

# Handloom sector lacks proper policy : PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said that the country's handloom sector could not achieve the expected development because of lack of proper policy, reports UNB.

She said there were various problems faced by the handloom industry, including lack of adequate supply and fair price of yarn, lack of capital, problems of marketing and duty on imports of raw materials. "These problems are there because of lack of a proper policy."

"It is possible to reduce loss in the textile sector if we can overcome our fascination for foreign goods and check smuggling," Begum Zia said urging all to cooperate with the government for curbing smuggling to protect the textile sector.

The Prime Minister was inaugurating a two-day national conference of weavers at the Shilpakala Academy.

She stressed the need for a proper policy after reviewing the problems of the weavers and the handloom industry.

Begum Zia said that her government was considering to establish a services and facilities centre for the weavers. Besides, some 20 basic centres are now being established across the country to help the weavers and solve the problems of the industry.

She further said that the government has undertaken a programme to rehabilitate the artisans for Benarasi saree. "We will do everything for the development of the handloom sector."

The Prime Minister recalled that Shaheed President Zaur Rahman had established the Bangladesh Handloom Board for the welfare of the weavers to restore the past glory of the industry.

"We believe our textile sector has a bright possibility. This is why we identified it as a dynamic sector," Begum Zia said. "Clothes are a basic need. It's our constitutional duty to provide clothes for the people."

She said that the textile was given priority after the agriculture sector and appropriate policies are being adopted to develop the sector as well as the economy.

The function was addressed, among others, by State Minister for Textile Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, Textile Secretary AH Mofazzel Karim, Textile Board Chairman Syed Shahabuddin Ahmed, Shahidullah Khan MP and weavers representative Mohammad Ramjuddin.

Later, the Prime Minister went round different stalls displaying handloom products at the conference venue.

# Toll collectors, hijackers held

By DMCH Correspondent

Two toll collectors were caught red-handed at New Eskaton in the city yesterday along with a sawed-off rifle and two bullets.

Witnesses said, a group of 'local mastans' went to the Development Design Consultants office yesterday morning but were resisted by the staff.

At one stage of altercation one of them stabbed the office peon Mohammad Mokaddes.

Two of the mastans, identified as Sobel, 25 and Abdul Aziz, 25, were caught and later handed over to Ramna police.

Meanwhile, four hijackers were arrested by the Mohammadpur police for their alleged attempt to snatch the gold chain of a rickshaw passenger at dagger point.

Tauhida Nasrin, the passenger, however, managed to draw attention of the passers-by who chased the muggers braving the cocktails hurled at them.

Jasimuddin, a contractor, who was on the scene, shot at the muggers with his licensed gun injuring one Fazal. The other held muggers are: Hemayet, Hannan and Masud.

UNB adds: Police arrested a young man with a loaded revolver from in front of the Babupura police box in the city yesterday.

Nizamuddin alias Monu Mia, 35, was arrested with a black briefcase at 8:10 am.



Two youngmen were caught red-handed while committing dacoity at a private consultants' firm at New Eskaton in the city yesterday.

# Private varsity in Comilla to be set up

An initiative has been taken to establish a private university in Comilla, reports UNB.

A 16-member Trust has already been formed to set up the proposed 'Comilla University.'

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia called for mobilising necessary fund for the university. He assured that the government would provide possible help in this regard.

The Works Minister gave the assurance while speaking at a meeting of the Comilla Education, Science and Technology Development Trust in the city yesterday.

Former Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof. Fazlul Halim Chowdhury chaired the meeting. President of the Trust Prof. Shamsul Haq and ex-minister, Abul Kashem were present.

# 30,000 tons sugar allotted for dealers

Thirty thousand tons of sugar have been allotted for wholesale, district and thana level sugar dealers as well as for the establishment permit holders (EPH) by Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation for the month of December, reports BSS.

The last date for lifting of allotted sugar is December 20 which would not be extended any further, the corporation asserted.

Sugar dealers and EPH owners have been requested to contact Sales Department of BSFC or the nearest sugar mill to lift their quota of sugar within the set time limit.

# Kuwait, Iraq returnees' programme

By Staff Correspondent

Some seventy thousand Bangladeshis repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq in the wake of the Gulf War yesterday announced their programme to join the Opposition by the end of this December for their active participation in all future anti-government agitations.

M. Ashraf Ali Khan and Nur Mohammad Siddiqi, President and General Secretary of the Association for Kuwait repatriated Bangladeshis made the announcement at a press conference at the National Press Club last evening.

The leaders accused the government of doing nothing for the Bangladeshis repatriated from Kuwait and Iraq after the Gulf crisis.

They will also observe a two-day hunger strike in front of the National Press Club from December 12 as part of their programme.

# Tariff

From Page 1 Col 8

The sole authority to decide any case as it needs clearance from the Law Ministry before taking any decision.

The NBR Chairman, however, suggested that there should be a dialogue between the NBR and the business people before the next budget, so that all the issues could be resolved.

In some cases, he said taxes are imposed for establishing control and supervision over a particular sector and in some cases, for removing the imbalances between the foreign aided projects and the domestic projects.

About a proposal for setting up a separate collectorate for the export oriented industries, the NBR Chairman said, the Board is now facing an acute shortage of manpower. About 33 per cent posts of the Customs Department are now vacant while out of 408 posts of the Income Tax Department, 193 posts are vacant, he disclosed. So at this stage the proposal cannot be implemented, but it can be done within two or three years, he pointed out.

The President of the MCCI Lutfur Rahman raised various issues relating to tax, tariff and duties for consideration of the Board and reiterated the need for a supportive role from the NBR.

He hailed the NBR's decision regarding acceptability of price certificates of pre-shipment inspection, but said there is something more to be done regarding the items for which there are tariff values. He also referred to the Finance Minister's commitment on the issue and said this can be done at least for the industrial importers.

The MCCI President was critical of the NBR's stand on the provision of deducting income tax at source in case of exports and also pointed out some irregularities in collecting the Value Added Tax (VAT).

From among the businessmen, Manzur-e-Elahi, Azizur Rashid, Major General (Ret'd) Amzad, Aminul Islam, Iqbal Mahmud, Abu Sayeed and many others raised various issues for consideration of the NBR Chairman. Dr Akbar Ali Khan, along with other members of the Board, responded to the questions raised by the leaders of the business community.

# The Midnight File

## Benazir declines Rao's invitation

ISLAMABAD, Dec 7: Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto tonight expressed her inability to accept her Indian counterpart, PV Narasimha Rao's personal invitation for attending the December 16 'education for all' summit, saying that she had 'other pre-occupations'.

This was stated by the Minister of State for External Affairs and Rao's special envoy R L Bhatia, who flew in here by a special Indian Air Force plane to deliver the invitation to Benazir, reports PTI.

## Syria rejects Israeli offer

DAMASCUS, Dec 7: Syria had rejected an Israeli offer to withdraw from the Golan heights in four phases in return for 'immediate' peace with Syria, an official Syrian newspaper said today.

The English-language daily The Syria Times said, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher brought the offer to Damascus. Christopher visited Syria on Sunday, reports Reuter.

# IDB to provide \$10m for pry schools, madrassahs

Bangladesh will receive 10 million US dollar from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for financing the construction of 500 government primary schools and 120 Madrassah throughout the country, reports BSS.

A loan agreement to this effect was signed between the two sides here yesterday.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and the visiting president of the IDB Dr Ahmad Muhammad Ali signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

Earlier during discussions, the Finance Minister emphasised the worthwhile project financing assistance instead of trade financing one from the IDB. He said that Bangladesh was now in a position to finance its imports and needed project financing aid from the IDB or such other institutions. Project financing assistance makes a significant impression upon the people of the recipient countries, he added.

The Finance Minister lauded the role of the IDB to build the Islamic Ummah.

The IDB president expressed his keen interest to assist in the Greater Faridpur Rural Electrification Project and the Greater Sylhet Feeder Road Construction Project.

Meanwhile the visiting president of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Dr Ahmed Mohamed Ali, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office here yesterday.

They discussed different aspects of the ICTVTR, an organ of OIC. Begum Zia told the IDB President that the institution was functioning excellently, but it had some financial constraints. She sought increased cooperation from Dr Ali in providing financial assistance to the ICTVTR.

# Population

From Page 1 Col 7

employment had risen recently but still remained as low as 5 per cent.

"In '51, the average age of marriage for a Bangladeshi girl was 14.4, by 1981 it had risen to an average of 16.6. Now the average is estimated at 18.1 years, he said.

The speakers stressed on the need for accelerating the family planning measures through ensuring education for women, raising the age of marriage, reducing infant and maternal mortality, improving employment opportunity for women and providing sex education.

# Telecom sector

From Page 1 Col 4

service in the rural areas was first permitted in 1989 when three licences were issued to private operators. One of the licences, Bangladesh Telecom (Private) Limited (BTL) never commenced operation and has surrendered its licence. BTL, which bought into Hutchinson Telecom of Hong Kong was also given a licence to provide cellular, radiopaging and riverine radio services in March 1990. Another licensee, the Bangladesh Rural Telecom Authority (BRTA) ran into a dispute with BTTS over its licence covering 203 thanas. The licence agreement was responded by the government in 1990. A revised agreement was issued recently.

The experiments in liberalisation of the telecommunication sector is yet to bring a noticeable private sector presence in the sector. Analysts believe that unless the government spells out its medium and long term intentions about the telecommunication sector clearly, investors will not be attracted to it.

# Khaleda : No provision

From Page 1 Col 7

that a hartal programme was organised by a leading opposition party in conjunction with the ousted force of autocracy coinciding with Shaheed Noor Nossain's death anniversary. "Instead of upholding the sanctity of the day by arranging milad, they observed hartal causing misery and suffering to the people."

She said, some opposition parties are trying to stop the wheels of development. "Why do you try to interrupt the programmes of poverty alleviation, industrial production, educational programmes and development works like the construction of bridges and culverts?"

"By calling hartals, breaking cars, damaging property and stopping production they were creating indiscipline and hindering progress."

Begum Khaleda Zia spoke of the glorious role of the Press in the anti-autocracy movement. The press, she said, also acknowledged the fairness and impartiality of the last parliamentary elections.

Terminating the Press as the watchdog of democracy, she said, "During our time, no phone calls are made to the newspaper offices at the dead of the night asking not to publish anti-government reports. You cannot cite a single instance of press censorship," she stated.

Presided over by City BNP President and Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, the meeting was also addressed by, among others, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Irrigation, Flood Control and Agricultural Minister Majid-Ul-Huq, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Post and Telecommunication Minister Tariqul Islam, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman Patal.

Dhaka City Mayor and Jubo Dal President Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain, DUCSU Vice President Amanullah Aman, Jatiyatadabi Mahila Dal President Begum Khwaja Shamsunnahar Ahsanullah, JASAS President Zahid Hossain Chhutra Dal President Fazlul Huq Milon.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Barrister Salam Talukdar said, the country could not expect any thing better from Awami League as its late leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had championed democracy, also killed democracy and the press freedom by establishing one-party BKSAL.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman termed the Awami League's attempt at calling frequent hartals "as nothing but an act of sabotage to destroy the economy."

Saifur said, that from day one BNP was elected to power, Awami League had been trying to dislodge the government. "All their efforts are aimed at stopping development work."

Tariqul Islam criticised the Awami League for collaborating with the Jatiya Party and frustrating the objectives of the Joint Declaration.

Barrister Nazmul Huda said, polls under a care-taker government happens only once in a country's history. "It happens when the system breaks down, there is chaos and there is anarchy."

Mir Shawkat Ali referred to a recent statement of the AL chief regarding strengthening of the Armed Forces. He said, all the armed personnel had bitter experiences since 1972. The Awami League not only ignored the armed forces, but also created a parallel force, the Rakkhi Bahini to undermine the armed forces.

# BDR, BSF talk cross-border problems

SYLHET, Dec 7: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security Force (BSF) of India at a coordination meeting here today discussed a wide range of cross-border problems between the two countries, reports UNB.

An official handout said the meeting, held in a cordial atmosphere, discussed trans-border crimes, including smuggling, trespass, kidnapping, murders, dacoity etc and measures to curb those.

The meeting also discussed law and order situation in the border areas, violation of the frontiers, land disputes, push-in, maintenance of border pillars and other allied matters.

The two sides at the meeting decided to exchange information on smuggling as well as on persons and organisations involved in smuggling.

# Steps taken to identify fake driving licences

State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the government had taken steps to identify false driving licences and their holders, reports BSS.

Responding to a call attention notice by Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder (AL) on false driving licence, Fazlur Rahman said punitive action would be taken against the holders of false driving licences.

# Police arrests 32 'outsiders' from passport office

By Staff Correspondent

Thirty two people were rounded up by Ramna police from the Dhaka Regional Passport Office yesterday allegedly for working as passport brokers.

The Special Branch (SB) and the Ramna Thana Police went into action in the passport office at Escaton following a directive from the Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

Earlier the Home Minister made a surprise visit to the passport office at around 1 pm yesterday and finding the office full of 'outsiders', he expressed dissatisfaction and asked the police to nab the 'unwanted persons'.

Police carried the raid at around 2 pm immediately after the Home Minister had left.

A source said the minister visited the passport office after receiving complaint that the general passport seekers were being harassed.

Following the directive, the law enforcing personnel on duty sealed off all the entrances to the office keeping the loitering people inside and picked up 32 people as they could not give any satisfactory answers about their presence there. Police suspected them as passport brokers.

A police officer on duty said, "these people normally get contracts to make passport for others taking money... We are questioning the suspects... Legal action will be taken against those found guilty and the rest will be released."

The police of the Detective Branch (DB) and the SB were interrogating the suspects in the Ramna police station last night.

Meanwhile, an official in the Passport Office said the police earlier arrested passport brokers several times. They were released and the situation did not improve in the past, he added.

UNB reports: The minister expressed extreme dissatisfaction seeing the mismanagement of the passport office and ordered for immediate suspension of an officer and a staff for neglecting duties and irregularity.

He directed the Director General of Immigration and Passport Directorate for eradicating all mismanagement and corruption from the passport office.

Matin also ordered to form a three-member probe body headed by a Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry for investigation into all mismanagement of the passport office.

Stressing on construction of a building of its own for the Passport and Immigration Directorate, the minister called for speedy implementation of the project already undertaken.

Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, the Additional Secretary of Home Ministry, the Additional Inspector General of Police and other high officials were present.

# JS move on local govt system

From Page 1 Col 4

While proposing the committee, the LGRD Minister ruling out the opposition claim that the proposed law was not consistent with the relevant constitutional provisions, said, "we want to set an example of working through an understanding with the opposition in parliament."

The minister, terming the move, an unprecedented one in Bangladesh said, no Treasury Bench in the parliaments of the past had shown this magnanimity to the opposition bench.

Earlier, on the eve of taking the local government (district council) (amendment) bill, 1993, for consideration by the House, the opposition leaders called upon the treasury bench to reach a consensus on the issue before passage of the bill.

Rising on a point of order, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad referred to the constitutional obligation for strengthening and institutionalizing all the tiers of local government through elected representatives.

Demanding a comprehensive bill, Azad said development of the country is hampered and frustration of the people increased in the absence of representative bodies at all tiers of local government.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed contended that the bill is not in conformity with the Constitution. He said articles 59 and 60 gave an integrated scheme of local government. "This is a distinctive and unique feature of our Constitution."

Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon said the bill proposed formation of district council with union parishad chairman, man and women. But Article 9 of the Constitution said the local government bodies should have representatives of peasants and workers.

Ganotantri Party MP Suranjit Sengupta, Jamaat MP Maulana Sobhan and JSD MP Shahajan Siraj also criticised the proposed law from the constitutional point of view and called upon the Treasury Bench to reach an understanding with the opposition on the issue with a view to institutionalizing democracy.

Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Education Minister, at this point took the floor to defend the bill and argued that there was no violation of constitution in any sections of the proposed law, especially after it had been presented in the House in an amended form.

Referring to the opposition objections to the provision for indirect election of the District Council chairman, the Education Minister informed the House that the provision has already been replaced with the system of direct polls.

Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League (AL) took the floor at this point to refer to the Prime Minister's Monday's speech in the JS in which Begum Khaleda Zia had expressed her will to resolve all the national level problems, on the floor of parliament.

The AL MP also called the Treasury Bench to resolve the present crisis on the subject of local government on the basis of consensus between the Treasury and the Opposition benches.

Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, in response to the AL legislator, proposed to Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali to adjourn the House for a few minutes to try to reach an agreement on the issue with the opposition.

The Speaker adjourned the House for 20 minutes at 8:45 pm.

The House resumed after an hour following a successful negotiation between the Treasury and the Opposition bench and the LGRD Minister came out with the proposal for the special committee.

The Minister, however, informed the House that apart from considering the local government issue in the committee, he discussed the matter during the last few days with many opposition leaders including Abdus Samad Azad, Mohammad Nasim, Rashed Khan Menon, Advocate Fazle Rabbi and Sheikh Ansar Ali.

Samad Azad, while giving his reaction on the Treasury Bench's positive response to the opposition call, thanked them and felt that the proposed committee should discuss the issue of local governments in totality.

The Speaker adjourned the House at 10:30 pm to resume again at 4 this afternoon.

# Naniarchar inquiry Dipankar MP concerned

By Staff Correspondent

Dipankar Talukder MP from the Rangamati Hill Tracts constituency expressed his deep concern over the alleged barring of witnesses from reporting to the inquiry commission probing the incident of killings at Naniarchar on November 17.

In a statement yesterday the parliamentarian alleged that different government agencies were resisting the witnesses from reporting to the probe body. He demanded administrative intervention in this matter.

**এজেন্টদের প্রতি বিশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

দি ডেইলী স্টার পত্রিকার সম্মতিত এজেন্ট, যাহারা নবেম্বর '৯৩ মাসের বিল এবং বকেয়া টাকা পরিশোধ করেন নাই, তাহাদেরকে চলতি মাসের ১৫ তারিখের মধ্যে নবেম্বর '৯৩ মাসের বিল ও বকেয়া সম্পূর্ণভাবে পরিশোধ করিতে বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ করা যাইতেছে। উক্তব্য যে সমস্ত এজেন্ট নির্ধারিত তারিখের মধ্যে বিল ও পূর্বের বকেয়া পরিশোধ করিতে ব্যর্থ হইবেন তাহাদের এজেন্সিতে পত্রিকার স্বাভাবিক সরবরাহ আমাদের একান্ত অনিচ্ছা সত্ত্বেও বিলম্বিত হইতে পারে। আপনাদের ব্যবসায়িক সহযোগিতা আমাদের একান্ত কাম্য। এখন হইতে সার্কুলেশনের যাবতীয় ব্যাপারে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর সাথে যোগাযোগ করিতে অনুরোধ করা যাইতেছে।

এ, বি, এম, আব্দুল সালাম  
কমার্শিয়াল ম্যানেজার  
দি ডেইলী স্টার  
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