

New investment zones planned

UNB, Dhaka

The Board of Governors of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) in its 24th meeting yesterday agreed in principle to set up new investment zones in addition to EPZs to attract more local and foreign investment.

The board of governors approved all the seven items on the agenda of the meeting held at the International Conference Centre (ICC) with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

After the meeting, Bepza Executive Chairman Brig Gen Ashraf Abdullah Yussuf disclosed the items approved at the meeting.

The items are the organogram of Bepza, security outsourcing in EPZs, expansion of Comilla EPZ, Bringing 184-acre land of Chittagong Steel Mills under Karnaphuli EPZ, installation of underground water network in Chittagong EPZ, setting up a container terminal on the Shitalakhya river beside Adamjee EPZ and construction of two hospitals in Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs.

The Bepza executive chairman told journalists that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would inaugurate Karnaphuli EPZ by the end of this month.

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EC turns away from electoral reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has backed out from its earlier planned initiative for reforming electoral laws during the tenure of the four-party alliance government, and it now wants to move with the reform agenda when the caretaker government takes over.

With the change of EC's position on the issue, officials at the EC secretariat have stopped preparing a set of draft proposals for the reforms, sources said.

When contacted, the officials said they are now busy with updating the voter list. The EC is trying its best to complete this task by August 20 as scheduled, and it is not mulling the reform issue at this moment, they added.

"The move for preparing a set of proposals for reforms has been stopped now. We don't know any reason for this. We hope we will again start working on the issue after the caretaker government takes office in October," a top EC official said.

"In fact, we are now trying hard to

complete updating the voter list properly to create public confidence in the Election Commission and rebuild its image," he said seeking anonymity.

Replying to a query, EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar told reporters yesterday that the EC has not yet held any discussion on the reform issue.

Directed by the EC around a month ago, its officials started preparing a draft incorporating proposals like making registration of political parties mandatory and raising the ceiling of a candidate's election expenditure to Tk 10 lakh from Tk 5 lakh now.

The EC also planned to introduce tougher punishment including imprisonment for six months and a fine of Tk 50,000 for irregularities in election campaigns, and restoring the EC's power to cancel candidature.

Sources said the EC however has no plan as yet to reform the existing policy and guidelines for election observers.

In the wake of allegations that some election observer bodies lack

neutrality, the EC secretary on Sunday told reporters that if necessary, the present policy and guidelines would be reformed.

Since his appointment in May last year, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz on several occasions declared that he would send a set of electoral reform proposals to the government but he has not done so till now.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE EC

Major political parties led by the ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League (AL) are divided on the reform agenda and the present EC.

The AL-led 14-party combine is agitating with its demands for reforms in caretaker government, the EC and electoral laws.

The BNP-led coalition has virtually ignored the opposition demands. The BNP seems to have planned to pass the onus of reforms on the caretaker government.

The ruling alliance has extended its support to the present

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Janmastami today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Hindus celebrate today Janmastami - one of their most festive celebrations commemorating the birth of Lord Krishna.

Krishna is regarded as the epitome of transcendental qualities in the Hindu mythology. His mission was to free the earth from evil, destroy the wrongdoers and protect the pious.

The day is a public holiday in the country.

The traditional Janmastami procession from the Dhakeshwari Temple will be brought out at 3:00pm where thousands are likely to take part. The procession will end at Bahadur Shah Park after

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Mashrafee keeps the series clean

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafee Bin Murtuza returned the best bowling figures by a Bangladeshi as the Tigers overwhelmed Kenya by six wickets in the third and final one-day international yesterday to wrap up the series 3-0.

The 22-year-old paceman's, the man-of-the-match in all three ODIs that earned him the man-of-the-series award as well, record bowling effort of 6-26 in the shorter version of the game powered the tourists repeat the feat done at home earlier this year when they outclassed the East African nation 4-0.

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BSF abducts 3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The Border Security Force (BSF) of India yesterday abducted three Bangladeshi nationals including two high school students from Hakimpur and Birampur upazilas.

The two abducted students - Zillur Rahman and Shariful Islam - are from Nowpara village under Hakimpur upazila while the third abducted is Masud Rana, a farmer from Mahmudpara village under

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Community primary teachers lay siege to secretariat today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Community primary teachers observing hunger strike since August 6 at the Central Shaheed Minar demanding nationalisation of their jobs will besiege the secretariat today and the Prime Minister's Office tomorrow.

Teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers' Association will bring out a procession from the Central Shaheed Minar and march towards the secretariat at 12:00 noon to press the government meet their one point demand.

The teachers on hunger strike yesterday announced fresh

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Uncared for railway track at the city's Tejgaon station. Long grasses have grown on the line and slum dwellers dump garbage at several points although trains run on it.

Pak charity funded airline bomb plot

Reports US newspaper

AFP, Washington

A Pakistani charity that received 10 million dollars from Britain for earthquake relief last year helped finance the alleged bomb plot to blow up US-bound passenger jets, The Washington Post said yesterday.

"The innocent Pakistani souls in Britain who contributed so generously for the victims of the earthquake didn't know that their money would actually be used for one of the biggest terrorist operations," a Pakistani intelligence official told the daily.

The charity was not mentioned by name, but the official said the funds traced to it helped investigators uncover the alleged plot British authorities thwarted last week and which US officials have tentatively linked to al-Qaeda.

Another senior Pakistani intelligence official said the charity had received some five million pounds (10 million dollars) from Britain, but that less than half was used for relief operations in the October earthquake that killed 73,000 people.

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PHOTO: STAR

The vessel bought two years ago for forest surveillance by Kadamtala Forest Station in Sathkira range for Tk 12 lakh lying unused for months. Repair of the vessel would now cost another Tk 1 lakh.

Hunt on for Tigers as Lanka fighting rages

Schools closed on govt orders

REUTERS, Colombo

Troops and Tamil Tigers fought a fierce artillery battle across the no-man's land in Sri Lanka's north yesterday, the military said, as it searched for rebel infiltrators amid fears a renewed civil war could escalate.

Schools were closed on government orders for holidays to begin early after a suspected Tiger front group threatened on Monday to attack civilian targets before an

ambush on a Pakistan embassy convoy in the capital killed seven people and wounded 17.

Pakistan is one of Sri Lanka's biggest arms suppliers.

The suicide attack on the convoy came after Air Force jets killed at least 19 men and women aged around 17-20 in a raid on rebel territory, truce monitors said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have accused the military of killing 61 schoolgirls in that raid, but the government said it

had killed dozens of guerrillas. "The fighting has been throughout the night. They are attacking us with artillery and mortar fire in Muhumalai," said a military spokesman, referring to a "border" crossing that separates rebel from government territory in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

"A search operation is also going on."

Thousands of residents were still holed up in churches and

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Displaced Lebanese return home

REUTERS, Beirut

Thousands of refugees headed home to south Lebanon yesterday as a UN truce between Israel and Hezbollah held for a second day and Israeli forces began pulling back from some positions they had occupied.

Overnight, Israeli troops left the southern Christian town of Marjayoun which they had occupied on Thursday, Lebanese security sources said. Witnesses said later they were also pulling out of the nearby town of Qlaiah.

The Israeli army, which had

poured 30,000 troops into the south to fight Hezbollah guerrillas, plans to start handing over some pockets of territory to UN troops in a day or two, Israeli officials and Western diplomats said.

Israel's expedited timetable for withdrawing reflects concerns that its forces on the ground are easy targets for Hezbollah attack. "They want a fast exit in one to two weeks," said a Western diplomat briefed by the Israeli army.

A Lebanese political source said the Israelis could withdraw completely from Lebanon as early as

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6th Expert Group Consultation session today

STAR REPORT

Nagorik Committee 2006 organises its sixth Expert Group Consultation session on the Vision 2021 for Bangladesh, Goal Six: "To be a globally integrated economic and commercial regional hub" at Cirdap Auditorium in the capital today.

The committee has identified

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JCD, Sramik Dal men held for beating up cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police yesterday arrested a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader and a Sramik Dal leader for beating up cops and attempting to loot a rifle from the police on duty at a Sonali Bank branch in the town.

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Pvt security men won't be allowed to carry firearms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided not to allow members of private security agencies carry firearms as it feels they lack credibility and have been found involved in robberies on several occasions.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said, "We're not giving them the permission because they lack credibility and people's trust." "The security agencies themselves were involved in a number of robbery incidents," he added.

He was speaking to reporters after finalising Private Security Service Rules in a meeting at the home ministry yesterday.

According to the rules, the private agencies will have to hire armed members of Ansar if they need firearms to protect their clients.

The rules, finalised about six months after passing of the Private Security Service Act, are likely to be enacted next week after vetting by the law ministry.

All private security agencies will have to have licence from the government after the enactment of the rules. Each agency will have to pay the government Tk 2 lakh as licence fees and Tk 5 lakh refundable security deposit. Besides, they

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PHOTO: STAR

A man treads fresh grooves on a used tyre at a radial shop in Dholakhal in Old Dhaka yesterday. The tyres are later sold for Tk 500-800 putting the vehicles using those at great risk of accidents.

Charges framed against 10 in journo Gautam killing case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against 10 people accused in the journalist Gautam Das murder case.

Faridpur bureau chief of Dainik Samakal Gautam Das, 30, was brutally killed on November 17 last year.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 framed the charges where six out of the 10 accused were present. He fixed August 22 for trial of the case.

The charge-sheeted accused are Asif Imtiaz Bulu, Kazi Murad, Zahid, Kamrul Islam Apon, Asad Bin Kadir, Siddiqur Rahman, Tamzid Hossain Babu, Rajib Hassan Miah, Asif Imran and Abu Taher Mohammad Murtuza Ahsan

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