

Weekly holiday

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 (BTMA)—in the readymade garment (RMG) sector, she said it is a welcome move that these trade bodies are now united and working together to face the challenges to survive in the global market.

The current global situation is not in favour of the developing countries. So, we have to go through a tough open market regime when there is no option but to be efficient, skilled and professional," she said.

Focusing on the present market trend, she urged the entrepreneurs and exporters to identify the reasons why the target in exporting woven products could not be achieved and growth in the knitwear items has slowed down.

The PM lauded the BGMEA for its efforts to organise an international event like Batepox, which has a very positive impact on flourishing the garment industry of the country.

Commerce Minister Atif Hossain Choudhury said the commerce ministry has set up two task forces to

address the issue of social compliance raised by foreign buyers and union leaders. The ministry has also set up a committee to make suggestions on how the sick industries can be made operational again, he added.

Adviser of Commerce Ministry Barkat Ullah Bulu said the garment factories in Bangladesh are facing tremendous pressure to comply with safety and security issues. It is possible to generate six lakh jobs if the sick RMG units are revived.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman was also present at the inauguration programme.

BGMEA President Annisul Haq said the making changes in the garment sector have gone down by 40-50 percent following the quota phase-out.

The buyers shift their orders to other countries if the shipment is delayed by a single day, he said, adding that the compliance issue has also become all-important, which is pushing the cost substantially.

He mentioned that the woven garment export to the EU market was 70 percent of the total export a few years back, but now it has come down to 43 percent.

The BGMEA president urged the government to rethink the issues, such as establishing a central bonded warehouse, Saarc cumulation and greater regional cumulation, to increase exports to the EU again.

Anisul Haq regretted that although a national coordination council was set up, some of its recommendations were not implemented.

BGMEA vice-presidents Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury and Md Shahidul Islam also spoke on the occasion.

JCD factions

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 Station said that they used six teargas shells and one bullet during the clashes.

About their silent role during the clashes, West Regional Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) Lokman Hakim said that police could not take action inside the campus without the order of the authority.

However, RU Vice chancellor Prof Atif Hossain said that the authority asked all concerned to take action against responsible persons.

The clashes occurred when State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar was attending a Rajshahi divisional meeting on the law and order.

RU doctors rushed to the Sher-e-Bangla and Abdul Latif Halls where the groups took shelter after police action and treated the injured.

Earlier, in the morning, Islam group's leader Md Masudul Karim Rana staged a showdown with open firearms and looked for their opponents on the campus. Failing to find any of them, the Gorki-Rana group went to Sher-e-Bangla hall.

Later, police escorted the Miran-Shafin group, who rounded the campus with open arms and attacked the Sher-e-Bangla hall.

Among the injured, RU JCD convening committee member Adil Shahriar Gorki received a bullet wound while JCD activists Nazmul, Shafiqul, Atiqur and Manik received wounds from splinters. The police arrested Gorki when he sneaked out of the hall for treatment in hospital.

The supporters of Gorki immediately laid siege to the residence of the VC, threatening to cripple the university if their injured leader was not released.

A photojournalist, Nazul Islam Zulu of the daily Jugantor, was attacked when he was snapping armed JCD cadres in action in front of police. JCD men led by Rumel, Miran and Shafin beat him mercilessly with iron rods while police looked on at 10 yards off the scene.

Journalists staged an immediate protest of the attack, taking out a procession.

Govt denounces

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 Bangladesh, expressed disappointment over the government decision not to allow its "International Electoral Best Practices Conference" scheduled for January 22-23 next year.

The chair of the group in a press statement on Wednesday expressed its disappointment and postponed the planned high-level electoral conference 'until a more opportune time'.

Asked about the latest government position after the group's reaction made public, the foreign secretary said the government stance on the so-called conference on best electoral practices is well-known and has been clearly stated several times.

"Bangladesh and its people are deeply committed to democracy. Governments are elected through free and fair elections, the mechanisms of which are codified in the constitution of the country."

He further said the past few elections were held in a free, fair and democratic manner, which has been recognised by the international community.

"Elections in our country are a matter for the people to decide. The proposal to hold the proposed international conference on electoral reforms was, in the government's opinion, unwarranted," Hemayet said.

Earlier, on September 25, Foreign Affairs Adviser Reza Rahman turned down the Tuesday Group's move terming it interference in domestic politics and counterproductive.

The group comprises ambassadors and high commissioners to Bangladesh from the UK, the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden and Switzerland as well as the Ambassador of the European Commission and the resident coordinator of the United Nations.

Govt to monitor

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 the government has instructed the authorities to keep a close eye on her itinerary and meetings.

The source said most of her important programmes are scheduled for today when she meets Indian leaders, adding that all the programmes were chalked out long before and handed her at the airport.

The leader of the opposition returned to New Delhi from Ajmer last night where a joint secretary of the Indian external affairs ministry received her. The deputy high commissioner of the Bangladesh High Commission also received her.

The source said Hasina would first meet her Indian counterpart and BJP chief LK Advani at his official residence.

She will meet Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his office-cum-residence on Race Course Road at 12:30pm, which she most likely will follow up by lunch. She is scheduled to meet Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee later today.

External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh will hold talks with her at the Hyderabad House in the evening when he will host a dinner.

The AL chief may meet ruling Congress Party chief Sonia Gandhi as well as the speaker of Indian parliament tomorrow.

Hasina will also meet West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and ex-chief minister Jyoti Basu at 11:30am and 12:30pm in Kolkata on October 2.

Hasina's programme schedule made no mention of her meet with Sonia Gandhi, presumably for security reasons.

"After seeing all her meeting programmes, the government is sure that it's a high-profile political visit by Sheikh Hasina. Her main purpose is to visit New Delhi to meet the Indian leaders; visiting Ajmer Sharif is not the prime one," the source said.

The government has given importance to Hasina's visit because it is taking place ahead of the Saarc summit in Dhaka on November 12-13 and the next general elections, the source added.

Hasina's 11-member entourage includes AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah, MP and her Political Secretary Saher Hossain Chowdhury.

Haque Brothers

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 company Tk 5,000 under the existing weight related ordinance for not mentioning weight measures on the biscuit packages.

The same court raided and fined Haque Brothers Limited Tk 50,000 last June after finding that many of its biscuit packages had no expiry date.

However, Rokan Ud Douhah expressed his satisfaction after observing better conditions during the second raid on the factory.

"During our first raid on Haque Brothers Limited last June, we found a huge number of biscuit packages without an expiry date. But this time we found the number of such packages has significantly reduced," Rokan Ud Douhah told journalists.

Another mobile court of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) raided the factory of AP Dhaka Limited, an herbal products and medicine company at the city's Armanitola, and fined them Tk 36,000 for having an unhygienic factory environment and for not using an expiry date on the packages of some of its products.

Production at the factory is going on in a century-old building, making its overall environment very unhygienic," said Mosharraf Hossain Milon, a DCC food and sanitation officer who was also with the mobile court.

The court, led by Sheikh Hamim Hasan, also found that the factory's ghee and rosewater lacked expiry dates.

The court confiscated for testing AP's honey, pickle, tomato ketchup and juice, suspecting that the items are mixed with hazardous colours and flavours.

Anti-graft body

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 Firstly, it will gather information on different kinds of corruption; secondly, an inquiry team will come to collect specific data and information, and lastly, the investigation team will bring proceedings against those (the officials) found guilty."

Talking to the journalists, he said if necessary a mobile team will be drafted into the port and customs to help them detect irregularities and corruption.

"Bangladesh has been ranked the most corrupt country in the world for four consecutive years and the ACC will strive to free the country of the stigma," Moniruddin observed.

He said changes, if required, should be brought about in the customs and port for the betterment of the country.

"If proper measures are taken to contain irregularities, I believe the customs has the scope to increase its efficiency up to 50 percent from its current position," said the ACC commissioner.

He, however, said there is still scope to enhance the efficiency of the customs department.

During the inspection, Moniruddin expressed his disgust at too many irregularities at Chittagong Customs. Seeing the crowded appraisement room, he questioned the customs officials' unauthorised presence in the room. He also saw some years old files lying on tables, yet to be disposed of.

The team in the afternoon visited Chittagong Port. They held meeting with the port officials who dismissed the report of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB).

The ACC has plans to set up two permanent offices at Chittagong customs and Benapole land port with a view to combat corruption.

The other members of the team include Joint Commissioner of Customs Moynul Hossain Khan, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax Abdur Raquib, and Inspector of Customs Akhtar Hamid Bhuiyan.

Brac staff shot

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 hospital.

Afghan news agency Pajhwok says the Bangladesh aid worker was identified as Shaheedullah.

Arif Islam, project manager for the Brac, told AFP that it was unclear who carried out the attack that came a day after a Bangladeshi UN worker was wounded by a roadside bomb in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

Another Bangladeshi national, who worked for the UN, was wounded in a similar ambush at the weekend in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

Earlier the United Nations said it had restricted movements of its staff in Kabul after a suicide bombing killed at least 10 people while Taliban said it had 45 more suicide attackers awaiting orders to strike.

50 injured

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 days, went to the VC office to press for their demand.

VC Professor Khalilur Rahman at that time was in Dhaka to have a meeting with Lutfur Rahman Khan Azad, minister-in charge of the district.

Superintendent of Police Abdullah Baki rushed to the spot to discuss with the agitating students. But at one stage, Magistrate Ziauddin, who was on the scene, directed the law enforcers to baton-charge the students.

Police clubbed the students indiscriminately and left at least 50 students injured. They did not even listen to the teachers' request to stop such action.

"Police did it to disperse the students," said the police super adding, "The arrest will continue."

Bangladesh 11 notches

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 the first position with 74 percent FDI growth in the same period.

According to the report, the other Asian countries that received strong FDI in 2004 are China, Korea, Macao, Mongolia, Qatar, Singapore, Syria and Vietnam.

Speaking at the launching of the report, Executive Chairman of Bol and Adviser of Energy and Mineral Resources Division Mahmudur Rahman said the FDI received in 2004 is the highest amount of FDI received in a single year in the history of Bangladesh.

According to the WIR, he said, the global economic growth is 5.1 percent while Bangladesh's average growth is 5.4 percent.

Terming "marketing" as the main factor in attracting FDI, he said, "Our aggressive marketing plan during the last three years was basically the reason for getting rebound FDI to Bangladesh. If we maintain our marketing strategy, we will be able to fulfil our desired FDI target of \$1 billion within a couple of years."

The macro-economic stability, changing global investment situation and buying capacity of people are also the reasons for Bangladesh to become a major destination for FDI inflow, he added.

Bangladesh's overall performance in capturing FDI is definitely positive compared to other neighbouring countries, he said adding, "We have advanced 11 steps, India only two, while Nepal and Pakistan reversed five steps and Sri Lanka took eight steps ahead."

The Bol executive said the FDI surged 60 percent in the first six months of the current year in comparison to the same period of last year.

He said during the last couple of years, the FDI flow—both foreign and domestic—has been unrelenting notably. "But some media reporting downplayed our achievement," he said.

The Bol chairman ignored the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2005-2006, saying, "I am doubtful about the methodology, data collection procedure of the [GCR] research."

He suggested the authorities to conduct a new research by following the Unctad data.

Speaking as the chief guest, UN Resident Coordinator in Dhaka Jorgen Lissner said Bangladesh's performance is very well in FDI collection last year, but to continue this performance in the future a comprehensive economic strategy is needed.

He said, "Bangladesh has faced the post-MFA [Multi Fibre Arrangement] scenario tactfully in its garments and textile sector, so now it has dug up new grounds for investment."

Prof M Ismail Hossain of the economics department of Jahangirnagar University showed in a presentation that the global FDI rose two percent to \$648 billion in 2004 after three years of decline.

"Inflows to developing countries surged by 40 percent to \$233 billion while the developed countries experienced 14 percent drop to \$380 billion," he said.

Intelligence

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 operations are being severely hindered by influential quarters.

Policemen have to think twice before acting against suspected or confirmed extremists alike, as instructions are there not to harass leaders and activists of Jamaat-Shibir and Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (Ahab) chief Asadullah Galib and his followers, they added.

Law enforcers cannot work freely due to the government's 'arrest militant, release them' policy, detectives said. They said they have evidence that many on the 'not-to-be-harassed' list that the home ministry has sent recently to Gaibandha and other northern districts are in fact involved with the militant groups.

For instance, a police officer seeking anonymity said, they have been instructed not to arrest Lutfur Rahman of Bagmara upazila of Rajshahi. "A college teacher by profession, Lutfur is an adviser to militant kingpin Bangla Bhai. He was with Jamaat before joining hands with Bangla Bhai's Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)," he said.

Lutfur went into hiding after the government banned JMJB on February 23. But as police received instructions not to harass him, he soon got back to his area. He had met a Jamaat leader immediately after coming out of hiding, said sources.

There are militants even among the police sub-inspectors who were given the jobs according to a list made by the ruling parties, added the sources.

Intelligence agencies had alerted the government on several occasions to the presence of extremist elements within the law enforcement agencies. They had called for action particularly against some militant cop hailing from Boga's Shariakandi, who is now at Sarda Police Academy. But nothing has yet been done to this end, observed an intelligence source.

Probe points

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 energy (later ousted) Mosharraf Hossain had forced Titus to give the pipes to Niko although those belonged to the DCCP and were not suitable for supplying gas from gas fields.

The Canadian company had no permission from the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), the government's Explosives Directorate, Petrobangla, Jalalabad Gas Transmission Company Ltd or even the Joint Management Committee comprising Bapex and Niko officials to construct the pipeline. There is no Gas Purchase Sales Agreement (GPSA) against this pipeline.

The DCCP on the other hand suffered delay because of this illegal act.

Criminal

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 the shootout, it added.

With at least 10 bullets, Titu was pronounced dead upon arrival at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) at 5:30am.

The Rab seized one sawn-off rifle, one revolver and six bullets. They said Titu was accused in five criminal cases.

Titu's brother Masum claimed at the DMCH Titu's rivals had 'orchestrated' the killing with the help of Rab.

In Bagerhat, Rab nabbed Shah Alam, an accomplice of slain Asaduzzaman Titu, who was killed in 'crossfire' early this year, in Khalishpur on Wednesday.

Alam was a workers' union leader in Boyra CSD storehouse and an accused in at least 18 criminal cases.

The Rab in the same release said they took him to Baintola village in Rampal upazila at around midnight to seize arms when his accomplices attacked them.

During the 15-minute shootout, Alam was killed in 'crossfire' when he tried to flee, said the press release. A Rab member was also injured, it claimed.

The Rab seized one rifle, one pipe-gun and seven bullets from the spot.

Bigots harass

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 Despite their verbal attacks, the photojournalist continued her professional duty.

The senior leaders of the ICM later regretted the incident.

The ICM wants to establish Quranic rule in the country. It looks at women from the ultra-fundamentalist viewpoint and opposes female participation outdoors.

They also criticised other Islamic parties in the ruling four-party alliance for accepting a woman, the incumbent prime minister, as the leader.

Sub-inspector (SI) Golam Rasul, as complainant, filed a case with Dumuria Police Station on April 19. Charge sheet of the case was submitted on February 7, 2002.

Submission

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 about 2.5 lakh returns were submitted in the last two months. They expressed the hope the number will be about 12 lakh.

From this year on, one will have to submit detailed information about their lifestyle and wealth statement along with the tax return, which will not be accepted otherwise.

Earlier, those who had wealth worth less than Tk 3 lakh did not have to submit wealth statement, but now everyone regardless of their amount of wealth will have to submit it.

Besides, information about wealth of spouse and offspring has to be submitted with necessary documents along with the tax return.

The government officials for the first time are brought within the same system of tax payment. They will have to pay tax on their own and submit information about their lifestyle and wealth as well.

However, the tax money paid by any government official on their salary will be later reimbursed from the government coffers.

Besides, one will be fined a one-time Tk 2,500 for delay in addition to the per-day delay fine of Tk 250. In case of a government official's failure to submit the tax return in time, their monthly salary will be held up.

The NBR issued a circular detailing the procedures to be followed by the government officials while submitting tax returns. The circular also contains an example showing how much tax a government official will have to pay if they have income from agricultural farm, share investment, houses, etc.

Many government officials, who have savings in the bank, houses or other property, are in a dilemma how much to reveal, fearing further troubles if they disclose information about all the property belonging to them or their families.

Many of them also asked the NBR to extend the income tax return submission deadline.

Meanwhile, a high NBR official said the tax return form has been simplified and one will not need a lawyer's assistance to fill it.

US lifts

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 In a memorandum to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Bush said he was waiving some restrictions under the US Arms Export Control Act because it was in the national security interest of the United States. The law restricts defence exports to Libya because the State Department has designated it a state sponsor of terrorism.

Bush waived defence export restrictions "to permit US companies to possibly participate in Libya's programme to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile," a White House National Security Council spokesman said.

PM goes

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 Commonwealth countries in London on October 3-4.

He said the foreign secretaries of the Commonwealth countries will discuss various issues of cooperation, particularly establishing the networking for development among the Commonwealth member states.

They will also discuss the draft of the CHOGM communiqué to be placed at the Commonwealth summit in Malta for approval, he added.

During his stays in London, the foreign secretary will also hold bilateral meetings with senior officials of the British Foreign Ministry and the Commonwealth Secretariat on mutual cooperation. He will also meet the secretary general of the Commonwealth.

Govt jobs politicised

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 The government has recruited about 40 JCD leaders and workers from different universities and Bogra district to National Security Intelligence (NSI) in three phases in last two years. The recruits are Shamsul Islam Shaon, Akheruzzaman Liton, Atiar Rahman, Bulbul, Mahabubul Alam Pahari, Rafique, Sohel, Royal, Towfique, Aziz, Kaiyum, Ranjait, Mamun, Mazul Islam Patwari, Shahajahan Miah, Zafar, ASM Sayem, Masum, Liton, Khadija Akhter Happy, Mostafizur Rahman Mamun, Shahriar, Mamun, and others.

A total of 20 JCD leaders and workers from DU unit have secured appointment as section officer at the National University (NU). They include, among others, Akram, former general secretary of Suryasen Hall unit JCD, Nuruzzaman, former vice-president of DU unit JCD, Delwar Hossain, former leader of Jahurul Haque Hall unit JCD.

Sources said former NU vice-chancellor Prof Atif Ahmed had recruited as many as 500 JCD and ICS activists from different universities, relatives of BNP and Jamaat leaders and of some DU teachers to NU, though the university could hardly accommodate such a large number of appointees.

At least 10 JCD and ICS men have been recruited to the PSC as assistant secretaries, the sources said adding that one of the PSC members had even been asked to recruit only those with allegiance to the ruling parties' student fronts.

Besides, a number of JCD leaders and activists were appointed Thana education officer through PSC a couple of years ago. Former assistant finance secretary of central JCD AFM Zahid Iqbal was among those, JCD sources said.

The JCD top brass are now lobbying hard for their favoured candidates to be appointed to the posts of police sergeant. They are also trying to have their men recruited to the Social Welfare Directorate, which will add to it some 30 new staff, JCD sources said.

At least 10 DU JCD leaders are on the race to become police sergeant, and assistant director of the passport office, also to be recruited soon.

The JCD sent at least 30 names to the PSC to recruit their activists through the 26th special BCS examination. JCD sources said at least 15 JCD leaders and workers got appointment in the examination from the list, among them Lutfur Rahman is the central unit assistant secretary of information and research.

Sources said the PSC also recruited at least 100 JCD men and 50 ICS men from different units of the country. At least 15 JCD leaders and activists of DU have also got appointment through the examination.

On the other hand, BNP JCD and Julia Dal leaders and lawmakers allegedly convinced the deputy commissioners and district education officers to recruit BNP loyalists as headmasters of different primary schools.

Sources said at least 50 BNP men have been recruited recently as headmasters of different primary schools.

OTHERS
 A large number of JCD and Jatayatbadi Samajik Sangskritik

Printers, where the leaflets distributed on August 17 were printed.

Members of Rab's intelligence unit raided the East Bashabo area at midnight on Wednesday following up information obtained from the people arrested earlier at the printing press.

The arrestee was being quizzed intensively by Rab members as of last night, said a Rab press release yesterday.

Earlier on September 16, Rab raided Colour City in Bashabo and Daud Modern Printers at Tanti Bazar in Old Dhaka, suspecting the leaflets distributed during the countrywide blasts were printed there.

During the raids Rab arrested eight people from Daud Modern Printers and 14 from Colour City Printers.

Quoting the arrestees, Rab sources said around 7,000 leaflets in Arabic and English were printed at Daud Modern Printers while 8,000 booklets and 52,000 leaflets were printed at Colour City Printers.

The Rab release also said Akramul Islam, who was arrested with five others at the rented East Bashabo house of Ataur Rahman, had ordered the printing and received the leaflets before August 17. Ataur is the younger brother of Abdur Rahman.

Aids virus

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 period, and they were unable fully to tease out any effect that drug therapy may have had on the virus.

Researcher Dr Eric Artz said: "This was a very preliminary study, but we did find a pretty striking observation in that the viruses from the 2000s are much weaker than the viruses from the eighties."

"Obviously this virus is still causing death, although it may be causing death at a slower rate of progression now. Maybe in another 50 to 60 years we might see this virus not causing death."

Keith Alcorn, senior editor at the HIV information charity NAM, said it had been thought that HIV would increase in virulence as it passed through more and more human hosts.

But the latest study suggested the opposite is actually true.

"What appears to be happening is that by the time HIV passes from one person to another, it has already toned down some of its most pathogenic effects in response to its host's immune system," he said.