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Mysterious
booms rock
city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Panic gripped city dwellers in the early hours yesterday when sounds of several explosions rocked parts of the capital city.

Neither police nor the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) could say anything with certainty about the explosions or from where the sound of explosions originated.

Some city dwellers heard six to seven loud explosion sounds in southern parts of Dhaka at around 12:40am yesterday.

A number of businessmen at Tejgaon said they heard the sounds around the same time, seeming to come from different parts of the city.

Some others living in the Dhaka University area also confirmed

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BDR-run shops
reopen with
hiked rice price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BDR outlets drew few consumers yesterday on reopening after four days as they have started selling coarse rice at Tk 30 per kg, a Tk 5 hike from the previous rate.

Meanwhile, prices of potatoes and all varieties of edible oil marked a significant rise in the city markets in the past two days and the traders have raised the prices of coarse and fine rice on the pretext of the hike in the rice price at the BDR outlets.

Talking to The Daily Star, BDR Sector Commander in Dhaka Col Mujibul Huq said though the crowds in the outlets were small, the sale was not.

According to him, a total of 300 tonnes of rice were sold in the 75 outlets in the capital yesterday.

Previously, an average of 450 tonnes of coarse rice used to sell daily in the city BDR shops.

In the past two days, the price of potatoe leapt by Tk 4-5 per kg with the traders saying they have not seen such a hike in so short period in recent times.

In the retail markets, potato was selling at Tk 16-18 per kg yesterday and at times, it was even seen

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Budget aims at 8 major objectives

Finance adviser terms it realistic, designed to overcome present crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the proposed budget for the next fiscal year is "realistic", not a very big one, and, if duly implemented, will help overcome the crisis the country is presently facing.

Terming food security and rising fuel prices a crisis at both domestic and global levels, he said, "This has created pressures on all of us...If the budget is implemented, it will help overcome the crisis.



Mirza Azizul Islam

"We did not announce a popular budget...I do not wish to take part in the elections," Mirza Azizul Islam said at a post-budget press conference at the National Economic Council of the Planning Commission yesterday.

He replied to a number of questions from newsmen who referred to the views of some economists and political parties that the proposed budget is "imaginary" in nature and dependent on bank borrowing.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

ACC permitted to quiz Khaleda, Koko for graft

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday gave the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) permission to interrogate BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her sub-jail gate in connection with misappropriation of funds from the Zia Orphanage Trust.

Meantime, the same court allowed the commission to grill her youngest son Arafat Rahman Koko at jail gate in a corruption case filed for amassing illegal assets and concealing information on his wealth to the watchdog.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed the order for quizzing Khaleda after ACC Assistant Director Nur Ahammad, also the investigation officer (IO), petitioned to that end.

The IO in his petition said Khaleda needs to be grilled at jail gate as there are specific

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Hasina gets Canadian visa, may fly tomorrow

Home ministry still busy ensuring legal aspects of govt's approval to set AL president free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Still detained former premier also Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina got a visa for Canada yesterday while she already had visas for the US and UK on her passport, returned to her the day before, signalling her readiness to leave the country very soon.

Sources in the government said a handout might be released today paving the way for Hasina's release, and she might leave the country tomorrow.

A source in the Chief Adviser's Office said a decision regarding Hasina was finalised but not signed

yet, delaying the issuance of the handout.

AL sources said she will fly off to London tomorrow on board a flight of British Airways en route to Boston in the US, from where she will catch a flight of a US airliner to Canada.

Another source however said she might fly out of the country on board a flight of Singapore airlines tomorrow morning.

Hasina's Chief Security Adviser Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, special personal assistant to Hasina also AL's Forest and Environment Affairs Secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud, and her personal

aid Selina Hossain will accompany her in her journey abroad. Sources said the three already completed necessary formalities for their departure including obtaining visas for Canada and the US.

The AL chief's release and departure from the country are now awaiting the government's issuance of the required executive order allowing her to go abroad 'for better treatment' with a set of conditions attached including promises that she will not deliver any political speech while abroad or out of detention, she will not

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NEXT ACTION
BNP factions
wait on Hasina's
departure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both factions of BNP will decide on their next course of action after the possible departure of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina from the country for treatment.

Leaders of both factions are now watching closely the developments in politics centring the two top political leaders as well as different administrative changes.

Dissident BNP faction leaders feel there would be more changes-political and administrative-after the possible departure of Hasina.

Three senior leaders of the factions--standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahabubur

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Clarification

The Prisons Directorate has sent a clarification of a news item titled "Hasina, Khaleda may be allowed to have treatment abroad by end-June", published in The Daily Star on Sunday, saying that it did not make any recommendations for forming a medical board for Tarique Rahman, son of former

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CPD ON PROPOSED BUDGET

Budget investment friendly, populist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any instability in the political climate and disturbances in transition to democracy will bring in major challenges for implementation of the proposed budget, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) observed in a post budget analysis yesterday.

The private policy research think-tank said according to its expenditure allocation the budget may be called a 'pro-people welfare budget', but implementation of it will be difficult with the existing poor capacities of the government.

"Budget implementation will be difficult without proper transition to democracy," CPD Executive Director Prof Mustafizur Rahman said during a post budget analysis news briefing at Brac Inn Centre in the capital, which was telecast live on private TV Channel i.

"Maintaining macroeconomic stability for smooth transition of power to a newly elected government during the first six months of the next fiscal will be a major challenge," he said.

CPD also suggested middle of the course review of the policies to ensure proper implementation of the budget.

The major budgetary challenges CPD identified for the next fiscal are, implementation of the electoral roadmap, implementation of a large part of the budget by an elected government, and maintaining adherence to the second phase of poverty reduction strategy.

The present caretaker government which placed national budgets for two consecutive fiscal, is likely to hand over power after the upcoming national election scheduled to be held in the third week of December this year. So the second half of the next fiscal is supposed to see a newly elected government at the helm of the state.

Analysing the proposed budget, the civil society think-tank however termed it 'investment friendly' and also 'populist'.

Commenting on the Tk 99,962 crore annual expenditure, announced on Monday by the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Hiked duty on children's books kicks up an uproar

SURAJNITH DEBNATH

Middle class families that send their children to English medium schools will feel the crunch in the next fiscal year as a 25 percent import duty on pictorials and drawing books has been proposed in the national budget.

When educational expenses, especially at English medium schools, already shot up three to

four times in the past few years, the recent government move will further heat up the situation and raise prices of books and other educational materials even further, said teachers and guardians of students studying at English medium schools.

Besides, the higher prices of books will also encourage piracy, resulting in loss of customs duty to the state exchequer, they added.

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Khaleda demands sons' treatment abroad

CG has no right to give budget, she says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded that her detained two sons are sent abroad for proper treatment for the sake of their lives.

Describing the proposed budget as "anti-people", she said the caretaker government has no right to announce a budget.

A caretaker government also has no authority to impose new taxes in the budget as this can be done only when there is parliament, Khaleda said during the hearing on charge framing in the

Gatco corruption case yesterday.

She also asked the government to lift the state of emergency and hold parliamentary polls soon.

The Special Court dealing with the Gatco case deferred the hearing on charge framing against Khaleda, her youngest son Arafat Rahman Koko and 22 others until June 16 following a defence petition.

During the hearing, Khaleda said, "According to the constitution, a caretaker government can only do routine work; it cannot make any policymaking decision.

"Moreover, this caretaker government has been in power

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Manju jailed for 7yrs in bribery case

Shahjahan Siraj's son gets 5yrs for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju to seven years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in a bribery case.

Besides, another special court gave Rajib Siraj Opu, son of former BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Siraj, five years' RI in a graft case the same day.

Judge Khandaker Kamal Uz-Zaman of the Special Court-9 on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises also handed down two year's simple imprisonment to Manju's wife Taslima Hossain and his cousin Mahmood Hossain for

aiding and abetting Manju in taking the bribe.

The court also fined the JP leader Tk 75 lakh. Also a former communications minister, Manju will have to serve one more year behind bars if he failed to pay the fine.

Taslima and Mahmood were also fined Tk 5 lakh each, in default of which they would have to spend six months more in prison.

Taslima and Mahmood were also fined Tk 5 lakh each, in default of which they would have to spend six months more in prison.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Assistant Director Sheikh

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Managing Director of Interfab Shirt Manufacturing Ltd & Vice Chairman of Viyellatex Group, Mr Ahsan Kabir Khan received the "Gold Award" from Phillips-VanHeusen (PVH), one of the biggest shirt sellers of USA for achieving excellence in making dress shirts for brands like VanHeusen, Arrow, Geoffrey Beene, IZOD, Donald J. Trump, Chaps etc. The award ceremony was held in a local hotel where PVH Dhaka team and all other suppliers were present.