

PEOPLES JUTE MILLS Workers refuse partial payment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tension is simmering among the workers of the shuttered Peoples Jute Mills in Khulna over the payment of gratuity and provident fund as they refused to accept any partial disbursement.

The laid off workers are demanding one-off payment of their remaining dues while the government turned down paying off any provident fund and said gratuity payments will be made in instalments.

The government has already paid the workers 15-week wage arrears and other financial benefits, starting from August 7.

Over 200 workers demonstrated in front of the mill's main gate yesterday in protest at the bid for partial payments.

They demanded the chief adviser's intervention to facilitate full payments of gratuity and provident fund, which climb upwards of Tk 23 crore.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

House help strangled in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage domestic help was strangled at Dakkhin Khan while a salon employee was stabbed to death at Shyampur in the capital on Friday.

Police said the domestic help, identified as Ramiza Khatun alias Fatema (16) of Goalundo upazila in Rajbari, was found dead with a scarf tied around her neck at the house of her employer Mafizur Rahman at Dakkhin Khan on Friday.

Her body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy. The morgue sources said they had found evidence that the girl was strangled.

Police arrested Sumon, 25, a garment factory worker, in this connection.

Fatema's uncle Shahid Mollah

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Second phase of voter listing begins in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

The second phase work on preparing the voter list with photographs and national ID card started in Khulna City Corporation (KCC) yesterday.

The first phase work on voter registration started at 31 centres in the KCC on August 26 and continued until August 30. Under the first phase, 71,447 people have registered their names as voters in wards. 5, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17.

Work on the second phase began at 32 centres in wards. 7, 8, 12, 18, 19 and 24 and will continue until Tuesday. Some 68,399 people are expected to register their names as voters.

According to the election officials, the third phase work on voter listing will begin in the city on Wednesday and will continue until September 9.

RMG to face new challenge for narrow product range

ICC-B cautions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to narrow export basket, Bangladesh will face heightened competition in readymade garment (RMG) export as the EU and US restrictions on Chinese garments are withdrawn from January next, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) president cautioned yesterday.

In this new competitive scenario, Mahbubur Rahman said, sustaining the current high export growth

will be an uphill challenge in the coming years. "We should, therefore, not only look for alternative markets for our readymade garments but at the same time diversify our products," he said.

To be competitive, Bangladesh must have a long-term strategy to create an industrial base, which will not only help support export diversification but will also help establish a smooth supply chain and control the present price spiral that is seriously affecting the low and

middle income groups, the ICC-B president said.

Mahbubur Rahman was addressing the inaugural function of a daylong workshop titled 'Incoterms 2000: Interpretation and Correct Selection of Delivery Terms' organised by the ICC-B in collaboration with German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Dhaka.

The workshop was meant for commercial executives of RMG

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

DU CRISIS BBC Sanglap calls for talks with teachers, students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should resolve the Dhaka University crisis through discussions with teachers and students before the public universities and colleges reopen, participants at a BBC Sanglap said yesterday.

They warned that the situation might get more complicated otherwise.

The BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, the Awami League central committee member Prof Abu Sayeed, former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal and former Dhaka University vice chancellor Prof Moniruzzaman Miah spoke at the dialogue held at Bangladesh-China Friendship

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Foreign adviser leaves for Russia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury last night left for Russia for a three-day visit, as Dhaka is looking to resuscitate Dhaka-Moscow relations with this first high-level visit from Bangladesh since the Russian Federation emerged from the dissolved Soviet Union in 1991.

"I am looking forward to my Russian visit which I hope will open many doors for us. It promises to be a ground-breaking one," said Iftekhar, who went to Russia at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The Russian minister was Iftekhar's counterpart during his stint as the permanent representative to the UN.

"Russia can be a vast market for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

British general blasts US strategy in Iraq

AFP, London

The head of the British Army during the 2003 invasion of Iraq has launched a fierce attack on the United States over its running of the troubled country since, a newspaper reported yesterday.

General Sir Mike Jackson branded US post-invasion policy "intellectually bankrupt" and said its then defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was "one of the most responsible for the current situation in Iraq."

The retired chief of the general staff added that the US's wider approach to tackling global terrorism is "inadequate" because it places too much emphasis on military power at the expense of nation-building and diplomacy.

His comments came at an embarrassing time for the British

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, centre, flanked by party leaders places wreaths on the grave of party founder, late president Ziaur Rahman, on its 29th founding anniversary yesterday.

POST-FLOOD CROPPING Tangail farmers show resilience

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Scores of farmers, badly affected by recent floods in Tangail, have started cultivating crops to recover the loss as floodwater receded from their croplands.

A vast area in the region was inundated by floods damaging cultivated crops, fruits and vegetables worth crores of taka. Most of the affected farmers cultivated crops taking loans from banks, NGOs, and moneylenders.

Muslem Uddin, a farmer of Hagra under Sadar upazila, said he cultivated transplanted Amon, jute and vegetables on 17 acres of land that were completely damaged by recent floods.

Abdul Hakim, a farmer of Jangalia village, said pineapple and vegetables, which he cultivated on his 10 acres of lands, were damaged as the land remained under water due to heavy downpours during the flood.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) of Tangail said the agriculture sector of the district had to incur a loss of Tk 90 crore due to floods. However, different non-government organisations in the district claimed that agricultural products worth over Tk 100 crore were damaged in floods.

According to the DAE statistics, 47,230 hectares of cropland in 12 upazilas under the district were

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Benazir's party mulls deal with Musharraf

Pak president's aides in London for talks

AP, Islamabad

Associates of Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf are in London for critical talks with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's party as it mulls whether the political rivals can reach a power-sharing deal, officials from both sides said yesterday.

Benazir met Friday with colleagues from her Pakistan People's Party and was to hold more discussions with them Saturday on whether to keep negotiating with the military leader.

Musharraf and Benazir have been wrangling for months over the terms of an agreement that would shore up his re-election bid and

allow her to return to Pakistan to contest parliamentary elections.

However, she has yet to win a public commitment from Musharraf on two critical points that he step down as army chief and give up the power to dismiss the government and Parliament.

Wajid Hassan, a party spokesman in London, said the Pakistan People's Party was waiting for written answers to questions raised with Musharraf's officials.

"Today is again an important day, and if Benazir Bhutto does not come up with more demands, I hope and expect that the talks should succeed," said Information Minister Mohammed Ali Durrani

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Huge amount of fish are caught dead as water mixed with toxic wastes enters fish enclosures with receding of floodwater at Trimohony on the outskirts of the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

60 Taliban killed in Afghan battle

AP, AFP, Kabul

Afghan police and foreign forces killed around 60 suspected Taliban fighters, many in the region where the insurgents recently released a group of South Korean church workers they had been holding, authorities said yesterday.

Meanwhile, South Korea's foreign minister defended direct negotiations with the Taliban to free the hostages amid concern the move violated international principles and could spur more abductions.

The US-led coalition said yesterday at least 60 rebels were killed in new strikes against extremist militants, including in villages near Pakistan where insurgent leaders were said to have taken refuge.

The militants were targeted in three major engagements Friday, one of them in the central province of Ghazni where the Taliban last week released 19 South Korean aid workers they had held hostage for six weeks.

More than 20 were killed in an air

and ground assault on compounds in northeastern mountains about six kilometres (four miles) from Pakistan, it said in a statement.

A coalition soldier was wounded and 11 suspects arrested in the raid in Nuristan province, it said.

Police attacked a group of Taliban late Friday who were planning to strike security forces in the central Afghan province of Ghazni, killing 18 and arresting six others, said provincial police Gen. Ali Shah Ahmadai.

Taliban militants abducted 23 South Koreans in Ghazni district six weeks ago. They killed two male hostages, released two women last month and the final 19 were freed last week after the Taliban held unprecedented negotiations with the government in Seoul. They left Afghanistan Friday and were due in South Korea early Sunday.

South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon on Saturday emphasized that South Korean negotiators were tasked with protecting the "innocent lives of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7