

School teachers threaten to go on strike from Jan 18

Bangladesh Teachers Oikya Parishad warned it will go for an indefinite strike from January 18 (Saturday) if the government fails to settle their demands by then, reports UNB.

The primary school teachers, who observed a token strike Sunday held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club to press home their 15-point demand including enhanced salary, promotion and full payment of their salary by the government.

Parishad leaders Qamatur-Raman, Badruddin Howlader, Mohammed Amanullah and Hena Das spoke at the rally among others.

They demanded introduction of a 'democratic education system' providing equal facili-

ties for the government and private school teachers of the country.

The rally was followed by a procession which paraded the main city streets. The processionists shouted various slogans in favour of their demands.

Chittagong

Bangladesh Shikshak Oikya Parishad and Shikshak Samity Federation observed a token-strike in Chittagong Sunday to press home their 15-point demand, reports BSS.

According to a press release of the Shikshak Samity, teachers in all non-government high schools in Chittagong region, abstained from work in support of their demands.

A rally of the teachers was also held at Municipal High School ground where Samity leaders called upon the government to fulfill their demands by January 17. They threatened to go on strike from January 18 if the demands were not met.

Central leader AKM Mahmudul Haq, regional President ATM Rafiqul Anwar Siddiqui, Chittagong Unit General Secretary Sunil Chakraborty and others addressed the rally.

The teachers also brought out a procession after the rally. Teachers demands include removal of differences in government, non-government schools, pay-hike ETC.

2.5 lakh motor vehicles ply in different routes

About 2,50,000 motor vehicles are now plying in different routes in the country, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Sakawat Hossain Bakul (BNP-Narsingdi), Commerce Minister M K Anwar told the Jatiya Sangsad Sunday that of these motor vehicles, 92,817 were insured. The percentage of the insured motor vehicles is 37.1.

Two crore litres liquor imported in 18 years

The country imported nearly two crore litres of liquor in last 18 years, since 1974, at a cost of about Tk 55 crore, reports UNB.

Commerce Minister M K Anwar said this in the parliament Sunday replying to a question of Moulana Abdus Sattar Akhand of Jamaat-Islami.

The break-up given by the Minister, shows that the largest quantum of liquor was imported during 1976-77 when 52,16,413 litres of liquor was brought at a cost of nearly Tk 10.35 crore.

Replying to a separate question from Akhand the minister informed the House that cosmetics worth Tk 165.50 lakh were imported during 1989-90.

3,189 cases await disposal at Labour Courts

A total of 3,189 cases are now awaiting disposal at different labour courts of the country, it was disclosed in Parliament Sunday, reports UNB.

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, replying to independent MP Nurul Islam Moni, said there are eight labour courts in the country.

The government, he said, plans to set up a new labour court in the port city of Chittagong.

He assured that steps are being taken for speedy disposal of the cases now pending in different labour courts.

Chinese acrobatic troupe due Feb 1

A Chinese acrobatic troupe from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship will arrive in Dhaka February 1, says a press release.

It will perform acrobatic shows at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka Stadium and also in Chittagong during its fortnight to Bangladesh.

The inaugural show will be held at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium on February 3.

All members of the Association have been requested to collect invitation card from S A Sikder, Secretary General of the Association by January 30, the press release added.

Reception

The secretary of economic relations division, Ministry of Finance, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Sunday hosted a luncheon reception in honour of the visiting Vice President of the World Bank Joseph Wood at the Hotel Sheraton in the city, reports BSS.

It was attended among others by secretaries of various ministries, and members of the diplomatic missions.

9.74 lakh Bangladeshis working abroad

A total of 9,74,839 people have left Bangladesh with employment abroad from 1976 to 1991, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Rahmat Ali (AL-Gazipur), Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the Jatiya Sangsad (Sunday) that foreign exchange sent annually by the Bangladesh employees working abroad is about Taka 2,700 crore.

The highest number of people 3,86,957, went to Saudi Arabia. Bangladeshis people are mainly working in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Iraq, Libya, Bahrain and Oman.

Answering another question from Abdul Khaleq Talukdar (AL-Bagerhat), the minister said 96,769 people were sent abroad so far in the current

fiscal year. Of them 5,422 people are professionals, 31,330 are skilled workers, 23,349 semi-skilled workers and 38,668 unskilled workers.

The minister also said there are 313 recruiting agencies whose licences are valid up to December 31 of 1991. These agencies are mainly situated in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

Replying to a question from Sardar Sakawat Hossain Bakul (BNP-Narsingdi), Mannan Bhuiyan said Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), established by the past government, has sent 6,401 people abroad till 1990. Of them 4,380 are skilled while the rest 2,021 are unskilled.

The BOESL has earned Taka 5,66,92,672 by exporting manpower, he said.

RU exams postponed

RAJSHAHI, Jan 12 : M.A., M.S.S. M. Sc and M. Com previous examinations of 1989 scheduled to be held from January 15 under Rajshahi University have been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, the Controller of Examinations announced, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, B.A., B.S.S., B.Sc and B.Com (Sanatan and Sammanita) honours part-3 examinations of 1989 scheduled to be held from February 10 have also been postponed.

Fresh dates for the examinations will be announced later.

Workshop on pry education begins

A three-day workshop for improving the standard of the primary students began at the Mohammadpur Preparatory and Girls School in Dhaka Saturday, reports BSS.

The teachers of the primary section of the school and other neighbouring schools are taking part in the workshop inaugurated by the Director General of the Directorate of Primary Education Abul Hossain.

Hossain stressed on primary education for overall improvement of education in the country.

Addressing the function, President of the School Managing Committee Kazi Azahar Ali underscored the need for proper training of primary teachers and ensuring access of all children to primary education. Principal of the school Zakera Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Monday

- 5.00 Opening announcement, Al Quran, Programme summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from Geeta
- 5.30 Cartoon film: The Great Space Coaster
- 6.30 Sports programme
- 7.05 TV debate competition
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Janamat
- 9.00 Songs Programme
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament roundup
- 10.35 Film: Rescue
- 11.30 Khabar/The news
- 11.40 Monday's programme summary
- 11.45 Closing.

Weather

Moderate cold wave likely

By Staff Correspondent

A moderate cold wave may sweep the country during the next 48 hours commencing 6 pm Sunday, Met office says.

Sky is likely to remain partly cloudy over northern Bangladesh and drizzle or light rain may occur at places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions and the regions of Comilla, Sylhet, Jessore and Kushtia, during the next 36 hours.

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country. Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged during the period, Met office also said.

Temperature and humidity recorded at important cities and towns on Sunday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	24.8	14.5	73	70
Chittagong	24.5	13.6	80	70
Rajshahi	24.2	11.8	85	85
Khulna	26.8	12.0	88	74
Barisal	26.0	11.0	93	77
Cox's Bazar	25.2	13.8	57	73
Srimangal	24.4	10.3	85	80
Dinajpur	20.5	12.8	91	92
Satkhira	27.0	12.9	89	68
Tangail	24.4	12.5	85	80
Sylhet	23.7	11.7	85	80
Isurdi	24.5	12.0	89	78

Sunset in Dhaka on Monday at 5-31 pm and sunrise Tuesday at 6-44 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature recorded at major cities of the region were:

City	Max		Min	
	Max	Min	Max	Min
Calcutta	28	14	Bombay	31
Delhi	26	07	Colombo	31
Karachi	23	07	Bangkok	31
Singapore	31	21		19

Can the Nation Afford?

The present Government has emphatically and repeatedly announced at the highest level that its economic policies will be based on what is called basic aspects of market economy. In operational terms, it means (1) non-interference by public authorities in the fundamentals of market forces so as to avoid any distortions in the prices of inputs and outputs with the ultimate objective of efficient allocation of resources — both human and materials, (2) contraction of the public sector, particularly in the manufacturing sector, (3) abolition of controls and regulations on the economy and elimination of red-tapism over economic activities through decentralisation of administration authorities, (4) promotion of rule of law which includes recasting of laws in consonance with the basic principles of market economy and (5) promotion of private sector through conscious policy support to help business and industry function efficiently.

Merits of market economy is today recognised globally. It is established beyond doubts that market economy ensures most efficient utilisation of economic resources and go hand in hand with democratic system of governance. Operation of a market economy and its efficient functioning, however, requires an environment which is ensured when the public authorities observe certain "dos and don'ts" in decision making within the broad parameters of the points mentioned against (1) to (5).

The recent agreements of the Government with Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) and the two Sangram Parishads, if analysed dispassionately, are in clear violation of these principles. Government intervention for fixing wages ignoring the capacity to pay, restrictions on efforts to eliminate over-staffing, ghost workers etc., and further subsidies to the loss making operations are contradictory to the basic principles of market economy.

The Government's agreements manifest inter alia three broad issues, viz., (i) protection and enhancement of wages and other financial benefits which are beyond the economic capacity of the concerned enterprises, (ii) ensuring retention of unnecessary jobs which are called hoarded labour and (iii) prohibition of transfer of public enterprise to private sector.

The additional financial concessions will cost the public sector enterprises alone an additional amount of over Tk 150 crore per year.

The financial plight of non-financial public sector enterprises (PSEs) is well-known. Their financial losses in 1989-90 and 1990-91 amounted to over Tk 988 crores. Turnover of their assets was merely 0.27 in 1990-91 and 0.25 in 1989-90. The ratio of wage-cost to value added was close to 100% in most of the PSEs and in some cases, it exceeded 100%. In 1990-91, of the total value-added of Tk 2,926 crores in the PSEs, wages cost amounted to Tk 1,193 crores for a total number of 3,20,095 workers. It shows that the per worker value-added in 1990-91 amounted to Tk 91,410 and per worker wage cost of Tk 37,270, the share of wage cost to value added thus being as high as 41%. The worst were the BJMC and BTMC, where the wage's share of value-added was 165% and 95% respectively. These two corporations have been forced to conclude agreements with the workers' Sangram Parishads. Nowhere in the world, the cost of workers is more than value-added. It is no wonder, therefore, that the public sector units having to pay the workers more than value addition generated, have lost their financial viability.

It was so far been said that the declaration of the PSEs cannot be stopped until a popularly elected accountable Government took over the administration. It was felt that only an accountable Government can enforce accountability and financial discipline but the recent agreements have belied that expectation.

It is unfortunate that in a country, where millions of educated and uneducated are unemployed/under-employed with consequential impact on poverty, the Government have sacrificed the interests of vital sectors of the economy for protecting the interests of a few lakhs of workers who are already fortunate of having been employed. It will be relevant to mention how industrial workers have been compensated in the recent years vis-a-vis increased in consumer price index (CPI) between 1980-81 and 1990-91. During this period, CPI increased by 178% against which, the agricultural workers' wages went up by 188% and the wages of the manufacturing workers rose by 258%.

On the other hand, labour productivity in the manufacturing sector has decreased by 17% during 1970-86. During this period, labour productivity in Pakistan and India increased by 251% and 73% respectively. Bangladesh competes with Pakistan and India in major export markets for a number of commodities. Such a low labour productivity in our country, vis-a-vis Pakistan and India, affects our price competitiveness compared to these two countries. Wage increases must, therefore, be linked to productivity improvement, which will be possible if wage negotiations are conducted at sector levels and not determined through the Wages Commission.

Prohibition of transfer of Public Sector to Private Sector has wider ramifications of great economic consequences. The World Bank Economic Review of September, 1991 enumerated one aspect of such ramifications relating to employment creation. It has pointed out that similar restrictions in India and Zimbabwe have caused a decline in employment. The journal mentioned that, based on a survey in 35 industries in India and 29 industries in Zimbabwe, it has been found that estimated impact on jobs has been quite severe. In India, employment declined by 17.5% and in Zimbabwe, by 25.2%. Similar survey in our country will undoubtedly reveal the same impact.

In the present socio-economic condition which, the Government repeatedly admits, is in a desperate state, it should be considered if the nation can continue to bear the burdens of such adhoc wage concessions having no relationship to productivity and capacity to pay. We feel that the people, particularly their representatives in the Jatiya Sangsad, will take a note of this situation and focus their attention on the trade-off between the results of appeasement policy and those aiming at quick development of the economy through rapid industrial development. Any feeling in any quarter that the new Commission on Wages will be able in two months' time to link wages to productivity is impractical. As the earlier Commissions experienced, such a linkage is not only time-consuming but requires sectoral approach. It is for this reason that we have been impressing upon the Government to stop its interventions in wage fixation and leave wage demands to be settled at sectoral levels on the basis of collective bargaining, which is in keeping with the law. Agreements with unregistered bodies, however representative or militant they might be, are illegal as per the present law.

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President

Bangladesh Employers' Association

Dr Naimur Rahman
Chairman,

Bangladesh Jute Mills Association.

Md Mosharrif Hossain
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Saleh Ahmed
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Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

A K M Rahmatullah
Chairman,

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S. ZAKIR HUSAIN
SECRETARY