

## More sectors to be brought under VAT from next fiscal

UNB, Dhaka

The tax net is going to be cast wide in the next budget as the new government, which has undertaken some ambitious development agenda, has instructed the National Board of Revenue to enhance revenue collection from VAT sector.

Sources in the NBR said they are now defining new areas for imposing the Value Added Tax (VAT), which comes from the pocket of the consumer.

Besides, the NBR team is also scrutinising and examining from which sectors the VAT exemption could be done away with. The government, issuing SROs (statutory regulatory order) at different times, exempted various sectors and sub-sectors from VAT.

In this connection, the NBR official mentioned that the government already has taken decision to abolish tax exemption from the import of mild steel (MS) rods to protect the

local re-rolling mills. "A statutory regulatory order to this effect will be issued very soon," he said.

There will be 15 percent VAT on the import of steel products as presently there is no VAT but only a 7 percent import duty imposed on imported rods.

Earlier, in the middle of 2008, the caretaker government abolished VAT and reduced duty to 7 percent from 25 percent to facilitate real estate and construction sectors when the price of MS rod hit an astronomical high.

The finance minister gave his green signal for expanding the VAT base to earn more revenue from this sector as the revenue earnings from import level has been on the downturn.

In the current fiscal year, the target for revenue collection from VAT is Tk 10,681 crore from local level while Tk 9,562 crore from import level.

The collection of VAT from import level stood at Tk

6391.46 crore with a 12.10 percent growth as on April 26 while from local level Tk 7397.39 crore, marking an 18.79 percent growth.

With the decline of import duties, the revenue collection from import-level VAT will also fall down the mark.

That means the revenue collection from the local-level VAT has to be increased by way of bringing more people onto the tax net - to cope with the higher target of revenue.

The finance minister in a recent visit to the NBR hinted that the revenue target for fiscal 2009-10 year, first under his custodianship of the national exchequer, would be no less than Tk 60,000 crore. And he also instructed the NBR officials to enhance revenue from direct tax.

Additional revenue incomes are an imperative to finance the next budget that could have a total outlay somewhere around one hundred thousand crore taka.



Local residents wait in a long queue at Wireless Gate in Maghbazar in the city yesterday to collect drinking water being supplied by Army men. Residents in many areas of the city are facing acute water crisis recently.

### One dies in rooftop fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man died after falling from the rooftop of a one-storied building in Tejgaon industrial area in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mahbubur Rahman, 30, son of Chan Mia Begumbari area.

After finding Mahbub lying on the ground around 11:00am, his family members rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 2:30pm, family sources said.

Police said he was in a drunken state when he went to the rooftop.

### 'Help bring war criminals to book'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The government is facing conspiracies mainly for its election pledges that include trial of war criminals, steps against militancy and restoration of the spirit of the Liberation War in the constitution.

This was stated by Shahriar Kabir, president of Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals, yesterday.

He was addressing a public meeting at Bhobon Mohon Park in Rajshahi demanding speedy trial of the war criminals.

"Our main goal is to create awareness among people about migratory birds and ensure a peaceful environment for them," said a member of Dhaka University Tourists' Society.

The fair has been organised jointly by Bangladesh Bird Club, Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, Zoology department of Dhaka University, Bangladesh Bird Preservation Society, Bangladesh Wildlife Society, Bangladesh Scouts and the Department of Forest.

Eastern Housing Ltd has sponsored the fair.

He called upon all to stay alert on streets to help bring the war criminals to book.

Dr Sujit Sarker, vice-president of the district unit of Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, chaired the meeting.

Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, Dr Sayed Shafikul Islam, Zihad Ali Mamun, Mostafizur Rahman Khan Alam, Abul Kalam Azad and Abdulla Al Masud also spoke.

Zillur said Tagore stressed the need for cooperatives and modern cultivation to increase agricultural output and improve the economic status of the people.

"He (Tagore) took initiatives for hybrid crop production at Shantiniketan and Shilaidah," the president said.

Tagore was a genuine Bangalee in his mentality, spirit and activities, he said. "As long as Bangla language and Bangladesh will exist, Rabindranath will also remain

## Cash fails to heal wounds for child jockeys

AFP, Gazipur

Munna Mia was just five when his family flew to the Middle East to escape the hardships in the country -- but all that awaited him was a life of danger, pain and hunger as a child camel jockey.

"For a year, they trained us by just throwing us on top of a camel and I often fell off. I still have lots of problems because of all the injuries."

Mia and his brothers were among thousands of South Asian children used as camel jockeys in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states after being brought in by traffickers or under false pretences with their families.

"The hot sand would burn my feet. We'd come back at night and we were exhausted. Every day I'd wonder if I would die," said Mia, who rode in races until he was nine.

He seldom wore a helmet and his uniform was a cotton pair of shorts and T-shirt.

The UAE this week gave the authorities in Bangladesh nearly 1.5 million dollars to compensate almost 900 former child jockeys for the injuries and abuse they suffered.

State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, whose department is in charge of distributing the funds, said each child would get between 1,000 and 10,000 dollars depending on their circumstances.

The money would pay for their medical treatment and education, he said.

"Using children as camel jockeys was despicable. It stirred the world's conscience," Ahmed said, adding that the UAE government told him that robots were now being used in place of children.

The UAE officially banned child jockeys in 1993 although abuses remained widespread until 2005.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), thousands of boys from Bangladesh, Pakistan and also Sudan were forced to become jockeys in the Middle East, where their small size was valued in the competitive camel racing scene.

They frequently fell off, sustaining injuries that could be fatal if they were trampled on.

For Mia's father, Abul

Kashem Mia, 45, watching his sons being used in such a dangerous sport was heart-wrenching.

"I was naive. All I could think about was getting us out of poverty. It all sounded too good to be true and it was. I frantically tried to save to pay back my debt so we could leave but it took a long time."

Four years after arriving, Mia, now 17, works behind the counter at a small fabric shop in his home town of Gazipur, his hand permanently damaged after a fall in Dubai.

He said he was delighted to be among those who will be compensated but that he still suffers emotional and physical scars from his time as a camel jockey.

"I haven't seen a camel since leaving and I don't want to ever see one again," he said.

"We are poor. This money is like winning the lottery for us. We don't know how much we will get, but it won't erase the pain and suffering my brothers and I went through."

## Tagore's thoughts on economic dev influences Bangladesh Says president

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman has said poet Rabindranath Tagore's thoughts on economic development through book-based education.

"He (Tagore) said the country's economic emancipation is possible through development of agriculture sector," the president said while inaugurating a programme marking the 148th birth anniversary of the poet at Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Zillur said Tagore stressed the need for cooperatives and modern cultivation to increase agricultural output and improve the economic status of the people.

"He (Tagore) took initiatives for hybrid crop production at Shantiniketan and Shilaidah," the president said.

Tagore was a genuine Bangalee in his mentality, spirit and activities, he said.

"As long as Bangla language and Bangladesh will exist, Rabindranath will also remain

with us."

The president said along-side the art and literature, Tagore attached equal importance to vocational education with book-based education.

He thought about modernisation of the education system.

Tagore also spoke about equality among the people, he added.

Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad, National Professor Kabir Chowdhury and Cultural Affairs secretary Shariful Alam also spoke at the function.

## Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Golam Kibria, news editor of the daily Khabar, passed away at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 53.

He was suffering from kidney ailment, family sources said.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and one daughter.

President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Secretary General Altaf Mahmud and President of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shah Alamgir and General Secretary Omar Faruque expressed deep shock at the death of Golam Kibria.

## Bimalendu Dutta

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bimalendu Bikash Dutta, father of the Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shamol Dutta, passed away due to old-age complications at a clinic at Chittagong yesterday morning at the age of 82, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

A retired government official, Bimalendu was also a noted cultural personality, a social worker and a football referee.

## Haider Ali

UNB, Faridpur

Haider Ali, a freedom fighter, passed away at Benapole in Jessore on his way home from India on Wednesday night. He was 58.

Haider, also a district Awami League leader, had been suffering from kidney problem since long. He went to India last week for treatment.

He left behind two daughters, a son and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

He was laid to rest at Matir graveyard in the district town with state honour.

## Installation of Tongi-Bhairab double rail lines likely this yr

UNB, Dhaka

Construction work for Tongi-Bhairab double railway lines is likely to start at the beginning of next fiscal year to facilitate smooth and faster train journey for the country's eastern-zone passengers, as this section provides the passage for a host of trains to and from the capital.

After completion of the 62-kilometre double tracks, experts said, train running time and the unusual halts at different rail stations will decrease. The tracks would also ensure comfortable train journey, cutting travel time by half an hour which is usually wasted during halt crossings.

Replies to a question, Railway Director General (DG) Md Belayet Hossain said, "Tender for the double rail tracks has already been floated and now it only needs approval of the ministries concerned for beginning the construction."

The DG informed that the government would take up some projects to develop the rail tracks in the eastern-zone areas, especially in Mymensingh, Netrakona and Kishoreganj districts, replacing the old sleepers and stones so that the trains in these areas could pick up more speeds.

"We're carrying out our efforts to improve the standard of railway service," he said, adding that the railway manpower would be gradually increased to ensure the better service.

Railway Additional DG (operation) Quazi Asadullah said the number of passengers and railway incomes in both eastern and western zones were on the up at a higher rate this year than the previous years.

"Up to March 2009, both 26 percent of railway's income and passengers' number increased by 28 percent of passengers' number have increased compared to last year's," he said.

He pointed out that equal (26 percent) of both the railway's income and passengers' number increased in the eastern zone, while 31 percent of income and 29 percent of passengers increased in the western zone.

Asadullah further said that the government is keen on developing the railway infrastructure by increasing the number of engines and coaches considering the passengers' interest.

He underscored the need to build additional two rail tracks from Dhaka to Tongi junction and pressing more trains into operation on these routes to facilitate train run from eastern and western zones. "The existing number of trains is very few."

When asked, the ADG said the construction of the double lines might begin from early next fiscal as the offices at the filed level have already been set up after the launch of the tendering process.

## Heatwave may continue

UNB, Noakhali

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP at Muradnagar in Sonamirai in the district on Thursday evening.

Police, however, held six, who are alleged to be BNP cadres, early yesterday in connection with the incident.

The arrestees were identified as Nurul Hossain, 30, Saddam Hossain, 28, Amir Hossain, 26, Sohel, 27, Babar, 23 and Manik, 24.

A group of BNP activists, led by Sonapuri Union Jubo Dal President Yusuf, attacked AL activists when they were going to Muradnagar from Amisapara by a CNG-run autorickshaw on Thursday evening.

The BNP workers hacked Nurul Amin, 30, Shakib Hossain, 28 and Kamal, 27, indiscriminately.

As the news spread, AL activists rushed to the spot and launched a counter attack on the BNP activists and a clash ensued, leaving at least 12 people from both sides injured.

The feuding groups also ransacked four houses of their rivals.

Of the injured, AL activists Amin, Shakib and Kamal were at first rushed to Noakhali General Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka as their conditions deteriorated. The other injured were taken to local hospital.

In a sequel to Thursday's clash, the BNP cadres yesterday vandalised two decorator shops of Nurunnabi, elder brother of critically injured Nurul Amin, at Tinteri Hirupur Bazar yesterday morning.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Weather Today

## Heatwave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

There are chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Sylhet division and the regions of Tangail and Mymensingh.

Severe heatwave is sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi while mild to moderate heat wave over Dhaka division and the regions of Bogra, Rangpur, Saidpur, Dinajpur, Chandpur and Patuakhali and it may continue.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:31pm today and rises at 5:18am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 42.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessor and the lowest of 21.8 degree at Sylhet.