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Sudden slash in tariff rates

Saifur says it will check price hike, help industry; move meets WB conditions for credit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an unprecedented step, the government yesterday reduced two of the three tiers of the tariff rates -- 7.5 percent and 15 percent -- to 6 percent and 13 percent one month into the budget apparently to meet

the World Bank's conditions that tariff protection has to be lowered to get more aid.

The decision will make items on 3,352 tariff lines cheaper by 1.5 to 2 percentage points, but may lead to a loss of Tk 476.07 crore in revenue.

One of the conditions of the

Development Support Credit (DSC) was to reduce tariff rate by 0.9 percent to get \$200 million in third phase in July, but the funds were not released as tariff incidence effectively increased in this year's budget.

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2-day weekly holiday may be considered

Says Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman believes the government can consider the two-day weekly holiday proposal of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF).

Saifur yesterday told the press at the planning ministry office that the government is discussing the option.

He, however, said the decision should be taken collectively. "This is a matter of policy making, so I should not comment on it at this

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Bid to deface Kahn's work again

So-called beautification stopped after *The Daily Star* enquiry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The authorities yesterday foiled a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) bid to construct a fountain beside the south plaza of the parliament complex without any approval and also defying the master plan,

made by world famous architect Louis I Kahn.

The Public Works Department (PWD) and Architecture Department moved to halt the construction work following inquiries by *The Daily Star* about

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PHOTO: STAR

Authorities yesterday demolish an illegal under-construction fountain beside the south plaza of the parliament complex. The fountain went almost halfway to completion until Monday. (Above).

Rotten fish at home ministry canteen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) mobile court in its drive against unhygienic food yesterday raided four canteens and a confectionery shop at the secretariat and the officers' canteen of the home ministry and fined them Tk 16,000 for the unhygienic condition of their kitchens and for preserving rotten food items.

Another mobile court of the home ministry found the kitchen of popular fast food shop La Bamba in Uttara in a car garage.

The home ministry formed two mobile courts last June following a

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ACC asked to revive 5,050 graft cases

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government yesterday asked the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to revive the 5,050 on trial corruption cases using public prosecutors (PPs) as an interim measure.

These cases filed by the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) have been gathering dust since the ACC was formed in November last year as there is no clear provision in the ACC Act that allows the commission to deal with such cases.

The ACC chairman yesterday

received a letter from the Cabinet Division that says the ACC will move these cases through the PPs till forming its own prosecution unit.

"The former Bac officials who have been attached to the ACC at the district level will assist the public prosecutors in conducting the cases," the letter suggests.

"In case the ACC needs to appoint non-government lawyer to conduct a special case, it can do so obtaining permission from the government," the Cabinet Division

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PM flies to China today, to sign deals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves Dhaka this morning on a 5-day official visit to China when a number of agreements covering tourism, energy, culture and education will be signed between the two countries.

Her visit to Beijing within four months of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Dhaka conveys the message of closeness, understanding and cooperation between the two countries, said a high official of the foreign ministry.

This will be Khaleda's second bilateral visit to China since the BNP-led alliance government assumed power in 2001.

Bangladesh and China signed several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Dhaka in April.

During Khaleda Zia's visit, Dhaka will seek Chinese cooperation in a number of areas, including the use of gas and energy resources, flood

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THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD

Nixon and Kissinger know everything, said Mustaque

LAWRENCE LIFSCHULTZ

"One thinks of Henry Kissinger as being a traditional 19th century diplomat," Morris continued. "His mentors, models and heroes are all 19th century. One would then think the adage would be, 'No permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests.' This would have dictated that the United States immediately welcome Mujib and embrace the regime; to try to keep it within the camp. But, there was, as I have

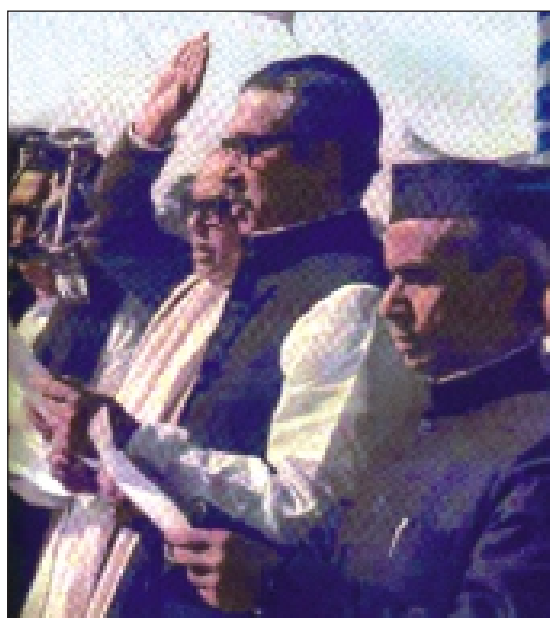
said, Kissinger's vindictive streak. It ran through it, in the sense, he [Mujib] is not our man. And, if he is not our man, there is no such thing as permanent interests. Now it is a matter of getting our people in and their people out... If one is looking for any elements of shame or hesitation, one will not find it in the record of the period. The Bangladesh thing is much less prominent; much more quiet; much easier to do."

Although I still remained skeptical

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Long-time comrade-turned-conspirator Khandker Mustaque Ahmed with Bangabandhu.

FILE PHOTO



PRSP finalised with 7 priorities

UNB, Dhaka

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was yesterday finalised with seven priorities designated for national development.

Employment, nutrition, maternal health, quality education (primary, secondary and vocational), sanitation and safe water, criminal justice and local governance are the pivotal tasks set for the government in the donor-prescribed development recipe.

The National Steering Committee on Final Draft of the PRSP in a meeting yesterday finalised the draft, and

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Rejoinder

Twelve-year-old domestic help Aklima Akter's employer Syed Abdullah Nasir has protested a report of *The Daily Star* published on August 3 headlined "Minor girl jailed after torture for crime she

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Move for 'opposition day' in JS rejected

Parliamentary body decides to introduce 30-minute 'zero hour'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday turned down a proposal for introduction of 'opposition day' in parliament intended to give adequate time to opposition lawmakers to discuss various issues as the ruling BNP opposed the move.

The parliamentary standing committee on rules of procedure (RO) dominated by the BNP however decided to introduce a 30-minute 'zero hour' allowing the lawmakers to speak on different issues.

"It is not necessary at present to introduce opposition day as private members' day exists," Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, also chairman of the committee, told reporters after its

meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"Lawmakers will get adequate time to speak when zero hour system is introduced. Besides, we should make private members' day more effective," he said.

The parliamentary body also discussed whether the provision of statements by ministers could be amended to allow lawmakers to counter such statements in a bid to ensure more accountability of the ministers on any issues.

The committee chairman however did not agree to this. "Lawmakers will make long speeches leading to disorder in the House if

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5 orphans tell court of sexual molestation by Anjuman staff

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five orphans of Anjuman-e-Mofidul Islam Orphanage yesterday told a Dhaka court horrifying stories of being sexually molested by the orphanage officials.

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Prime accused in 3 foreigners' abduction case held at Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Avilash Chakma, the prime accused in the sensational three foreigners abduction case, was produced before the court here yesterday, two days after he was arrested by Rapid

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