

2000 BCIC employees seek self-retirement

Some 2,000 officers, employees and workers have applied for voluntary retirement from the industrial enterprises of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

Officials told UNB that the public sector corporation needs Tk 150 crore for implementing the voluntary retirement scheme, dubbed 'golden handshake', a donor-prescribed programme of the government.

The government has initiated the retrenchment drive for ridding the public sector industries and corporations of surplus manpower under a structural adjustment scheme. The programme has already been implemented in the Railway sector.

BCIC, one of the major state-run corporations, has 21 industrial enterprises and more than 28,000 workers, employees and officials. Its units produce fertiliser, paper, newsprint, dry cells, cosmetics, cement clinkers, glass sheet and other chemical products.

The corporation invited applications from its staffs and the workers, employees and officers of its industrial enterprises in February. It also circulated the notice in April after revisiting the terms and conditions of retirement.

Those who have served the corporation for at least 10 years and are aged below 52

could apply for the option. Applicants who have served at least 20 years will get a lump sum equal to 60 months' pay of the last basic salary, those who served more than 15 years but less than 20 years will be given 45 months' salary while 30 months' pay be given to those who served more than 10 but less than 15 years.

They will also get general gratuity and other benefits from the corporation.

Sources said about Tk 150 crore would be needed for the payoff as the amount per head would range from Tk 2 lakh to Tk 10 lakh. However, the fund has not yet been made available.

As per the terms and conditions, those who will retire cannot be appointed again in the corporation.

But, sources said, efficient and important officials and employees have applied for retirement which would affect normal function of the corporation and its industries.

Some applicants from the Kohinoor Battery Manufacturers Limited, the only dry cell producer in the public sector, demanded that their benefits be reckoned up till the date when retirement would take effect, not the date of submission of their applications.

Meanwhile, the corporation has decided to sell out the factory and has floated tender for the sale.



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman participated in a policy dialogue on the government programme for poverty alleviation at the BIDS auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Poverty

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agricultural products have led to the current high yield of rice in the country. He said that diesel price cannot be lowered for the agriculture sector alone.

Saifur outlined the government's policies for poverty alleviation by saying that any growth should be employment-oriented.

"For this, labour-intensive cottage industries should be promoted," he said.

He also stressed the need for bringing efficiency in agricultural support services for better crop production.

Saifur lamented that the government inherited more than one lakh surplus employees in the public sector because of which a massive chunk of government expenditures cannot be diverted to poverty alleviation.

Kashmir militants storm police station, loot arms

SRINAGAR, May 15: Armed Militants stormed a police station in Kashmir and stripped its armoury of weapons as six people died in the troubled northern Indian state, officials said here today, reports AFP.

The attackers, who raided the Vilgam police station on Kashmir's border with Pakistan just after midnight, escaped with 20 rifles and thousands of rounds of ammunition, police said. None was injured during the raid.

The frontier police station has been under the virtual control of the Indian army since 1989.

Officers posted in the station said raiders carrying automatic rifles forced them to surrender before stripping the

Hasina

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trenched, farmers deprived of fair prices, prices of diesel and agricultural inputs increased several times aggravating the hardship of common man.

The Awami League president demanded slashing of expenditure in unproductive sectors to increase allocation in productive sectors including agriculture, health and education.

Referring to the unemployment problem, she said as many as 1,70,000 government posts including 2,000 posts of doctors remained vacant but the ruling party fails to fill in the vacancies due to unproductive expenditures.

She brought charges of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency against the government.

Amidst slogans and clappings from her audience, the opposition leader said "the BNP has done fraud with the people but they cannot be fooled time and again."

Referring to the local problems, Hasina demanded implementation of the Chandpur town protection scheme prepared by the Bangabandhu government in 1973. She also demanded construction of a bridge over the Dakatia linking old and new Chandpur Bazar, a long-standing demand of the people.

Earlier, Hasina went to Haimchar by launch to see the erosion by the Meghna and demanded steps to protect the lives and property of the people from the erosion. There she addressed a meeting presided over by Kalkobad Churnu.

BNP programmes to observe Zia's death anniversary

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has chalked out a four-day programme in observance of the death anniversary of its founder Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman on May 30, reports BSS.

All units of the BNP have been directed to observe the day with due respect throughout the country.

The programme begins on May 27 with a discussion entitled 'Politics of production, industrial revolution and Ziaur Rahman' organised by the Jatnyatabadi Samik Dal. Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badrudduza Chowdhury will be the chief guest.

On May 28 the Jatnyatabadi Chhatra Dal and the Juba Dal will jointly organise a voluntary blood donation programme. In the afternoon the Chhatra Dal will hold a discussion in which BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder will be the chief guest.

On May 29, at 4 pm, a discussion, photo exhibition and documentary film show on the life and activities of Shaheed Zia will be organised by the Dhaka City Jatnyatabadi Samajik Sangkritik Sangstha (JASAS). On the same day the Jatnyatabadi Mahila Dal will distribute clothes to distressed women and children.

On May 30 at 6 pm the party flag will fly at half-mast at all offices of the BNP including its central office in Dhaka. The Jatnyatabadi Olema Dal will hold Quran Khwani and millad mahfil at the mazar of late President Zia since morning. Ziarat and offering of wreaths at the mausoleum will be held at nine in the morning.

The Dhaka city BNP will feed the poor in all wards and thanas of the metropolitan city.

Youngman stabbed

By DMCH Correspondent

A young businessman was stabbed at Mirpur in the city late Friday night by unidentified youngmen.

The 27-year-old garments supplier Md Jahangir had intervened to protect a local girl from the bullying of a youth of Sector 12.

Jahangir was stabbed in his lower abdomen by a group of unidentified youngmen immediately after the incident around 11.30 pm.

Jahangir was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The Midnight File

Dy Speaker endorses Yeltsin's convention

MOSCOW, May 15: One of Boris Yeltsin's parliamentary opponents has endorsed the president's call for a constitutional convention, the first sign in months of a possible compromise to end the country's power struggle. Yeltsin wants the June 5-10 convention to draft a new constitution that would strengthen the presidency and replace the Soviet-era parliament with an American-style legislature. Deputy Parliament Speaker Nikolai Ryabov told lawmakers on Friday that Yeltsin's summoning of the convention was "justified." He called for the parliament and president to take "steps toward each other" to avoid a collision between two rival draft constitutions, reports AP.

Ultimatum to Croatia

ZAGREB, May 15: The Muslim-led Bosnian government today issued an ultimatum to Croatia, warning it to stop attacking Bosnia "immediately" or face a plea for action by the international community, an official communiqué said. The Sarajevo government warned Croatia to withdraw its troops from the country or it would be forced to call in outside help to "defend the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia," said the communiqué issued by the Bosnia-Herzegovina embassy here, reports AFP.

PM: Opposition

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the nation of the unemployment problem through encouraging new industrial ventures in the private sector and attracting foreign investors.

She, however, regretted that a certain political party had chosen to engage itself in chaos and indiscipline when her government was going ahead with the programmes of meeting the five basic needs of the people — food, clothing, shelter, education and medicine.

The Prime Minister reminded all that the foremost duty now was to lift the country out of economic disarray so that the people could reap the benefits of the establishment of democracy.

She underlined the need for maintaining peace, order and discipline to help implement the programmes of her government and urged the people to extend their cooperation to the government in the same way they had united to remove the past autocratic regime.

The Prime Minister said that people had already started getting benefits of the politics of production of her government since the prices of all essentials including rice, pulses, onions and cooking oil were within the purchasing capacity of the consumers.

She said that the government had reduced the prices of fertiliser but a section of un-

scrupulous traders were out to dupe the farmers.

Begum Zia said that her government had taken a number of measures for the spread of education in the country. The Prime Minister asked the guardians, local chairmen and elite to motivate the children to go to schools regularly.

Begum Zia also reiterated her call to the people, particularly the rural masses, to set up dairy and poultry farms. She also asked them to plant two saplings each which, she said, would help them in times of need.

The Prime Minister said production had increased due to the canal digging programme and the government was even contemplating the export of rice.

The Prime Minister also said the Langolkot-Laksham-Daulatganj road would be metalled shortly. The affected educational institutions under this thana would also be provided with financial help, she added.

Earlier, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the Langolkot Thana Health Complex. The 50-bed health complex, to be built over four acres, would cost taka five crore.

The Prime Minister said that the people of this locality would get better medicare after the completion of this complex.

Ogata: UN presence

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During her three-day stay the UNHCR chief signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Bangladesh government on the "safe and voluntary" repatriation of the remaining Rohingya refugees.

Lauding the role of the people and the government of Bangladesh in hosting the Rohingya refugees, Ogata also dwelt on the contents of the MOU, the possible time frame for the return of the refugees, UNHCR assistance for local ecological damages and the international refugee situation in general.

Saying that a UNHCR presence in the country of return would enhance the repatriation process, Ogata said: "The change that is required now is to have UN presence in Myanmar as per the provisions of the bilateral accord signed between the two countries on April 29, 1992."

She noted that according to the agreement Myanmar agreed to allow UNHCR presence in the country at an "appropriate" time. "I think the appropriate time is approaching with the UN technical mission already there," she said.

"The UN technical mission in Myanmar, which includes a UNHCR official, would discuss the modalities of our participation in the repatriation process," the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said.

The MOU signed between Bangladesh and the UNHCR, Ogata noted, is a "clear mechanism for implementing the bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar."

Responding to a question, she added that the MOU would have a "positive" influence on relationship between the two countries.

Asked when the repatriation process under UNHCR supervision is likely to begin, she said: "I am hopeful that it would start soon but organising a large-scale repatriation is a very difficult process."

Declining to set a specific time limit for completing the repatriation process, Ogata noted that the recently concluded return of 3,60,000 Cambodian refugees from Thailand took 13 months.

Describing that as one of the "best organised" repatriation processes, she added "It was completed in record time as confidence and the desire of the Cambodians to go home was very high."

Replying to another question, Ogata said that the 22,400 Rohingya refugees, out of a total of over 2,50,000, who have already returned, went back on their own.

Terming it as "spontaneous repatriation," the UNHCR chief said "Spontaneous return is something we are not in a position to stop."

However, Ogata refused to comment on whether the returning refugees were coerced, as alleged by some international quarters.

"We were not involved in the repatriation process and we did not have access to the refugee camps at the time, so

Bank manager, two others arrested in Khulna

From Our Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 15: Police today arrested a local bank manager and two employees for their alleged involvement in defalcation bank money.

According to police, on April 8 last, Tk 14 lakh was found missing from the strong room of the Sonali Bank, Koyra Branch. The Sonali Bank Regional Office, Khulna lodged a case with the police.

Accordingly police arrested the branch manager, Tejendra Nath Mandal, cashier Abdus Sabur and a night guard today.

Criminals' list

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Minister's office M Hafizuddin Khan, police commissioners of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi metropolises and deputy commissioners and police superiors of Chittagong, Myensingh, Comilla, Sylhet and Jessore districts.

The meeting decided to take stringent measure after reviewing violence and terrorism in the educational institutions, hijacking, illegal toll collections, smuggling, cow lifting, dacoity on the highways and in the waterways.

The meeting emphasised the need for increasing manpower and logistic support and modernisation of police.

It instructed the officials to prepare up-to-date list of criminals and arrest them accordingly.

It emphasised to conduct district law and order committee meeting regularly.

The meeting took decisions to take drastic actions against criminals irrespective of their political affiliations. It directed the officials to execute Anti-Terrorism Law strictly.

2 dacoits held

By Staff Correspondent

Two dacoits guised as pious Muslims were caught red-handed by Mirpur mobile police early Saturday morning.

The dacoits robbed the house of one Abdul Kader of 280/4 Paikpara, Mirpur and tried to flee by pretending to go to the mosque for Fajr prayers.

Shibir observes hartal in Rangpur

RANGPUR, May 15: A half-day hartal was observed in the town today (Saturday) at the call of the Islami Chhatra Shibir protesting the killing of a student of Rangpur Government College, reports UNB.

Saiful Islam, who was allegedly beaten up by a group of unidentified people during Thursday's hartal

WB conditions

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trenched workers: privatisation of all the nationalised jute mills in phases; introduction of a new wage policy; rationalisation of production as per requirements; training for the officials and employees; restructuring of credit structure and repayment of bank loans; and stopping of government interference in running the jute mills.

Official sources further said part of the WB loan would be used to off-set the already burdened interests on previous loans of the jute sector.

They said during the negotiation with the WB, the Bangladesh team would bargain on some of the proposed conditions regarding retrenchment of surplus workers, new wage policy, rationalisation of production and rehabilitation of the retrenched workers with the financial assistance of the bank.

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