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USTR asks for documents on labour rights by Oct 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States Trade Representatives (USTR) has requested documents by October 19 as proof for its stand against allegations brought by a US rights group of violation of labour rights in Bangladesh.

The USTR also sought an explanation from Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) on why it had extended the timeframe to 2010 from 2008 for liberalising the workers' union activities, sources said.

According to a deal signed with the USTR, Bangladesh was supposed to liberalise workers' union

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MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE ACCOUNT

Govt to showcase anti-graft drive to get fund

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The Bangladesh government intends to showcase its recent success story in curbing corruption to persuade the US to allocate its Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) development assistance funds to Bangladesh this year.

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) of finance ministry has recently held a meeting with its US counterpart in this regard, said a high official at ERD.

Bangladesh this year ranked below the median level in nine

out of 16 indicators of the MCA programme. The indicators are designed to measure a country's effectiveness at ruling justly, investing in people, and fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Bangladesh was initially included in the primary list of MCA programme for 2007, but it failed to gain higher points over the median level of the corruption control indicator -- which is mandatory to obtain the assistance.

Although Bangladesh performed poorly in most of the indi-

cators including controlling corruption, rule of law, regulatory quality, cost of starting a business, trade policy, fiscal policy, health expenditure and primary education expenditure, the government is hopeful that a fresh review of the indicators would show improvements -- especially on the issue of curbing corruption.

The country, however, performed well in the indicators of political rights, civil liberties, immunisation and completion rate of girls' primary education.

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Sajeda bins graft claims against her

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday rejected the allegation of corruption against her.

"I obviously reject the government list that has shown me as corrupt," she told the news agency and electronic media at her Gulshan residence.

Sajeda said she will reply and state her position if the government serves notice on her.

She opposed the arrest of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia before completion of investigation into corruption against them.

Criticising the motive behind putting names of Awami Leaguers on the lists of corruption suspects,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Call for flood-friendly academic calendar

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Academic activities of students of primary to college level are seriously hampered every year due to floods across the country in August-September, as 'flood-friendly' academic session has not yet been introduced.

Generally, August-October is the most important period for students of conventional January-December academic calendar. During this period, they sit for second term examinations or take preparations for final exams usually held in November.

However, the two months -- August and September -- is the probable time for flood, especially

in the northern districts. If flood hits, October is usually spent to repair the damaged school and college buildings.

Every year, on an average 30 percent schools and colleges are badly damaged or used as shelter houses for the flood victims. As a result, the authorities have to keep the institutions closed, sources at the Food and Disaster Management Centre said.

Academicians suggest that academic calendar for primary, high school and colleges should be July-June period with a view to avoiding impacts of flood.

English medium institutions in Bangladesh, however, follow the July-June calendar.

Students usually become idle and often classes are not seriously taken during December-January after the annual exams, the academicians point out.

If the annual exams are held before July, flood, if occurs, will not affect the academic activities that much, they add.

"Time has come to reschedule our academic sessions. It's a good idea to start the session from July considering the effects of floods," said renowned educationist Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury.

"The government should consider this idea and hold talks with teachers and others concerned to introduce a flood-friendly

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bhuiyan has no right to call for unity in BNP

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said expelled BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has no right to call for unity among party men, as he is no longer a member of BNP.

He said the party remains united under the leadership of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"Mannan Bhuiyan does not have any right to speak about unity or division in the party as he is no more a party member," he said while talking to reporters at his NAM flat yesterday.

"He (Bhuiyan) could only speak about the unity of the party if he is the BNP chairperson and millions of BNP workers forgive him for what he did," Delwar said.

Replying to a query about bringing Bhuiyan back to the party, he said only the party chairperson can decide this, if she feels necessary. He said he has no reason to think about talking to Bhuiyan, as he is an expelled party member, and he

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Rickshaw pullers waiting with lanterns for their shift to begin as rules require them to have a lighted lantern while pulling rickshaws after evening. The photo was taken from Mohakhali DOHS area in the capital yesterday.

MYANMAR UNDER FIRE

US warns of UN sanction move

AP, United Nations

The US warned it would push for UN sanctions against Myanmar if it fails to respond to international demands to move toward democracy. But the country's UN ambassador strongly resisted punitive measures, saying it is not a threat to regional security and needs "patience" to promote reconciliation.

The US and its allies on the Security Council France and Britain said Friday after being briefed on the UN special envoy's

four-day trip to Myanmar that they want swift action in response to the government's brutal crackdown on demonstrations last week.

Security Council members met behind closed doors to discuss a possible statement in support of national reconciliation in the country and UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari's efforts, but US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stressed he was prepared to go further.

"The United States is appalled by the brutal repression that has

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Judgment in graft case against Lobi today

UNB, Dhaka

The judgment in a graft case against former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi and his wife Khushud Asgar Lobi will be delivered by a special court today.

Lobi, already sentenced to eight years imprisonment for evading income tax, now faces the graft case along with his detained wife.

On March 21, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Gulshan Police Station accusing Lobi, also ex-president of Bangladesh Cricket Board, and his wife, of concealing information in their wealth statement submitted to the commission.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Get Prayer times from Warid Menu

Iftaar 5:43 PM 4:33 AM

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Oct	Sehri	Iftar
24	7		5-43
25	8	4-34	5-42
26	9	4-34	5-41

Prayer Timing

October 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-33	4-43
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-43	5-58
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Severe electricity crisis grips country

UNB, Dhaka

A severe power crisis, caused by short supply of gas to power plants, has again gripped the country at a time when people are suffering from hot and humid weather.

According to official sources, the country yesterday generated 3,580MW of electricity against the demand for 4,400MW.

But the power sector experts believe the demand for electricity was more than 5,000 MW.

The country saw a landmark electricity production of 4,100 MW last month, but it could not be

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

3 of a family killed as train hits motorbike at level crossing

UNB, Khulna

Three members of a family were crushed under the wheels of a train at Phulbari level crossing in the city yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Gazi Iqbal Hossain, 38, son of late Abdur Razzak of Gilatala of the city, his younger brother M Akbar Hossain, 35, and their nephew Gazi Al Aziz, 18.

Iqbal Hossain along with his

brother and nephew was going to the market for Eid shopping riding a motorbike.

Witnesses said the Parbatipur-bound Rocket Express crushed the three when they were crossing the level crossing, ignoring the flag of the lineman at 10:10am.

The bodies were sent to the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) morgue for autopsy.

DU student 'commits suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student of Dhaka University hanged herself from the ceiling fan of her rented room at Azimpur Govt Colony in the capital yesterday, police said.

She was identified as Brishti Das, a first-year student of physics department and lived at the colony with three other girls.

Police said they found the body hanging with a scarf after breaking through the door of the room at around noon as Brishti did not respond from inside.

The body was sent to Mitford Hospital in the evening. The reason behind the suicide could not be known immediately.

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