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1,200 Mongla dock workers face axe

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is likely to soon give the golden handshake to some 1,200 dock workers at Mongla seaport.

According to shipping ministry sources, a proposal to allocate Tk 12 crore for the early retirement incentive is in the final stage of approval.

The decision came on the heels of a recent threat of indefinite strike by workers who have been agitating for almost a month now to press

home their demands.

Dock workers at a rally on Wednesday gave a 72-hour ultimatum to the government to implement their demands or face an indefinite strike at the port from January 14.

Many port workers already lost their jobs due to a decline in the number of ships calling at the port resulting in a cut in loading and unloading jobs.

During protest rallies and demonstrations throughout the last

month, the workers demanded of the authorities to ensure their employment at the port through revival of the dying seaport or come up with a suitable severance agreement.

In line with the workers' demand, Mongla Port Authority (MPA) submitted the proposal for golden handshake, which was forwarded to the finance ministry for approval, sources said.

"We have got clear indication

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PM asks cops to go tough on crime

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Khaleda Zia yesterday gave strong instructions to the police high-ups to go tough for maintaining an atmosphere congenial to development, production and local and foreign investment.

"Police had a glorious role in the War of Independence. You will have to contribute meaningfully so that people can reap the benefit of independence," she told them.

The prime minister had a meeting at the International Conference Centre with police superiors (SPs) from all the districts, who gathered in the capital Saturday on the occasion of

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CNG 3-WHEELER 'SCAM' Huda wants recast of JS probe body

UNB, Dhaka

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday sought recast of the parliamentary committee formed to investigate alleged corruption in the import of CNG autorickshaws.

In a letter addressed to the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the communications ministry, he said the probe body should be recast with a 'neutral member' or the chairman of the body as its head to ensure justice.

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Rescind ban on publications

Civil society bodies ask govt in legal notice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four civil society organisations yesterday served a legal notice on the government for issuing a press release 'banning' wholesale and without notice the publications of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh.

The notice was signed by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) Director and Supreme Court Advocate Faustina Pereira on behalf of her clients - the ASK, a human rights and legal aid organisation, Sammilito Samajik Andolon, a civil society movement,

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Ahmadiyya book ban violation of rights

Hasina tells journalists, decries plan to control electronic media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday protested the ban on Ahmadiyya publications, terming the government decision as a violation of the community's fundamental and constitutional rights.

"It clearly violates the freedoms of religion and thought, enshrined in the constitution," she said while exchanging views with journalists at the Dhanmondi office of Awami

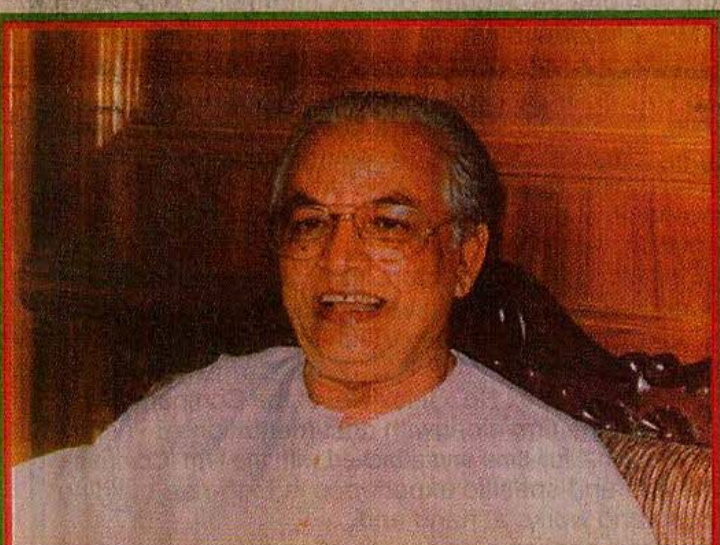
League (AL), of which she is the president.

Hasina said the ban was also against the fundamental spirit of Islam, a religion that upholds tolerance.

"Who are we to say whether a person is Muslim or not. Only Allah can judge it," she said.

The former prime minister also criticised the government move to bring the electronic media, especially

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In memory of First death Anniversary

Today is 12th January, on this day we deeply remember our deceased founder Chairman of Shamsul Alamin Group Late Al-haj A.K. Shamsul Alamin, a renowned personality, a famous Industrialist, a social worker, a Charitable man and a former member of Parliament.

We pray to Allah to grant eternal peace for the departed soul of Late Al-haj A.K. Shamsul Alamin.

Humbly, we remain,

All family members and Officers, Staffs and Workers,

Shamsul Alamin Group

Alamin Centre, 25/A, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka - 1000

Stretched retirement age under scrutiny

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Public Administration Reforms yesterday started looking into the prospects of increasing service life of bureaucrats by shifting the retirement age.

The meeting observed that as per the present retirement age, a number of officials have to retire at the peak of their performance. This obliges the government to retain them through contracts, which creates resentment in the administration,

as the normal process of promotions gets stuck.

So, the meeting anticipated that an increase in service age was also likely to create an administrative clog, especially in promotions, which needed to be addressed.

The cabinet committee also noted that compared to the civil servants who retire at 57, school-teachers retire at 60 and judges at 65.

Another positive argument for increasing the bureaucrats' service

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Saddam's trial may begin in 6 months

6 Iraqis killed as protest turns deadly

AFB, Baghdad

Six Iraqis were killed by police and British forces during a protest in southern Iraq on Saturday, as it emerged that Saddam Hussein could stand trial within six months after the Pentagon declared him a

prisoner of war.

Sunday morning, meanwhile, three loud blasts were heard across the capital over the course of an hour, but the US military said it had no immediate information on the cause.

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MADHUPUR ECO-PARK AL MPs ask govt to drop scheme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Awami League (AL) parliamentary delegation yesterday demanded immediate scrap of Madhupur eco-park project and a judicial probe under a sitting judge into the killing of an anti-scheme protester.

"The repression on indigenous people must stop," said Abdul Hamid, deputy leader of the opposition and chief of the delegation, at a press briefing after his team's visit to Madhupur area on Friday.

The delegation, also comprising local legislator Abdur Razzak Bhola, Opposition Whip Faruk Khan and Promod Mankin, visited the Joinagachha house of Piren Slang, an indigenous man who was killed on January 3 when police and forest guards opened fire on a group of demonstrators.

The government is planning to develop an eco-park under about Tk 9 crore Madhupur National Park

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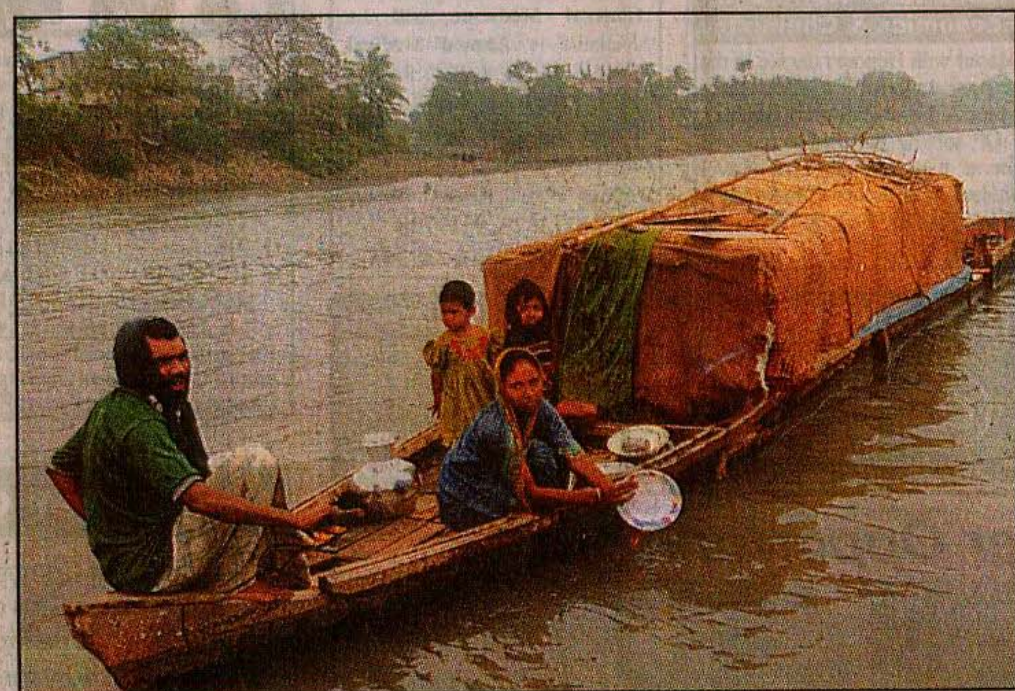


PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

A floating home on the Buriganga river is what Rahimuddin and his wife have opted for. A rickshawpuller, Rahimuddin, 40, decided to move his family onto a boat and save the Tk 1,000-1,500 monthly rent of a room in the slums. He has since expanded this old boat to hold two compartments. The children are growing up without friends or neighbours. Rahimuddin continues his daily struggle to make ends meet, but after a hard day's work he rests assured of a roof for the family to shelter beneath.

PSI scrap to hike import costs 5-8 times

Top business bodies against move

STAR REPORT

The country's apex trade body and associations yesterday expressed deep concern over the recent unilateral government decision to do away with pre-shipment inspection (PSI) scheme.

The finance minister's announcement is 'quite abrupt' since no discussion has been held

with the trade and industry, they said in a joint statement urging the government to discuss the issue before going ahead with the move.

The trade and industry have reasons to fear that costs of imports will increase as much as five to eight times if the old customs valuation procedure is revived, the leaders added.

The National Board of Revenue's

(NBR) own data reveal that the growth of collection of customs duties during the pre-PSI period (1997-98 to 1999-2000) was minus 2.4 percent (negative) while post-PSI growth (2001 to date) has been 9.45 percent, they pointed out.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, elaborating on the decision, stated that the PSI

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Padma Bridge levy proposed

STAR REPORT

The communications ministry has proposed imposition of levy on utility bills, services, interest on bank deposits and other savings instruments to collect funds for the proposed Padma Bridge.

The proposal is likely to be discussed in the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today.

According to the proposal, the levy would be charged at 1 percent on airfare, 5 percent or Tk 2 on tolls collected for using bridges, 2 percent on interest on savings instruments and deposits, 1 percent on

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