

## Partymen, elite greet Khaleda on her birthday

UNB, Dhaka

Ruling party leaders and activists, elite and professionals thronged the Proddhan Montri Bhaban yesterday evening to greet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on the occasion of her 58th birthday anniversary.

"Pray for me to Allah so that I can go on serving the country as well as the people," said the Prime Minister responding to the best wishes from her well-wishers.

She thanked the visitors, exchanged pleasantries with them and enquired about their wellbeing.

Instead of cutting cakes and receiving birthday presents, the Prime Minister asked for distributing all gifts, including cakes and sweets, among students of madrasah and inmates of orphanages in the city.

The party leaders and workers came to the PM's house along with their kids and wished the Prime

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## Handful for a bag full

### Export unit price dips

MONJUR MAHMUD

For every single dollar earned through exports, the country had to sell an additional 15 per cent goods in the global market last fiscal.

It was a nightmare for exporters as they saw prices dripping. At least in one item -- frozen food -- the tumble was as much as 50 per cent.

Four major export earning sectors -- the readymade garments (RMG), frozen food, knitwear and jute goods -- contributing over 85 per cent or \$5103.44 million to the total export earnings, found their unit prices plunging steeply.

The overall export price index clocked 14.87 per cent negative growth. Although the export volume went up by 7.43 per cent, earnings stood at US\$ 5986.09 million, 7.44 per cent down from last fiscal's figure, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

"Our export earnings in FY02 could have been equal to the previous fiscal's had the export volume increased by 15 per cent. It means to earn every single dollar, exporters had to sell 15 per cent more products last fiscal," said Professor Mostafizur Rahman, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The exports faced a major setback in last fiscal mainly due to the global recession. The September 11 terrorist attacks in the US deepened the crisis.

Taking advantage of the recession, buyers dictated price, threatening to shift away orders to other cheap

countries. Bangladesh being an exporter of low quality products could increase export volume since such goods have low demand elasticity even in the face of recession, Rahman mentioned.

Bangladeshi exporters should now get hold of new technology and produce quality high-value products, he suggested.

The RMG fetched \$3124.56 million in FY02, down by 7.12 per cent from the previous fiscal's. But the RMG volume rose by 7.80 per cent and the average price dipped by 13.83 per cent in last fiscal.

The knitwear sector earned \$1459.24 million last fiscal. Although the export volume increased by 20.66 per cent, the average price declined by 19.17 per cent.

"Our products faced price-dip of as much as 30 per cent. We are now exporting products at \$8 to \$9 per dozen which earlier fetched \$12," said Monjurul Huq, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA).

Frozen food exports of \$276.11 million was 23.98 per cent less than the previous fiscal's. The average price of shrimp dipped by 29.16 per cent although the export volume increased by 1.90 per cent in last fiscal.

According to exporters, price of frozen food dipped as much as 50 per cent on the back of the economic tumble and the September 11 alone pulled it down by 30 per cent.

Jute goods fetched \$243.53 million last fiscal. Its volume went up by 12.50 per cent although the unit price dipped by 6.26 per cent.



PHOTO: STAR

Two young men lie wounded at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Ansars opened fire on Jubo Dal activists and Muslim devotees who clashed over the control of a mosque at Malibagh in the city yesterday. The firing left four persons dead.

## Sony's killing Main accused put on 5-day police remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nurul Islam alias Sagar arrested in connection with the killing of Sabequn Nahar Sony was placed on a five-day remand yesterday.

Detectives produced Sagar before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday with a prayer for a seven-day remand. Magistrate Al-Mamun placed him on a five-day remand.

In the forwarding report, police said that earlier two arrested accused gave confessional statements in the CMM's Court, mentioning the name of Sagar as the main accused in the killing of Sony.

Sony, a student of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), was killed in a shootout between two factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal on the BUET campus on June 8.

Sagar nicknamed Tempo Nuru or

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia chairs a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) at the NEC conference room at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

## Now NBR on trail of Agarwal, Modi

STAR REPORT

After the Bangladesh Bank (BB), the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has started investigating the tax records and properties of three Marwari businessmen.

The NBR has assigned two tax commissioners to investigate the files of Giridhari Lal Modi and Om Prakash Agarwal and submit their reports by August 22.

The tax officials in their initial findings have found Giridhari Lal Modi not mentioning any personal bank account in his tax return.

"In Giridhari Lal's tax file he claimed that he does not have any bank account," a NBR official said yesterday.

But the ongoing BB investigation till Wednesday has tracked credit accounts in different banks for Giridhari Lal and his Uttara Group. Giridhari and his business group have loans worth Tk 114 crore in four banks.

In response, Giridhari in an advertisement published in different newspaper on Tuesday stated he has stake in six companies and the companies under Uttara Group have loans from four banks amounting a little over Tk 60 crore.

"We are collecting information and have wrote to different banks to provide us information regarding Agarwal's accounts and transactions," a NBR official

said requesting anonymity.

According to NBR sources, Giridhari Lal Modi took advantage of the government's amnesty in the 1980s and whitened nearly one crore Taka of his illegal income.

Giridhari has a personal tax file under tax zone-8, which shows him as the owner of a fuel station in Kushtia district and some warehouses. Giridhari pays a paltry amount as income taxes, sources said.

However, according to other NBR sources, Giridhari has Tk 33 lakh dues in taxes and did not pay heed to the repeated notices to pay the overdue.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) is making an inventory of Giridhari's property and his source of income. The BAC started the investigation following a special order from the Prime Minister's Office in January.

So far, the BAC found Giridhari has stake in 11 companies. However, Giridhari told the BAC officials that most of his companies are 'not in operation', BAC sources said.

The tax officials are also looking into the files of Om Prakash Agarwal in Narayanganj, sources said.

In addition, BB is still investigating the financial scam of the three Marwari businessmen with particular

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## Autopsy finds marks on Bappi's body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Rubaiyet Ahmed Bappi was suffocated and his body bore marks of wound in the chest, neck and hand caused with blunt weapons, the autopsy report has said.

The report was handed over to police from Narayanganj General Hospital yesterday.

The autopsy was performed by a three-member medical board at the general hospital yesterday morning. The board comprised Resident Medical Officer at the hospital Dr Jatindra Chandra Mondal, Medical Officer Dr Md Asaduzzaman and Dr Laxman Chandra Barai.

The board handed over the report to the superintendent of police, Narayanganj. The investigation officer of the case later got it, sources said.

Bappi's decomposed body was recovered from the Shitalakhya on Wednesday, nine days after he was abducted and killed.

## Rowdy BNP activists force Pran to close Natore plant

UNB, Dhaka

Pran, an agro-processing enterprise, has closed down its Natore plant over violence unleashed allegedly by the ruling party supporters.

"We had to close the plant down following violence unleashed by some people. A local BNP leader and UP chairman led the gang," a top official of the Pran Agro Limited told the news agency yesterday.

He said 600 workers, 500 of them female, were employed by the plant. Also involved were some 2,000 people, directly or indirectly, apart from local mango growers.

He said the Pran managing director, Major General (retd) Amjad, had informed the finance, commerce and LGRD ministers about the disturbance.

The Tk 10 crore project with Tk 4.25 crore from the government-sponsored Equity and

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## Meters for auto 3-wheelers

RAZIUR RAHMAN

The government mulls over making the use of meters mandatory for auto-rickshaws to cap nasty haggle over fare, said sources in the communications ministry.

In the absence of metering, auto-rickshaw drivers charge passengers at will. Sometimes, the fare equals that of a non-airconditioned black taxicab, city dwellers complain.

Normally, a ride on a black taxicab from Hatirpool to Section No. 2 in Gulshan costs a passenger around Tk 50, while an auto-rickshaw charges no less than Tk 45.

During rush hours, commuters have no option but to pay, however high the fare may be.

Even the recently introduced CNG-run four-stroke three-wheelers charge the same fare as that of two-stroke auto-rickshaws, though the price of compressed natural gas (CNG) is about five times lower than petrol. One cubic metre CNG is priced at Tk 7.45, while petrol sells at Tk 28 a litre.

A CNG-driven vehicle with Tk 6 runs the same distance as a petrol-run three-wheeler with Tk 28.

The government has already given permission to an import of 2,500 CNG-run three-wheelers. Some 400 CNG-run vehicles are already in operation.

The sources said the communi-

cations ministry decided to give permission to an import of ten thousand more such three-wheelers. But the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials and importers of CNG-run three-wheelers said they did not get any approval yet.

Experts on communications observe that the government should ask importers to import auto-rickshaws with meters and owners of the already plying CNG-run vehicles to install meters.

"We are yet to take any decision on this. If we decide, we'll ask the importers to do so," Communications Minister Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star.

## 3 snatchers arrested in Chittagong

BSS, Dhaka

A mobile team of Khulsi police arrested three snatchers from Foy's Lake area in the city Wednesday night.

The snatchers were identified as Mohammad Mofiz, Taru Meah and Al Amin alias Liton, all hail from Muradnagar thana of Comilla district.

A case was lodged with Khulsi police in this connection.

## Khulna Jail 7 security men suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Seven security guards of Khulna District Jail have been suspended on charges of negligence of duties and corrupt practices.

Of them, five have been identified as Mohabbat, Sultan, Loknath Karmakar, Kalam Molla and Mohammad Ali Khan.

Besides, 45 employees have been transferred to different jails of the country. They left Khulna yesterday morning to join their new places of works. Thirty others are expected to join their new places of work by Monday.

The suspension orders were issued on Wednesday by Superintendent of district jail.

Three top criminals -- Ershad Shikder, Golam Mowla Shanu and Mahmud Hasan Shimul -- have been lodged in Kashimpur central jail in Gazipur district. They were sent there on Tuesday.

This step has been taken following a secret information that Ershad Shikder and BPCP ringleader Shimul were planning to escape from jail with the help of a section of jail police and their accomplices from outside.

## Assault on BCL men 5 CU students showcased

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University (CU) authorities yesterday issued showcase notices on five students of the university belonging to Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) for assaulting leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on Tuesday, sources said.

Some cadres of ICS attacked and assaulted 15 leaders and activists of BCL including its president and general secretary at the university railway station on the campus.

Though the authorities issued showcase notices against the five students, but the name of only one student could be known till filing of this report at 7:45 pm yesterday.

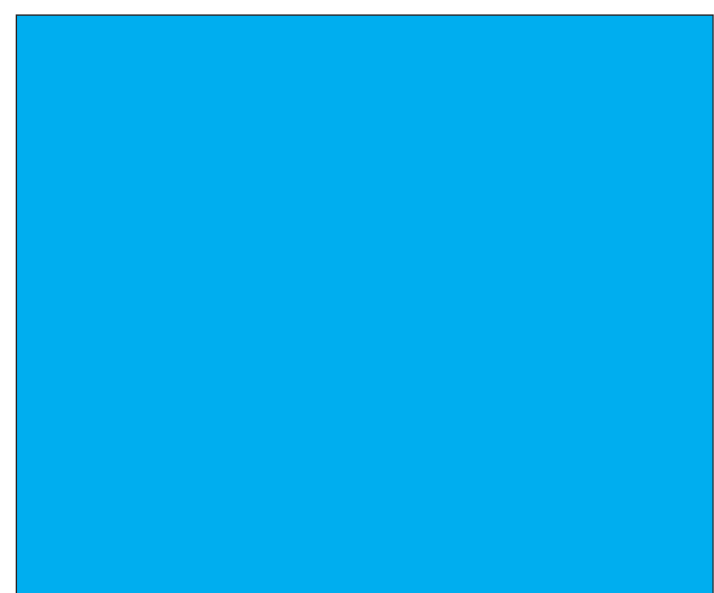
His name is Rony, a second year student of Bangla department.

When contacted, CU Proctor Prof Abdul Hakim admitted issuance of showcase notices against the students but refused to disclose their names.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 16		6-31 pm
Aug 17	5-34 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-30	5-00
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-38	6-42
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



## BNP split over presidency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Groupings have surfaced in the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) over appointment to some vital posts, including the president.

Sources said the BNP hardliners, after their success to remove Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury from presidency, have become even more active in appointing their own men to the posts like president, speaker, deputy leader of the House and home minister.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia received conflicting suggestions from her senior cabinet colleagues with whom she held a series of meetings on the appointment.

The BNP insiders said the lead-

ers, who want to see their own men installed in the posts, bring allegations -- some false -- against the persons chosen by their rivals.

It was almost certain that Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, also the acting president, would be nominated for the next presidency, but some senior leaders brought allegations against him.

Moreover, the leaders have suggested that Sircar be removed from the position of speaker, as they think he could not run the parliament well.

The prime minister almost finalised her decision after consultation with party policymakers on nominating Sircar for presidency and electing Pran and Telecom-communications

Minister Aminul Haq as speaker, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as deputy leader of the House and Industries Minister MK Anwar as home minister.

But the hardliners opposed the move to appoint Bhuiyan as deputy leader and the number of claimants to the position climbed to more than five, including Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the insiders said. As a result, Khaleda had to drop the move to appoint a deputy leader.

Another move to replace Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury also stalled, as the planned reshuffle of the cabinet did not take place for reasons unknown.