

UTTARA EPZ
Factory workers start indefinite strike to realise 15-pt demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Workers of the only two operational industrial units of Uttara Export Processing Zone (UEPZ) in Nilphamari yesterday started an indefinite strike programme and demanded implementation of their 15-point charter of demands that include fair and reasonable wages. Around 1500 employees of Uttara Sweater Factory and Quest SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Lightning kills 6 in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Lightning killed six people in the district yesterday, leaving eight others injured. According to local sources, the lightning hit a shop at Khachopiya Bazar under Gorgoniya union of Ramu upazila at around 4:00pm and killed the six inside. The dead are -- Amir Hossain, 20, son of Chorot Alam, Monjor SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

KM Hasan visits Comilla mazar

UNB, Comilla

Former chief justice KM Hasan, who is due to take over as the head of the caretaker government on October 28, yesterday visited a number of Mazars in Comilla. He did not meet any government officials or talked to the journalists. Accompanied by Dhaka University Vice-chancellor SMA Fayeze and Imam of the Dhaka High Court Mazar Mosque, Justice Hasan offered fateha at Darogabari Mazar (shrine), Shahpur Darbar Sharif and Ahmed Peara Bagdadai Mazar.

New workers' wage low, skilled ones' acceptable

Leading economists tell about proposed RMG wage

MONJUR MAHMUD

Leading economists think that the proposed minimum wage of Tk 1,604 a month for the entry-level workers in the first year is lower but Tk 2,117 in the third year should be acceptable.

The government will need to take concrete measures, including improving efficiency at the port, ensuring power supply and reducing corruption, in cutting the cost of doing business so that entrepreneurs can survive, they recommended.

They observed that the readymade garment sector will

face new challenges in the global market once quota on Chinese exports to the European Union and USA is phased out after 2008. The capacity to withstand the wage hike will vary from factory to factory and not all entrepreneurs and factories will be able to adjust to the new situation, they said.

"There were strong arguments for the minimum wage to be reviewed and adjusted upward in view of the post-1994 inflation, protecting the real income of workers, and adjustment for the rise in per capita income," said Mustafizur Rahman, research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Taking into account the inflation rate for industrial workers' consumption basket, inflation-adjusted wage rate and per capita GDP growth, an extrapolation of 1994 minimum wage comes to about Tk 2,156 in 2006, he explained, adding that if the consumer price index is considered in place of the basket for industrial workers, the adjusted figure comes to Tk 2,670.

The proposed minimum wage for grade VII at Tk 2,117 in the third year is below the aforesaid cut-off mark, Mustafiz said. "This has been

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Barapukuria plant tripped again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The Barapukuria 250MW coal-based power plant tripped again last Friday for the 19th time since going into operation in February last year and worsened power outages in the region.

Both units of the \$250 million plant went out of order due to technical glitches and may not be able to perform without interruption soon, said Power Development Board (PDB) sources in Dinajpur.

However, the officials claimed that the plant would resume production within the next four to five days.

Negligence of the officials concerned and poor machinery provided by the supplier and their non-cooperation with PDB are the

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WB chief again asks for hiking oil price

Suggests subsidy for the poor

UNB, Singapore

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz has again stressed the need for raising fuel oil prices in Bangladesh, with a subsidy provision for the poor, as a means of making its economy sustainable.

"The economy is not sustainable... some adjustment is needed," he told a courtesy meeting Friday evening in Singapore with a select group of journalists from developing countries who gathered there to

cover the IMF-World Bank annual meetings of the Boards of Governors on September 19-20.

"Indonesia adjusted the [oil] prices despite political crisis," Wolfowitz said replying to a question, apparently with an oblique reference to concern of possible political unrest just before the next general election in Bangladesh.

"Again, they [Indonesia] raised subsidy for the poor," he said in response to a supplementary question about the Bretton Woods Institution's mandate to

stand for the poor. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have long been pressing Bangladesh to raise domestic prices of petroleum to make the economy sustainable.

Asked whether World Bank could arrange some budgetary support as Bangladesh might suffer from a deficit out of increased oil prices in the international market, the World Bank president again mentioned about the need for the adjustment of domestic oil prices



Madrassa teachers say Asr prayers, blocking the road beside Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday. They demonstrated for a government move to award Fazil and Kamil degrees status equal to bachelor's and master's.

PHOTO: STAR

Oli hints at floating new party

UNB, Ctg

Estranged BNP leader Col (ret) Oli Ahmed yesterday gave indication of floating a new party after the caretaker government takes over by the end of next month.

Oli held a closed-door meeting with grassroots level leaders at Chandanai yesterday and asked them if he was right in launching a crusade against corruption in the government and godfathers of the terrorists within the BNP, sources said.

They said Oli got "overwhelming" support from the meeting as the grassroots leaders assured him of joining the new party.

Oli, however, declined to talk to newsmen after the meeting.

Sources said he is also maintaining contacts with other disgruntled BNP leaders and told them that the BNP high command has no moral

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Let it be last polls under interim govt

Citizens forum says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties should pledge in their manifestos that the coming general election would be the last one under a caretaker government, and polls in future will be held under elected governments.

This was suggested by Shushanoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a citizens forum for political reforms and good governance, at its first national convention in the city yesterday.

"Caretaker government should not be a permanent system. It has been created due to the mistrust among political parties but it cannot be a good practice for democracy," said Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of the forum.

Shujan put forward a set of

recommendations for the political parties to include those in their manifestos for the next general elections.

"The political parties should pledge that they will hold discussions in and outside parliament for creating a national consensus that the caretaker government system should be dissolved after the next elections," Shujan suggested at the national convention following a series of regional workshops across the country.

Asked about this, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain who spoke at the convention, later said caretaker government system would not be required if elected governments could hold free and fair elections.

"If good and honest people are

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5 journos hurt as BCL faction attacks rival's briefing

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least five journalists were wounded when a group of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists attacked a press conference of their rival faction at the Modhu's Canteen of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday.

Armed with iron rods and sticks, the BCL men also used iron chairs to assault the reporters and foil the press meet.

The injured included Kamrul Hasan Khan of The Daily Star, Mazharul Anwar Khan Shipu of the daily Janakantha, Palash Sarkar of the daily Jai Jai Din, Niladri Shekhar Pintu of the daily Amader Samay and Shahjahan Shuvo of the daily Inquilab.

Of them, Kamrul was rushed to university medical centre with

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Nitun cremated in state honour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted sculptor, freedom fighter and business entrepreneur Nitun Kundu was cremated yesterday in state honour after people from all strata paid their last homage to the late artist. Thousands of people including artists, cultural activists, political leaders and admirers thronged the Central Shaheed Minar to have a last glimpse of the legendary artist whose body was kept there for an hour from 11:00am.

The mourners stood in silence as bugles played the last post as a tribute to Nitun Kundu the freedom fighter. A police contingent presented guard of honour in reverence for his contribution to the country's liberation.

Floral wreaths laid by people on the coffin of Nitun Kundu turned it a huge shrine of flowers.

"We are grateful to the government that it has shown the honour to a freedom fighter he deserves," Animesh Kundu, son of the late artist, told The Daily Star.

"Nitun Kundu is no more today, but as long as the country will exist he will remain alive in the mind of people for his role in the Liberation

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM US brackets 6 Asian nations as violators

AFP, Washington

The United States on Friday classified six Asian countries as religious freedom violators, aside from China, Myanmar, North Korea and Vietnam already blacklisted as worst offenders in the region. Afghanistan, Brunei, India, Laos, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were

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Policemen stand in reverence for Nitun Kundu as a band play the last post during a state funeral at the Central Shahid Minar yesterday to honour the freedom fighter and sculptor par excellence.

PHOTO: STAR

Doctor jailed 3 years for negligence in duty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A court here on Thursday sentenced a doctor to three years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) on charge of negligence in duty that cost the premature death of a boy in June 2005.

District and Sessions Judge Md Abdul Salam Shikdar handed down the punishment in presence of the convict Dr Abu Taher Md Golam Murtaza, 40, at around 1:00pm.

The court also fined him Tk 1000 and acquitted four others, including two nurses of the charges as they were found to be innocent.

According to the prosecution, Md Habibur Rahman, 8, son of Jahangir Hossain of Shibpur Bernaiya village in Shahrasti upazila of the district was brought to Grameen Shastha Kalyan Kendra on June 23, 2005 for a circumcision by Dr Golam Murtaza of the health centre.

Just after the circumcision, Habib started to bleed profusely

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Prayer Timing		
September 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-09	6-12
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation