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Readjustment of quota proposed US urged to increase import of high-demand apparels

By Rafiq Hasan

The government has requested the US government to increase quotas of some high-demand garments items by re-adjusting their quotas with those of low-demand ones for the current year.

Garments exports to the US under categories 336/636, 347/348, 237/369 and 647/648 fulfilled 71.6, 76.8, 61, 59.4, and 56.5 per cent of their respective quotas till June 29, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

The items include trousers, shorts, dresses and play suits. On the other hand some categories have fulfilled their quotas to levels as low as 15-19 per cent.

"We have requested the US Department of Custom and Commerce for re-adjustment of quota this year as some items have already fulfilled over 70 per cent of their quotas," Abdul Razzaq Director General of EPB told The Daily Star.

The re-adjustment can be done under the 'flexibility facilities', provided under the US-Bangladesh agreement on textile export, he said.

"Quotas for certain categories can be increased up to 30 per cent through re-adjustment," he said.

Abdur Razzaq ruled out the possibility of an embargo by the US government on import of these high-demand items if their quotas are fulfilled before the year-end.

"Quota re-adjustment is permitted under the US-Bangladesh agreement on textile export and the US government will do it very soon," Razzaq hoped.

Re-adjustment of quota is not unusual. Whenever demand for a certain category goes up, the quota is increased through 'carry forward, shift swing and advance quota system', said another high official of the EPB.

Observing the export trend, EPB requested the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington earlier to communicate with the US Department of State and the Department of Commerce to re-adjust the quota.

The Embassy informed the EPB in a recent letter that the matter would be taken up with appropriate authorities for an early solution.

There are as many as 3200 export oriented garments factories in the country and the bulk of their products are exported to the USA and Canada. The US fixes quotas for 21 categories of items and Canada for 10. Bangladesh will export more than 3.50 crore dozen pieces of garments to the US and Canada this year under these quotas.

Garments exports accounted for 55.87 per cent (USD 2125.63 million) of the total export earnings in the first nine months of the last financial year.

Pakistan expels Indian HC official for spying

ISLAMABAD, July 7: Pakistan today ordered the expulsion of an Indian High Commission (embassy) official on spying charges and gave him a week to leave the country, reports Reuters.

A Foreign Ministry statement said the Pakistani government had declared Yograj Vij persona non grata after finding him 'indulging in activities incompatible with his official status', diplomatic jargon for spying.

"He has been told to leave Pakistan within a week by July 14," it said.

The statement said the Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Islamabad was summoned to the Foreign Ministry yesterday and informed of Pakistan's decision. The action came two days after India said Vij was beaten up and abducted by Pakistani intelligence agents and amid charges by

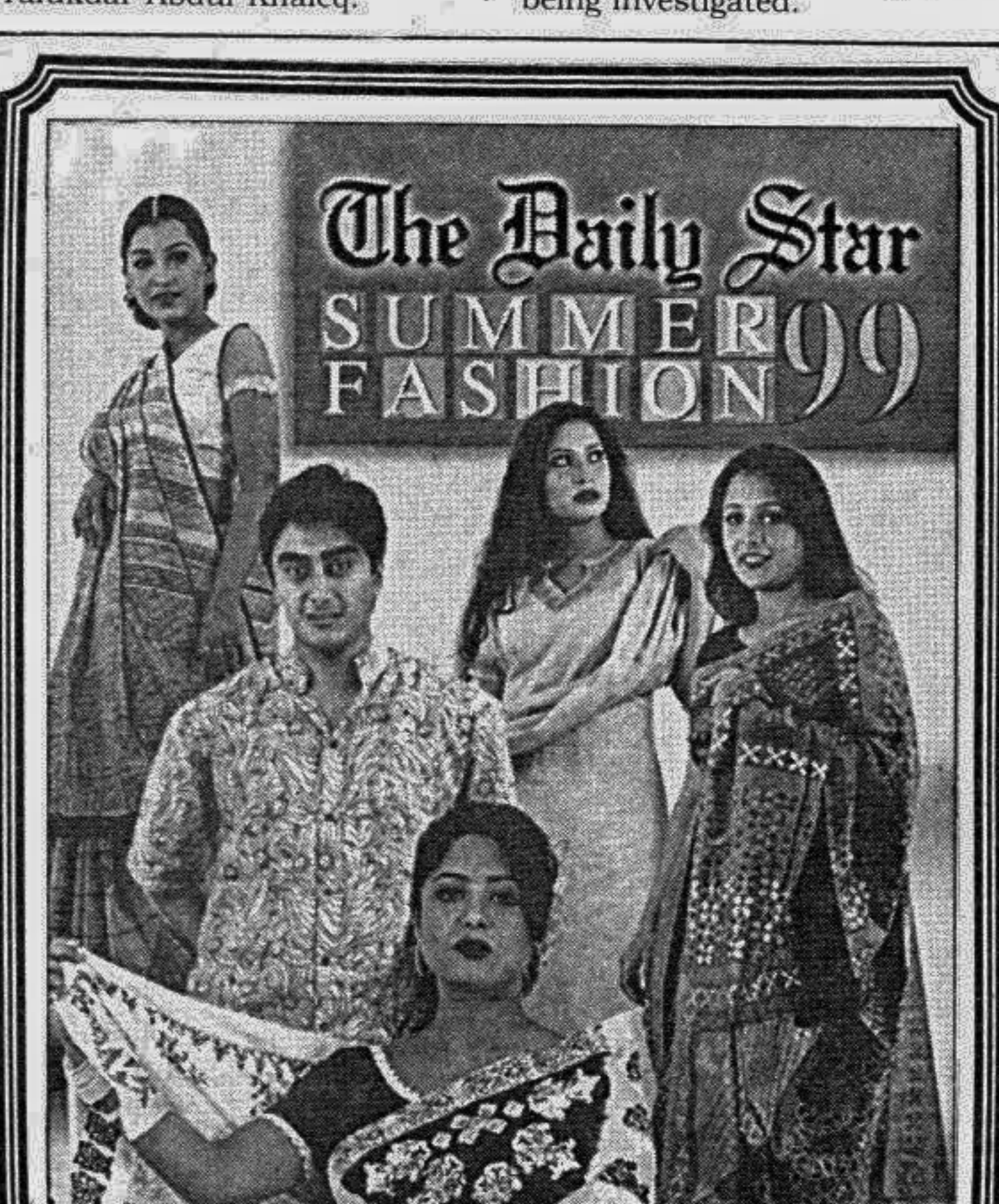
both sides that their high commission staff had been abducted and tortured by the other.

The Pakistani Foreign Minister said today it had lodged a strong protest with India on "the kidnapping and illegal confinement" of two officials of its High Commission in New Delhi by intelligence agencies on Monday night.

An Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman, reacting to a similar earlier statement by the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, rejected the allegation as "completely baseless."

On Monday, the Press Trust of India news agency quoted the Indian High Commission in Islamabad as saying that Vij had been beaten up and abducted by intelligence agents, and a Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman said the charge was being investigated.

The meeting was presided over by State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleq.



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72 surrendered outlaws, terrorists granted bail

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, July 7: Seventy-two outlaws and terrorists were granted bail by a court here on Tuesday.

They were among 398 who formally laid down their arms in presence of Home Minister Mohammed Nasim at a function at the Circuit House Maidan on Friday last.

All of them are accused in several criminal cases, including murder. They were released on bail from Noornagar sub-jail Tuesday evening.

Residents of old city threaten hunger strike

Residents of the old city have threatened to go on a day-long hunger strike and stage demonstration on August 1 if the Corporation fails to repair the damaged roads by July 31, reports UNB.

The threat came from a meeting of Old Dhaka People's Association held with its convenor Mahbubuddin Chowdhury in the chair yesterday.

The areas with damaged roads are Nawabpur, Tikatuli, Jarabari, Wari, Bangla Bazaar, Farashganj, Sutrapur, Gandaria, Faridabad, Jurain and Postagola.

Addressing the meeting, the association leaders said people of the areas have long been facing enormous difficulties due to deplorable condition of the roads.

They also urged the WASA authorities to take steps to clean up the manholes and place a lids on the uncovered manholes of the areas, according to a press release.

Dock workers observe strike at Ctg Port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 7: The dock workers of Chittagong port observed an eight-hour strike from 8 am today to press home their demands.

Dock Bandar Sramik Karmachhari Sangram Parishad, a combine of 22 labour organisations at Chittagong port called the strike demanding cancellation of permission for setting up a private container terminal at Patenga and incentive bonus for workers.

The strike, however coincided with today's hartal in the city enforced by BCL (Nasir faction).

Cargo handling and delivery of goods to and from Chittagong port came to a halt due to the strike.

No loading and unloading of goods took place at 16 vessels anchored at port jetties, port sources said.

Besides, some other vessels remained stranded at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port due to the stalemate, the sources added.

BSC to buy 2 more ships

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) will buy two more ships to strengthen its feeder service, reports UNB.

A proposal to this effect was taken by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Shipping Ministry at a meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with Committee chairman Col (Retd) Shawkat Ali in the chair.

The meeting asked the authorities concerned to take pragmatic steps to make the BSC profitable.

It also reviewed the progress of earlier decisions on the BSC, the Maritime Marine Department and the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).



BNP brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday in support of today's hartal. — Star photo

Opposition calls hartal

From Page 1
get was placed. The opposition parties again called hartal today for what they said was the imposition of huge new taxes on the commonman.

In support of the hartal, BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ), Jagpa, Democratic League (DL), Progressive Nationalist Party (PNP) and Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) brought out separate processions and held rallies in different parts of the city.

Main opposition BNP and its different front organisations brought out joint torch processions from 11 spots in the capital city in support of the hartal. Main processions were brought out from the old city's Nayabazar Yusuf Market while others came out in the street from New Market, Mohakhali, Khilgaon Chowrasta, Mirpur BNP office, Pallabi town hall, Tejgaon, Mohammadpur, Shyampur, Badda Hossain Ali Market and Kafur areas.

Witnesses said BNP and its front organisations brought out a big torch procession from its city unit office at Nawab Yusuf Market at 7 pm and ended at Golap Shah mazar at about 7:15 pm.

They said some unruly activists of BNP set fire a boat gate built by local Awami League at Banghal. The projectionists also damaged a BRTC bus at Gulistan area. The unruly workers also threw torches indiscriminately after ending the procession at Golap Shah Mazar.

BNP leaders MK Anwar, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam, Barkatullah Bhulu and Kazi Abdul Bashir led the procession. They also addressed a rally prior to bringing out the procession.

A large number of activists joined the processions and

Biman to privatise

From Page 1
crore became due during the BNP period.

He said the authorities have undertaken measures and legal steps to realise the outstanding money from the travel agencies. The civil aviation minister, while replying to BNP member Abul Kalam Azad Siddique, said, the government has received proposals from ten private organisations for introducing STOL or the Short Take-Off and Landing service in the country.

The organisations are: South Asian Airlines Ltd, Falcon Aviation Ltd, Royal Bengal Airlines, Falcon Air Ltd, Borak Travels (Pvt) Ltd, Bangladesh Flying Academy, Oriental Airlines Bangladesh Ltd, Green Air Ltd, Aero Bengal Airlines and Air Parabat Ltd.

The routes proposed by the organisations are Dhaka-Barisal-Dhaka, Dhaka-Shamsher-nagar-Dhaka, Dhaka-Lalmohar-Dhaka, Dhaka-Ishwardi-Dhaka, Dhaka-Thakurgaon-Dhaka and Dhaka-Comilla-Dhaka.

Responding to BNP member Nazimuddin Alam query, he said the authorities had received five million US dollars in insurance claim of an aircraft that was grounded in Sylhet recently.

"We have purchased two F-28 aircraft with the insurance money. One is already in service in the domestic sector while the other is undergoing repair," he informed.

The BNP member alleged that the government purchased

Khaleda protests attacks on houses of Khagrachhari BNP leaders

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has protested the attacks on houses of her party leaders and workers in Khagrachhari district, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, she said Awami League 'terrorists' looted and set fire to the houses and shops of Ramgarh thana BNP president Belayet Hossain Bhuiyan and local party activists on June 29.

They also torched house of Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, brother of Belayet and BNP leader, and houses of party activists at Shuvopur village in Chhagalnaiya thana, she said.

The BNP chairperson said Jubo League activists of Ramgarh thana went on the rampage after the killing of local Jubo League leader Yasin on June 28. But Yasin was killed by terrorists, she alleged.

Begum Zia said the terrorists in presence of police took away 15 cows and teak timber from Belayet's garden. They also shot dead two of his cows.

Instead of taking action against the Awami 'terrorists', police arrested 24 leaders and workers of BNP of Ramgarh and tortured them in custody, the BNP chairperson alleged.

Begum Zia asked the government to take legal action against the persons involved in the violence at two places on the basis of fair investigation.

PM witnesses question hour session in House of Commons

Prime Minister Hasina today witnessed the question hour session from the gallery box of the British House of Commons, reports UNB.

During the session, British Prime Minister Tony Blair replied to questions from the lawmakers.

The House of Commons was full and the members from both the opposition and treasury benches asked questions to Tony Blair.

Sheikh Hasina enjoyed the lively question-answer session for half an hour.

Indefinite strike at BIT, Khulna

KHULNA, July 7: Students at the Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) here began an indefinite strike today, reports UNB.

The All-Party Student Unity called the strike protesting "misappropriation" of Tk three lakh of the BIT students union and demanding immediate holding of the silver jubilee of the Institute.

The Institute was scheduled to hold the silver jubilee function on July 1, but the date was shifted twice.

BIT sources said several hundred students left their dormitories today following the indefinite strike.

Transport workers threaten strike from Aug 10

Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation has threatened to go on countrywide transport strike from August 10 if its 11-point demand is not met by August 9, reports UNB.

The federation leaders yesterday met Political Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr S A Malek who assured them of sympathetic consideration of the demands.

He told them he would discuss the issue with the Prime Minister after her return from the UK.

The leaders explained to the Adviser the problems facing the transport sector.

Federation president Wazid Khan pointed to the loopholes in the existing laws that gave rise to mushroom growth of workers' and owners' unions. Illegal toll collection and dacoity are rampant in the highways as labour laws are not strictly followed in the affairs of such union, he added.

He further said cases were being filed against transport workers for their suspected link with highway dacoity and transport workers killed in accidents are not given compensation.

The Federation leaders

stressed the need for issuance of appointment letters to workers, ensuring 8-hour work, strict adherence to traffic rules, and withdrawal of VAT on tyres and spares.

Other members of the delegation were Osman Ali, Shimul Bishwas, Akhter Hossain, Abbasuddin, Shahidullah and Sohrab Ali.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour Ministry Abdul Latif Mirza was also present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, in the south-western region, people virtually remained confined for the third day yesterday of a 72-hour transport strike against imposition of new taxes on motor spares.

The situation is the worst in Kusthia where the owners of buses, minibuses, trucks and other small vehicles continued their strike for the fifth day protesting failure of the roads and highways authorities to repair and reconstruct the roads.

They also demanded immediate repair of the Bailey bridge over river Mathabhanga at Khalisakundi on the Kusthia-Meherpur road as it "could collapse at any moment".

Manual tabulation

From Page 1
cruitment process, the sources said.

They suggested that the check-and-balance system in the computerised tabulation process could be strengthened to make it more effective and perfect.

Several members also argued that the manual tabulation system was changed from 17th BCS examination, held in 1996-97, to avoid involvement of a large number of people in the examination process.

The old system, if reintroduced, will again create a situation in which more people would be involved in the examination procedure.

They should try to go forward, rather than going backward," a source in the PSC commented when asked later.

At present, tabulation is done by two separate sets of computers and the two tabulation sheets are compared to check any mistake. The computers with important data are now protected with secret passwords and the computer room is restricted for persons other than designated members and officials.

Sheikh Hasina apprised the LDP leader that Awami League has a strong party base in the rural areas of the country.

She said her government has been working hard to strengthen parliamentary democracy in the country. She said the parliament has been made the focal point of all development activities.

She also referred to the good investment opportunity in Bangladesh and hoped that British businessmen would take advantage of the liberal industrial policy of Bangladesh.

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