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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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RAMPAL POWER PROJECT

Long marchers give govt until Oct 11 to cancel the laying of foundation stone

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INDIAN POLITICS STIRRED

Rahul's outburst over convicted lawmakers embarrasses Manmohan Singh

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New MPs also to 'dodge' tax

NBR forced to waive duty on car imports

SOHEL PARVEZ

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has withdrawn a provision that barred lawmakers elected in the last two years of parliament from getting tax waiver on car imports.

Following repeated requests by the parliament secretariat, the revenue authority removed the provision on Monday, only four months before the present government's tenure expires, said an NBR official, seeking anonymity.

More than five newly elected lawmakers are now allowed to import cars without paying customs duty and VAT (value-added tax). They include those declared elected by court in the last year of parliament.

Among the beneficiaries are Rejwan Ahmed Toufiq, elected from Kishoreganj-4 in July, Simeen Hussain Rimi, elected from Gazipur in September last year and Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed, elected from Chittagong-12 in January this year.

Toufiq is the son of President Abdul Hamid, Rimi is the daughter of



Bangladesh's first prime minister Tajuddin Ahmad and Javed is the son of former lawmaker late A k h t a r u z z a m a n Chowdhury Babu.

The NBR official said taxmen had initially suggested that the authorities refrain from taking such a step as it might spark criticism.

Later, it had to withdraw the bar on instructions of the finance ministry, he added.

Some 315 incumbent lawmakers imported duty-free cars, depriving the state exchequer of more than Tk 1,000 crore in taxes, Finance Minister AMA Muhith had earlier said in parliament.

During the BNP-dominated eighth parliament's tenure, 275 lawmakers imported luxury vehicles without paying Tk 280 crore in taxes.

The duty and VAT-free car import was first offered to lawmakers in 1988 by the then autocrat HM Ershad. Since then, elected governments have kept the privilege despite criticism.

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79 Bangladeshis held in Iraq

STAR REPORT

About 79 Bangladeshis have been languishing in a Kurdistan prison in Iraq for months without trial for illegal entry.

The Bangladeshi citizens, who mainly used to work for different municipalities as garbage collectors, house cleaners and construction workers, were in fear that they would be deported to Iran instead of being sent back home, reported Rudaw English, a private online newspaper from the autonomous Kurdistan region, on Friday.

The region shares a long, porous border with Iran. Authorities say the illegal workers often cross in through that border.

As police officials clang open the door to the large prison cell in Sulaimani where they are held, the inmates promptly rise to attention, the report added.

"We are waiting for the court order to deport them all back to their country," says Hiwa Sheikh Ali, head of the detention and deportation centre in Sulaimani.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York yesterday.

PHOTO: PIB, INDIA



HASINA-MANMOHAN MEETING

Short talk, big curiosity

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh had an exclusive meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York yesterday.

The two leaders discussed, among other issues, land boundary agreement, Teesta water sharing treaty and

power purchase.

After delegation-level talks, Hasina and Manmohan had a 20-minute one-to-one meeting, said diplomatic sources.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid and other high officials from both sides were present during the delegation-level discussion.

PM's Media Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the prime minister will give details of the meeting at her press conference in the afternoon.

Diplomatic circles in Dhaka and New Delhi considered the meeting significant with general elections nearing in both countries.

It is believed that Hasina briefed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Most wetlands gone

Seminar decries govt's inaction, urges people to rally behind rivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 10,000 acres of wetland, enough to make up 146 Ramna Parks, have been disappearing each year since 1999 owing to illegal earth filling in and around Dhaka city, experts said at a seminar in the city yesterday.

The tendency to encroach on wetland had increased since the government issued the gazette of Detailed Area Planning (DAP) in 2010, they said.

The country lost about four percent of gross domestic production (GDP), equivalent to Tk 44,600 crore, in the last financial year due to pollution and encroachment, said the experts at the seminar on "Saving Rivers and Water Bodies in and around Dhaka City".

Despite a public outcry and judicial orders, no political parties or governments had taken effective measures to protect

rivers and wetland, as the encroachers and polluters had links with political parties, they said at the auditorium of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

People must mount pressure on the government to implement judicial orders to save the remaining water bodies in Dhaka city that would otherwise become unliveable soon, they said.

At the daylong seminar, the experts discussed the present state of river pollution, encroachment on wetland and possible solutions to the problem.

Analysing satellite images of five water bodies in Dhaka city, Savar, Gazipur and Narayanganj, KM Ansar Uddin, secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said about 77 percent of wetland on the city's eastern fringe had already been filled up.

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WAGE BOARD AWARD NEXT MONTH

Implementation right away

Pledge garment-makers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Trade union leaders yesterday agreed to help end labour unrest in the garment sector after assurances of a favourable minimum wage from November.

"The wage board is likely to announce the minimum salary for garment workers next month, and the recommendation will be implemented immediately," Atiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), told reporters following a meeting with labour leaders.

He also urged all garment makers to clear the salaries and bonuses of workers well ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

At the meeting which took place at the BGMEA office, the garment owners and leaders of more than 40 trade unions agreed to stop disseminating rumours and vandalism in the sector.

The country's chief export earning sector has been struck

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A Buddha idol in the remains of a Ramu temple burned down in a communal violence last year.

PHOTO: FILE

Temples rebuilt, not trust

Uttam stays missing one year after attacks on Buddhists, none sees tears of his family

MUHAMMAD ALI ZINNAT with SHAMIM ASHRAF

Remember the Buddhist youth Uttam Barua, the deed writer whose Facebook profile image had been doctored to make a fake post that provoked an unprecedented attack on the Buddhist community of Ramu exactly a year ago?

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Uttam Barua

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বিশ্বখ্যাত সিটি ব্যাংক এন. এ. কর্তৃক '২০১৩ পারফরমেন্স এক্সিলেন্স এ্যাওয়ার্ড' অর্জন করেছে রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড। জনতা ব্যাংকের সিইও এন্ড এমডি এস এম আমিনুর রহমান সম্প্রতি সিটি ব্যাংক এন. এ. এর ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর ও সিটি কান্ট্রি অফিসার, খন্দকার রাশেদ মাকসুদ এর কাছ থেকে এই এ্যাওয়ার্ড গ্রহণ করেন। এ সময় জনতা ব্যাংকের উপ-ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক ও মহা-ব্যবস্থাপকসহ জনতা ব্যাংকের এবং সিটি ব্যাংক এন. এ. এর উর্ধ্বতন কর্মকর্তারা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য অটোমেটেড ইলেক্ট্রনিক পেমেন্টসহ বিভিন্ন মানদণ্ডে প্রশংসনীয় সাফল্য অর্জন করায় জনতা ব্যাংক লিঃ এ এ্যাওয়ার্ড অর্জন করে।

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