

## GSP HEARING Dhaka presents firm position on labour rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka presented its firm position at the first hearing on Generalised System of Preference (GSP) facilities for Bangladeshi products at the US Trade Representative's (USTR) office in Washington saying that it provides and protects maximum labour rights in all the industries.

"Bangladesh fully recognises that improving the lives of its workforce and safeguarding their labour rights are mutually reinforcing objectives in building a modern nation," said M Humayun Kabir, Bangladesh ambassador to US.

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## REB under-billing puts PDB on recovery chase

Crores of taka go unnoticed since March

SHARIER KHAN

Defying the government's new power tariff structure, the Rural Electrification Board (REB) paid the Power Development Board (PDB) at a lower rate for power purchase, depriving it of at least Tk 8 crore revenue per month since March.

Such a blatant irregularity went unnoticed for months as a section of PDB and REB officials were involved in it.

The power ministry received a

complaint in this regard from the PDB recently and upon reviewing it instructed the REB to clear the arrears within three days and punish the officials responsible for this.

Consequently, the REB cleared arrears for July and August and is expected to pay off that for March to June. "These arrears would be around Tk 25 crore," said a power ministry source.

The REB buys power worth around Tk 147 crore from the PDB every month and sells it for a much higher return. But due to wide-

spread irregularities in the REB's cooperatives which sell the power, the organisation makes little profit.

The government nominally enhanced power tariff in March to minimise losses incurred by the PDB for selling power at a rate much lower than its production cost. PDB's average power sale rate was increased to Tk 2.37 per kilowatt hour (one unit) from its previous rate of Tk 2.15 per unit. PDB's average power production cost is Tk 2.53 a unit.

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## Bhuiyan for fair trial of Khaleda

'Repressive step won't curb corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ex-pelle BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said he expects a fair trial for detained party chief Khaleda Zia.

His comment on the matter was the first from him since the arrest of the party chief, who had expelled him personally the day before her arrest on September 3 on charges of corruption.

"I don't want to comment on the case of Begum Zia as it is still on trial but I want her to get justice," Bhuiyan said while talking to reporters in his Gulshan residence.

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## Tofail cautions EC against 'wrong' steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed yesterday urged the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) not to take any decision that will run the risk of putting the next election in uncertainty.

The AL leader, whose name was published on Thursday by the Anti-corruption Commission on its latest list of corruption suspects, also urged all political parties to cooperate with the EC and the government in implementing the

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## \$60,000 seized near Ctg airport

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Coastguard (East Zone) members seized foreign currency worth Tk 42 lakh reportedly brought without declaration by a Bangladeshi expatriate from Dubai near Shah Amanat International Airport yesterday afternoon.

They also arrested two people and seized a car in which the two were carrying the currency. The arrestees are Iqbal Mohammad Mizan, 25, of Fatikchhari, and car driver Md Shafi, 32, of Raizan.

The arrestees, recovered currency and the car were handed over

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## Cold weather after Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The monsoon will be over and a northerly wind will start to blow, ushering in the cold weather, just after the Eid-ul-Fitr in the middle of this month while the present spell of sultry weather will continue for another three-four days.

Basically, northerly and north-westerly winds bring winter, which will start becoming active in the country at that time, weathermen forecast. They also said the present sultry weather will continue for another three-four days as a well-marked low has been prevailing in

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## Green chilli and onion prices skyrocket

Many other essentials keep pace

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and  
WASIM BIN HABIB

Prices of green chilli and onion skyrocketed all on a sudden while prices of powder milk, vermicelli, flour, butter oil, chicken and soybean oil rose significantly at all kitchen markets in the capital and elsewhere in the country as the Eid approaches.

However, prices of a number of essential items like spices and vegetables dropped slightly.

The price of green chilli has risen to Tk 150-160 a kg at kitchen markets. The price was

Tk 80 a kg five days ago.

They said they purchased green chilli at Tk 120 per kg from the wholesalers Thursday and 10-15 percent of it had rotten before yesterday afternoon.

The price of green chilli has been fluctuating during the month of Ramadan. It was selling at Tk 150 a kg at retail markets in the beginning of Ramadan. Traders then blamed inadequate supply due to floods.

The price plummeted to Tk 60-70 later on but shot up to Tk 80 during mid-Ramadan. The traders then blamed the sudden spell of rain for the price hike as it

damaged green chilli.

Retailers at Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital yesterday said poor supply of green chilli and price hike by wholesalers were to blame for the soaring price of green chilli.

Price of both local and Indian onions increased during the last five days as the Indian government suspended onion export for 15 days. Price of Indian onions climbed up to Tk 45 per kg; it was sold at Tk 33 per kg five days ago. Price of local onions rose to Tk 48-50 a kg from Tk 44 five days ago.

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PHOTO: STAR

Shoppers throng shopping arcades of the capital yesterday, the penultimate weekend before Eid. The photo was taken from New Market.

## Envoy in KL pledges better handling of issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur M Khairuzzaman pledged better handling of Bangladeshi workers' issues in Malaysia and said the procedures have been revamped.

The assurance came after his meeting with Malaysian home ministry's Deputy Secretary-General Raja Azahar Raja Abdul Manap on October 4 where Khairuzzaman sought details of the ban announced by Malaysian Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad.

Malaysian home ministry

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## MANPOWER EXPORT TO MALAYSIA

## Fleecing of workers rampant in both countries

PORIMOL PALMA

Unauthorized sub-agents in Bangladesh and outsourcing companies and their sub-agents in Malaysia have gobbled up an estimated amount of more than Tk 2,000 crore from about two lakh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, suggested a survey and statements of workers, sub-agents and businesses gathered by a Malaysian human rights organisation.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the report.

Experts in the sector said a section of government officials of both the countries are also party to

this unholy practice, which gave rise to a situation where a several thousand Bangladeshi workers were subject to abuse that led to an indefinite freeze by the Malaysian government on hiring workers from Bangladesh.

According to the decision of Malaysia and Bangladesh, each Bangladeshi worker is supposed to pay no more than Tk 84,000 to cover the costs including agents' service charges, government fees, fees for medical tests, and airfare, but they had to pay Tk 2 lakh to Tk 2.3 lakh each.

Malaysian human rights organisation, Tenaganita, in a statement

signed by its Director Dr Irene Fernandez and issued in July this year, said apart from the official fees for visas, levies and attestations, outsourcing companies in Malaysia pay between 1,500 and 2,000 Malaysian Ringgit, equivalent to Tk 30,000 and Tk 40,000, in different forms to the Malaysian home ministry.

Tenaganita that prepared the statement on the basis of a survey on 150 jobless and stranded Bangladeshi workers and a study on 36 cases of the workers, said Malaysian outsourcing companies also spend between 1,000 and

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