

# The Daily Star

COMMITTED TO  
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XI No. 44

DHAKA WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2001

www.dailystarnews.com

FALGUN 16, 1407 BS

ZELHAJ 3, 1421 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 6.00

## EC sidesteps Dhaka's request for relaxation of rules of origin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Commission (EC) has made no direct response to Bangladesh's request that the rules of origin for its apparel export to the European Union market be relaxed.

Instead, it has suggested that Bangladesh diversify its export base, reducing dependence on readymade garments (RMG), and look for items where the rules of origin do not apply.

"We haven't got any direct reply from the EC on relaxation of the rules of origin," Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed told a press briefing at the commerce ministry following yesterday's first EU-Bangladesh Joint Commission under the new cooperation agreement signed last year.

However, the visiting EC Director for Asia, Fokion Fotiadis said that the EU was willing to encourage Bangladesh to diversify exports and reduce its single-sector dependence. He also suggested that the country should explore other sectors, which are free from any rules of origin.

The joint commission was co-chaired by Ahmed and Fotiadis. Representative of the European Commission (EC), Dhaka office, JV

Kettelsen and representatives of the member-states of the European Union were present at the meeting.

The meeting is considered crucial for Bangladesh against the backdrop of the crisis it faces in global trade following the September 11 attacks on the United States.

The government placed a number of demands for a better leverage in both diversifying and increasing exports. Despite the EU's Everything-but-Arms (EBA) facility for the least developed countries (LDCs), Bangladesh is not able to reap the benefit for the rules of origin.

The commission will be followed by official-level negotiations, talks between Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and EC Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy and a seminar on the EBA facility, which allows duty-free access of the LDC products to the EU.

At the meeting, Fotiadis said that EU had already expanded its development budget (grant) for Bangladesh for development in critical areas including expansion and diversification of exports.

Under the new cooperation agreement, Bangladesh will get financial

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## Northern Alliance to attend UN power-sharing talks

AP, Kabul

The Northern Alliance, which controls the Afghan capital and more than half the country, accepted a UN invitation to attend power-sharing talks in Germany with other factions, likely to be held next Monday.

The alliance's formal acceptance of a UN invitation to the talks was announced yesterday by the alliance's acting foreign minister, Abdullah, at a joint news conference in Kabul with a UN envoy.

Appearing at a UN-sponsored news conference, Abdullah said his group would be sending a delegation to take part in the talks aimed at

establishing a new broad-based multiethnic government to replace the Taliban.

Earlier, the head of the northern alliance, former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, said the opening session would be 'symbolic' and that he was sticking by his demand that substantive decisions on the future of Afghanistan could only be taken at meetings held in this country.

The United States and its allies, however, wanted the conference on neutral ground.

Afghanistan has been without a central government since the

Taliban pulled out of the capital Kabul on Nov 13, and the power vacuum has raised fears the country could again descend into anarchic faction fighting.

**Secretary of State Colin Powell said yesterday he was boosting a US reward for information leading to the arrest of Osama bin Laden to 25 million dollars, reports AFP.**

UN envoy Francesc Vendrell, appearing at the same press conference, said that although the Taliban would not be represented, there

would be representatives of the dominant ethnic Pashtun community.

"We are very aware that convening these groups would not mean that every single Afghan would feel totally happy, totally represented," Vendrell said. "This is the first step. This is not the final step."

He said the former Afghan king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, would send a delegation.

Meanwhile, AFP says, the deployment of thousands of British troops in Afghanistan is being delayed.

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## PM orders strict implementation of 100-day programme

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday ordered strict implementation of her government's 100-day programme within the stipulated time.

She issued the instruction at a review meeting with officials at the PM's Office marking the end of one month since the announcement of the special programme.

On October 19, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia announced the first short-term task of the BNP-led four-party coalition government while addressing the nation over state-owned radio and television.

The 100-day programme includes recovery of illegal arms, arrest of identified criminals and starting their trial, keeping open all educational institutions and stopping all kinds of terrorism on the

campus, starting the process of scrapping PSA (public safety act) and SPA (special powers act) and cancelling all previous illegal orders in the administration.

The programme also includes

finding the cause of the 1996 share scam and completing the process of identifying the culprits, starting judicial inquiry into all terrible bomb blasts, forming citizen's

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## Armed Forces Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The Armed Forces Day will be observed in the country today with great enthusiasm.

President Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina in separate messages on the occasion paid rich tribute to the memory of members of the Armed Forces, who had embraced martyrdom in the Liberation War in 1971.

The day's programme begins with the offering of special munajat after Fazr prayers at all mosques at army garrisons, naval ships and establishments and air forces bases across the country.

In Dhaka, President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who is in-charge of the

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As utility service providers carry on with their maintenance operations, indiscriminately digging the major thoroughfares, the metropolis experiences heavy traffic congestion at peak hours every day. The photograph is taken from the road near the Science Laboratory in the city.

## Twelve Indian citizens held in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Police arrested 12 Indian citizens on Monday night in connection with the incident of shooting a young tribal man the same morning.

Police suspect that the arrested people are members of National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT). A wireless set was recovered from their possession.

Eleven of the arrested were identified as Darjo Tripura, 22, Ahlai Tripura, 25, Manai Tripura, 20, Mochang Tripura, 29, Habendra Tripura, 32, Gobindo Tripura, 27, Aslang Tripura, 39, Shankar Tripura, 22, Aijok Tripura, 22, Protibha Rani Tripura, 26, and Helanga Tripura, 24.

Police said the injured youth, identified as Chatang Tripura, and those arrested belong to the same group.

Following the incident, police cordoned-off the residence of Dr Hemanta Tripura in Khagrachhari area on Monday night and arrested the twelve.

A case has been filed with police in this connection.

## Clarification

Attorney General Hassan Arif has contradicted a portion of a news item titled "Mamun-ur-Rashid reinstated and made OSD", published in The Daily Star on November 19.

The Daily Star had reported that the office of the attorney general allegedly refrained from defending the government in a writ petition filed by former secretary of the government, Mamun-ur-Rashid, to get back his job.

The Attorney General in a clarification yesterday said this is not true. "I myself appeared in the above mentioned matter along with my law officer and there is reference of our appearance on behalf of the government in the judgement of the High Court Division", he said.

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## Snapping of 60 ISP lines hits Internet users

STAR REPORT

The sudden severing of connections of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) by the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) has created havoc for thousands of Internet users, sources said.

The users have been thrown out of the Internet, as BTB snapped connections of at least 60 ISPs on Monday as they failed to renew licenses in time.

This is a disaster for information technology in the private sector, the sources said.

Snapping of the connections has

also barred the users access to some government and private websites, hosted by leading ISPs.

The Ministry of Science and Technology is also not getting access to the World Wide Web (WWW) following snapping of connection of ISN, an ISP.

When contacted yesterday, BTB Chairman NH Chowdhury said connections of ISPs were snapped following an order from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MOPT).

He also said BTB is closely monitoring the ISPs engaged in

"illegal voice transmission operation".

There are about 100 licensed ISPs in the country. But only 30 to 35 of them are operating the market, in which five to seven ISPs are major players.

However, ISPs providing service with broad-band connections through cable modem could avoid the disaster.

Thousands of Internet users are making queries with the ISPs, thinking that there has been problem.

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## More changes in army

DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

Several changes have been made in the Bangladesh Army.

Many of the transfers and postings were made yesterday and more are underway, sources said.

Brigadier General Moyeen Uddin Ahmed, the defence attaché in the Bangladesh mission in Islamabad, will take over as the master general of ordnance (MGO), replacing Major General MA Wahab, who goes into retirement at the end of next month.

Major General Fazlur Kabir, the commandant of the National Defence College, retires on November 26. However, his replacement is yet to be named.

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## AL govt didn't sign PSCs for gas export thru' pipeline: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Back From Chittagong

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina categorically said yesterday that her government did not sign any production sharing contact (PSC) with provision for export of gas through pipeline.

"There is no mention of pipeline export of gas in any of the PSCs we signed," Hasina, now Leader of the Opposition in parliament, said while talking to newsmen at Chittagong Circuit House.

When journalists sought her party's view on the new govern-

ment's move to gas export, the Awami League president said, "BNP wants to export gas. But at the same time it wants to put the onus on us. This is unfair."

She deplored that the present government's finance minister and energy state minister were misinterpreting the issue by saying that AL paved the way for gas export by signing PSCs.

"They (BNP) had signed PSCs before we did. They signed PSCs through negotiations while we did it through open international bidding. Moreover, there was no mention of

pipeline export of gas in those PSCs (signed by my government)," she said.

She said her party's position on gas export has always been very clear. "We first want a seismic survey of our reserve. If there is surplus after meeting 50 years' domestic requirement, then gas can be exported."

Hasina recalled the Magurchhara disaster to note that the previous BNP government had signed exploration contact with Occidental without open bidding and kept no clause for compensation in the PSC.

She said after the disaster that

## Police camp tragedy Insecticide mistakenly mixed while cooking iftar items?

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Insecticide in the form of white powder which was mistakenly mixed while cooking food for iftar on Sunday might have caused the death of 11 police men at Paglipara police camp in Rangamati, investigators suspect.

A high level team formed by the

home ministry is investigating the incident. Additional DIG of CID Anwarul Iqbal Chowdhury is heading the team, which visited the spot yesterday morning.

All the 27 members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBN) fell sick after taking iftar on Sunday evening at the camp. They were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where eleven of them died on Sunday night and on Monday. The rest 16 are being treated at the CMCH and at the Combined Military Hospital.

The iftar was prepared by the cook at the camp with supplies from its godown. Cooking materials and all items at the camp for preparation of food have been seized, police sources said.

Meanwhile Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Ministry Moni Swapon Dewan declared that families of the dead policemen would be given Tk 10,000

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## INSIDE TODAY

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China's admission into WTO: Apparent implications  
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Harun ur Rashid

Supplement 17-20

Today's 20-page issue of The Daily Star contains a 4-page supplement on 'Armed Forces Day'

ACI  
Iftar

## Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
5	21	-	5-15
6	22	4-55	5-14
7	23	4-55	5-14