

NOAB-BSP demands cut in import duty on newsprint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspapers Owners Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) and Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) yesterday demanded reduction of import duty on newsprint to 5 percent from 25 percent as proposed in the budget for FY 2005-06.

The associations in a joint statement also demanded withdrawal of the rules of using 50 percent local newsprint in the newspaper industry and increasing the rate of government advertisements to save the industry.

The government has fixed the import duty of newsprint at 25 percent in the proposed budget. Besides, the importers have to pay 35 percent VAT and other charges on C&F (clearing and forwarding) prices, the statement said.

The statement, signed by NOAB

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Rab rescues Habiganj trader from abductors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday rescued a Habiganj businessman from captivity at Rampura in Dhaka and arrested three abductors from the house where he had been confined to.

Mohammad Tipu Chowdhury was kidnapped from the capital's Bangla Motor Monday.

Rab-2 could not, however, get hold of mastermind Saiful.

The arrestees are Zakir Hossain Bahadur, 23, Dipan Chakma Bitu, 24, and Nazrul Islam, 23.

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AL lawmakers protest budget inside JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday staged demonstration inside the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban carrying black flags in protest against the proposed budget for FY 2005-06 which they termed "anti-people."

The AL also enforces a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country today as the government did not accept its 13-point amendments to the budget. AL's allies Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (Nap) have extended support to the shutdown.

"We don't accept this budget of black money," the main opposition lawmakers chanted as they started a procession from the conference room of the leader of the opposition

in the parliament building at about 4:25pm.

The slogan-chanting lawmakers came out of the Sangsad Bhaban with the procession and held a brief rally near the South Plaza.

Earlier, the AL lawmakers attended a meeting of AL parliamentary party (ALPP) which was chaired by party General Secretary Abdul Jalil. Only 26 party lawmakers out of 57 attended the meeting held at the opposition leader's conference room.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina is now on tour in Europe while Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid in his constituency, Kishoreganj.

Briefing newsmen about the ALPP meeting, Faruk Khan, acting chief whip of the main opposition, said the party thinks

there is no other option but to observe today's hartal as the government has failed to accept their 13-point proposals.

On June 24, the Awami Central Working Committee (ALCWC) formulated the 13-point proposal for the budget and announced the hartal programme.

The proposals include withdrawal of tax on salt, milk powder, diesel and kerosene, software export, SIM cards, and increasing the allocation for agriculture.

Addressing the rally in front of the parliament building, the AL general secretary termed the proposed budget a "trickery" and said people have also rejected the budget.

"The option for whitening the

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CLASH IN AFGHANISTAN

US chopper downed with 17 GIs on board

REUTERS, Kabul

AUS military helicopter that crashed during an anti-guerrilla mission in eastern Afghanistan may have been shot down and the fate of 17 US troops aboard is not immediately known, the US military said on Wednesday.

Initial reports indicated Tuesday's crash in Kunar province, which borders Pakistan, may have been caused by hostile fire in the operation against al-Qaeda mili-

itants, the military said.

The twin-rotor CH-47 Chinook came down in remote and mountainous terrain west of Kunar's capital Asadabad, US spokeswoman Lieutenant Cindy Moore said.

Kunar Governor Asadullah Wafa said it was hit by a rocket and a spokesman for the Taliban, Abdul Latif Hakimi, claimed the guerrillas shot down the aircraft in the village of Shorak using "a new type of

weapon" he did not describe.

"Initial reports indicate the crash may have been caused by hostile fire. The status of the service members is unknown at this time," the US statement said.

It said US and Afghan troops had sealed off the crash site to block any enemy movement toward or away from it and US aircraft were flying overhead.

"This is a tragic event for all of us,

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13 Jubo League men jailed for picketing

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced 13 Jubo League leaders and activists to two year's rigorous imprisonment for carrying out an arson attack on a rickshaw during hartal hours on February 6.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafiqul Islam of the Speedy Trial Court-1 handed down the verdict in presence of the convicts.

The court cancelled bail petition of the Jubo League men of the Kotwali thana unit and sent them to Dhaka Central Jail.

The convicts are Pir Mohammad, Mohammad Nadim, Ramzan Ali alias Robin, Khokon, Mohammad Jahangir, Murad, Parvez, Ayat, Hayat, Sharif, Pokra Mintu, Pintu and Mohammad Akhter.

They have also been fined Tk 1,000 each and would have to serve out 30 days in prison if they failed to pay it.

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Strike at DU called for July 2-3

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and six other student organisations yesterday called a strike at Dhaka University (DU) on July 2-3 for not meeting their five-point demand.

Leaders of the seven student organisations have threatened to go on an indefinite strike from July 4 if their demands are not met by July 3.

The combine made the decisions at an emergency meeting chaired by BCL President Liaqat Sikder at BCL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League lawmakers take out a procession from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with black flags to protest against the budget for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

1,670 acres rail land gobbled up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grabbers have occupied 1,670 acres of railway land in its two regions -- Eastern and Western -- Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday told parliament.

Responding to a question from Awami League lawmaker Frauk Khan, the minister said 668.38 acres of railway land in Eastern region and 1,002.38 acres in Western region have been encroached upon..

In a written reply, Nazmul however said measures have been

taken to recover the illegally occupied land. "The railway authorities are conducting drive to recover the land and it will continue."

The minister told another questioner 2,011 train accidents occurred from January 1, 2002 to May this year, leaving 59 people killed and 252 injured.

The families of 13 of the victims applied for compensation, four of them already got it while six applications are under process, Nazmul said.

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Bidisha to sue Ershad to get her son back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bidisha, estranged wife of Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, yesterday said she will sue Ershad in order to get back her four-year-old son Eric.

"I will fight against Ershad through the law to get back my child as it's not late yet to sue Ershad," said Bidisha while talking to journalists yesterday at the Sikder Medical in city's Gulshan. "There is no law on earth that can keep away a baby from the mother," she said.

"There are 18 cases against Ershad but no actions are taken

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PHOTO: STAR

Students heap wreaths on the coffin of Prof Sitara Parvin in a mark of respect in front of Arts Faculty building at Dhaka University yesterday.

Dr Sitara laid to rest

DU CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of mourners yesterday paid their last tributes to Dhaka University (DU) journalism professor Dr Sitara Parvin who was killed in a tragic road accident in the US on Friday.

After namaz-e-janaza at the DU Central Mosque, she was buried at the city's Banani graveyard.

Wearing black badges, hundreds of teachers, staff, students -- present and former, and journalists began to gather at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism to pay last tribute to their beloved colleague and teacher Dr Sitara, daughter of former president Shahabuddin Ahmed and wife of DU journalism professor Ahaduzzaman Mohammad Ali.

At 11:50am, Sitara's coffin was brought to the department from

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Bhuiyan for tough laws against hartal, JS boycott

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government, Rural Development (LGRD) and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday suggested in parliament introduction of tough laws to stop frequent hartals and House-boycott by the opposition.

Blasting the main opposition Awami League (AL) for skipping parliament proceedings, the LGRD minister, also secretary general of the ruling BNP, said the AL MPs take all the remuneration and privileges as lawmakers but do not discharge their constitutional duties.

Terming it "a contempt of parlia-

ment" he said, "It cannot be allowed." Bhuiyan was discussing on the proposed budget.

"If a lawmaker remains absent for ten consecutive working days without your permission, his membership will be vacated and he will be disqualified to contest in the election for one term," Bhuiyan suggested to the speaker.

He asked the speaker to take initiative to formulate such a law to stop House-boycott in consultation with the other political parties if the main opposition party does not attend the discussion.

To stop frequent hartal, Bhuiyan requested the prime minister to enact a tough law against hartal and

the persons who enforce it for greater interest of the country.

He criticised the main opposition for enforcing today's hartal protesting the proposed budget.

On the reforms of the Election Commission, the BNP secretary general said the AL cannot benefit from this reforms "unless its own mentality is reformed". He, however, urged the AL to place its proposal on the reforms to the electoral laws, if any, in parliament.

He said the fairer the election will be, the more seats the BNP will win in future elections.

20 injured as AL, BNP men attack motorcade of Kazi Siraj

UNB, Faridpur

Local BNP and Awami League (AL) activists attacked the motorcade of former lawmaker Kazi Siraj at Machkandi in Madhukhali yesterday,

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Prayer Timing		
June 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-57
Esha	8-17	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Tigers to face Aussies

AL-AMIN from Canterbury

Captain Habibul Bashar will go into Bangladesh's final game of the NatWest Series against Australia at St. Lawrence ground today with the knowledge that one-day cricket will not be the same again in their next assignment against Sri Lanka.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has this week approved inclusion of substitute and exten-

sion of field restriction from 15 to 20 overs which come into effect after this tri-nation tournament.

"I'm relieved that we don't need to follow the new rules right now and we will definitely get enough time to work out the details later on," said Bashar ahead of their third game against Australia.

Bashar was, however, more

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