers.

On the challenges of budget implementation, Saifur said nowhere in the world budget is implemented 100 percent. "Comparing to many other countries, our process of budget implementation is in much better position," he claimed.

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2 JCD men held after mugging Tk 12 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested two Dhaka College students and pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists of the college unit and seized a car on charge of mugging Tk 12 lakh in Motijheel.

They are Golam Ohab Liton, science and technology affairs secretary of the Dhaka College JCD unit, and Azizul Haq, a member.

Dhanmondi police said they seized Tk 10 lakh and 30,000 Saudi riyal from room No. 212 of International Hostel at Dhaka College.

The arrestees admitted their fellow student and Assistant General Secretary Ruhul Amin had escaped with the stolen money and firearms.

said Duty Officer of Motijheel Police Station ASI Abdur Rahim.

Earlier, the three JCD men forced Abul Kashem, employee of Uma Jewellers at Baitul Mokarram Mosque Market, into the car in Purana Paltan, police and witnesses said. Kashem was going to a bank to deposit the sum at around 3:00pm.

The muggers drove off towards Motijheel when an on duty traffic constable stopped the car at Dainik Bangla intersection, suspecting something wrong inside.

Police rushed to the spot and held Liton and Azizul with a bullet and seized the car. However, Ruhul and Abul Hasan, driver of the car, fled.

The arrested JCD men, students

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Mosharraf's fate fixed two months ago

His stance for gas export pushed him away from PMO

SHARIER KHAN

AKM Mosharraf Hossain, ousted state minister for energy, had fallen from grace within the government about two months ago for a number of reasons, including persistently holding a stand for gas export that went against the prime minister's stance, sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Taking benefit from Canadian company Niko Resources in the form of a highly expensive Toyota Land Cruiser Cygnus was a pretext for his ouster, the sources believe.

The reasons behind Mosharraf's

'resignation' on Saturday under orders from the prime minister include his resistance to assurance of 20 years of gas supply for Indian giant Tata's investment in Bangladesh, while advocating export of gas to India through a new deal. This had angered the Board of Investment and a powerful lobby in the ruling BNP, they pointed out.

Mosharraf had always sided with foreign companies on issues of state interests like Magurchara gas blowout compensation claims, financial disputes or even the deal with Niko Resources. In some cases, he made certain quarters in the

government happy but in others he had embarrassed the government, the PMO sources mentioned.

Mosharraf's interference in all the nine affiliates of Petrobangla, where he appointed several dozens of corrupt officials, was another reason. These appointments went against government policy, obstructed restoring order in the affiliates and drained out hundreds of crores of taka in bribes.

And finally, Mosharraf's past conflict with Khandker Shahidul Islam when he was energy secretary two years ago also acted as a factor.

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3 lynched in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two extortionists were lynched by an angry mob yesterday in front of Baitun Noor mosque under Sonadanga thana of Khulna city, while an extremist was also lynched in a separate incident at Sonakhali under Fakirhat upazila of Bagerhat.

None of the dead could be identified by police at the time this report was filed.

According to police, the extortionists, calling over a cell phone, demanded taka one lakh in tolls on Saturday night from Jatiya party leader and former MP Abdul Gaffar Biswas. Biswas agreed to pay Tk 50,000 at noon yesterday.

Police said an angry mob caught

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MONEY-LAUNDERING CASE Bidisha denied bail again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again rejected the ad-interim bail petition of former military ruler HM Ershad's estranged wife Bidisha in the money laundering case.

The case, in which she was shown arrested, was filed on Thursday on charge of funneling abroad local and foreign currencies worth Tk 21 crore.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a criminal appeal filed by the defence lawyers against the rejection order of the lower court.

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Arrival of Interpol team uncertain

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Arrival of an Interpol team to probe the grenade attacks on an Awami League rally on August 21 last year has become uncertain following disagreement over the terms of their operations in Bangladesh, official sources said.

After the August 21 carnage that killed 23 people and injured more than 300, an Interpol team visited Dhaka and conducted some preliminary investigations but they were unhappy about the level of cooperation available from the local intelligence agencies.

Even their instructions for the

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