

Land port
customs
calls off
strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Agitating customs officials and employees at three land ports postponed their strike yesterday following a government assurance on meeting their demands.

They however said the strike would begin unless their demands are met by May 20.

Cross border trade at three land ports at Benapole, Bhomra and Darshana stopped yesterday because of a token strike, in demand for withdrawal of cases against four customs officials at Satkhira and an end to harassment by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). Travelers however passed through.

The BDR recently seized a huge quantity of Indian goods and filed a case against four customs officials at Benapole land port for their alleged involvement in the attempted smuggling.

State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain came to Benapole yesterday noon and held a series of meetings with customs

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Heart patient
dies after cop
'rough up'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A heart patient, who came to the city for a medical check-up, died yesterday when a police team reportedly treated him roughly and handcuffed him with an alleged criminal at North Sayedabad in the city.

Farid Uddin, 45, residing at Koshba, Brahmanbaria came to his sister's house at North Sayedabad on Wednesday to see a heart consultant who advised him some medical tests. The victim and his wife, Hasina, were waiting for the report.

A team of police lead by Assistant Sub-inspector Shahid of the Demra Police Station raided North Sayedabad area to arrest drug traffickers at about 10:00am. The team arrested Musa, an

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Gas piped to kitchen may turn dearer

Energy ministry sits today; industrial rates may be revised down

SHARIER KHAN

The energy ministry is likely to decide today on a gas price fixation proposal that plans higher prices for small consumers and lower costs for enterprises.

If accepted, the scheme will push up domestic gas consumption rate to Tk 169.39 per unit or 1,000 cubic feet (cft) from the present rate of Tk 120, taking gas-

spending uphill by 49.31 per cent.

However, consumers of industrial, commercial, brick kilns, captive and small power unit category will find gas cheaper.

After adoption of its decision, the ministry will send it to the prime minister for approval.

The gas price hike proposal, built on a formula worked out by a committee, also plans to make Power Development Board (PDB)-

generated electricity costlier for ordinary consumers.

Giving details of the proposal, ministry officials said gas rate for power plants under the PDB would shoot up to Tk 88.40 per unit from Tk 70 in a 18.4 per cent rise.

It will take the PDB's bulk power sale rate to Tk 2.65 per unit, up from Tk 2.54.

At the same time, gas rate for

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Govt snubbed for not keeping polls pledges

Speakers at the National Policy Review Forum 2003

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, from Sylhet

Civic activism, including that by the opposition political parties, is needed to compel the government to implement administrative reforms.

Some reform policies have already been adopted though not implemented and so, a consensus among the political parties and the citizens is a must to ensure the implementation.

The observations were made at the first session of the daylong regional consultation of the National Policy Review Forum -- 2003 held at Sylhet yesterday. Organised by the Centre for Policy

Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo, the session was on "Administrative Reforms".

Speakers said administrative reforms need political consensus since the government of the day tends to rule out the policies of the previous one.

The dialogue criticised the government for not implementing

its election pledges, thus making a mockery of the voters' aspirations.

Political leaders make numerous promises to their voters before elections but forget them once elected, the discussants pointed out.

They said this cannot be allowed anymore and stressed the need for a common platform of all citizens to continuously press the government into implementing its pledges.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the CPD, moderated the discussion chaired by Treasurer of Shahjalal University of

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PHOTO: STAR

BACK WHERE SHE BELONGS
Mother hugs an all-smiling Tonni, who was kidnapped 19 days back from Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Tiny Tonni back after 19-day abduction

Four child lifters arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday rescued two and a half years old Tonni abducted from Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on April 21.

Four people were arrested on charge of abducting the girl. They are Rozina Khatun alias Pushpa alias Puja alias Bithi, 20, her accomplices Safia, 45, Najma alias Naju, 22, and Rafiq, 18.

Police said they are members of an organised gang of child lifters operating across the country. They hand over the children to others to

smuggle them out of the country.

Rozina had lured the child by offering her chocolate and watermelon and taken her out of the DMCH. Then they kept her hidden at Matuail, Jatrabari, Bangbandhu National Stadium and some other places.

Rozina and Rafiq rented a house at Matuail on May 1 and were staying there along with Tonni. But their suspicious activities prompted the house owner and local people to

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NCBs to write off Tk 1,300 cr bad loans by June

Process on to file suit against defaulters

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) will write off Tk 1,300 crore in bad loans by June 30 as part of their drive to clean up bad portfolio.

Sonali Bank will write off Tk 500 crore, Janata Bank Tk 300 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 300 crore and Rupali Bank Tk 200 crore.

The four NCBs had Tk 12,179 crore in classified loans on December 31, 2002 and their bad

loans stood at Tk 11,000 crore. Under a Bangladesh Bank (BB) order, they will have to write off loans, which have turned bad for five years or more. It was not immediately known how much of the bad portfolio qualifies for the write-off.

The loans, which will be written off in the first phase, were disbursed since independence till 1990. During this period, Tk 5,859 crore loans were disbursed of which about

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Govt appeals to recruit 152 judicial staff thru'PSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to recruit 152 judicial officers through the Public Service Commission (PSC) despite a Supreme Court ruling that termed such a process 'anti-constitutional' three years ago.

The government appealed to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday, seeking its approval for the appointment.

The hearing of the appeal is likely to be held in a couple of days.

On December 2, 1999, the Appellate Division had given a 12-point directives to the government for the separation of judiciary one of

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Maid murder Employer's son put on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shahrier Mahmood Kabir, arrested for his alleged involvement in the killing of domestic help Halima, was placed on a two-day remand for interrogation.

Kabir had surrendered to the Motijheel Police Station on Friday noon and he was shown to have been arrested.

Motijheel police brought Kabir before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, with a ten-day remand prayer. The court, however, granted two.

The court also directed the Investigation Officer (IO) to interrogate him with caution as the arrestee claimed to be physically ill and

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