

Cash in on business climate

PM urges Chinese investors

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged Chinese entrepreneurs to come forward to invest in Bangladesh by capitalising the existing congenial business climate.

She made this request when new Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Chai Xi made his first call on the prime minister at her office.

Terming China a trusted and dependable friend, Khaleda felt the relationship could be cemented further. Urging for a wider trade and business cooperation, Khaleda requested China to maintain trade balance between the two countries.

Chai, who stayed in Bangladesh for 12 years in different capacities in

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Mobile courts at Aminbazar, Tongi to stop extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting on law and order yesterday cited obstruction of vehicles by extortionists for illegal toll collection as the reason for an intolerable traffic build-up at Aminbazar and Tongi.

"Two more mobile courts will be posted to Amin Bazar and Tongi to curb the problem," said State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzam Babar, who chaired the meeting of the law and order review committee at the ministry.

Another meeting on Wednesday was told that the halt to vehicles by extortionists led to traffic snarls near the Kanchpur Bridge and two mobile courts were added to improve the situation.

The state minister said the traffic jam slightly improved in the city and

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Coastguards seize Tk 92 lakh Indian sarees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Coast guards yesterday recovered smuggled Indian sarees said to be worth about Tk 92 lakh from Bhatiari under Sitakunda.

A team of coast guards, east zone, recovered the sarees from an abandoned truck during a patrol at the coastal area at around 4:00am.

Coast guard sources said smugglers left the truck loaded with Indian sarees sensing the presence of the patrol team. The truck was also seized, they added.

The handover process of the confiscated objects to the customs authority was underway, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

Girl scouts march in a procession marking the National Voluntary Blood Donation and Posthumous Eye Donation Day, observed by the health ministry and Central Sandhani Council yesterday.

Bush's popularity slips over Iraq policy

AP, Washington

US President Bush is losing public support for his war and economic policies, according to a new poll which for the first time shows that a majority of Americans disapprove of his handling of Iraq.

A slim majority, 51 percent, disapprove of his Iraq policy, while 47 percent approve, according to the ABC News-Washington Post poll released Sunday.

Most Americans, 54 percent, continue to believe the Iraq war was worth fighting, but that's down from 70 percent in April. A new high -- 62 percent -- say the level of US casualties is unacceptable.

Fewer than one in 10 Americans say Bush has made the nation more prosperous, while 58 percent -- a new high --

say the president fails to understand their problems.

The economy remains a major issue, with 45 percent of Americans approving of the way Bush is handling the economy and 53 percent disapproving. By a wide margin, 62 percent to 35 percent, the public sees the economy as a more pressing problem than terrorism.

The poll was conducted before Thursday's report that the economy surged from July through September at the fastest pace in nearly two decades.

The Bush administration contends that as economic growth improves, meaningful job creation will follow. Bush will be counting on that as he faces re-election in 2004.

"The tax relief we passed is working," Bush said, citing the latest GDP showing. "We left more money in the hands of

the American people, and the American people are moving this economy forward."

The president cautioned against expecting "economic growth numbers like this every quarter. Yet by continuing a pro-growth agenda, we will sustain growth and job creation in this country."

He added: "We're on the right track, but we've got work to do."

Democrats argue that the president's policies and tax cuts have done little to spur significant job growth, have contributed to a record budget deficit in the recently ended fiscal year and will hurt the economy over time if deficits put pressure on long-term borrowing rates.

The poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 26-29 and has an overall margin of error of 3.3 percentage points.

Body formed to frame strict anti-land grab laws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government, pegging land-grab as a national problem, yesterday formed a high-powered 11-member secretarial committee to prepare recommendations for formulation of tougher laws to check the menace.

With Cabinet Secretary Sa'adat Husain as its chairman, the committee will recommend how to protect government and private land from

grabbers, recover the occupied land and take legal and administrative action against offenders, according to a government handout.

Ten other members of the committee are secretaries of communications, home, land, local government, fisheries and livestock, environment and forest, housing and public works, expatriates welfare and overseas employment, shipping and law.

The land ministry will give secre-

tarial support to the committee that has been asked to submit its report to the government by January 31, 2004 along with its recommendations.

The anti-land grab move came after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's meeting with all secretaries on October 4, which underscored a quick halt to the fast depletion of government land, especially railway and riverside land.

The committee will also suggest

streamlining the process of recovering land, identifying characteristics and working patterns of land grabbers and stern legal action against them.

A national committee is likely to be formed on the basis of the recommendations of the secretarial committee to deal with public and private land grabbers -- if need be -- by amending the existing or enacting tougher laws, sources said.

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Postal dept to aid file DV lottery forms

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh postal department has decided to help aspirants for the Electronic Diversity Visa (EDV) lottery of USA by filing forms digitally.

The visa seekers will be able to buy printed forms for the lottery, which should be filled up manually.

These forms will have to be submitted to the postal department, which will then enter the data in computers from the filled-out forms and e-mail those to the USA.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunication (MoPT) drew up the business strategy for the first time after the US government introduced the EDV system from this year.

Previously known as the DV lottery, it generated huge response among Bangladeshis since it was introduced in the nineties. Last year,

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Biman cancels fare hike on Barisal route

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has postponed its newly increased fare on Dhaka-Barisal route after a meeting between the lawmakers of the region and a state minister on Saturday.

A delegation of lawmakers and leaders of Barisal division including Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Barisal City Corporation Mayor Majibur Rahman Sarwar, Nazimuddin Alam, Nurul Islam Moni and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Nasiruddin.

They demanded immediate withdrawal of the increased fare, expansion and development of Barisal Airport and tourism industries in the region.

After the meeting, the state minister ordered to postpone the increased fare till next fiscal, sources said.

Enact freedom of information law

Saarc journalists' confce ends with the call

UNB, Dhaka

A two-day conference of editors and working journalists of Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries concluded here yesterday with a set of recommendations including a call for member states to enact freedom of information law to ensure a free press.

To that end, the meet called for removing barriers to press freedom and upholding freedom of expression and the right to dissent.

The 10-point recommendation called for establishing a legal framework to ensure free flow of informa-

tion within and between the SAARC countries. It also made a strong plea for scrapping all legal restrictions and barriers hindering press freedom in the region.

"Freedom of movement by media professionals within SAARC-member countries should be ensured. Visa regime should be relaxed while media professionals should get preferential access to MPs, judges and business leaders of SAARC countries," it said.

To ensure easy availability of media products, the recommendation said tariff, non-tariff and para-tariff restrictions on all forms of

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HC ruling on contempt case against Sayedee today

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court Division today will pass its ruling on hearing of a contempt petition concluded yesterday against Delwar Hossain Sayedee, lawmaker of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

The contempt petition filed by senior advocate Sudangshu Shekhar Halder also implicated the chief editor and editor of the daily Sangbad.

Moving the petition, Halder quoted the remarks of Sayedee at a public meeting in Pirojpur on October 21 as published in the daily Sangbad that he must win his election case in the Supreme Court that he lost in the High Court.

The claim is contemptuous as the case is pending with the Supreme Court, contended Halder. He argued that Sayedee's claim has given an impression in public mind that he wields enough control over the highest judiciary.

The High Court on September 14 ruled the election of Sayedee illegal, as it found him guilty of election fraud upon a writ petition filed by Halder of the Awami League. Halder cast the second highest votes in the October 2001 general elections in Pirojpur-1 constituency.

Anomalies rule DU hall seat allotment

Students threaten a greater movement

DU CORRESPONDENT

Residential students of Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University have accused the authorities of irregularities in seat allotment and demanded immediate fresh allocations basing on their merit and seniority.

Alleging 'widespread irregularities' in allotments, incensed students tore all the lists posted on the dormitory notice boards on Saturday in a re-run of Friday's scene.

At least 2,000 students and about 200 outsiders are living in the hall having 1,047 seats, sources said, adding some

rooms fell to the hands of occupiers, belonging to the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of coalition leader Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The grabbed rooms house outsiders, they added. Students allege because of authorities' indifference, irregularities crept in dormitory seat distribution two years ago.

They said in the face of student protests, authorities put up the lists of allocated seats for four buildings

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Sehri, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
7	3		5-22
8	4	4-45	5-21

Prayer Timings		
November 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-44	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-23	5-30
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Of men, beards and moustaches



PHOTO: AFP

Contestants pose at the World Beard and Moustache Championships yesterday in Nevada, USA. Judged in 17 categories, the top prize goes to the contestant with the 'best overall facial hair'.

AFP, Nevada

Sporting plunging Fu-Manchus, rapier-like Van Dykes, and bushy belly-warming beards, more than 130 of the world's most hirsute men paraded down a catwalk here Saturday in the sixth World Beard and Moustache Championships.

The audience cheered and sighed in awe as contestants from a dozen countries displayed massive handlebar moustaches and intricately shaped beards to a panel of judges.

Most had spent hours preening, waxing and blow-drying their beards, moustaches and sideburns to vie for honors in 16 different categories, ranging from graceful waxed "English" moustaches to full "Garibaldi" beard-and-moustache combinations to "freestyle" shapes.

Winners garnered trophies and bragging rights, though no financial reward. "This is the Olympics of beards," said Kai Cofer, a Los Angeles television actor whose knee-length chin tresses were woven into small braids in the freestyle category.

Despite a jovial atmosphere and more than a little beer-drinking, contestants were as intense and focused as in

any athletic contest.

"I'm very nervous, I didn't sleep last night," said Berliner Lutz Giese. Giese pulled his moustache into long horizontal spikes in what is called an "English" style and donned an 18th century British admiral's uniform.

Many contestants rose before dawn to begin shaping their beards, spending up to two hours twisting, blow-drying and pasting facial hair into lethal-looking five-inch spikes and swooping curls. Some beards were more than a metre (yard) long. Others sported up to six large whorls. Swiss Jurg Biland bore a waxed moustache that stretched 1.45 metres from tip to tip.

Many contestants prepared intricate costumes reflecting the national origins of their facial hairstyle. Ted Sedman of Surry, England donned a Chinese mandarin's outfit to accompany his long, drooping Fu Manchu moustache.

To match his golden Van Dyke, American Gary Johnson wore a cowboy outfit for a legendary Wild Bill Hickok look.

This year marked the first time

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Riots claim four in India over cricket match

PTI, Ahmedabad

Communal clashes broke out near Ahmedabad early on Sunday, killing at least four people and injuring some 40 others, sources said.

The clashes were triggered in the wake of a cricket match between local youths at Viragam town, about 70 km from Ahmedabad city.

Police fired 20 rounds to quell the rioting mobs that torched and ransacked at least three shops in Chandfadi and Sheikhvaad areas of the town. They clamped a curfew in the town at around 11:30am.

One company of State Reserve Police has already been deployed to prevent further violence.

The injured have been admitted to different hospitals in the area. Some of them were being treated for shrapnel injuries.

The situation was now under control, and police would soon begin combing operations to those who instigated the violence, DIG, Ahmedabad range AK Sharma said.