

BUDGET APPROVED

Duty withdrawn on capital machinery for export plants

Computer, mobile phones also exempted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday approved the budget for fiscal 2007-08 without imposing the duties proposed on computer, mobile phone sets, and export-oriented capital machinery and keeping the private universities out of the Value Added Tax (VAT) net.

"Most of the changes relate to customs duties. There are a few changes regarding VAT and income tax," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul

Islam said. He declined to elaborate on the changes but said he would explain those at a press conference on Saturday.

Accompanied by Finance Secretary Mohammad Tareq and National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Badiur Rahman, Mirza Aziz went to the Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon for the president's nod to the financial plan.

Now that no parliament is in place, the budget will come into effect on July 1 through an ordi-

nance under section 93 (1) of the constitution.

Earlier it was approved by the council of advisers at a special meeting on Wednesday.

Talking to the journalists at the Bangabhaban, the finance adviser said import duty on computer accessories has been cut.

He said the tariff gap between finished and intermediate goods that was earlier proposed to be reduced will rise in the final budget.

Asked about public representa-

tion in the approval process in absence of a legislative body, the adviser claimed that it had more of it than any year before.

He said in the past, the nation had hardly seen any fruitful and productive discussion on budget in the Jatiya Sangsad. "The lawmakers used to demand additional funds for their respective constituencies," he said.

But this time, a cross-section of

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Sheikh Selim gets parole as mother dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asia Khatun, mother of detained Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, died of old age complications at ZH Shikdar Medical College Hospital in the capital yesterday. She was 89.

Following the death of Asia, elder sister of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the caretaker government released Selim on parole in the evening as family members submitted a petition seeking his bail so that he could attend his mother's janaza and burial.

After Asia's death at about

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Ex-state minister Talukder Abdul Khaleque held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested Khulna City Awami League President and former state minister Talukder Abdul Khaleque and six other people last night at a house on Gagan Babu Road in the city.

The other arrestees are Liaquat Ali, Makbul Hossain, Jahangir Alam, retired police inspector SM Aziz, Nurul Islam and Mostafa.

Police said they also arrested two women during the drive but they were released soon after their arrest.

Allegations against Talukder Khaleque and other arrestees could not be known.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

Govt to sue some former ministers, MPs for fraud

Money-laundering case underway; wife disowns Dulu's Tk 3cr asset declaration in her name

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The military-backed caretaker government is going to sue several former ministers and lawmakers for cheating the government institutions to make staggering fortunes.

The move came hot on the heels of the first ever anti-graft crackdown against institutionalised corruption in government agencies, starting with the decades old Rajdhani

Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk).

Tasked with massive anti-corruption drive against high profile corruption suspects since February, the national taskforces have already gathered evidence against at least eight ex-lawmakers of the BNP for obtaining elusive plots from the Rajuk by providing fake declarations.

"We are going to file cases under the Section 420 against the politi-

cians and others who cheated the government with false declaration," an investigator working in a taskforce group told The Daily Star yesterday.

The maximum punishment for the swindle is seven years behind bars.

"Our investigation exposed only

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

BGMEA Bhaban should be demolished

Says local govt adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government Adviser Anwarul Iqbal has once again said the 15-storey BGMEA Bhaban built on Begunbari canal in the capital should be demolished as it did not have Rajuk approval.

The adviser said this while talking to reporters after an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday.

However, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Dhaka canals exist only in documents

PINAKI ROY

All the open natural canals in the capital's southern part from the Buriganga to Bangla Motor area have disappeared for the "development" of the city over the years although many of them still exist in government records.

According to the records, in the area there are at least eight canals--Dholai canal, Narinda canal, Segunbagicha canal, Arambagh canal, Gopibagh canal, Paribagh

canal, Kathalbagan canal and Dhanmondi canal. But these canals now exist only in the memory of elderly city dwellers.

The Water and Sewerage Authorities (Wasa) and the Dhaka City Corporation have robbed these canals for constructing roads and box culverts in the name of development.

Environmentalists said such unplanned development is now taking its toll by inundating vast areas in the city during the mon-

soon.

To add to this plight, government agencies, private business houses and real estate companies have now targeted the Begunbari canal and Hatirjheel wetland.

Environmentalists and experts on urban issues now fear that the lone open canal and the adjoining wetland in the mid- and southern parts of the city are under threat and will be robbed soon.

"If the Begunbari canal and

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

Tigers slumped

BISHWAJIT ROY From Colombo

After fighting boldly on the previous day, Bangladesh lost their last five wickets in less than half an hour on the fourth morning to suffer their

biggest defeat against Sri Lanka -- by an innings and 234 runs -- in the first Test of the three-match series at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) ground yesterday.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6



Birdem docs call off strike till tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The striking doctors of Birdem Hospital yesterday postponed their programme till tomorrow after getting assurance from the authorities that their demands will be met.

Besides, the suffering of the patients also played a role in withdrawing the strike, says a press release issued by the striking doctors.

Following the postponement of the strike, the country's prime diabetes treating facility got back its usual tempo, with activities resuming at the in-patient department.

After a discussion with the Board of Management of Finance

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4