

Dhaka's textiles to lose duty-free access

Says *Altaf* on return from *WTO* meet

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury made it clear yesterday that the textiles sector, which earns 76 percent foreign exchange for the country, is going to lose the privilege of duty-free and quota-free market access under the latest WTO deal.

He however said Bangladesh's benefit out of the WTO trade agreement reached Sunday would be clear after two follow-up meetings in Geneva and Washington to be held in a few months to decide the products that would lose duty-free status.

"Few among the textile items could be exempted from the restriction during the meetings," he told the news agency at Zia International Airport, on his return from the World

Trade Organisation conference in Hong Kong.

"We're hopeful that the follow-up negotiations would bring some positive results for us," the commerce minister added.

The United States and Pakistan had made frantic effort in the early days of the six-day ministerial conference to drop Bangladesh, along with Cambodia, from the privilege of zero-tariff market access, giving a broad indication of the textile fate.

The first draft of the ministerial text had proposed to offer the LDCs (least developed countries) duty-free and quota-free access for 95 percent of their products.

Eventually, the trade agreement offered LDCs, 32 of them members of the WTO, such benefit for 97

percent products. But it gave the rich countries prerogative to drop 3 percent of poor nations' products, 339 or more, out of that special treatment.

"This is what we have been able to achieve from the negotiations," Altaf said. LDCs have been able to increase the tariff lines and negotiate to bring out the textiles of Bangladesh and Cambodia from the proposed embargo, he added.

Asked why he did not use veto power as he had hinted earlier, even until Sunday afternoon, he said: "It was a burgeoning position."

Replying to another question, the minister said the government would sit together with the private

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Cabinet asks for scrutiny of terror finance law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet at a meeting yesterday agreed in principle to enact the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Law 2005 and asked the finance ministry to submit the draft law again after further scrutiny.

Meeting sources said the cabinet asked the law ministry to find out if there are overlapping or inconsistencies between the proposed Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Law and the Anti-Terrorism Act 2005.

The draft Anti-Terrorism Act 2005 has already been submitted to the home ministry for its opinion, sources said.

The meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, however, approved the draft law (amended)

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PHOTO: PID

Delegates of the Bimstec member states pay a curtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, the venue of the 8th Bimstec ministerial meet.

Women held on non-bailable charge get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to two women on a non-bailable charge filed under the Narcotics Control Act (NCA), triggering a mixed reaction among the lawyers on the court premises.

Mohammad Mujibur Rahman, the First Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate granted bail to Saleha Begum and Rina Akhter, arrested for possession of heroin on November 16.

As per provision of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), a lower court cannot grant bail to an accused arrested for a charge triable in the Sessions Courts. This case is triable in the Sessions Courts and punishable by death for possession of heroin.

According to the prosecution, a team of Narcotics Control Department (NCD) raided a house at Krishi Market at Mohammadpur on November 16 and arrested five women and recovered 175 grams of heroin from their possession. Later, a case under the NCA was filed with the Mohammadpur Police Station against them on the same day.

A senior lawyer Mohammad

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PHOTO: STAR

A herd of camels awaits sale at Gabtoli cattle market in the capital yesterday ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha. At least 30 camels have been brought from India to be sold at Tk 30,000 to Tk 50,000 each.

Explosives recovered in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered some explosives and detonators from a bordering area in Companyganj upazila yesterday morning.

However, the person carrying those explosive materials managed to escape.

Official sources in the 21 Battalion of BDR in Sylhet said, at about 4:00am a patrol team of the border guards of Kalasadek Border outpost saw a man entering the Bangladesh territory near border pillar no 1249. He was carrying a bag.

As the guards challenged him at about 100 yards inside the Bangladesh territory, the man fled the scene leaving behind the bag.

The BDR then recovered the bag and found five pieces of explosives (power gel), each weighing 125grams, four detonators and nine fuses inside it. The explosive materials were kept hidden under oranges, the official said.

NETRAKONA BLASTS SCBA team visits victims' families

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A team of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday visited the family members of the Netrakona bomb blast victims, including Yadav Das, and injured people.

The team led by SCBA president advocate Mahbubey Alam and secretary M Enayetur Rahim met the family members of Yadav Das, Khaja Haider and Sudipta Paul Shelly and consoled them.

They also visited eight injured people who have been undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

The SCBA leaders also held a meeting with Netrokona Bar Association members with its president Safayet Ahmed in the chair.

The meeting demanded the government to give Tk 5,000,000 as compensation to the family members of each of the victims who were killed in the bomb attacks in Gazipur, Jhalakathi, Chittagong and Netrokona.

They demanded better treatment for the injured of bomb attacks by taking them abroad.

SCBA Secretary M Enayetur Rahim last night told the news

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Indians kill 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Indians shot a Bangladeshi lumberjack dead near the India-Bangladesh border at Uthma in Companyganj of Sylhet Sunday afternoon.

Indian indigenous people allegedly shot Shahid Miah, 50, of Banpur model village as he went to collect wood. Critically wounded Shahid managed to return home but succumbed to his injuries within half an hour.

His body was later sent to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Shibir man admits to be JMB bomber

16 captured; families of Barisal charge-sheeted accused demand judicial probe

STAR REPORT

Rajshahi police yesterday arrested a bomb manufacturer of the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), who claimed to be working actively for Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) simultaneously. The police also arrested 15 more suspected JMB cadres from across the country.

RAJSHAH

The police yesterday chased five people and arrested a JMB bomb manufacturer also a suicide squad member Razzak alias Mahbub Ullah Jibon alias Suman alias Masud from Kashiadanga area near the Bornali Cinema intersection in the city, our Rajshahi correspondent reports. The other four including a high-ranking JMB leader managed to escape.

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Razzak admitted that he is an active member of ICS, Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing, at Meherchandi area, and that he also worked for JMB. Razzak said he was engaged in bomb-making and recently was included in the suicide squad.

His neighbours said he had close relations with local ICS and Jamaat leaders. He was often seen in Jamaat processions and in skirmishes involving the organisation on Rajshahi University campus.

The Police however recorded his father's name as Belayet Hossain based on information from Razzak but his neighbours told reporters that his father's name is Abu Taleb Ali, who is deceased. Razzak's brother Sohrab is also a JMB cadre who was arrested two months ago.

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Bangla-Nepal body formed to explore economy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Nepal agreed to form a joint consultative committee to explore ways to develop their economy.

The two sides agreed to form the ministerial level committee during a meeting yesterday between Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and his Nepalese counterpart Ramesh Nath Pandey at the sidelines of Bimstec ministerial meeting.

Prayer Timing		
December 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-25	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-24	5-27
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

BAKSHIBAZAR COMPLEX

Ahmadiyyas concerned at bigots' seizure plan on December 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to take prior security measures and stop in advance the zealots who are preparing for laying siege to Ahmadiyya base at Bakshibazar in Dhaka on December 23 to force the government to declare Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim.

Expressing grave concern over the fanatics' programme, Prof Meer Mobashwer Ali, acting amir of Ahmadiyya Jamaat said, "Our bitter experiences say that such gherao programmes are ploy of launching attacks on Ahmadiyya members, mosques and homesteads."

"We wonder how the fanatics are allowed to hold such a programme that may create communal anarchy during a time when the government is conducting operations against extremist bombers and terrorists across the country," Prof Ali said while reading out a written speech at a press conference at the Ahmadiyya headquarters yesterday.

Expressing disappointment over the fact that no one responsi-

ble for attacking the Ahmadiyyas have been brought to book so far, the acting Ahmadiyya amir said, "Scot-free, they are rather announcing fresh programmes to siege Ahmadiyya mosque."

Referring to the recent Khulna incident where "a group of people in cloak" hung a fanatics' signboard on an Ahmadiyya mosque in the presence of police, he said the government's "subservient policy" has turned their lives unbearable.

Ahmadiyya leaders reiterated their demand for removal of the fanatics' signboards from Ahmadiyya mosques in Bogra and Khulna, reinstating of four Ahmadiyya mosques in Brahmanbaria that are now under the capture of anti-Ahmadiyya zealots, and punishment for killing and attack of Ahmadiyya members.

The December 23 siege programme is the last of a one-year agitation programme declared by the zealots.

Ahmadiyya leaders Abdul Awal and Kawsar Ali Mollah were also present at the press conference.