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# The Daily Star

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## PM assures Employers' Association Govt won't bow to SKOP strike threat

**Star Report**

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Tuesday assured the employers that the government would not bow to the threat of a 48-hour strike by the Srantik Karmachari Otkyo Parishad (SKOP).

She said that all the issues covering the terms of reference of the Wages and Productivity Commission would be objectively considered through tripartite discussions for linkage of wages and productivity before arriving at any final decision, according to concerned sources.

The Prime Minister said this during a one-and-a-half hour meeting with a delegation of Bangladesh Employers' Association (BEA) at her Sugandha office yesterday evening.

It was also decided at the meeting that tripartite discussions among the employers, workers and government would be held on the issue of wages and productivity for any final decision on the report of the Wages and Productivity Commission, said an official of the BEA who participated in the meeting.

The 16-member employers' delegation was led by the president of the BEA, Anis-ud-Dowla while representatives from jute mills, textile mills, garments, jute spinning mills, cold storage and film exhibitors association were present.

Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was also present at the meeting.

Sources said that the Prime Minister herself was convinced that any increase in wages without linkage to productivity would not help raise the real wages of the labourers.

The BEA told the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia that if the government implemented the report of the Wage Commission under pressure of the labour organisations, that would lead to a dangerous consequence for the country's industries.

According to concerned sources, the BEA warned that the wage hike as proposed in the report of the Commission would force the employers to shut their units. They said this



Leaders of Bangladesh Employers' Association called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office yesterday. — PIB photo

## Probe report on 30 Hare Road VVIP House No proof of corruption but irregularities identified

The report of the enquiry committee constituted by the cabinet on the construction of the most-talked-about 30 Hare Road VVIP House, asserted that the committee found no proof of corruption though a number of irregularities had been identified, reports BSS.

The report of the committee headed by Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor, Shah Abdul Hannan recommended that the additional cost incurred for the construction of the house should be sanctioned after proper consideration by the Works Ministry.

The then autocratic regime took a decision on August 12, 1989 to construct a VVIP House at 30 Hare Road Dhaka and deposited President H M Ershad approved the architectural design of the house with three fountains and ordered that construction work should be completed urgently. But the Planning Commission did not approve the project at that time, the enquiry committee report observed.

The serious irregularities in the construction of the house were that the ousted regime gave the work order to the Concord Engineers and Construction Ltd on March 5, 1990 keeping Taka 10 crore for this work under the revenue budget.

The enquiry committee report said, a supervisory committee headed by the Additional Chief Engineer was formed on August 12, 1990 and this committee at different times took decisions to change, revise and expand the construction work. A total of Taka two crore 75 lakh was spent by February 1991 out of an estimated cost of Taka

## Size of family becoming smaller, Nafis tells PM

The visiting UNFPA Executive Director, Dr Nafis Sadik, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office here yesterday, reports BSS.

During the meeting Dr Sadik appreciated the efforts of the present government in the family planning sector. She said it is a good sign that the size of family is becoming small in Bangladesh. Dr Sadik expressed her satisfaction over the sincere efforts of the government for women development.

The UNFPA Executive Director had words of praise for the priority, attached to female education in Bangladesh. She expressed the hope that spread of female education will create a favourable impact on population control.

She said the existing democratic environment and human rights would create a favourable climate for wider acceptability of family planning devices.

## 50 injured as AJM workers clash

**From Our Correspondent**

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 9: At least 50 workers of the Adamjee Jute Mills were injured in violent clashes between BNP-backed Khayer Group and Jatiya Party (JP)-backed Siddik Group this evening.

Among them, Jahangir, 20, Amcer, 23, Rafik, 25, and Shafiqur Rahman, 25, were admitted to the Adamjee local clinic and Monir, 22, Khokan, 25, and Kabir, 18, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition. All of them received bomb injuries except Kabir who was hit by bullet.

The clashes took place in Dhaka Baju and the New Colony areas at 3:00 pm and continued till 5:15 pm. A second round of clashes broke at the same places at 6:20 pm and continued till 7:15.

Some two hundred workers of both the groups armed with pistols, cocktails, rods, sharp weapons and sticks were engaged in the clashes.

The police arrested one Shapon with a locally made pistol and also Yunus and Wahid from the spot. All of them are supporters of Khayer group.

The incident took place when two BNP leaders, Mannan and Mattin allegedly demanded of the Assistant Manager of Administration of the Finishing Department of the mill No 1 at 3:00 pm to provide temporary jobs for some 20 young men. The BNP leaders started insulting the Assistant Manager as he refused to oblige them, sources said.

Witnesses said, at that moment JP leader Sekander arrived at the spot and interfered. Later, some 15 members of JP beat the BNP leaders.

The incident sparked off

## SAARC Summit April 10-11, says Lankan Foreign Office

COLOMBO, Mar 9: A summit of seven South Asian leaders twice postponed because of religious violence in India, will now be held on April 10 and 11 in Dhaka, the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry said today, reports Reuters.

It said Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, current Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had consulted the six other leaders and agreed on the new dates.

Leaders of SAARC — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives — should not meet as scheduled last December or in January due to problems in India.

On both occasions, Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was unable to attend due to communal violence across India.

## Insurance (amendment) Bill passed

**By Staff Correspondent**

Parliament yesterday passed, by voice vote, the Insurance (amendment) Bill, 1993 opening the door of the general insurance to the health insurance policy.

Introduced by the Commerce Minister M K Anwar in the last session of parliament, the objectives of the bill said that passage of the bill would help grow the insurance industry by expanding competition between private and public sectors.

The minister while moving the bill in the House said that

## Dhaka ready to take part in any UN move in Bosnia

Bangladesh would continue its relentless efforts for redressing the sufferings of the brotherly people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Replying to a call attention notice moved by Awami League member Salaudin Yusuf on the brutal killings of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and rape of women there, the Foreign Minister said the government would make untiring efforts for protecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia.

Dwelling on the present situation on Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Foreign Minister said Bosnia-Herzegovina had emerged as an independent state on April 6 last year and earned the membership of the United Nations on May 22 the same year.

From the moment of their independence, the Foreign Minister said, the brotherly Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina had been victimised through brutal mass killings and aggressions of the century.

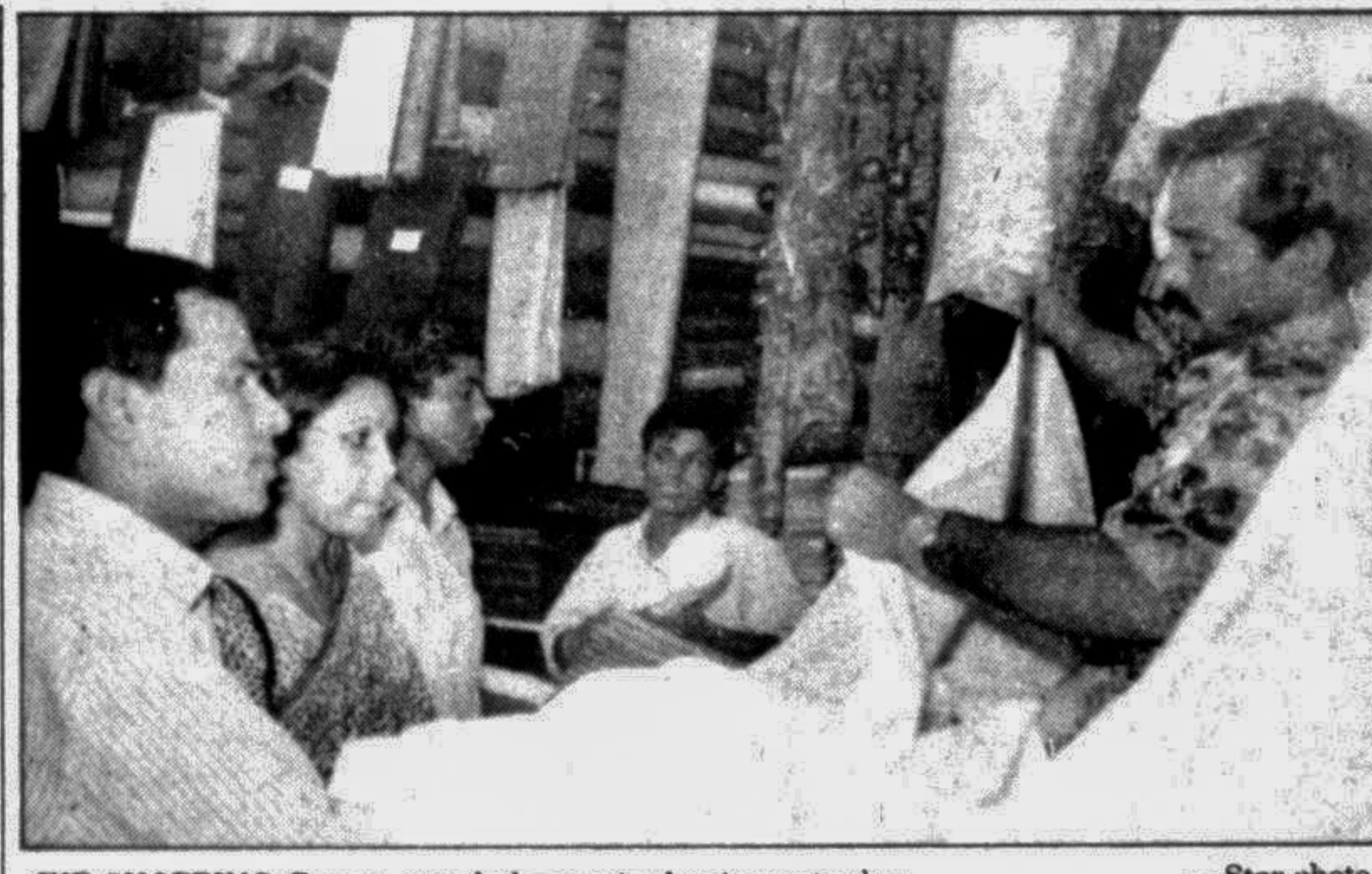
Replying to a question

## Corruption charge against two ministries sparks debate in JS

Parliament yesterday witnessed a heated debate when some opposition stalwarts demanded immediate discussion on alleged corruption in the Works and the Energy ministries, reports UNB.

It all began as SM Firoze (AL) deliberating on President's speech quoted newspaper report and said inquiry committees held the Works and the Energy ministries responsible for corruption.

Sharp came the reply of Works Minister Bartistar



EID SHOPPING: Buyers at a cloth store in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## All-time low water level stops GK pumps

**Star Report**

Unusually low discharge of Ganges waters this year, thanks to the Farakka Barrage and India's unilateral withdrawal of waters at Hoogli point, has made the gigantic pumps of the Ganges-Kabodak irrigation project inoperative, affecting 1,20,000 acres of arable land during the on-going dry season.

Pumps, which should have been put into operation March 1 to pour waters into the cropland, could not be made operational until yesterday due to non-availability of adequate waters near the project's pump house at Bheramara, Kushtia, Water Development Board (WDB) officials said.

"This year, the situation seems to be worse than ever," said Arifur Rahman Khan, WDB's senior-most official for project implementation, giving the data since 1988 that showed a downward trend in flows.

The last Bangladesh-India memorandum of understanding on Ganges water sharing expired May 31, 1988. Since then, parts of Bangladesh have had difficult dry seasons as

## Eid shopping off to a slow start

**Star Report**

The Eid market this year is becoming highly competitive for the clothing, cosmetic and shoe shopkeepers in the city and they do not hope to make the usually good profits although sales are according to their expectations.

During the month of Ramzan, the shopkeepers make most of the profit. "We actually live on the profit of the Eid season," the shopkeepers say, "the rest of the months hardly bring us bread and butter."

A large number of shoppers are already cramming the

## Indecision over importing raw materials Over 100 knit garments factories facing closure

**From Ehsanul Haque**

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 9: Over hundred knit garments factories here have been facing closure due to government's indecision to fix the import target of raw materials against wastage, owners informed.

Basic raw materials — yarn and fabrics — imported for 102 Narayanganj-based garments factories have now been lying uncleared at the Benapole Checkpost since the authorities reduced the volume of import of raw materials against wastage to 10 per cent from 38 per cent on January 11 last, according to factory owners.

They said the deadlock was driving away the foreign buyers of garments, causing stockpile of those products, making the industrialist defaulters to the banks and throwing about three lakh garments workers to unemployment.

Besides, the consignments of raw materials worth over Tk 100 crore were being damaged as truckloads of yarn and fabrics remained unprotected at

## Special Kuwaiti envoy arrives tomorrow

A special envoy of the State of Kuwait will arrive here tomorrow to deliver a message of the Kuwaiti Amir to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports UNB.

Kuwaiti Education Minister Dr Ahmed Abdullah Al Rubel will fly in into the capital on the last leg of his 12-nation tour of South Asia and the Pacific Region.

During his 2-day sojourn, the special envoy will deliver the message from Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Al Rubel, who is also a member of the 50-seat National Assembly of Kuwait, is scheduled to call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

He will meet Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman before leaving for home on Friday.

## Delhi likely to hold talks with Kashmir rebels

NEW DELHI, Mar 9: The Indian government is preparing measures to end the rebellion in Kashmir and would consider holding talks with Muslim insurgents, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says Reuter.

The news agency quoted Junior Home (Interior) Minister Rajesh Pilot as saying that the government would follow a three-pronged strategy in Kashmir.

It would include a shake-up of the local administration, more patrolling on the border with Pakistan and keeping an open mind on talks with the rebels. Pilot was quoted as saying.

Pilot is known for what he calls a pragmatic view on the Kashmir rebellion. Previously the government has refused to hold talks with the militants until they surrender arms and agree not to discuss secession.

That view has been undergoing a gradual change since Pilot moved to the Home Ministry in a cabinet reshuffle last month.

Muslim rebels have been fighting for the secession of Kashmir from Hindu-majority India since 1990. About 8,500 people have been killed.

They demand independence or merger with Pakistan.

India controls two-thirds of Kashmir and Pakistan the rest. The two nations have gone to war twice over the Himalayan territory since they became independent of Britain in 1947.

## 71 Pak drug traffickers on death-row in S Arabia

ISLAMABAD, Mar 9: Some 71 Pakistanis convicted of drug trafficking are on death row in Saudi Arabia and facing beheading, a newspaper here said today, reports AFP.

Most came from Pakistan's northwestern region, which is notorious for illegal drug trading and clandestine heroin laboratories in the semi-autonomous tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, the News Daily said.

## Barrage of missiles kill 22 in Kabul

KABUL, Mar 9: The Afghan ceasefire was shattered again as Kabul was subjected to a punishing barrage of up to 70 missiles killing 22 civilians and wounding 150, the state news agency Bakhtar announced today, reports AFP.

Residents in three of the capital's northern districts, Karte Parwan, Khair Khana and Metrorayan, were hammered by heavy artillery late Monday from the two anti-government factions, the Pashtun Hezb-I-Islami and the Shiite Hazara Hezb-I-Wahdat.

Although the rebel factions are believed to have instigated the shelling, government batteries on city mountain-tops were quick to reply, observers said.

Defence Ministry posts on top of the strategic Sherdawa mountain chain, which extends southwards from the city centre into Hezb territory, also came under artillery fire early Tuesday.

The latest ceasefire was

## Sugar price may come down to Tk 24 per kg

Retail price of sugar is expected to come down to Tk 24 per kilogram within a day or two as the lifting of sugar from mills has increased following reduction of ex-mill price, reports UNB.

It was assured by the leaders of Bangladesh Wholesale Sugar Dealers Association at a meeting between Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan yesterday.

**Shetri, Iftar Timings**

Ram	Mar	Shetri	Iftar
15	10	—	6.12 pm
16	11	4.52 am	6.12 pm