



PHOTO: STAR
As Eid draws nearer, people of all ages, particularly youths, throng markets to buy greeting cards for their near and dear ones. This picture was taken from a shop at Purana Paltan in the city yesterday.

Mugger lynched in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Angry mob lynched a mugger at East Nabinagar in Hathazari early yesterday. The dead was identified as Abdul Mannan, 28.

Sources said a gang of seven to eight muggers waylaid a Hathazari-bound CNG auto-rickshaw, which was carrying three businessmen of the city, at around 4:30am at Gate No 2 of

Chittagong University (CU).

They took away Tk 7,000 and cellular phones from the businessmen. At one stage the businessmen started screaming for help. The locals came forward and chased the gang. They caught one of the muggers and beat him to death.

His accomplices managed to flee the scene with looted goods.

INDECENT BEHAVIOUR

JU teacher removed

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Jahangirnagar University (JU) syndicate yesterday removed Tanvir Ahmad Siddique, a newly appointed lecturer, from the Department of Business Administration as allegations of indecent behaviour against him were proved true.

The syndicate took the decision at its meeting after a six-member probe committee found him guilty.

The probe body headed by Vice-Chancellor Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman conducted an in-depth investigation into the allegations made by the students.

PRICE HIKE OF JU ADMISSION FORMS

Bid to force students to withdraw agitation

JU CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday tried to force the activists of Progotishil Chhatra Jote (PSJ) to withdraw their agitation programme over the price hike of admission forms, but to no effect.

The student activists started their agitation programme on October 24 demanding that the price of admission forms be reduced, resulting in suspension of distribution of forms.

Around 10:00am yesterday, a group of teachers asked the students to withdraw their programme when they were demonstrating in front of the Agrani Bank branch on the campus where the admission forms are available. But the students refused to comply, leading to a heated debate among them.

Finally the teachers forced the students to budge from the place and managed to sell some 100 forms, PSJ activists said.

Some university employees were seen purchasing the forms from the booth of the bank, but the admission seekers who came there to collect forms did not buy those during the tensed situation, they said.

Students will hold a meeting on the campus at 11:00am today to chart their next course of action to press home their demand for withdrawal of price hike of form.

TATA negotiation

FROM PAGE 1
off in April in different phases with three ministerial committees -- one for coal and gas, one for power and the third for land-related components. These three committees again function under a main negotiation team headed by the communications secretary. These committees comprise only a handful of experts.

Interestingly, adviser to the energy ministry Mahmudur Rahman, though not included in any of the committees, is the unofficial leader of the negotiations.

The committee to negotiate on coal and gas has now become weaker, as its head SR Osmani, who at least has more than a decade of experience in energy and finance, was recently removed from his post as Petrobangla chairman. This committee is dealing with the most complicated components of the Tata proposal.

The three committees have recently engaged a few experts, but economists consider their number inadequate. The government now is also seeking assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

There has been no effort to make an analysis or evaluation of the Tata proposal. "At least, the government should have asked the planning ministry and the Bangladesh Bank to make some economic analyses of the proposal," a committee member told The Daily Star.

On the flaws in the government's negotiation method, the executive director of the country's leading economic think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue, Debapriya Bhattachariya, said, "The basic problem is that, from Bangladesh's perspective, there has been no evaluation or assessment of the social cost-benefit or spill-over impact."

"From the government's part, the secretary-level team does not have the decision-making power or the technical expertise [required]," he pointed out.

According to Debapriya, "The government should have taken technical assistance from non-resident Bangladeshi experts and multilateral sources. It should form a technical expertisegroup."

"In the present way, the government's decision would come about in an uninformed manner. The government is not prepared. The low-level negotiators do not have technical skills. This way there cannot be the best of a decision," he said.

"The overall package should be balanced. Tata is doing its studies, but there is no Bangladeshi study. Petrobangla, and the power and the land ministry are looking into the proposal. But no body is looking at it in its totality," he observed.

The government negotiators lack expertise. Other than taking help from the ADB in setting the coal-based power tariff, it has not taken any expert from the national level, from among the non-

resident Bangladeshis or from the multilateral organisations.

On the other hand, Tata has been doing its homework thoroughly with its experts. It is even going to furnish the government with a financial impact analysis prepared by Economists Intelligence Unit (EIU) of the UK, a joint venture of the Economist and the Financial Times. A draft report of the analysis has recently been submitted to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Tata Group's Resident Director S Manzer Hussain said, "The report will be shortly available. The initial draft shows an excellent impact of Tata's investment on Bangladesh's economy. It has got a major long-term impact on the macroeconomic indices."

According to him, "It will generate employment, both directly and indirectly. There will be a lot of economic activities and it will have a signalling effect on other investors."

Hussain also noted that, "The agreement must be a win-win one and must withstand the test of time. We are here for a long time. And that will only be possible if we go in details with the agreement. We must understand each other's views."

"Investors come to make money. But the nation must also benefit from the venture. We are proceeding with the negotiations keeping this in mind. Tata is known for its values and ethical standards. We will proceed only by safeguarding these values," he added.

He pointed out that the Tata proposal is very large and complex, which requires time to understand. "There has been some progress in the negotiations. But, at the same time, we would like to see a faster pace," Hussain observed.

He said two prime issues have remained unresolved till now -- the assurance of gas supply and a package of financial incentives for Tata. The other unresolved issues, though not as critical as the above two, are the power purchase deal, land acquisition and the coal mining area.

Earlier on May 29, eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud suggested to the government developing strategic think-tanks to efficiently deal with issues ranging from foreign investment negotiations to trade agreements to bilateral or regional economic cooperation.

"There are already some big investment proposals in the pipeline. They can be very beneficial for the economy. But some of them are also highly complex, involving a whole range of issues like land acquisition, tax arrangements, supply and pricing of inputs [like gas], marketing and export of outputs [like fertiliser and electricity] and so on," Mahmud said explaining the need for such think-tanks at a pre-budget seminar in the city.



PHOTO: STAR
Swadhin Bangla Garments Federation stages a demonstration at Mukttangan in the city yesterday demanding salaries before Eid.

DRU-Mercantile Bank Media Centre launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DRU-Mercantile Bank Media Centre was formally launched at the VIP Lounge of Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday.

Chairman of the bank Abdul Jalil, who is also the General Secretary of Awami League, donated a cheque for Tk 5 lakh after inaugurating the media centre as chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Jalil said the bank would continue to help the DRU for its development works.

He said the bank has several projects for low income people and small entrepreneurs including poor students.

DRU President Shafiqul Karim Shabu said its members would get phone, fax and email facilities after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Executive Director of the bank Shah Mohammad Nurul Alam, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the bank Golam Farook Ahmed and DRU General Secretary Shawkat Hossain Badsha also spoke on the occasion.