

4 jute mills in Khulna closed after clashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four state-owned jute mills in Khalishpur industrial belt have been closed and its employees laid off amid violent labour unrest for the last three days over arrear payments of last 14 weeks.

By order of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) Chairman M Ataharul Islam, the decision was to take effect from 5:00pm yesterday at Peoples Jute Mill, Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill, Crescent Jute Mill and Star Jute Mill.

The BJMC chairman has also requested the Khulna metropolitan police commissioner in an official letter to take necessary actions to contain the violent labour unrest in the industrial belt at any cost and ensure security of property of all officials and employees of the mills until the government allocates necessary resources.

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Anti-hoarding drive disrupting supply

Says IMF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) yesterday said the law enforcers' drive against hoarding is disrupting the entire supply system and adversely affecting the inflation.

The IMF also suggested increasing the prices of gas and power and introducing automatic pricing formula for petroleum products.

The observations came at a press conference organised by an eight-member IMF team headed by its Asia and the Pacific Department Adviser Thomas Rumbaugh at the IMF office yesterday.

During its 16-day stay in Bangladesh, the IMF team made a general assessment of the econ-

omy in context of this year's Article IV consultation and implementation of policies supported by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement.

"Administered measures to prevent hoarding and control the prices of essentials are creating uncertainty and supply disruptions and may actually have the opposite effect on inflation," Rumbaugh said at the press conference.

Asked how he evaluates the recent joint forces' drives against hoarding, he said, "I think you have to be very careful in that kind of policies so you don't end up disrupting trade, disrupting imports and actually making the price situation."

"That's the only point that we asked the government to be very

careful about—how they implement this kind of measures by different ministries," Rumbaugh said.

On inflation he said, "Ultimately, inflation is determined by macroeconomic policies. So, you need to make sure that you have the right monetary policies in place."

"We have advised the government that they need monetary policies in response to the increasing inflation and they need to be preparing to allow the exchange rate policy to be a little bit more flexible...The combination of the two would help to constrain prices," he said.

Rumbaugh said dismal performance of tax revenue is the main

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5th century Gupta era relic found

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The archaeology department recently cemented ancient building material, known as "vajralepa", dating back to the Gupta era, during an excavation at Bhair Dhap site in Shibganj upazila of Bogra.

Rajshahi region Director of the department Abdul Khalaque said this is the first time that building material from such an ancient time was found.

Vajralepa was used for construction of the brick-built walls of the two Buddhist temples from the 5th-6th century AD recently discovered at the site, he said.

Archaeology department Custodian Nahid Sultan said vajralepa is like the cement and was made of banana, pulses, broth prepared from boiling buffalo hide, starch and other materials.

Assistant Custodian Md Mahabub-Ul-Alam also said vajralepa plaster is still on the walls of the two recently discovered Buddhist temples.

Mahabub and Nahid Sultan have already prepared a report on the excavation at Bhair Dhap and vajralepa to submit to the department concerned.

Indian authors mentioned vajralepa and its use in books like "Bharat Samhita" and "Visnudharmotrastra".

Meanwhile, antiquities including terracotta plaques with Brahmi inscriptions were found in huge number at the Bhair Dhap site during the five month-long excavation that started on November 1 last year.

The Brahmi inscriptions show ancient formation of some Bangla letters, said Regional Director Abdul Khalaque.

The other relics found at the site include terracotta balls, ornamented terracotta, arch panels, and ornamental bricks.



This photo shows terracotta plaques with Brahmi letters, ancient forms of Bangla letters. The relics were recently found at Bhair Dhap dig site in Shibganj upazila of Bogra.

7 Bangladeshis abducted, tortured by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Brutalities on seven Bangladeshi cattle traders abducted by Border Security Force (BSF) of India landed them in hospitals.

The BSF on Tuesday and Wednesday had abducted the seven Bangladeshi cattle traders from two different areas of Sadar upazila.

Three Bangladeshi cattle traders, Abdul Hamid, 22, from Haroddah village of Sadar upazila and Manirul Islam, 20, and Abdul Jalil, 24, from Debhatta village of Debhatta upazila, were abducted by

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Development partners assure support to CG

UNB, Dhaka

Appreciating the caretaker government's performance, Bangladesh's major development partners have evinced interest to extend assistance in various fields, including holding of elections, in reform agenda and for good governance.

This was conveyed by the representatives of joint strategy partners comprising Asian Development Bank (ADB), UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Japan and World Bank when they jointly called on Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

They lauded the chief adviser's leadership and his government's commitment to hold a free, fair and credible general election and also appreciated the CA's recent address to the nation mentioning the election timeframe and other reform agendas and plans.

The delegation included British High Commissioner in Dhaka Anwar Chowdhury, Japanese Ambassador Masayuki Inoue, ADB Country Representative Hua Du, World Bank's Acting Country Director

Quaiser Khan and Acting Head of DFID Elizabeth Carriere.

The members of the delegation said they are actively supporting the caretaker government's reform activities and showed interest to respond to the government's requests for assistance in holding the next general election.

In this regard, the representatives of the development partners informed that they have already had discussions with Economic Relations Division (ERD), Election Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

They expressed interest to provide cooperation in various affairs and sectors including bringing good governance in public service, separation of judiciary, public financial management, infrastructure growth, power sector and roads and railways.

The emissaries stressed the need for reform of the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The CA welcomed the development partners for extending their cooperation and thanked them for their appreciation and coming

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Five alleged militants arrested

STAR REPORT

Police arrested five alleged militants of the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) during raids in Kurigram and Rangpur early yesterday.

Matin Mehdi, 46, said to be the chief of "Allaher Dal", Biplob, 26, Anwar, 24, and Zubair, 17, was arrested at their rented house in Hatirpari of Kurigram around 2:00am. Matin Mehdi was condemned to death and life term for his involvement in two August 17, 2005 nationwide bombing cases filed with Jhenaidah and Gaibandha police stations.

"Even though evidence confirms their links with JMB, the arrestees identified themselves as members of a new Islamist organisation yet to be named," said Chowdhury Manjurul Karim, superintendent of police (SP), Kurigram.

Police recovered books on Jihad, an unidentified bomb-like device inside the cover of a compact disc, and chemicals believed to be bomb-making materials from the possession of the arrestees.

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Prayer Timing

April 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:25	5:00
Juma	12:30	1:15
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:27	6:31
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Declaration of N'ganj daily cancelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The district administration yesterday cancelled the declaration of local daily "Ajker Narayanganj".

District Magistrate Ahsan Habib cancelled the declaration under the Press and Publication (Declaration and Registration) Act 1973 for violation of rules, the cancellation order issued yesterday evening said, adding that the order would be effective from April 18.

Following recent arrest of editor of the newspaper Tofazzal Hossain by law enforcers on an extortion charge, the district administration served a show-cause notice to publisher of the daily Syed Din Mohammad.

In reply, the publisher said he thought it improper to continue publication of the newspaper in view of his financial constraints and extortion scandal of the editor.

US closely monitoring situation

UNB, Dhaka

The United States is closely monitoring the developments in Bangladesh following the government restriction on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's return to the country.

"We are monitoring the developments closely," a spokesperson for the US embassy told the news agency yesterday, a day after the restriction was imposed.

Hasina, who was on a private tour of the United States, arrived in London yesterday on her way back to Dhaka. She was reportedly bent on returning home on April 23, as scheduled.

In reply to a question, the spokesperson said Sheikh Hasina was on a private visit to the US. All visitors to the US are permitted entry for a safe period of time and "must comply" with the US immigration laws.

UK assures support in polls, anti-graft drive

UNB, Dhaka

Britain has assured all-out cooperation in holding a credible election and carrying out anti-corruption drive in Bangladesh.

The assurance was given by British Minister for International Development Gareth Thomas during a meeting with Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury in London on Wednesday.

He said the British government is very pleased with the announcement of a timeframe for holding the general elections and ready to provide all necessary support in a most comprehensive manner to ensure a credible election in Bangladesh.

Thomas praised the caretaker government's reforms package to strengthen electoral and other public institutions in Bangladesh.

He said they are pleased with the anti-corruption drive and assured the adviser of increasing DFID assistance to meet the special needs of the interim government.

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A woman breaks down as she lost her house in a fire that gutted over 100 dwellings at Kachukhet at Mirpur-12 in the capital yesterday.

Next budget to eye higher revenue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will set a higher revenue target in the upcoming national budget to reduce the state's dependency on borrowing from banks.

Finance and Planning Adviser AB Mirza Aziz Islam said yesterday.

Citing the ratio of tax to GDP (gross domestic product) as the lowest in South Asia, he said the upcoming budget will focus on increasing the revenues. "And it will be done by expanding the tax net, not by raising the tax rate," he added.

He was addressing a seminar on the State of Bangladesh Economy, which was organised by Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) at the National Press Club.

"The increased revenues will help the government reduce its

dependency on bank borrowing," the adviser said adding that the tax payment process should also be simplified.

In some cases, non-tax revenues would be raised but that will not affect the poor, he noted.

He said the budget would also concentrate on employment generation in productive sector and also on expansion of the social safety net.

The finance adviser observed that there has been a huge deficit in revenue collection in the three months following the handing over of power in October due mainly to political instability.

"The revenue target set in the last budget was very ambitious, whereas the collection rate was far lower compared to the historical growth rates," he added.

"In July-March period of the

PID cancels 1,609 date-expired accreditation cards

UNB, Dhaka

Press Information Department (PID) has cancelled 1,609 date-expired press accreditation cards to prevent any illegal use of such cards.

As part of the cancellation process, a list of the temporary accreditation cards, which expired on December 31, 2006, has been sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs, said a PID handout.

It said necessary steps have also been taken to issue press accreditation cards following a fixed quota for every newspaper and mass media organisation to provide timely and better cooperation to the journalists in performing their professional duties.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed meets representatives of Joint Strategy Partners comprising the Asian Development Bank, UK's Department for International Development, Japan and World Bank at his office yesterday.