

# The Baily Star



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People's Right to Know www.thedailystar.net

**EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES** 

# Govt finally opts for limited TU activities

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has finally decided to allow trade union albeit in a limited form in the export processingzones (EPZs).

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday conveyed the decision to US Ambassador Harry K Thomas during a meeting at the finance ministry.

"EPZ workers will be given rights to practise limited unionism," Saifur told reporters after the meeting. "The law ministry has been asked to draft a law by March 25 for EPZ trade

The EPZ trade unions will not be permitted to get involved with any political party, sources said.

"If the parliament is not in session when the law has been drafted, it will be made effective through an ordinance," Saifur said. "The law will be acceptable to all parties

The World Bank and the

Bangladesh EPZ Authority have prepared a framework for the law after discussions with investors and US labour organisation American Federal Labour Congress and Industrial Organisation

The framework was presented at yesterday's meeting with Thomas, who reportedly found it acceptable. The meeting over, Thomas told

journalists that the framework would be finalised in a few weeks. He said introduction of trade

union would not scare away investors and would be acceptable to all. Earlier, the US agreed to give

Bangladesh an extension of about two months to decide on allowing trade union in the EPZs. Bangladesh got bogged down in a trade conflict with the US that threatened cancellation of trade concessions if it did not allow EPZ unionism by January. But the overriding concern was that foreign investors opted to roll out of the country if unionism was allowed.

The two EPZs -- one at Savar and the other in Chittagong -- employ 130,000 workers in around 180 industrial units and boast South Korean and Japanese investments, apart from local investment to the tune of \$600 million.

Bangladesh sat on the issue because GSP has a comparatively low economic value in its total export basket.

Under GSP, Bangladeshi exports to the US fetch \$40 million a year, but exports from the EPZs earn \$1.2 billion, a fifth of the country's total Again, the US is the largest buyer

of Bangladeshi products, accounting for 44 percent of its total exports mostly outside GSP.

Around \$103 million was invested in the EPZs last year and fresh recruitments there increased to 10,000 in a country with high unemployment

#### **JCD** declares Badruddoza unwanted at DU Asks MA Mannan's wife

to resign from senate

DU CORRESPONDENT

The student wing of the key ruling party yesterday declared Dhaka University a no-go area for alternative political stream convenor AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, saying the former president betrayed the party that lifted him to national promi-

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, vowed to resist the entry of the physician-turnedpolitician into the campus and threatened the wife of a leader of his platform with the same fate if she did not resign for the university's

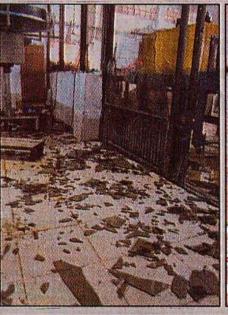
At a rally on the campus, the student front asked Ummey Kulsum, wife of retired army major MA Manhan, member secretary of the stream, to resign from senate in a week or face being 'unwarranted' at the university.

JCD President Sahabuddin Laltu pegged Badruddoza's platform as 'a union of betrayers', saying the conspirators' were unmasked with the formation of the 'so-called

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

# Major Mannan's beverage factory bombed, rampaged

60 alleged BNP activists go berserk, cops refuse to take case





Workers look at vandalised soft drink cans, right, and glass shards lie scattered on the floor, left, after hoodlums yesterday attacked a beverage factory in Savar of retired army major MA Mannan, who resigned from parliament and ruling BNP

Armed activists apparently of the ruling BNP went on the rampage at a beverage factory of an ex-party leader in Savar yesterday, injuring six workers with bombs and gunshots that scared about 200 others out of work.

MA Mannan, owner of National Beverage and Sunman Food, who resigned from parliament as lawmaker and the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) on March 10, claimed the attackers cost the factoryTk 10 crore in lost property.

Witnesses said about 60 attack ers arrived on 13 microbuses and four motorbikes and beat up the factory workers in Hemayetpur sending them running for cover amid a string of gunshots and blasts of homemade bombs during a lunch break at 12:45pm.

Four workers suffered bomb injuries and two were hit by bullet before the gang vandalised three vehicles to force its way into the

#### BNP men lay siege to cop station, try to snatch leaders

UNB, Sirajganj

Local BNP adherents yesterday laid a siege to Kamarkhand Police Station for several hours in an apparent bid to snatch away five of its leaders and activists after police held them on charge of plundering six houses of rival group at a Sirajganj village. Led by Badiuzzaman Ferdous,

president of Sirajganj BNP, and ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Babu, about 100 armed BNP supporters gheraoed the police station from noon and tried to free from police custody, police said.

Deputy commissioner, Sirajganj and local superintendent of police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Additional police forces were deployed around the police station to avert any untoward incident, they added.

Police produced the arrestees before a local court in the evening under heavy protection. The court sent them to jail, sources said.

Earlier, police nabbed BNP activists Lutfor Rahman and Abdus Salam and JCD leaders Masud Rana, Aminul Islam Babu and Al Mamun for their alleged link to the arson attack on six houses in Jatibari hours after some miscreants murdered upazila JCD president Khorshed Alam Huda on March 11, they added.

Blaming a rival group for the killing, local BNP activists torched the houses forcing the residents to live under open sky, locals said.

#### CANCER TREATMENT

## Govt ignores experts' 'no' to buy dubious machines

NAIMUL HAQ

Ignoring experts' recommendations, the government is going to purchase three 'cobalt radioactive sources' instead of new improved machines for cancer treatment that might cause a huge wastage of public funds.

Three sources of cobalt teletherapy machines at Rajshahi, Sylhet and Rangpur medical college hospitals require replacement when nearly half of the life of the sources

Some officials pointed out the quoted price of the cobalt sources to be imported from China by a local agent, Mardel Agency, is almost the same as the price of the machines purchased in 1994.

Each cobalt source is costing the national exchequer about Tk one crore whereas a new improved full unit of the machine with almost twice the radiation dose capability costs about Tk 4 crore.

A senior official seeking anonymity said, "an underhand deal led to. rejection of the experts' views."

Leading cancer specialists including the Radiation Safety and Control director of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) officially stated that six Chinese teletherapy machines including those three procured in 1994 are 'no worth operating' as they remained almost 'non-functional' ever since

their installation in 1999. Another machine could not even be installed because of technical

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

At a meeting on March 10 last

Hold classes

regularly

at any cost

PM at Buet convocation

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yester-

day urged the teachers to ensure a

congenial atmosphere on the cam-

pus and regular holding of classes at

any cost for the sake of the students

teachers to ensure that classes in the

educational institutions run regu-

larly in any situation. Protests, if

necessary, can be demonstrated

"You have to create scope for

"It is my special request to the

as also for future of the country.

#### to head off opposition JS session resumes today STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNPPP meets

Jan 21 on ways

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to unveil à plan for her lawmakers in a party forum to face growing opposition to the BNP-led coalition rule days after the Jatiya Sangsad resumes session today.

The Jatiya Sangsad sits after an 1-day recess with the main opposition unbent on its boycott decision and the BNP smarting from the defection of two party lawmakers.

The BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) meeting, adjourned until January 21, is set to be held on March 21 with the indications of some guidelines from the party leadership to lawmakers to face the opposition, sources in the key ruling party hinted.

Resignation from the party and parliament by former army major Abdul Mannan and Mahi B Chowdhury will figure in the BNPPP meeting where Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will unveil plans for her deputies to face the opposition and the alternative political stream led by former president Badruddoza Chowdhury, sources said. The BNP adjourned its third

parliamentary party meeting after taking office in October ballot in 2001 for an indefinite period.

"The meeting might take a long time as legislators want to express their opinions in running the state," a ruling party whip told The Daily without hampering classes," she

The government is also planning to table a constitution amendment SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Socialists win Spain polls, vow 'to pull out Iraq troops'

AFP, Madrid

After Spain's opposition Socialists won elections, prime minister-elect Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero vowed yesterday to withdraw troops from Iraq and criticised US President George W. Bush after Spanish voters ousted governing conservatives who took the country into the controversial war

"The war in Iraq was a disaster, the occupation of Iraq is a disaster," Zapatero, 43, told Cadena Serradio.

He spoke just before the European Union held three minutes' silence in tribute to the 200 bombings of crowded Madrid com-An ongoing investigation into the

attacks has found growing evidence

they were carried out by Islamic

extremists linked to al-Qaeda as punishment for Spain's help in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Voters turned out in force for Sunday's elections. Many of them

expressed anger at retiring Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar when he cast his ballot, jostling and booing him while some shouted "Aznar: vour war, our dead,"

Zapatero, whose Socialist Party

people killed in last Thursday's ended eight years of rule by Aznar's Popular Party (PP) after winning 43 percent of the ballots to the PP's 38 percent, said near-total public opposition to the Iraq war had been

> He said that barring new devel opments in Iraq before June 30 -- the date the United States has promised to hand power over to an Iragi provisional government -- Spain's 1,300 troops in Iraq "will return home" as he had promised before the elec-

> The other occupying states will be contacted for consultations on SEE PAGE 11 COLI

## Govt takes a hard line on B Chy's forum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government, which has been keeping an eye on the opposition Awami League, has mounted watch on the "alternative stream" initiated by the ruling BNP defectors and taken a hard line on them.

It has decided to head off the alternative political stream spear-headed by former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and go slow towards the AL, highly placed

sources in the ruling four-party alliancesaid.

Several ministers and leaders of the BNP and its different front organisations in their press statements and speeches in the last few days have been overtly threatening to resist the move of the alternative stream at any cost.

The government resorted to repressive measures against the main opposition last month when it

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

#### **BDR-BSF** confce in Kolkata begins today

A four-day border conference between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) begins in Kolkata, capital of the Indian state of West Bengal today, aiming to resolve various unresolved issues.

The issues include firing on unarmed civilians by the BSF and Indian 'miscreants,' push in of Indian citizens, intrusion of Indians into Bangladesh territory, tree and tea plantations on no man's land and smuggling.

Deputy Director General of the SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

#### Ganguly uncertain for today's ODI

REUTERS/AFP, Rawalpindi

India captain Sourav Ganguly has a fever and is doubtful for today's daynight second one-day international against Pakistan at the Pindi Cricket

The 31-year-old left-hander missed a practice session yesterday and the team's medical staff will assess his condition in the morning

"Sourav has a mild fever," Indian vice-captain Rahul Dravid told SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



GAS SCAM

### Official accused of neglect gets key task

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hands out a certificate to a recipient during the convo-

cation of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology yesterday.

Belated move for action against him on

STAR REPORT

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd has assigned an official, who was at the heart of neglect leading to gas pipe-line scam, to foot the bills of contractors accused of delivering sub-

standard jobs.

The parliamentary standing committee on energy ministry that fomented nationwide hue and cry pointing out risky and low-quality gas pipe installation under an overpriced project kept mum.

PHOTO: STAR

"Titas has taken all preparations to pay the contractors, accused of bungling installation of two pipelines, their bills," a source said.

On February 29, General Manager (Planning) of Titas Mahbubur Rahman was assigned to assess whether the contractors will

The Titas Board of Directors suggested measures against him for poor monitoring of the job at a meeting on February 26 and the Titas authorities asked the Petrobangla to withdraw him from Titas hours ahead of a board meet-

The board at the February SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



SEE PAGE 11 COL 7





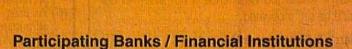
BDT 400,000,000

Syndicated Term Loan, Lease and Working Capital Facility

Arranger **IPDC** of Bangladesh Limited

Agent Bank Southeast Bank Limited

This announcement appears as a matter of record only



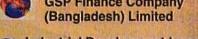


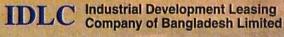






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