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for the  
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SKOP calls  
24-hour  
strike today

By Staff Correspondent  
Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) has called a 24-hour countrywide strike beginning at 6 am today to press home its demands.

"We have decided to go ahead with the strike programme as a dialogue with the Minister for Labour and Manpower yesterday failed to yield positive results, one SKOP leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, SKOP leaders at a press conference yesterday called upon all concerned not to open educational institutions, industries, offices and business establishments. Rail-road and river transports will also come under the purview of the strike, SKOP leaders said.

Sramik Dal president Abdulla Al Noman, Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar and Abdulla Safar addressed the press conference at SKOP's temporary office.

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Dollar, Jewel  
still staying  
at DU hall

By DU Correspondent

The two Bangladeshi Chhatra League (BCL) leaders, whom the Dhaka University authorities declared *persona non grata*, are still staying in the Sir Salimullah Hall, residents said.

Dollar and Jewel, general secretary and environment secretary of Salimullah Hall unit of BCL respectively, were declared on Tuesday *persona non grata* in the hall and its adjoining areas for cutting trees and getting involved in various territorial authorities at the hall.

The authorities also asked them to leave the hall areas immediately or face further action. But no action was taken against them so far although both were staying at their hall rooms, sources said.

Prof. Aminur Rashid.

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NCB cheques to  
have water marks

Star Report

The central bank has directed the four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) to have water marks in their cheques to curb withdrawal of money through forgery, sources said.

At a meeting yesterday, Bangladesh Bank also directed the NCBs to send statements of accounts to clients to keep them informed about their balances.

The central bank also directed the NCBs not to allow any person to remain near any desk for long and to take measures to curb forgery by changing cheque numbers.

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June Sun Rises Sun Sets  
20 6-49 pm  
21 5-12 am

Prayer Timings

JUNE 20  
Fair 4-15 4-45  
Zohr 1-00 1-30  
Asr 5-00 5-15  
Magrib 6-50 6-55  
Esha 8-15 8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Bodies of 58 Asian migrants found in container truck at UK port



A policeman stands guard outside the garage where a truck's trailer was inspected and in which was found 58 dead bodies believed to be illegal Asian immigrants at the port of Dover in UK yesterday and (right) investigators gather evidence from the contents of the truck on the rear of which two people were found alive.

— AFP photo

## Food gap reduced to zero, first time in the country

By Reaz Ahmad

The country's food-gap came down to zero in 1999-2000 for the first time, according to official sources.

The latest production has been projected at 243 lakh metric tons (MT) against a net annual requirement of 213.58 lakh MT of foodgrain. Deducting the 10-12 per cent usual crop loss, the net food production settles exactly around the requirements level.

As per the estimations, Bangladesh grew 7 lakh MT more rice than the requirement in 1999-2000 and again, it produced 7 lakh MT less wheat than it needed.

Never before in the 30-year history of Bangladesh had the domestic production been at par with the domestic requirements. Ten to 20 lakh MT of food gap has been an usual annual phenomenon for Bangladesh.

Each year Bangladesh used to cover up its food deficit by accepting an average volume of 5 to 10 lakh MT food from donors and by importing.

This time though the government heaved a sigh of relief as it avoided pressure on the scarce foreign exchange reserves by abandoning the fiscal plan of food import (four lakh

MT) in 1999-2000.

Experts told the Daily Star that such surge in production could not have happened in a better time since food aid commitments from abroad were already on the slide.

Thanks to the subsequent bumper in wheat and paddy production, the projection of 224 lakh MT at the beginning of the year was revised upward at 243 lakh MT at the end of the fiscal.

According to officials, *aus* production stood at 1.73 lakh MT, *aman* 10.3 lakh MT, *boro* 10.6 lakh MT (projected) and

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Unauthorised parking on either side narrows down the road in front of Senakalyan Bhavan in the city's Motijheel commercial area to a mere by-lane. And the end result is endless traffic jam.

— Star photo

## Negotiations on blocks 19 & 20 resume with Maersk Olie

By Staff Correspondent

Petrobangla resumed negotiations on Sunday with European oil company Maersk Olie for oil and gas exploration in deep sea blocks 19 and 20.

The company is now taking up various issues including taxation and duration of the initial operation period (IOP).

Sources concerned said Maersk Olie seeks a five-year IOP instead of the three-year time frame outlined in the Model PSC. Negotiations with it resumed after two months.

Maersk is seeking a PSC for mainly conducting seismic survey in deep sea blocks 19 and 20 instead of focusing on drilling exploratory gas or oil well.

Meanwhile, Petrobangla is waiting for a joint response from Irish oil company Tullow and American oil company Chevron regarding the govern-

ment's recent proposal regarding block 9 that Bangladeshi exploration company BAPEX should be the operator. BAPEX has a 10 per cent carried over interest in this block while Chevron, Texaco and Tullow has 30 per cent interest each.

The government proposed this to end disagreement between Tullow-Chevron and Texaco about which company would be the operator in the block.

While Chevron-Texaco agreed to the proposal, Tullow did not. The government then suggested that the three companies discuss the proposal among themselves and give the feedback soon.

Sources said Tullow has un-

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Dockers continue protest against proposed container port at Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 19: Leaders of dock workers at Chittagong port continued their protest yesterday against government's move for allowing installation of a private container port by Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) at Patenga.

Dock Bandar Sramik Karmachari Federation (DBSKF) in a meeting of its representatives on port office premises this afternoon, reiterated their demand for taking punitive action against those 'bureaucrats' who have clandestine links with SSA for installation of a proposed private container port at Patenga.

Leaders of DBSKF in the

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## 40 bighas of govt land in Mirpur illegally occupied

DUIIP plan to allot 1100 plots to low income group uncertain

By Mustak Hossain

Over 40 bighas of government land at Mirpur Section 12, earmarked for allotment of plots to low income people, could not be recovered from illegal occupants in several years.

The Department of Housing and Settlement can not remove the illegal slums there because of a court injunction, sources in the Department said.

The land was demarcated into about 1100 plots, each measuring three-fourths of a katha, for allotment under the Dhaka Urban Infrastructure Improvement Project (DUIIP).

The Department also failed to allot plots to the allottees in its Mohammadpur "F" Block as the land is illegally occupied by some people, the sources said.

Slums have sprung up and

some shops have been built on the land along the Shimamoli Ring Road. During a visit to the area, some shop owners said they built shops with permission from the local member of parliament.

A total of 23,063 applicants applied for the 470 plots in "F" Block, categorised as A, B and C. They paid Tk 30, 000 for A, Tk 25, 000 for B and Tk. 15, 000 for C category plots, some of the applicants said.

Applications were invited from middle and low-income groups of people in January 1998 for the plots in "F" Block.

The Housing Department, failing to recover the land at Mohammadpur, later proposed to the Ministry of Planning for construction of 720 flats instead of allotting plots.

The proposal was made to accommodate more people on the land, a high official of the Department told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

The land can not be recovered as there is a High Court injunction on eviction of the slums, the official said.

About one thousand applicants have already withdrawn their applications due to uncertainty in getting plots, some of them told this correspondent.

If the government can not recover the land or wants to build apartment buildings, it should inform the applicants through a public notice, said an applicant, Masud Kabir.

Housing Department officials said any applicant can withdraw his application and get back his money.

## Opposition likely to enter parliament today

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition parties, boycotting parliament proceedings since July 8, 1999, are expected to return to the House this morning.

The adjournment of the House immediately after the passage of the supplementary budget at 10:40 a.m. held back the opposition's much-awaited return yesterday. Khaleda Zia, the Leader of the Opposition in parliament, arrived at the parliament building at 11 a.m.

Deputy Leader of the Opposi-

## First judgement: One jailed under PSA in city

By Court Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Tk 4,489.68 crore supplementary budget for fiscal 1999-2000 with the Opposition Bench empty.

The bill was passed smoothly and in a much shorter time than usually needed as the Opposition members continued to boycott JS sessions.

It took Finance Minister S A

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## Non-govt teachers' strike today

CHITTAGONG, June 19: Non-government school and college teachers, as part of their movement will observe work abstention in the educational institutions across the country tomorrow to press home their 22-point demand, reports BSS.

Addressing a press conference at Chittagong Press Club, secretary general of Bangladesh Teachers Association Federation Principal Kazi Faroque Ahmed reiterated the demand

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## CITIBANK N.A'S NEW BRANCH HAS COMMENCED FULL OPERATIONS IN CHITTAGONG

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