

## Govt firm to work for welfare of FFs

PM tells Dr Sitara

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday reassured her government's commitment to working towards welfare of the freedom fighters.

Dr Captain (Retd) Sitara Begum, Bir Protik, who is leading a medical mission of expatriate physicians from the United States, called on the prime Minister at her office yesterday.

The 11-member team, including Sitara's husband Dr Abidur Rahman, is now in Bangladesh with a "Cardiac Care Mission" to apprise local doctors of the latest medical

developments.

They are imparting training to the doctors of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and exchanging information regarding latest medical developments in the western world.

They have also provided medical equipment worth about Tk one crore.

Khaleda hoped that the Bangladesh expatriates from other parts of the world would follow the example.

She also recalled with appreciation the role of Dr Sitara in the War of Liberation.

## JCD factions clash at DU: 2 injured

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least two activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) of Sir F Rahman Hall unit of Dhaka University were injured in factional fighting in presence of a minister at meeting yesterday.

The fighting broke out when the State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosarraf Hossain was attending the council of the hall committee at about 8:00pm.

The attacking group ransacked the stage and threw bricks at other

group attending the meeting leading to a battle for a couple of minutes.

The attackers charged Vice-president Sultan Salauddin Tuku, also the convenor of the council preparation committee, and Joint Secretary Selimuzzaman Selim of JCD Central Committee, with nepotism in forming the committee before the council.

Police and Rab members however brought the situation under control and the meeting was continuing till filing of this report at 9:00pm.



Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhtar speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left is director Mahmuda Imam.

### PHASE-OUT OF MFA

## Security fund for garment workers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari, a non-government organisation, yesterday demanded security fund for garment workers who are likely to lose their jobs with the phase out of multi-fiber arrangement (MFA) this month.

At a press conference at the National Press Club, leaders of the organisation also demanded of the government to announce a detailed plan for the rehabilitation of garment workers likely to be retrenched.

The speaker said allocation of Tk 20 crore by the government for the training and employment of garment workers was not sufficient.

They also urged the government to identify the garment industries that are supposed to be shut down and make a list of the workers that might be retrenched.

Shirin Akhtar, president of Karmojibi Nari, said the garment industries should have national regulations and exit policy so that around 18 lakh garment workers do not face any uncertain situation and he or she could be paid for at least three months.

The garment workers are much vulnerable as they are yet to have the

right to form trade union. Strengthening the movement for trade union is essential for garment workers, and the political parties who should come forward to help attain this right," she said, adding that otherwise the women workers who gained their dignity in the society through employment would be the most sufferers.

Rokayel Rafiq Baby, executive director of Karmojibi Nari, said there are many women garment workers who still don't know what a dreadful situation they are going to face in the new year, and mass campaign is needed to prepare them to meet the challenge.

She said her organisation has taken up a programme in this regard from March 19 to December and around 1 lakh workers have so far taken part in it.

Karmojibi Nari would announce its next programme after holding a rally at Muktangan tomorrow.

**1,371 more held**

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,371 people on various charges from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday.

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PHOTO: STAR  
Gonotantrik Olyka Jote stages a demonstration in front of the Anti-Corruption Commission head office in the city yesterday demanding steps to make the Commission effective.

## Dev hampered in absence of strong local govt

### Experts tell int'l workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development is hampered in absence of strong local government, said the experts at an international workshop yesterday.

They called for effective local bodies which could take the government to the people and help establish democracy.

The two-day international workshop on Decentralisation for efficient urban management in Bangladesh was organised with a view to prepare a set of proposals for government consideration to reform municipal authorities.

LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan formally inaugurated the workshop organised by 'Local Government Initiative (LGI) ARD' in collaboration with the Times Research Foundation (TRF) of Kolkata at Sheraton hotel in the city.

He said the workshop would give the government an opportunity to discuss the proposals for its decentralisation and urban management.

The minister said only a strong

local government could ensure the active participation of local people in the development activities at the grassroots level.

"Around 30 million people representing about 25 percent of the total population of the country are now living in urban areas. This number is increasing sharply due to migration from rural to urban areas creating huge pressure on urban infrastructure," he said.

It is very difficult to provide pure drinking water, sanitation and other civic amenities to all city dwellers with limited resources, he added.

Manan hoped that the workshop would discuss the strength as well as weakness of various steps taken by the government in the field of urbanisation.

Former finance and planning minister AMA Mithu said the Bangladesh government is centralised in the world.

"We have many local bodies including six city corporations, 269 municipalities, and 4400 union parishads, but these are tremendously

handicapped by the government," he added.

Mithu said, "If the authorities of Sylhet City Corporation wants to set up a bridge, they will have to come to Dhaka for permission."

He said there is no need of Wasa and Rajuk to develop the capital. Their job could be done by giving necessary authority and autonomy to Dhaka City Corporation.

City Mayor Sadek Hossain said decentralisation is a global agenda for efficient management and administration.

"In fact, good governance cannot be thought of without a well-built and decentralised local government," he added.

Director of Economic Growth of USAID/India Rebecca Black delivered the welcome address at the inaugural session addressed by Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, Raj Kapoor of TRF-India, and Dr Zarina Rahaman Khan of Local Government Initiative.

### President assents to 5 bills

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday assented to five bills passed in the 14th session of the 8th Parliament.

The bills are: The Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Transfer of Property (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Specific Relief (Amendment) Bill, 2004; The Limitation (Amendment) Bill, 2004; and The Birth and Death Registration Bill, 2004.

### Zia Film City to open for shooting soon

BSS, Dhaka

The Film Development Corporation (FDC) has decided to open Zia Film City (ZFC) at Kabirpur soon for shooting of film, drama and ad films at a limited level.

The managing director of FDC directed the project director to procure necessary furniture for makeup rooms there, an official source said yesterday.

## 'Address minority rights issue in regional context'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The issue of minority rights has to be addressed in the South Asian regional context instead of looking at it in Bangladesh context alone, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

Justice Abdul Bari Sarker, Advocate Jahangir Alam Khan and special correspondent of the daily Inqilab Mobaideen Rahman also spoke at the seminar presided over by Organisation's Chairman Advocate Abu Salek.

The Organisation to Safeguard Human Rights arranged the seminar on 'Protection of minority rights in the South Asian sub-continent' at the National Press Club.

The issue of human rights is critical not only for Bangladesh, but also for the welfare of all the countries in the region, said former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed as special guest.

"All the countries in the South Asian region must raise their voices in the same manner and proportion whenever an incident of human rights violation takes place," he said.

Although Bangladesh has a tradition of communal harmony, Prof Ahmed said, there is no denial of the fact that there are some cases of minority rights infringements.

In the wake of communal massacre in the Indian state of Gujarat and International Secretary Munir Hossain.

recent inhuman atrocities on the Muslims in Thailand, the hue and cry was not raised in the same proportion as seen in case of minority repression in Bangladesh, said Advocate Badruddin Ahmed.

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