

Iraq banking on donors' meet in Madrid

AFP, Baghdad

US overseer Paul Bremer and Iraqi officials were counting yesterday on the Madrid donors' conference to bring financial aid to help rebuild after decades of war and neglect under Saddam Hussein.

The conference, to be attended by a 100-strong delegation from Iraq, seeks 36 billion dollars for the nation's ravaged infrastructure.

The funds are key to bringing long-term stability to a country where US forces come under daily fire from Saddam loyalists and now face a threat from Shiite fundamentalists.

"I think we're going to have a SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



Traders and businesspeople of Baitul Mukarram Market demonstrate in a Purana Paltan road in Dhaka yesterday after extortionists threatened Shahidul Haq Khokon, a businessman, with dire consequences upon his refusal to pay them money.

Landmark Indian bid for Kashmir peace

Advani to head talks with separatists

PTI/ REUTERS, New Delhi

India unveiled a significant peace move yesterday seeking direct talks with Kashmir separatists for the first time.

The central government of India picked Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani to talk with Hurriyat chairman Abbas Ali Ansari on the Kashmir issue. This will be the first official talk between India's government and main separatist group in Indian-administered Kashmir.

"The Deputy Prime Minister will meet Ansari in response to his

statement of August 25 that they (Hurriyat) are interested in talks with the Centre", Home Secretary N Gopalaswami told reporters after a two-hour long meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Asked as to when the meeting between Advani and Ansari would take place, he said the dates would be decided later.

The decision signals the start of a new effort to end more than a decade of conflict in the Himalayan region, which has cost tens of

thousands of lives.

Hurriyat chairman Ansari said the organization's executive council would meet soon to discuss the offer.

"We will see what the offer is. The executive council will sit and decide accordingly," he told Reuters. But a breakaway Hurriyat faction backed by militants said talks were meaningless unless they included Pakistan.

Pakistan has given a guarded initial response to the proposals.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

India offers olive branch to Pakistan

REUTERS/ PTI, New Delhi

India, trying to revive a stalled peace process, yesterday offered to open new border crossings with Pakistan -- including one in disputed Kashmir.

In a highly symbolic move, Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha said the cabinet had also decided to resume sporting ties with Pakistan, including the subcontinent's most popular sport, cricket, which was frozen in 2000 after a major military clash.

But he maintained India's insistence that Pakistan stop Muslim separatists crossing into Indian Kashmir to join a bloody 14-year revolt against New Delhi's rule.

There was no immediate Pakistani response, but yesterday's

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Keep business above politics

Hasina asks govt at close of Batexpo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on the government to keep business above politics and solve entrepreneurs' problems urgently to ensure their greater contribution to development.

Addressing the close of three-day Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition (Batexpo-2003), she said unless the government provided businesspeople with supportive policies, trade and investment would not sustain.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) organised the 14th edition of the annual event to showcase garment products at Sonargaon Hotel that ended yesterday.

"The government should create a business-friendly environment for the sake of national development and all political parties should reach a consensus that their activities do

not affect economic activities," said Hasina, also the president of the main opposition Bangladesh Awami League (AL).

She assured the businesspeople that her party would extend all possible support to them, but skirted the hartal issue on which the businesspeople pressed for a concrete assurance.

She urged the government to fulfil the demands of businesspeople, especially that of garment exporters who contribute 75 percent to the export basket and employ 18 lakh people.

Hasina asked the government to implement Saarc cumulative initiative offered by the European Union to increase textile and readymade garment (RMG) exports worth Tk 3,000 crore a year.

She also called upon the administration to give a nod to the setting up of a central bonded warehouse in the private sector to help RMG

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Batexpo bags \$48.39m spot orders

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladeshi readymade garment manufacturers got spot orders of export worth US\$ 48.39 million in the three-day Batexpo, the country's largest apparel and textile exposition, that concluded here yesterday.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) officials said the exhibition would yield export orders worth US\$ 390 million in the next three months.

"Specially Canada and Australia will have significant role in the near future in the export of Bangladeshi garments," said a BGMEA release issued on completion of the Batexpo-2003.

Some 80 international buyers from Canada, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, the UK and some Asian countries visited the exhibition where products were showcased in 72 stalls.

Some 5,000 businessmen gathered at the exposition of garments, accessories and machinery.

Visiting President of Sierra Leon Alhaji Dr Ahmed Teijan Kabbah also visited the show.

India's river-link plan also worries Nepal

REAZ AHMAD, back from Kathmandu

Despite being an upper riparian country in South Asia, Nepal is no less worried than its downstream co-riparian Bangladesh about the planned multibillion-dollar river-link project (RLP) of the common neighbour India.

Apprehensions already run high in Bangladesh over the probable fallout of water from some of the transnational rivers like the Ganges and Brahmaputra.

Nepal being strategically located, with India as its lower riparian neighbour, is too worried about submersion of vast areas within its territory along the Indo-Nepal borders in case big dams and reservoirs are built across the border as envisaged by the RLP.

The RLP mentions all the major Nepal-India common rivers on its list of linkages. There already exist bilateral agreements between

Nepal and India on the rivers Kosi, Gandak and Mahakali, which are going to be linked to other rivers in the Indian territory.

"These agreements, although not equal in benefit-sharing and many other aspects, at least guarantee upper riparian Nepal its right either in full or in part over the water flowing to India through its territory," said Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, coordinator of Water and Energy Users' Federation, Nepal (WAFED), a people's rights group.

Chintan told The Daily Star India is legally obligated to consult Nepal and reassess the water-sharing treaties on common rivers if it has to divert flows of international rivers through any sort of river linkage even within India.

Immediate past water resources minister of Nepal Dipak Gyawali said submersion of lands inside

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Anxious parents of Anwar Hossain Kazi, now in Dhaka, await their son's rescue. The ten-year-old boy was smuggled into India from his home district of Magura 13 months ago.

Cry for son

10-yr-old Bangladeshi boy languishes in Delhi shelter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parents of a 10-year-old boy, smuggled into India and now languishing in a Missionaries of Charity shelter home in New Delhi, pleaded

for the rescue of their son.

"We have seen no trace of our son, Anwar Hossain Kazi, since his abduction from a boat race

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

JS body seeks ways to raise seed output

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on agriculture ministry yesterday had a detailed discussion on enhancing public sector seed production and annual seed replacement rate (SRR).

The government aims to raise the SRR from a paltry 5.63 percent now to 15 percent by 2010 and to 20 percent by 2020.

The meeting that ended inconclusively decided to wrap the issue up on November 12, when the next meet is due.

"We've discussed to gradually double the seed production capacity of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC). We need to have more discussion on development of required facilities for attaining the enhanced seed production in the public sector. The question of manpower rationalisation at the BADC also came up for discussion today," committee Chairman Abdul Mannan told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The meeting expressed concern

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

A child receives an oral polio vaccine at Guide House in Dhaka yesterday, as the government launched the second round of immunisation.

Thousands in CHT living sans rations despite PM's order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large number of indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are living below subsistence level without rations despite a prime ministerial directive.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on October 13 directed officials concerned to provide rations to the CHT's 12,222 families of ethnic internal refugees from the PM's emergency relief fund. But sources said the fund is not big enough to provide the required amount of food grain.

"We can provide only 7,500 tonnes of food grain from the emergency fund, which is half the required amount. The rest has to be managed from somewhere else,"

said a high official of the CHT affairs ministry on condition of anonymity.

The annual requirement of rations for the refugees is some 15,300 tonnes of food grain.

Some 65,000 indigenous people of the 12,222 families received a weekly ration of five kg of rice for an adult and half that amount for a child until June when the government stopped the rations. An order from the prime minister asked the CHT affairs ministry to find an alternative for their rehabilitation with funds from the Annual Development Programme.

The order however did not affect some 26,000 Bangalees living in cluster villages who continued to get their rations as before.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 23		5-26 pm
Oct 24	6-00 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-05	4-20
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Iran to submit nuclear papers

BBC ONLINE

Iran is to give the United Nations nuclear watchdog documents on its nuclear programme, a top official says.

Abdollah Ramazanzadeh said the papers would be handed over on

Wednesday night.

A day after Tehran agreed to tougher international inspections, the country's Supreme Leader has said Iran does not intend to build nuclear arms.

President George W Bush has welcomed the Iranian deal as "a very positive development" and urged Iran to prove it had accepted the demands.

In what was believed to be his first public pronouncement on the issue, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran had no intention on becoming a nuclear power.

"We have always said we have no need of nuclear weapons b e c a u s e

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5