

Exports won't be affected: Khosru

Roadmap for trade union activities at EPZs

UNB, Dhaka

Country's exports will not be affected if the roadmap for trade union activities in the export processing zones (EPZs) is implemented properly.

Labour bodies denounce govt decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour organisations of the country have denounced the government decision of allowing a limited-scale trade unionism at the export processing zones (EPZ) from next month, terming it an omen of disaster for the entire industrial sector.

The labour bodies rejected the decision and demanded a full-scale trade union right in the EPZs according to the labour law and ILO (International Labour Organisation) Convention.

President of Bangladesh Bastra O Poshak Shilpa Sramik League Z.M. Kamrul Anam and General Secretary k.Alam Belal in a joint statement said, legal amendment to facilitate a limited form of trade unionism bypassing the ILO Convention would provoke a disorder not only in the EPZs but in other mills and factories of the country.

Bangladesh National Council of Textile, Garments, Leather Workers at a protest meeting in the city said the government's tricky procrastination in allowing trade unionism in the EPZs has put the readymade garment sector in a perilous situation.

Workers leaders Abul Bashar, Roy Ramesh Chandra, among others spoke at the meeting presided by ZM Kamrul Anam.

Leaders of Garments Tailors Workers League and United Garment Tailor Workers Federation in separate statements condemned the government decision.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury expressed the optimism while elaborating on the roadmap during the question-hour in parliament yesterday, replying to a supplementary from M Shahiduzzaman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Khosru told the House that the roadmap for trade union in the export processing zones has been formulated after long discussions with the United States and the investors in the EPZs.

"Under the roadmap, there will be labour unions in the EPZs, but without any political or outside interference," he said mentioning that the investors also agreed with the roadmap.

Replying to Golam Habib Dulal (Jatiya Party-Kurigram), the commerce minister firmly said Bangladesh's garments sector is ready to face the post-multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) period when there will be no quota.

"The quota protected us, but it also brought some limitations. When there will be no quota, we'll have no limitations and it can otherwise bring good for us," he added.

Elaborating various measures to face the MFA challenge, Khosru said Bangladesh developed its garments sector in 20 years and other countries cannot suppress the vast experience.

The minister also ruled out the apprehension that workers would lose their jobs under the quota-free regime. He appreciated both the entrepreneurs and the workers for building human resources in the sector.

Replying to Abu Sayeed M Shahadat Hossain, he hoped that Bangladesh's market access to India would increase following the implementation of Safta (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) and bilateral free trade agreement.



Leaders of left-leaning political parties join hands at a public meeting organised by the Workers' Party of Bangladesh at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday. The leaders called for stepping up the movement to topple the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Platform for direct election for women observes hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of several women and human rights organisations on a platform of direct election to the parliamentary reserved seats yesterday staged a hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Denouncing the provision of taking women representatives in parliament through nomination, they said it virtually denies women of any meaningful status as women leaders and their effective participation in policy making.

Implementation Committee for Reserved Seats of Women in the Parliament through Direct Election, representing more than 35 women and human rights groups, organised the programme as part of its prolonged movement for effective women representation in parliament.

"Though direct election was an election-pledge of the ruling BNP, the government's stand in this regard still remains unclear," said Supreme Court Senior Advocate Rabia Bhuiyan.

She said nominating women lawmakers hinders their meaningful empowerment to take part in development programmes and policy-making and deprives them of holding a legislative constituency of their own.

Women must have independent and clearly demarcated constituencies directly representing a certain people, she added.

"We don't expect much of the government as it is ruthlessly suppressing any political dissent," Sharmeen Mursheed of Brotee said. "But we have to carry on for our rights."

The provision of nomination will help a certain political party as its vote bank, she added.

"Both the BNP and Awami League sympathise with our demand while in opposition but forget their commitment when in power," said Rekha Chowdhury of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

The government is reluctant to direct election because of its alliance with fundamentalist elements, said Ivy Rahman of Mahila Awami League.

Maleka Banu of Mahila Parishad, Shahin Manwar and Meher Afroz of Women Voice, Israt Jahan of Nagarik Samaj, among others, took part in the strike.

Home Secretary Faroq's contract extended for another year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday further extended the contract service of Home Secretary Mohammad Omar Faroq.

According to official sources, the home secretary was given another year of contractual service effective from today, making it his third such contract.

Faroq has been in line with the government's confidence since the BNP-led alliance government assumed in power and he may continue his services till the tenure of the government, sources said.

The home secretary has strong lobby within the government and both the home minister and the state minister for home are highly satisfied with his works, they added.

Govt tramples on people's democratic rights: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting general secretary of Awami League Obaidul Kader yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government was trampling on the democratic rights of the people and their freedom of expression.

In a statement he said, "The government has unmasked its fascist character through a series of attack on political opponents."

These include the recent attack on a scheduled public rally of former president and convener of newly formed 'alternative political stream' AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, arson at different factories of its member secretary Abdul Mannan and attack on the Kalapara Upazila council of the Awami League by the alliance loyalists, he added.

Kader said the tyranny and repression of the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has surpassed the records of all previous dictatorial rulers.

"No autocratic ruler could cling to power resorting to violence and repression in the past and the present government will have to meet the similar fate for its policy of persecution on political opponents," he added.

NDI team meets B Chowdhury

A delegation of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a Washington-based organisation, called on former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury at the Bikalpa Dhara office on Monday, says a press release.

The three-member delegation comprised of Dr. Owen Lippert, Resident Director, Ms. Deborah Healy, director Political Party Programmes and Saiful Karim, senior programme officer.

They discussed about the alternative stream political initiative taken by Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury. The delegation members showed interest in the Bikalpa Dhara organisation its present situation and future plans. They also discussed about various issues as regards to democratic development in Bangladesh.

Maj (Rtd) Mannan, Mahi B Choudhury and Feroz M. Hassan of Bikalpa Dhara National Committee were present in the meeting.

Brilliant DU student dies of TB

Taposh Kumar Golder, a brilliant student of Dhaka University who was awarded gold medal by the prime minister in December last for his excellent academic performance, died of tuberculosis in Kolkata on March 13.

A student of sociology, he stood first class first in his honours examination in 2000. He also sat for master's examination last year, but the results are yet to be published.

Taposh, who hailed from Kalikapur village under Dumuria upazila in Khulna district, went to Kolkata recently for treatment.

Livestock project staff demand transfers to revenue budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Non-cadre Livestock Employees Welfare Association yesterday demanded that all staffs of 10 completed projects under the livestock directorate be transferred to the revenue budget.

The association leaders also rejected the cabinet committee decision to create a number of posts with conditions for appointments from the staff.

The conditions are unrealistic and most of the staff will not get any chance for appointment when 2884 staff are waiting to be regularised, they said at a press conference.

The leaders also urged the government to regularise all temporary staff.

Md Afsar Ali read out a written statement at the press conference.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Dr Anwarul Huq, a physician and freedom fighter, died of blood cancer in England on Monday at the age of 75.

His body will be flown in to Dhaka on Friday. He will be buried at Panjarup village under Kasba thana in Brahmanbaria.

Dr Anwarul Huq went to Britain in 1973 and joined the medical service there. He retired as consultant in 1997.

He is survived by his wife, a son and two daughters.

Ahmed Hossain



A h m e d H o s s a i n, retired chief engineering instructor of Bangladesh Airlines, passed away at St. Joseph Hospital in Los Angeles on February 9 at the age of 77, says a press release.

Son of Forqan Ali, he is survived by three sons, three daughters and 12 grandchildren.

Sufia Khanom

Sufia Khanom, wife of late Abdul Majid Bhuiyan and mother of AKM Mahabur Rahman, chief accounts and finance officer of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), died on Sunday at the age of 95, says a press release.

She was buried at her home village at Nabiabad, handina of Comilla.

She is survived by three sons, one daughter and a number of grandchildren.

Bangladeshi hundi trader found dead in West Bengal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a Bangladeshi hundi trader was recovered in the West Bengal state of India yesterday a day after he was abducted from Kalaroa in Sathkira.

Some unknown people kidnapped Ganesh Mitra from near his house at Keragachi, according to his family.

The family members suspected that he was killed by his business rivals.

Local people found the body at Dakbhangla in 24 Parganas district.

BDR sources, however, denied that Ganesh was abducted.

He went to India for treatment, they said, adding that he died in a road accident.

UNFPA Media Award 2003 distributed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UNFPA Media Award 2003 was distributed yesterday.

Dr. Sultana Monira Hossain Muku and Sheela Afroza received the first and second prize respectively for population reporting in Bangla category while Ziaur Rahman and Sultana Rahman got first and second prize respectively for English.

Sultana Rahman is working with The Daily Star as reporter.

Besides, three special prizes were also awarded for population and reproductive health related work.

The recipients of these prizes are Shahnaz Munni for TV reporting, Md Abdul Haque for Radio Spot and Yeasmin Rima for print media.

The first prize carries Tk 50,000, the second Tk 40,000 and the third Tk 20,000.

The award giving ceremony was held at the National Press Club auditorium.

Director of UNFPA New York Subhash K Gupta, Whip Rezaul Bari Dina and UNFPA Representative in Dhaka Suneta Mukharjee distributed the prizes.

Md Nurul Ameen and Asma Akhter of UNFPA conducted the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Rezaul Bari Dina emphasised the role of elected representatives in ensuring reproductive health of mothers.

Subhash Gupta said the media can play a crucial role in raising public awareness about population problems.

UNFPA has also invited participation from print and electronic media for its Media Award 2004.

More details in this respect can be obtained from UNFPA website www.unfpa-bangladesh.org.



Recipients of the UNFPA Media Award 2003 pose with the guests at the award giving ceremony at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.



Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Toiletries Limited, hands over a cheque for Tk 5 lakh to Motiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, for the Prothom Alo Aid Fund for acid victims at a ceremony in the city recently.

WEATHER TODAY logo with sun and cloud icons.

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country with chance of rain or thundershowers at one or two places over Sylhet division till 6pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 38.1 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and the lowest 18.0 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.09 pm today and rises at 6:04 am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY section listing Film show, Blood donation, Lecture, Musical evening, Presentation, Cultural conference, Workshop, and Get-together events.