

Indian ban on exports

Dhaka can import sugar originating in third country

UNB, Dhaka

Despite India's ban on export of Sugar, pulses and wheat, Bangladesh can import sugar from India, which originates in any third country.

Sources in the business circle said the ban will be effective only on the commodities produced domestically in India.

They said the ban, however, will not hamper the export of products, which were earlier imported to India from any third country.

Utilising the third country provision, Bangladesh can import sugar from India, which the Indian importers procured from countries like Brazil, Thailand or elsewhere.

Apart from producing sugar domestically, India usually imports raw sugar from different countries and after refining, it exports the finished sugar to other countries.

Soon after imposition of the ban, Commerce Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed said the decision of the Indian government to stop export of wheat, sugar and pulses to other countries will not have any negative impact on the Bangladesh market.

Our Staff correspondent from Khulna reported that no shipment of pulses entered Bangladesh from India through Benapole land port since Thursday as India placed a ban on the export of sugar, pulses and wheat.

Petrapole customs authorities, Indian side of the land port, received

a letter on Thursday from the Indian government enforcing the ban.

Sources from the Benapole customs confirmed the Indian ban particularly on the export of pulses for the next six months. Sources said at least 30 trucks loaded with over 700 tons of pulses remain stranded at Petrapole as Indian customs authorities refused to give clearance to them to enter Benapole land port.

Indian exporters are reported to have sharply reacted to the sudden ban on the export of pulses, sugar and wheat. They would go to court against the decision of the Indian government, said an Indian daily quoting Babla Chakravorty, secretary of Bongaon C&F Agents' Association.

Many trucks carrying pulses went back to Kolkata at noon yesterday after their consignments were not cleared at Petrapole land port, Benapole customs officials said.

Meanwhile, price of pulses have soared up to Tk 65 per kg yesterday in Khulna. It was Tk 56 on Thursday.

Teesta bridge

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Zone] requesting anonymity said the bridge is 117 years old and it is not unusual that it has problems now and then.

He said, "The bridge was built for trains only and commissioning it for vehicular movements only made it risky."

Iraq fight will go on despite Zargawi death

Laden tape warns

AFP, dubai

Osama bin Laden warned that jihad (holy war) will go on in Iraq despite the death of local Al-Qaeda chief Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, according to a new message attributed to the fugitive leader of the terror network Friday.

In an audiotape aired on an Islamist website, the speaker said to be bin Laden paid a glowing tribute to Zarqawi, the most wanted man in Iraq who was killed in a US air strike on his hideout three weeks ago.

He described the Jordanian-born Zarqawi as "a lion of Islam and jihad who does honor not just to his family and tribe but to the whole of mankind."

"We will keep up our fight to bleed your money dry, kill your men and so that (your forces) go home defeated, as we defeated you in Somalia," bin Laden told US President George W. Bush.

"Don't rejoice too much. The banner (of jihad) has not fallen. It will be picked up by another lion of Islam. We will continue our fight against you everywhere, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Somalia and in Sudan."

Zarqawi, who orchestrated a bloody campaign of attacks and beheadings of hostages, had long remained elusive in Iraq despite a 25-million-dollar US bounty on his head until his killing on June 7.

Bin Laden defended Zarqawi against critics who attacked him for killing Iraqis, chiefly Shiite Muslims who were long oppressed under ousted dictator Saddam Hussein, and not just US-led forces which invaded in March 2003.

"(Zarqawi) had clear instructions to concentrate his fight on the occupying invaders, chiefly the Americans, and to spare all those who opted for neutrality," the voice said in the tape, which could not be authenticated.

Graveyard

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condition, Azam said they should not appeal to the mayor for that.

Last Friday also saw some 3,000 people demonstrating at the graveyard. The protesters at one point chased away a contingent of police and an employee of the construction firm when they attempted to obstruct the demonstrators from demolishing the under-construction structure for the road.

Earlier on June 19, lawmaker Nasiruddin Pintu, whose wife owns Asha Enterprise -- the construction company building the road, denied his association in any way with the construction of the road.

Initially, a 20 feet wide road was supposed to be built but later the width of it was extended to 23 feet. The road would leave no trace of at least 4,000 graves instead of previously thought 200 graves, the demonstrators claimed.

Following the news published by a number of national dailies about the construction of a 1.5 kilometre long road over the graveyard, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka ordered cancellation of the road construction but the construction firm continued the work under cover of night, alleged the demonstrators.

Safta

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They said it would not yield the desired results without removing the NTBs and PTBs.

"Even zero tariffs will not help achieve what we want from the Safta agreement," said a leading businessman.

The Safta Ministerial Council at their first meeting, however, formed a subgroup on the NTBs and PTBs to remove the trade barriers as soon as possible.

It would review the existing NTBs and PTBs from time to time, identify the barriers and take steps to remove the snags through bilateral and regional negotiations.

Commerce Ministry officials said the sub-group already met in their first meeting in Kathmandu on May 16-17, finalising the terms of reference of the group.

Outlaw hurt

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later shifted to RMCH where he succumbed to his injuries.

A listed criminal in Atrai and Raninagar upazilas of Naogaon, Marshal was an accused in seven cases including four for murder, Rab said.

with 81 magazines, one grenade launcher, seven grenade ammunition, 20 hand grenades, API ammunition of 9 millimetre, 347 mortar shells, and 20 improvised device.

BDR was interrogating the arrestees as of filing of this report at 6:30pm.

The arrestees might have link with extremist groups, said a source.

Recognise rights of Santals

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the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday where speakers emphasised constitutional recognition of the right to ancestral land of the indigenous people, reports BDNEWS.

Indigenous freedom fighter Budu Munda inaugurated the session that was presided over by Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya.

Prof Mesbah Kamal gave the welcome speech while eminent artist Hashem Khan and journalist Kamal Lohani were present as special guests.

The traditional land rights of the indigenous people are yet to get constitutional recognition, as the government is reluctant, speakers at the session said.

The reactionary people in the country are not interested to see Bangladesh as a pluralistic country, Pankaj Bhattacharya said.

Prof Anisuzzaman, Rashed Khan Menon of Workers' Party, Ruhin Hossain Prince of Communist Party of Bangladesh, Golam Kuddus of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote and indigenous leader Rebeca Soren, among others, addressed the programme.

After the inaugural ceremony, a colourful procession from the Central Saheed Minar paraded streets around the Dhaka University. An indigenous dance programme was also held.

Santal Students Union organised a separate discussion meeting and cultural programme at the Agriculturists Institute auditorium yesterday.

Presided over by Swapan Murmu, the discussion was addressed, among others, by freedom fighter and indigenous leader Mathai Tudu and Dhaka University Professor ASM Atiqur Rahman.

Indigenous leaders, including Salvatar Pauria, George Marandi,

Dulal S Tudu, Subodh M Banke, took part in the discussion.

To observe the 151st anniversary of Santal Hool, Bangladesh Adivasi Samity organised daylong programmes including discussion, procession, seminar and cultural function in Dinajpur yesterday, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Comrade Abdul Mannan, General Secretary of Bangladesh Krishak Federation, inaugurated the programmes.

The reasons for which the Santals revolted 151 years back still exist in society, the speakers at a discussion said, adding that the ethnic minorities are still struggling for existence as the ruling classes try to grab their land.

The meeting urged the government to review the existing laws in line with the declarations and conventions of the United Nations and other international organisations, conducting a separate census to establish the adivasi population, and to ensure their representation in all policymaking bodies.

They called for constitutional recognition of the ethnic minorities and end of discrimination against them. The meeting also urged to stop coalmine activities in Dinajpur, which would evict at least 50,000 indigenous people.

The speakers demanded indigenous people's right to education in their mother tongues.

Sreemati Amai Kisku urged to stop 'repression and harassment' on the Santals in the northern districts.

Mr Ananious Hasda Munna, Rajshahi divisional president of Bangladesh Adivasi Samity, Vincent Soren of Rangpur, Martin Murmu of Chapainawabganj were present at the discussion.

Our staff correspondent adds from Rajshahi: Jatiya Adivasi Parishad and NGOs related to

aborigines organised programmes to commemorate the Santal's heroic struggle 150 years back.

Following big rallies brought out from Public Library in Rajshahi and Dayingpara School field in Godagari with different traditional drums, discussions and cultural functions were held.

The aborigine people placed floral wreaths on a temporarily built monument to remember thousands of Santal heroes including Shidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairab who sacrificed their lives for the cause of their rights.

Workers Party politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha, Jatiya Adivashi Parishad President Anil Marandi, Secretary Rabindranath Saren spoke at the Public Library discussion. Prominent literary figure Prof Hasan Azizul Haque attended it as chief guest.

The speakers emphasised realisation of the ethnic minority group's demands for constitutional identity, primary education in their own language, equal opportunity in job sector, and formation of a separate ministry.

The speakers also demanded construction of a permanent memorial of the Santal heroes, and protection of their cultural traditions and research on it.

The Santals narrated their present plight including land grabbing and torture on women.

A bow and arrow competition was held at Godagari to mark the struggle.

The Santals performed a cultural function titled 'Aborigines, rise and work for the nation'.

There were songs, dances and recitation of poems praising the revolution heroes.

Udichi

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proceedings of the case and reinvestigated it as an Islami militant claimed his organisation's responsibility for the incident.

"The government could stay the proceeding of the prosecution legally as a new set of accused came to light," said Barrister Arosh Ali, also an Udichi leader.

The speakers accused both the governments under which the proceedings of the case were run of using the case to harass opposition leaders.

They said the Islami militants dared to continue the same kind of militant activities again and again as the government did not take proper steps when the first incident took place on March 7, 1999.

The Udichi leaders announced to hold a programme to exchange views on July 3. They will also stage a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on July 7.

Udichi President Golam Mohamed Idu, and leaders Abdus Shaheed Lal, Prof Kazi Madina, Manzare Hasin Sweet and Prabr Sardar were present at the press conference.

Meanwhile, three other sensational bomb attack cases in the southwest region have gathered dust as the real accused could not be identified because of weak charge sheets, absence of prosecution witnesses and political influence, writes our correspondent in Khulna.

Two cases were filed with the Khulna Police Station for a bomb attack on an Ahmadiyya mosque in Nirala residential area in Khulna city on October 8, 1999, killing seven persons and injuring 300 others.

The police submitted the final report of the cases in 2001 as they could not identify the bombers and none wanted to become prosecution witness.

Over 100 people were injured in separate bomb attacks on a cinema and a circus fair in Sakhira on the night of September 28, 2000.

The investigation officer of the case submitted the final report in January 2004, describing the bomb attacks as a sequel to the district BNP's intra-party rivalry.

Eight persons were killed and over 100 injured in a bomb attack on an Awami League election rally on September 23, 2001.

The investigation officer submitted the final report of the case in January last year reportedly failing to identify the bombers and collect any evidence. He, however, said he could not arrest the real accused due to political influence.

Road accident

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city's Pahartali Police Station. Identity of another victim could not be known.

The injured are undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH).

Our Faridpur correspondent adds: A speeding truck hit a rickshaw van at Kanaipur on the Dhaka-Khulna highway at 2:pm yesterday, leaving two people dead and five others injured.

The dead are Naren Mondal, 50, and Farhad Fakir, 18. The injured are undergoing treatment at Faridpur General Hospital.

Kotwali police seized the truck, but its driver managed to flee.

Govt conspiring

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to flee their homes.

"The alliance government has been violating the Rules of Procedure (of parliament) and the Constitution one after another while it scored a record in punishment transfer, retrenchment, harassment, making OSD and contract basis appointment of officials during its tenure," the AL chief said.

Referring to the new national budget, she said the block allocation in the budget is not for the people's welfare, but for looting by the ministers, MPs and ruling party men.

The huge amount of public money that the ruling party men had looted will be utilised to bribe the AL voters in the ensuing parliamentary polls, she said, adding, "But the people are waiting to give appropriate reply to the alliance government in the next polls."

Hasina accused the alliance government of playing with the voter list, even by violating the orders of the High Court and the Supreme Court. "And now they have initiated a new game with the Presidency," she said.

"After coming to power through

vote stealing and conspiracies, Khaleida Zia removed a president of her choice, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, who had come up with slanderous propaganda against our party in the 2001 polls."

"She [Khaleida Zia] then appointed 100 per cent faithful Prof Iajuddin Ahmed as the president, but now she cannot believe him."

The Speaker is not leaving the charge of president, which is a direct violation of the constitution, she said.

Urging the party leaders and workers to get united for a massive movement to save the nation from the looters and criminals, the AL president told them to rise above self-interest and stand by the people.

The AL president yesterday met with 26 organisational units of Barisal City, and Barisal, Jhalakati and Bhola districts that cover 12 parliamentary constituencies.

Most of the grassroots leaders demanded that the AL chief constitute full-fledged committees after resolving the intra-party conflicts.

Bush, Koizumi

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In a symbolic joint statement, the two leaders said the US-Japan partnership is "one of the most accomplished bilateral relationships in history."

The bilateral political, economic and military alliance has contributed to stability in Asia-Pacific, the statement said.

Koizumi got a welcome worthy of a state visit as he and Bush emphasized their close personal ties.

Hundreds of US military in full dress uniform laid on an elaborate ceremony in sweltering heat for the prime minister.

"Americans cherish our friendship with the Japanese people. We value our alliance with the nation of Japan. And we honor the leadership of Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi," said the president.

"He is a man of vision. He's a man of integrity. And I'm proud to call him my friend," Bush said.

"It is no exaggeration to say that over the past five years there has been no world leader, alongside President Bush, among the world

leaders with whom I've felt so much heart-to-heart, felt so deep a friendship and trust," Koizumi replied through an interpreter.

Bush joked that the high point of Koizumi's visit would likely be a visit on Friday to the Memphis mansion of the late Elvis Presley.

"Officially, he's here to see the president, but I know the highlight of his visit will be paying his respects to the King," said Bush, who will also go to Memphis in a sign of their friendship.

During an official toast at a gala dinner later at the White House, Koizumi summed up Japan's policy toward the United States by citing the lyrics of an Elvis tune he said was the first English song he had memorized as a youth.

"I would like to propose a toast to the further enhancement of Japan-US relations," the prime minister said lifting his glass. "In the words of Elvis, 'I want you, I need you, I love you.'"

Israel pounds Gaza

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Three members of the armed Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, linked to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party, were also injured in a shootout with Israeli troops in northern Gaza, Palestinian medical sources said.

However, the army denied there had been a shootout.

Israel had called a halt Thursday to a planned incursion into the northern Gaza Strip amid international appeals for diplomatic efforts to free 19-year-old Gilad Shalit, seized in an attack on an army post on Sunday.

Israeli media said the delay was because of differences between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the army chief of staff over how to proceed in the worst crisis since Hamas took office in March after an election win.

The best-selling Yediot Aharonot newspaper said Olmert, who had warned he was prepared to take "extreme measures" to bring back Shalit, believed the operation would cause too many civilian casualties as well as heavy Israeli losses in one of the world's most densely populated areas.

An opinion poll by Yediot Aharonot also revealed that 53 percent of Israelis considered "negotiation and international pressure" the best option for bringing Shalit home while only 43 percent favour military activity.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in comments published Friday that Hamas has agreed to secure Shalit's release, on certain conditions.

"The movement has accepted, conditionally, to have the Israeli soldier returned as soon as possible to avoid an escalation," Mubarak said in an interview with the government newspaper Al-Ahram.

"Up to now, the Israeli side does not accept," he added, but gave no details of the Palestinian conditions. "I am personally deploying all possible efforts, late into the night, to avoid a real catastrophe which would scorch the whole region."

On Monday three Palestinian groups, including the armed wing of Hamas, called for the release of all Palestinian women and children from Israeli jails in exchange for information on the soldier.

Also Thursday, the body of a Jewish settler kidnapped by gunmen was found dumped in the West Bank, adding to the tensions.

But the international community, led by UN chief Kofi Annan, has issued urgent appeals for all sides to show restraint, and to prevent the crisis spreading across the region.

"We hope that Israel, in trying to retrieve its soldier, will practise restraint and that both sides will practise restraint in trying to lower the temperature and develop a sense of security in the future," said White House spokesman Tony Snow.

Meeting in Moscow, foreign minis-

Non-govt school

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not allocating additional funds for realising their demand.

"In their election manifesto, the ruling BNP had pledged to meet our demand. But the government did not bother to take any effective measures [to this end] even in its latest budget," said Kazi Faruque Ahmed.

Among others, Front leaders Azizul Islam, Shahjahan, Asadul Haque, MA Sattar, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Mohammad Ali Chowdhury, Mahbub Alam Talukdar, Afzal Mian, Shariful Islam and Abdul Mannan spoke at the rally organised to condemn the budget.

A procession brought out after the rally paraded different streets in the capital.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Shikhhak-Karmachari Oikya Parishad, another organisation of the non-government high school, college and madrasa teachers, yesterday announced indefinite strike from July 8.

The announcement came at a

press conference at the Tajul Auditorium in the capital.

"We have decided to go for the strike at the schools, colleges and madrasas across the country as the four-party alliance government did not allocate any funds to meet our 17-point demand including 100 percent salary from the government exchequer," said Prof MA Awal Siddique, convener of Oikya Parishad.

He said around 98 per cent education at the secondary and higher secondary levels depends on non-government schools and colleges but teachers and employees of these institutions receive only 15 per cent of the government benefits.

Besides, Jatiya Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Jote led by Selim Bhuiyan will observe one-hour work abstention from today. To be held from 10:00am to 11:00am, the programme will continue till July 3 to press home the demand for 100 percent government salary.

EC administration

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Officials in the EC Secretariat and at the field level said conducting the next general election will be hampered if the crisis is not resolved soon. "Only a few officers are dominating the EC Secretariat victimising the rest of the officials," a source said.

"Everybody is now stressing the need for reconstitution of the Election Commission, but nobody is talking about strengthening the election administration," a senior official of the EC Secretariat told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

ONE PERSON IN THREE POSTS!

The erstwhile secretary to the EC Secretariat, SM Zakaria, had been appointed as an election commissioner on January 16 this year, a few days before the tenure of his contractual appointment to the earlier post expired. Joint Secretary to the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakaria was also delegated with additional current charge of the additional secretary and the secretary on the same day.

The government in January appointed a secretary from a ministry to the vacant post of secretary to the EC Secretariat, but the official declined to join the post, sources said. Since then Joint Secretary Mohammad Zakaria has been simultaneously discharging duties of two other posts of the additional secretary and the secretary in the EC Secretariat, sources said.

Acting Secretary Mohammad Zakaria, even allowed his personal secretary to use the office room of the additional secretary in the EC Secretariat, as the government has not appointed anyone to the post yet.

Zakaria participated in an election-training programme last month in Korea showing his designation as the joint secretary while he was also discharging the duties of the acting secretary. He is looking after the UNDP funded project for 'Strengthening the Election Commission for Improvement in the Electoral process' as its national project director, a post which is usually held by an

additional secretary. Zakaria signed documents as the additional secretary without mentioning that he is in current charge of the post, sources said.

On the other hand, Election Commissioner SM Zakaria is continuing to use the office room of the secretary even though he was appointed as an election commissioner and the two rooms for commissioners still remain vacant.

DIVISION AMONG THE OFFICIALS

Once there was no division among the officials in the EC Secretariat and at its field level administration, but a conflict between the previous chief election commissioner (CEC), MA Syed, and the previous secretary, SM Zakaria, created room for a division to emerge among other officials about three years ago.

SM Zakaria, who boycotted the EC's meetings for about two years during the tenure of the former CEC allegedly patronised the division among the officials in the EC Secretariat. As a result, a few officials close to Zakaria celebrated his appointment to the post of an election commissioner on January 16 while other officials expressed their fear over the appointment.

The division among the officials in the EC Secretariat and at the field level administration still exists, sources said.

Officials, who are frustrated and angry over the division, are suggesting introduction of a cadre system for election officials. Two former CECs Abu Hena and MA Syed also proposed the government to introduce a cadre service.

"Once the cadre service is introduced, officials of the EC Secretariat can be transferred to other organisations of the government reducing the scope for corruption and the mentality for maintaining divisions," said a senior official wishing anonymity.