

Tata unhappy

FROM PAGE 1
negotiator of the company has said.
"We should not expect we could complete all formalities as speedily as we do in an European country. But obviously, if we find the investment negotiation is being delayed long enough, we may reconsider our plan," said Alan Rosling, executive director of Tata Sons Ltd, in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on Sunday.
"We have already lost six months for negotiation", pointed out Rosling, who arrived in Dhaka earlier on the day to participate in the final round of negotiation with the government that started yesterday.

He strongly disagreed with the government proposal to set a higher price for a guaranteed gas supply for 20 years.

Rosling noted that mills across the world produce steel using gas at a price that is considered economically viable and with its supply secured. "You will not invest \$3.0 billion where gas supply might stop tomorrow," he said.

The government offer for 1.25 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) gas supply is inadequate as Tata will need 2.16 Tcf gas for its steel plant (for 25 years) and power and fertiliser plants (20 years each).

The government however suggested Tata to use coal as an alternative energy source but the company does not view this as an alternative.

"We need a certain amount of gas for the economic life line for our projects. But coal cannot be a substitute for gas. Now, it depends on the government if it would agree to offer gas to Tata or not," Rosling said.

"If the government agrees to supply gas for the steel plant, only then Tata can consider setting up a steel plant. Otherwise, it will not go for the steel unit."

If Tata believed that gas is an issue in Bangladesh, it would not have come here or started the process of investment.

The Tata executive is hammering on a good package of tax incentives. "If you like to have infrastructure projects, the major capital projects whose payback period is 10 years or 20 years, you have to provide a good package of incentives to the investors," he said.

He mentioned that the government negotiators have already agreed to develop a package of incentives for the projects.

Asked why they have chosen Bangladesh as their major FDI

destination, Rosling said Bangladesh has various opportunities, which may help reduce cost of production.

The cost of funds and land may be high in Bangladesh but the exchange rate will create better opportunity for the projects here compared to other countries in South Asia, the Tata negotiator said.

He claimed that the Tata investment will help increase gross domestic product (GDP) by almost two percent and directly create 26,000 jobs. Moreover, it will speed up economic development and improve the balance of payment situation. Eventually, these factors will give positive signals about the credibility of Bangladesh to other foreign investors.

The Tata executive thought Bangladesh's population of around 140 million, 5-6 percent economic growth rate a year, democratic order and its location in association with the growing South Asian economic show it has tremendous potential.

Rosling observed that Tata investment would also help expand relations with India and build integration among the South Asian countries.

He expressed disagreement with the common public impression in India that the rising Islamist element in Bangladesh is a major problem and said this element is not strong to act as a barrier to investment.

On April 20 last year, Tata submitted its \$2.5 billion investment proposal for setting up a 1,000 MW power station, a steel mill with an annual production capacity of 420,000 tonnes and a one million-tonne fertiliser unit.

Later on May 9, the government and Tata agreed to begin negotiations from May 25, conclude it by August 31 and sign the agreements before November 30 the same year.

ANN's weekly

FROM PAGE 1
ANN, and tap the editorial resources and talents of its members.

The magazine will also be available on digital e-paper form via www.asianewsnet.net.

The magazine will initially be on board selected member carriers of Star Alliance, the world's largest airline group. Other sponsors include Holcim Group of Switzerland which has cement operations in almost all countries in Asia and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

"The ANN is a prime example of Asian cooperation which we all dream of, and we would like to thank these organisations in having the foresight to support the AsiaNews magazine," said Bangkok-based Pana Janviroj, executive director of the Asia News Network.
Since its founding in 1999, the ANN has aimed to take advantage of its resources by working on collaborations among its editors and reporters as well as the daily exchange of stories and photos to provide a comprehensive coverage on Asia.

The ANN members are The Statesman (India), The Jakarta Post, (Indonesia), Sin Chew Daily and The Star (Malaysia), The Straits Times (Singapore), The Nation (Thailand), Viet Nam News (Viet Nam), The Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Daily Star (Bangladesh), China Daily (China), Daily Yomiuri and Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan), The Korea Herald (South Korea) and The Island (Sri Lanka).

The ANN members send their personnel to the Bangkok secretariat office on a rotation basis to help maintain its website (www.asianewsnet.net), produce the daily newsletter, publish the weekly magazine in print and e-paper forms, and facilitate the regular exchange of editorial content among its members.

The alliance enjoys a combined circulation of 14 million newspaper copies daily. Its readers are from corporate/business, government and professional sectors, are highly educated and are middle to high income earners. The newsletter is sent to almost 20,000 subscribers daily.

Kibria Killing

FROM PAGE 16
on the same day by a special contingent of police. These include, 32 splinters, covers of grenades, parts of detonators and three mobile phones.

The eight accused, who had been staying in different jails, were brought to Sylhet central jail last week and are to be produced before the court today. However, two of the accused are absconding since Kibria's murder on January 27 last year.

The murder case filed with the Habiganj Police Station was later transferred to the CID. Assistant Superintendent of Police Munshi Atiqur Rahman of CID filed the chargesheet against 10 people.

The prime accused Abdul Quaiyum was brought to Sylhet from Moulvibazar district jail. Jamir Ali, Shahed Ali, Jainal Abedin Jalal, Tajul Islam, Selim Ahmed and Ayat Ali were brought to Sylhet from Habiganj district jail. Jainal Abedin Momin has been in the Sylhet Central Jail for the last few months.

The accused Muhibur Rahman and Kajol are still on the run.

The complainant filed an appeal before the HC praying for further investigation into the murder case. But the HC ruled it out and asked for the trial to be held in the court concerned.

Dollar price

FROM PAGE 1
market yesterday and sold at Tk 66.75, which was Tk 66.60 on Sunday.

Although import declined due to Bangladesh Bank's tight monetary policy, the oil price hike in the international market is forcing Bangladesh to spend more dollars and consequently making dollars dearer.

In the first five months of the current fiscal year, import grew by 10.95 percent while the growth was 22.95 percent during the corresponding period of the previous year.

The opening of LCs, on the other hand, has risen by a meagre 1.87 percent over the first half of the current fiscal, while the growth was 24.12 percent during the same period of the previous year.

The opening of LCs for importing petroleum, however, rose by about 28 percent which the banking sources said is the main reason behind the dollar crisis.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at the annual conference of Janata Bank last week cautioned the bankers to keep enough reserve for petroleum import and refrain from big lending.

Banking sources also pointed out that the multinational companies, including those in the telecommunications and gas sectors, have started to repatriate their profit. A foreign bank source said profits to the tune of over \$500 million will be repatriated to the parent countries.

Besides, the remittance inflow has also slowed down a bit after the Eid-ul-Azha. In January, remittances worth \$390 million came to the country compared to the remittance of \$418 million in December.

DU teachers

FROM PAGE 16
under the shelter of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government are killing progressive teachers, political leaders, civil society members and intellectuals one after another. They alleged that the government has always remained completely indifferent to bringing the killers to book.

The Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) organised the one-hour sit-in demonstration in front of the Arts Faculty building from 11:00am to 12:00 noon, protesting the killing of Rajshahi University Professor S Taher Ahmed on February 03.

The DU teachers demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers of Taher.

Duta President Sharifullah Bhuiyan said the government should immediately identify the killers and bring them to justice. "The same quarters...killed Prof Humayun Azad of Dhaka University in 2004, Prof Dr Yunus of Rajshahi University last year and Prof S Taher Ahmed recently but the government is still indifferent," he said.

He threatened to go for tougher agitation programmes if stern measures are not taken immediately against the killers of Taher.
Duta General Secretary Prof M Akhtaruzzaman accused the alliance government of playing Star (Bangladesh), China Daily (China), Daily Yomiuri and Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan), The Korea Herald (South Korea) and The Island (Sri Lanka).

"Attacks on the teachers will not stop unless the government dissociates itself from the perpetrators of the crime," said former Duta president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique.

DU former vice chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Dean of Social Science Faculty Prof Harunor-Rashid, Duta Vice President Prof Tazmery SA Islam, Chairman of Mass Communication and Journalism Department Prof Golam Rahman, among others, were present at the programme.

The DU teachers later brought out a silent procession, marching different roads on the campus from the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla to the Central Shaheed Minar.

India

FROM PAGE 16
India's Chief of Army Staff General J.J. Singh said the brigade had already left Kashmir and had returned to their bases in Darjeeling and Silliguri, in West Bengal.

Singh said the redeployment would help to bolster reserves in India's northeastern region, where troops are battling a number of separatist insurgencies.

Further withdrawals from Kashmir could be considered, but there was no definite plan to pull more troops out, he said.

While the two countries have strengthened transport, cultural and sporting links since starting the peace process two years ago, they have made little headway on tackling the dispute over Kashmir, the cause of two of their three wars since independence from British rule in 1947.

Indian officials say violence has declined in Kashmir since the peace process began. But they have also been urging Islamabad to do more to fully stop the flow of Islamic militants from Pakistan into Indian Kashmir.

Islamabad says it is doing all it can to prevent militants crossing and has instead asked New Delhi to begin talks to resolve the territory's future.

Inflation rate

FROM PAGE 1
in non-food items and stood at 7.13 percent in December, while it was 7.03 percent in November.

An analysis of the inflation situation shows the inflation rate in non-food items dropped in urban areas but increased in rural areas.

In the urban areas the inflation rate in non-food items declined by 0.08 percentage point, while in the rural areas it rose by 0.19 percentage point in December compared to that of November.

The rise in the inflation rate of the rural areas in non-food items contributed to the increase in the overall inflation rate in non-food items.

A planning ministry source said it is mainly the rise in the transportation cost that is responsible for making the non-food items dearer in the rural areas.

Though the government adjusted fuel prices in September, transport costs rose later in several phases, making the impact so evident in December.

Sources said the *aus* and *aman* production was better in FY 06 than in FY 05. Besides, the costs of food items saw a downward trend in December as the market had adequate supply of winter vegetables.

In the current fiscal year, 17.45 lakh tonnes of *aus* was produced, while the volume stood at 15 lakh tonnes in FY 05.

Talks with Tata

FROM PAGE 1
Petrobangla is likely to put forward its ideas and arguments at today's meeting, sources said.

Mosharrar Hossain Bhuiyan, chairman of Petrobangla, and Alan Rosling of Tata Sons Ltd, led the negotiators from the government side and Tata Group.

Mosharrar declined to say anything about the outcome of the meeting.

Manzer Hossain, Tata resident director, said they discussed coal and gas issues on a preliminary basis.

"We have placed before the government side international practices on how gas price is determined as a background. So, on that basis we will start talks tomorrow (Tuesday)."

He said the discussion held yesterday paves the way for further discussion today, and no decisions were taken on the day.

"Discussion was held on international practices now going on. Hopefully, from tomorrow onwards we should be in a position to see some kind of decisions emerging from the discussions," he added.
Meeting sources said that on

Agriculture ministry sources said 1.12 crore tonnes of *aman* rice will be produced this year, compared to last year's apparently poor production of 98 lakh tonnes due to floods.

The source said the price of rice this year is not as high as last year's due to a rise in *aman* production.

As the food price dropped, the inflation rate dropped by 1.14 percentage point in rural areas and 0.26 percentage point in urban areas.

In December, the inflation rate in rural areas was 7.23 percent, which was 8.37 percent in November.

In the food items the rate was 6.96 percent in December and 8.84 percent in November. In the non-food items the rate was 7.71 percent in December and 7.52 percent in November.

In December, the inflation rate in urban areas was 6.66 percent, which was 6.92 percent in November.

In the food items the rate was 7.58 percent in December and 7.99 percent in November. In the non-food items the rate was 5.66 percent in December and 5.74 percent in November.

Barapukuria coal mine, Tata reiterated its proposal for dismantling the existing underground mining and replace that with an open-cast mining, owned by it. But Petrobangla reiterated its proposal for a joint venture on Barapukuria mine and said Tata should work centring its (Petrobangla) proposal since a significant amount of investment has already been made on the existing underground mining.

"Besides, Tata is asking for information about gas field reserves. It is natural. But it is really difficult for us to respond to Tata's demand for a 20-year sovereign guarantee for gas supply. We are not sure at this point of time if we can give such a guarantee, especially when Tata's gas demand is quite high," a meeting source pointed out.

Petrobangla negotiators also urged Tata to keep the issues of coal, steel and power plants and fertiliser plant separate. But Tata is interested in negotiating these issues as an integrated proposal.

AL may give govt

FROM PAGE 1
Hasina in a speech in parliament will place the reform proposals and announce the time limit, added the sources.

In line with the 14-party alliance's reform agenda, the AL policymakers are now drafting the speech stressing that the next parliamentary election will not be free and fair unless the reforms are implemented, sources said.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that the proposals must be submitted in accordance with the rules of procedure of parliament. The government will obviously consider those if they are acceptable in constitutional terms.

The government will decide on what to do after seeing how they [AL] place the proposals, he observed.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday said the proposals will be tabled either as a private member's bill or under rule 62 or rule 68 of the rules of procedure. It will be decided in consultation with the members of the 14-party.

He said they will demand the Business Advisory Committee extend the ongoing session, currently scheduled to run till February 16, for 15 more workdays.

Hasina, also the AL president, at the post-long march rally Sunday threatened to resign en bloc from parliament if the government refuses to accept the proposals. But sources among the party policymakers hint that the resignation decision would rather come at a time when the government will have no scope to hold by-elections to the vacant seats.

"The possibility of mass resignation from parliament before the next June or July is somewhat remote if by this time no dramatic political developments take place," an AL policymaker told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

AL Whip Faruk Khan told The Daily Star that the AL parliamentary party will sit in a couple of days to work out its strategy in the House.

He and Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdus Shahid on Sunday night talked to the AL chief about the possible date for the meeting and sought guidelines on the next course of action.

With the return, AL will end a 16-month boycott, which they attribute to the speaker's not allowing the opposition lawmakers to speak. The return will also save the leader of the opposition from losing her membership.

Hili port

FROM PAGE 16
Rahman, assistant commissioner of Hill land port was also present. Deputy Commissioner Md Surut Zamana asked for reports from the clearing and forwarding agents associations, and exporters and importers associations of both Bangladesh and India.

After the submission of reports, a meeting will be held between the DC of Dinajpur and the district magistrate of South Dinajpur to resume trade through the land port.

Hill land port entered into the 8th day of its closure yesterday as exporters, importers, clearing and forwarding agents (C&F agents) of Bangladesh had enforced an indefinite strike from January 30 protesting a new rule imposed by the Indian exporters.

In a letter to Bangladeshi Importers and C&F Agents Association, Indian Exporters and C&F Agents Association laid out the rule that Bangladeshi importers would not be allowed to carry more than 10 tonnes of goods on a single truck. The new rule increases transportation cost for Bangladeshi traders as they used to load 20 tonnes in a truck.

In response to Bangladeshi traders' strike, their Indian counterpart issued an ultimatum threatening to paralyse greater South Dinajpur if the authorities failed to resolve the matter by February 8.

Sources said several meetings between Bangladeshi and Indian traders were held in the last seven days but without any solution.

The strike, continuing for eight consecutive days at the land port, is costing the government Tk 80 lakh in revenue loss every day and at least 10 land port workers were rendered jobless.

Ganesh Saha, president of Importers and C&F Agents Association in Bangladesh told The Daily Star that he along with other importers and exporters are trying their best to settle the matter.

Urging the authorities concerned to tackle the situation immediately, Shahinur Rahman, general secretary of Hill Importers and C&F Agents Association, said a counter programme by Indian traders and transport owners' association would damage harmonious bilateral business relations between the two countries.

2,500 beggars

FROM PAGE 16
country.

Under the project, which is to begin within two months, the Grameen Trust will give credits up to Tk 3,000 to 2,500 beggars across the country.

The beggars will also be provided with basic literacy and financial education, assistance to set up income generating activities like processing and manufacturing food, selling fruits, vegetables and clothes, and raising livestock.

Besides, the beggars will be brought under an insurance coverage so that their family gets money for immediate expenses following the death of any credit receiver. The outstanding loans will also be waived after the death of the receiver.

The programme will create an opportunity and present an alternative to begging as it aims to provide financial services to the beggars to help them find "a dignified way of living in the society", said Mamun Rashid, country officer of Citigroup for Bangladesh.

If the project can achieve its ultimate aim, the Citigroup will grant more funds in future, Rashid said at a press briefing yesterday, adding, "Even we may replicate the project in other countries."

Referring to Grameen's currently running "Struggling Members Project", Prof Hi Latif, managing director of the Grameen Trust, said nearly 500 beggars of its 70,000 listed members have given up begging.

He said there are over 3 lakh beggars across the country and the Grameen Trust wants to bring them to a dignified way of living.

Lamiya Morshed, director (development) of the Grameen Trust, was also present at the briefing.

Maulana Mannan

FROM PAGE 16
Masjid-e-Gausul Azam Complex. He will be buried there.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed deep shock at the death of Mannan.

In a condolence message, Khaleda said: "Maulana Mannan had been active in the political arena of this country for long and played a remarkable role in publication of newspaper." She also recalled Mannan's activities in various social fields.

The prime minister prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed sympathy for the bereaved family members.

Several ministers and leaders of some religion-based political parties who also condoled the death of Mannan, who was the president of Jamiyat-e-Mudarrasin, an organisation of madrasa teachers.

He served as a minister under the late president Justice Abdus Sattar and then in the cabinet of HM Ershad. Earlier, he was elected a lawmaker from Chandpur in 1979.

In 1971, Mannan was one of the top leaders of the so-called Peace and Welfare Council that was set up to help the Pakistani occupation forces.

During the Liberation War, Mannan played an active role against the freedom struggle and issued numerous statements in favour of the genocide committed by the Pakistan army.

He assisted the Pakistanis in committing atrocities and allegedly had direct involvement in the killing of intellectuals. He was a well-known collaborator of the genocidal force.

Seizure lists in 3 cases

FROM PAGE 1
Judge Monzurul Bachhid of the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on Sunday directed the Public Prosecutor (PP) and Assistant Public Prosecutor (APP) again to submit the seizure lists on March 6.

In his order, the judge mentioned the seizure lists of the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act were not produced before the court though the case was to be proved on the basis of the pieces of evidence and seizure lists. Moreover, the pieces of evidence and seizure lists are important documents for proving the allegations against the accused. So the case was retracted from judgement, the judge said.

When contacted, the conducting APP Mohammad Jalal Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star he got the case diary (CD) without the seizure lists from Quamrul Islam, the PP of the Awami League regime. But he could not give a satisfactory answer to why he did not inform the court even though the court directed him to submit it on January 14, 2004 and May 29 last year.

Quamrul Islam however denied the allegation brought against him. He

Danish envoy

FROM PAGE 1
the matter.

Morshed told the Danish envoy that the cartoons have deeply hurt the religious sentiment of the people of Bangladesh and requested him to convey the sentiment to his government.

"The Danish government needs to take necessary steps to stop recurrence of such heinous act," Haque quoted Morshed as telling the envoy.

Meanwhile, security measures have been beefed up at the Royal Danish Embassy in Dhaka in the wake of attacks at Denmark embassies in Lebanon and Syria.

Additional policemen were deployed to ensure security of the embassy since Sunday while a platoon of police was kept standby as striking force, a senior police official told the news agency yesterday.

Some Islamist groups, including the Hizbut Tahrir, have declared to lay a siege to the Danish embassy on Friday.

Finley

FROM PAGE 1
gardens owned by Finley at a cost of Tk 380 crore.

This is going to be the biggest take over by local entrepreneurs under a single deal from a multi-national company. Few weeks ago a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Finley and the buyers' consortium.

The buyers are keeping the deal secret as a business strategy, sources said.

MM Ispahani, Pedrollo Pump Group, the local agent of DHL, Uttara Motors, the local agent of an American lubricant manufacturer Mobil, and three leading ship breaking industry owners of Chittagong are in the consortium.

Finley was sold to a Hong Kong based British company Swire a few years ago, according to the sources.

The British company is winding up its business from Bangladesh following the government's policy changes regarding leasing out of land for tea cultivation and mismanagement in the local management.

The government recently restricted the lease period from 99 years to 35 years. On the other hand business diversification by the Hong Kong based Swire might be another reason for closing the business in Bangladesh, the sources said.

Tea experts, however, fear a negative impact on the tea sector following the take over of the country's one of the oldest tea companies by the people who had not been involved with tea business.

US not ruling out

FROM PAGE 16
to the IAEA decision.

Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency has been formally notified of Iran's decision to resume full-scale uranium enrichment work, the country's top national security official was quoted as saying yesterday.

"In a letter to the IAEA, we have announced this date," Ali Larjani was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency in response to a question on when enrichment work would restart.

"Their inspectors will come to Iran for this purpose in the next few days," said Larjani, apparently referring to the procedure whereby agency seals are removed in the presence of IAEA inspectors.

Enrichment is a process that involves feeding uranium gas through cascades of centrifuges. When purified to low levels the result is reactor fuel, but the process can be extended to make the fissile core of a nuclear bomb.

Iran argues it only wants to generate atomic energy, and maintains that fuel cycle work for peaceful purposes is a right enshrined by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The headline regime has ended its two-year-old freeze on enrichment in response to Saturday vote

said the PP and the APP received the CD after scrutinising it.

A team of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) along with the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Cantonment Police Station raided Faruk's house at DOHS in the capital around 3:45am on August 18, 1996. Police seized a revolver, a shotgun, an airgun, a Stengun, 616 bullets, eight international passports, 2,830 Pakistani rupees and 62.75 Libyan dinars at his house.

Four cases were filed with Cantonment Police Station, one under the Arms Act, one under the Foreign Currency Control Act, one under the Explosive Substances Act and the other under the Special Powers Act.

On May 9 last year, the same court acquitted Faruk of charges in a case filed for possessing foreign currencies, as the charges brought against him were not proved. Another court on October 20, 2004 sentenced Faruk to life imprisonment in the Jail Killing Case.

Bar asks CJ

FROM PAGE 16
Mohammad Rezaul Karim Chunnus alleged political activities and campaign for getting BNP ticket from Kishoreganj sadar constituency in the next general elections evoked sharp reaction among the lawyers of the apex court.

Enclosed with the letter were newspaper clippings covering the political speeches and interviews given by Chunnu at his constituency as ready reference for justifying the complaint, the SCBA leader said.

He made a plea in the petition that measures should be taken for 'upholding the image and dignity of the judiciary'.

Talking to the news agency, Rahim pointed out that sitting judges are barred from