

Body formed to implement post-MFA recommendation

NAZRUL ISLAM

The government has formed a 16-member committee headed by the commerce minister to implement recommendations on the post-Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA) development strategy and technical assistance for the readymade garments (RMG) sector.

The committee titled, "Implementation Task Force", would deal with the challenges of free market era from 2005 and onwards, according to an official order issued on Monday.

"This forum has been formed to safeguard the country's potential readymade sector from possible debate in the post-MFA," Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. He added that the government wants the recommendations, which were made earlier

based on a survey on the RMG sector, to be followed up.

Representatives from textile, shipping and education ministries, Board of Investment, the Export Promotion Board (EPB), National Board of Revenue (NBR), labour and employment ministry, foreign ministry, trade associations and industrial units of the RMG sector have been included in the policymaking body.

The taskforce was formed to keep track of changing trends and fashion designs of post-2004 world, when textile quotas will be lifted and the survival of products will depend on quality, competitive price and timely delivery, according to sources in the ministry.

Businessmen and industry owners, especially in the RMG sector, have long been expressing concern over the post-MFA com-

petition. They have also been asking the government for adequate steps to avoid possible setback in the quota-free world.

The government also fixed the terms of reference of the taskforce, which included accumulation of finances and ensuring technical support for implementing the recommendations on the post-MFA development strategy on the RMG sector.

The taskforce would undertake steps and guide the government on implementing the recommendations made in March. The comprehensive recommendations included competitive human resources and infrastructure development, central-boned warehouse and reforms in other relevant sectors.

It would also distribute responsibilities among the government, trade association and industrial

units and coordinate activities among the ministries, divisions and departments.

A consultative group comprising 39 members from various segments of the society to address pressing issues in raw materials, backward linkage industries, port facilities, infrastructure, investment, tariff, market research and product development activities.

The government also appointed a core group to implement the plans and activities of the taskforce.

The group includes secretaries of the commerce and textile ministries, vice chairman of EPB, member NBR, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and chief technical advisor of the BDXDP.

May Day observed PM for political consensus on economic, welfare issues

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Thursday stressed the need for political consensus on economic and other issues of people's welfare to achieve economic emancipation.

"We have to build up a skilled workforce and expand the scope of productive employment," she said addressing a function organised on the occasion of historic May Day at the Osmani Memorial Hall on Thursday.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the function was also addressed by State Minister for Labour and Employment Lutfur Rahman Khan, Secretary M Nurunnabi, Director of ILO Dhaka office Gopal Bhattacharya and Labour Director Shamsur Rahman Khan.

General secretary of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal Nazrul Islam Khan said

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique (C) is over the moon after capturing a South African wicket. Rafique took six for 77 to return the best individual bowling figures by a Bangladeshi in Test cricket.

Miladunnabi on May 15

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi will be observed in the country on May 15 as the Arabic month of Rabiul Awwal begins from tomorrow (May 4).

This was decided at a meeting of National Moon Sighting committee at the Islamic Foundation auditorium here yesterday with committee chairman and State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharrar Hossain Shahjahan in the chair.

JCD leader murdered in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal) leader of Uzirpur upazila under Barisal district was brutally murdered on Thursday night at village Purbo Narayanpur, police said.

Police and victim's relatives said Mamun Mia, 25, organising secretary of Chakhar College unit of JCD and general secretary of JCD, Narayanpur union, went to the 'Kalir Mela' (fair), about two kilometres from his residence.

On his way back from the fair at about 8:00pm, a local AL worker Dulal Khan allegedly took Mamun to a nearby betel nut garden where a group of about seven people attacked him with sharp weapons.

Drawn by Mamun's cries for help, local people rushed to the spot while the attackers fled the scene, leaving the victim seriously injured. Mamun was rushed to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Mamun's relatives believe the murder is a sequel to a dispute over the last general election.

The body was handed over to the victim's relatives after autopsy. Preparation was under way to file a case.

Steamer incident Complaint against 36 army men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A complaint was lodged with the Kotwali Police Station against Major Sharir and 35 other army men by the master of a BIWTC steamer on April 30.

It was lodged in connection with the untoward incident taking place on the rocket steamer 'Turn' on Monday (April 28), according to police sources.

According to the complaint, two persons, introducing themselves as army men, boarded the steamer at Chandpur on Monday night and asked master Nur Mohammad to arrange seats for them. But as he failed to do that in the overcrowded steamer, the army men got angry and started beating him. The steamer crew rushed to the spot and rescued him.

The steamer reached Barisal on Tuesday morning and Nazrul Islam and Anwar Hossain informed the army camp stationed in Barisal of

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Five murders in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people, including a couple, were killed in a spate of violence in the city on Thursday and Wednesday, police and witnesses said.

They said a middle-aged man and his second wife were hacked to death in their residence at Badda on Wednesday night in an apparent family feud.

The bodies of Mohammad Hares Mia, 55, and his second wife Sharjahan Begum, 25, were found with multiple injuries at their 223 Kuril, Badda house yesterday morning. Police sent those to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Relatives of the victims said

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Hares had developed rocky relations with his first wife, Maria, and sons over his second marriage and sharing of land.

Police suspect the hands of Maria, her son Harun and daughter-in-law Kohinur behind the gruesome twin-killing.

Police on Thursday arrested Maria and Kohinur in connection with the case. Harun went into hiding following the double-murder.

Meanwhile, a young man was gunned down by unidentified miscreants near Mohakhali rail gate slum in the city on Thursday afternoon.

Hospital sources said a gang of miscreants, numbering four to five,

City BNP leader beaten up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A top BNP leader suffered serious head injuries in an attack by unknown assailants in the city's Tejjana area on Thursday night, the victim and his relatives said.

Abdus Salam, general secretary of BNP's Dhaka city unit, came under the attack when he was on his way to the party's central office at Naya Paltan.

The attackers smashed a window shield of the car he was riding on, hit him in the head with stones and made a quick getaway leaving him critically injured.

Selim, a relative of Salam, said a vehicle blocked the leader's car in front of the Polytechnic Institute at about 7:45pm.

"As soon as my car stopped, some people started hitting the window shields of my car. I took them to be snatchers," Salam told The Daily Star from his hospital bed

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Govt going for IMF loan at the cost of national interest: Hasina

UNB, Kurigram

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the alliance government of wrecking the economy saying the government was now planning to get IMF loan on tough conditions detrimental to national interest.

"They (government) have looted and ruined the economy...they are now going to IMF for loans at the cost of national interest," she told a public meeting at Kurigram Govt. High School ground.

The Awami League president demanded pay rise for officials, employees and workers in view of the price spiral of essentials.

Describing the alliance government as a government of scandals, she said it had imposed "curse on the people through terrorism, cor

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US troops raid Tikrit, kill one more, nab 20

AP, Tikrit

US soldiers raided a dozen buildings in Saddam Hussein's hometown yesterday, killing one Iraqi and detaining about 20.

Even with President Bush declaring an end to "major combat operations," the raid in Tikrit was the latest of many signs that daunting challenges remain for American forces in Iraq.

Almost daily, US troops exchange gunfire with Iraqis, sometimes as a result of anti-American protests. Lawlessness is rampant, in a land abounding with well-armed citizens and divided loyalties.

Tikrit, the stronghold of Saddam's al-Tikriti clan, has been a centre of pro-regime sentiment even as the former government collapsed. US officers say members

of Saddam's Baath Party are trying to reorganize to stage attacks on American troops, and one of the men detained yesterday was described as a party official.

"Some of these guys are continuing to terrorise people out there, and that's going to take a while to work through," said Lt. Col. Phil Battaglia, commander of the infantry regiment that conducted the raid.

During the raid, troops found several weapons and about \$3,000 hidden in various houses, and one Iraqi was killed when he tried to wrest a rifle from an American soldier, US officers said.

The raid, the second in Tikrit in as many days, began shortly after midnight when six Bradley Fighting Vehicles sealed off a residential district. Soldiers broke down gates and doors, forced their

way inside and emerged with about 20 men, blindfolded and hands tied behind their backs.

No new violence was reported yesterday in Fallujah, where seven US soldiers were wounded Thursday in a grenade attack.

That attack was in apparent retaliation for US gunfire earlier in the week that killed 18 people, according to local hospital officials. US officers said their soldiers were defending themselves after being shot at, while residents said the victims were unarmed protesters.

Even a leader of the temporary city administration spoke harshly of the US troops in Fallujah, a Baath Party stronghold 30 miles west of Baghdad.

"After the massacre, we don't believe the Americans came to free

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PHOTO: AFP

Iraqi communists march in the centre of Baghdad to mark May Day for the first time in post-Saddam Iraq. The Iraqi Communist Party will not take part in the "vague" US-led meetings to thrash out Iraq's future.

US takes three Iraqi officials to custody

AP, Doha

The director of Iraq's office of military industrialisation and one of Iraq's two vice presidents and a close confidant of Saddam Hussein have been taken in custody by the US-led military coalition, US Central Command announced yesterday.

In a brief statement, Central Command identified the detained men as Abd al Tawab Mullah Huwaysh, director of the Office of Military Industrialization, and Taha Muhie-eldin Marouf, an Iraqi vice president and member of the Revolutionary Command Council.

The statement did not give details of where the men were detained, where they were being held or whether they surrendered or were seized.

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BDR, BSF agree to end push-in, smuggling and border firing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) reached a consensus on ending cross-border push-in, firing and smuggling at a meeting in Dhaka Thursday.

"The meeting was a success on every front," BDR Director General Major General Mohammad Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told the press.

India assured Bangladesh that it would not allow any activities against its neighbour and promised to be sincere in not repeating push-in attempts, said Chowdhury.

"Our counterpart told us that they (BSF) would try all out to stop the smuggling of Phensidyl into Bangladesh," said the BDR director general. Smuggling of the banned drugs was reduced in the last six months, he added.

Border troops of the two countries exchanged heavy fire on the northern frontier of Tentulia when their chiefs were holding talks in Dhaka to resolve dispute and maintain peace along the border. Both chiefs, when asked to comment, described the incident as unfortunate and promised a joint investigation into it.

The meeting that started at the

BDR headquarters on April 27 ended Thursday, with both sides signing a memorandum of understanding.

The meeting also discussed the killing of Bangladeshi citizens by BSF and Indian nationals and anti-Bangladeshi activities.

"We decided to instruct field-level border guards to be more alert and more cautious for peace," said Chowdhury.

The Indian side led by BSF Director General Ajay Raj Sharma told journalists that there were 1.5 to 2 million illegal Bangladeshis in India -- the figure the Indian High Commission scaled up to 15 to 20 million in talks with BBC Radio by phone an hour after the press briefing. But the BDR chief denied the allegation of illegal stay of Bangladeshis in India.

Bangladesh provides no space for insurgency and will never allow any such activities in future either, said the BDR chief.

The meeting also resolved to curb trafficking in women and children from Bangladesh and discussed illegal construction of structures within 150 yards of zero line.

Sector commanders of BDR, officials of foreign and home minis

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Rafique sings in the rain

SPORTS REPORTER

Rain has put a question mark on the fate of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and South Africa after play was called off after just one session on Day Two at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With local met office forecasting more showers today and just one innings completed, the match looks heading for a draw already.

Play began after lunch due to thundershowers in the morning. The visitors, who resumed on 264 for six, were all out for 330 in an hour and 45 minutes much with left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique delighting the home crowd with figures of six for 77. It was Rafique's career best figures and also the best by any Bangladeshi in Test cricket.

In reply, the home had scored four runs without loss in three overs before heavy rain stopped the day's proceedings.

The 32-year old Rafique, playing only his third Test, had taken four

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 3	4-30	6-28 pm
May 4	5-22 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Cops asked to run a check on arms and ammunition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police Enayetullah Dewan has asked the cops serving in police stations and camps to check whether their arms and ammunition are in perfect working condition.

All 303 rifles must be tested by firing bullets at the firing spots used by police in the districts within the Khulna range.

An order to this end has been issued in view of the fact that constables Atiar and Paritosh failed to repulse the armed attack of outlaws at Fakirhat, as their 303 rifles did not fire owing to damp bullets. The killers escaped unhurt by a microbus.

They were carrying 303 rifles with damp bullets, said a senior

officer at the DIG's office.

"We want to find out the exact number of dead bullets and ineffective 303 rifles being used by the forces in the Khulna range," the senior officer said.

According to police sources, there are many defective firearms and damp ammunition with security guards of the state-owned commercial banks in the city and the 10 districts of Khulna division.

Some of the guards do not even know how to use a 303 rifle. Most of these arms have become rusty, as they are not maintained properly, said an officer of the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

There are over 1,000 security guards serving in banks and different private industries in Khulna district who have been given arms and ammunition for security rea-

son. One of the security guards at a branch of the Agrani Bank said yesterday that he was given a rifle along with ammunition in 1974, the year of his appointment. "I have never fired a single shot since then," he said.

Another security guard at a branch of the Janata Bank said he has been working for 20 years with a rifle and bullets manufactured in 1964. Officials of the banks in the city said they were concerned with banking and not matters relating to arms and ammunition.

"We are scared at the incidents of arms looting, because we are not trained to face the outlaws or miscreants launching an armed attack," said a security guard of the Khulna branch of the Bangladesh Bank.