

Special tax facilities for foreign investors to go

Saifur says only equal-opportunity economic zones to be set up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign investors in future will not enjoy any special tax facility, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman announced yesterday.

The country will not see any new export processing zone (EPZ) either; instead, economic zones will be set up where both local and foreign investors will enjoy equal facilities, he told a consultative committee meeting of National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The NBR and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) jointly organised the meeting at a city hotel. There, business leaders raised some pressing issues includ-

ing the ongoing gas, power and water crises, high interest rate, devaluation of taka, and tight monetary policy that they said were hampering the country's industrial production seriously.

Referring to the unusual price spiral of essentials, they urged the government to enact an anti-hoarding law and another to protect consumers' rights, besides reactivating Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) and the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) to regulate the market.

Saifur admitted the negative impacts of the factors mentioned by the business representatives but opposed the proposal to bring the

BADC and TCB back into action. If the TCB alone imports sugar, its price would go beyond Tk 200 a kg due to the long time needed to comply with the government rules and regulation, he argued. It usually takes six to nine months for the government to import anything, he added.

In the same way, if food import had not been deregulated, the country would see a famine-like situation, the finance minister maintained. He suggested the businessmen to take advantage of the free market, and advised them not to hoard and to keep the prices reasonable.

Mentioning the low tax-GDP
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Part of Sheikh Rehana's house allocated to ex-CJ Hasan

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A portion of the Dhanmondi house allotted in 2001 to Bangabandhu's youngest daughter Sheikh Rehana has been allocated to former Chief Justice KM Hasan who will head the next caretaker government, sources concerned said.

Earlier, a police station was set up at the plot. Sheikh Rehana purchased the house in cash when it was allocated to her during the previous Awami League government.

The sources said Justice Hasan on November 15, 2005 applied to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works for allocation of one katha land for sweeper passage on the northern side of his house at plot 16 (old 35) on Dhanmondi road-4.

The house at plot 21 (old 41) on the northern side of Justice Hasan's residence belongs to Sheikh
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PHOTO: STAR

An HSC examinee struggles to make her way through the gridlock in the city streets as the examinations begin yesterday across the country.

HSC EXAMS 57 expelled on the first day

BSS, Dhaka

Fifty-seven examinees were expelled for copying yesterday, the first day of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations.

According to the education ministry control room, 20 students were expelled from Dhaka, six from Barisal, four from Jessore, eight from Comilla, one from Chittagong, 17 from Rajshahi and one from Sylhet Education Board.

The HSC and equivalent examinations began yesterday with English first paper under the seven general educational boards, Madrasa Education Board and the Technical Education Board in a peaceful atmosphere.

Sources in the general and technical education boards said a total of 516,753 examinees sat for the HSC examinations at 1,492 centres.

Of them, 133,526 appeared in the examinations under Dhaka
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Dhaka assured of continued WB support

Patel meets PM

BSS, Dhaka

World Bank Vice-President Praful C Patel yesterday reiterated the bank's continued support to Bangladesh's ongoing development efforts.

The assurance came when Patel called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office.

Patel said the World Bank would extend its support, if necessary, to any infrastructure development in Bangladesh which would attract more foreign investors.

The prime minister thanked the World Bank for its support for various projects to help the country's development process and hoped such support would continue in the future.

Referring to the indications of growing foreign investment in Bangladesh, the WB vice president said many countries of the world now recognise Bangladesh as a
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PHOTO: PID

Visiting World Bank Vice-president Praful C Patel calls on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

PM may go to UAE May 23

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to pay a two-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from May 23 at the invitation of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed-al-Nahyan.

She was scheduled to visit the UAE in December last year, but dropped it due to some pressing matters at home.

Official sources said the visit of the prime minister is seen as "highly important" on many counts, including recent price hike of oil on the international market, UAE investment, export of Bangladeshi manpower and easing the visa system.

During her tour, Khaleda Zia is expected to seek the facility to buy oil on credit at favourable price from the oil-rich Gulf country, so that Bangladesh could meet its growing fuel requirement.

She will also invite UAE investment in potential sectors in Bangladesh. Recently, some leading companies and investors expressed their willingness to
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DU POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMS

Alleged question leak spawns first-class boom

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN

Question-paper leak may have acted behind the first-class boom in the master of social science (MS) examinations 2002 held in 2004 in the political science department of Dhaka University (DU), sources said.

Following the publication of the controversial results where 52 examinees achieved first class, a probe committee found some minor faults in the tabulation sheets but

now the issue of question-paper leak has come under the spotlight as the main factor behind the first class boom.

A 10-member probe committee headed by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider is interviewing the persons concerned including Prof Ataur Rahman, chairman of the examination committee, two other committee members, controller of examinations, the then acting controller of examinations, tabulators, and some officials of the con-

troller of examinations' office.

Probe committee sources said the interviews of the people concerned point to a question-paper leak, but Prof Ataur Rahman talking to The Daily Star strongly denied the allegation.

Question papers were kept at Ataur's office instead of the strong room at the controller of examinations' office, Deputy Controller of Examinations-1 Mohammad
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FILMING SC PREMISES

CJ seizes tape from ATN Bangla camera crew

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain seized a videocassette from a camera crew of private TV channel ATN Bangla yesterday when the latter was filming on the Supreme Court (SC) premises.

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22 injured as traders clash with toll-takers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 22 people were injured, three of them critically, in a clash between traders and extortionists at Songachha in Sirajganj yesterday.

The injured were taken to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital and six
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Akbar seeks Hasina's help to resolve Ctg port crisis

Port tense over mayor's threat to paralyse it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday sought intervention of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina for resolving the ongoing crisis at the Chittagong port where a tense situation is prevailing following Chittagong mayor's threat to paralyse the port activities.

"I am ready to go to the opposition leader for resolving the present crisis at the port if Mohiuddin Chowdhury [Chittagong city mayor] agrees," he said at an emergency press conference at the shipping ministry yesterday.

"None will be able to stop the port's functioning even for a day as

there are a host of my people in the port," he said, adding that the workers will not support Mayor Mohiuddin.

The Chittagong city mayor earlier threatened to halt loading and unloading of containers at the port from May 19, unless the government cancelled the decision of privatising newly built New Mooring container terminal near the existing port.

Mayor Mohiuddin launched the programme with a political motivation, the shipping minister said, adding, "The mayor is even mobilising his workers so that the goods can not reach up to Mirersarai area." While the government is yet to

call tender for privatising operation of the New Mooring terminal the mayor has already called for work stoppage programme at the port, he said.

Akbar Hossain also threatened to file defamation case against the Chittagong mayor for accusing him of embezzling Tk 200 crore while buying four gantry cranes at a cost of Tk 117 crore for the Chittagong port recently.

The minister said loading and unloading of the containers at the port should be increased at least three times to cope with the increasing pressure of containers.
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MEGHNAGHAT PLANT

Rights group serves legal notice on govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rights group served the government with a legal notice demanding cancellation of the process to award any contract based on the unsolicited proposal of the Cadogan Manning Group, UK for setting up the third phase 500 megawatt power plant in Meghnaghat.

Advocate of the Supreme Court Md Ozuallah Saturday served the notice on behalf of Engineer SM Shahidullah, Convener of the National Committee for Protection of Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources and Electricity demanded cancellation of this deal because it violates all policies and undermines national interest.

It was served to the principal secretary and the secretaries of the power division, energy division, cabinet division and ministry of
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35 killed in spate of Iraq attacks

6 small Shia shrines destroyed

AFP, Reuters, Baghdad

At least 35 people were killed in a spate of attacks yesterday, including 14 dead in a double suicide bombing near Baghdad airport, Iraqi and US security officials said.

Meanwhile, two British soldiers were killed and one other wounded in a roadside bombing in the southern port city of Basra on Saturday, the defence ministry in London said. Bombs also wrecked six small rural Shia shrines north of the capi-

tal what appeared to be fresh sectarian attacks.

Fourteen Iraqis were killed and six wounded in the two suicide car bombings near a US base close to Baghdad international airport, the US military said.

Two vehicles packed with explosives were detonated in a parking lot near a Victory Base checkpoint, it said in a statement, adding that the attacks did not target the base itself.
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Nepal parliament set to slash royal powers

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's new parliament is set to pass a proclamation drastically curtailing the monarch's power and bringing the army under parliamentary control, officials said late Saturday.

"The seven party alliance is making a draft proclamation to be presented in parliament that would give full autonomy to the house," said Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat.

Parliament was reinstated after King Gyanendra handed back power at the end of April. Weeks of anti-royal mass protests across the
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SUST FIRING Dr Kamal asks for judicial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Mancha (JOM) President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday demanded judicial inquiry into the police firing at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) in Sylhet,
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Chakma royal palace resurfaces in Kaptai Lake

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The remains of a century-old royal palace of the Chakma dynasty resurfaced for the second time in the Kaptai Lake after its submersion nearly forty-six years ago as the lake's water level fell down drastically due to the long drought this year.

The royal mansion went under waters of the Kaptai Lake when the then Pakistan government created the artificial lake by making a dam along the Kamaphuli river in 1960 to execute the Kaptai Hydroelectric Project.

At least 54,000 acres of cultivable land submerged by the dam water and around two million people lost their homesteads.
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PHOTO: STAR

Tourists hop onto the remains of the century-old royal palace of the Chakma dynasty from a boat. The remains resurfaced after 20 years as the depth of water in the Kaptai Lake hits a record low.

Govt asked to go if unable to resolve utility crises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition combine yesterday asked the BNP-Jamaat alliance government to step down if they feel they cannot bring immediate solutions to ongoing power, water, gas crises and price hike of essentials.

The leaders of 14-party also threatened to resist any election in the country before implementation
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BANGLADESH WATERS

Move to look into 'illegal' exploration

UNB, Dhaka

The foreign ministry will be asked to take up the matter of hydrocarbon exploration by India and Myanmar in Bangladesh's territorial waters violating the international law.

"We will write to the foreign ministry in a day or two with necessary information to take up the matter," Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman told reporters yesterday.
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