

Dhaka, Russia trade agreement soon

Bangladesh will soon enter into an agreement to resume bilateral trade with Russia, the major republic in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which replaced the Soviet Union, reports UNB. Official sources said the Ministry of Commerce expected a draft agreement from the Russian authorities today. The agreement will be finalised and signed after necessary scrutiny.

They said the government will soon move to enter into similar agreements with other republics in the CIS with special preference to Muslim dominated central Asian nations. Proposals have already been put forward to the governments of those republics through the Bangladesh Embassy in Moscow.

Initial response was favourable and agreement with Russia will pave the way for similar agreements with other states, the sources said. A high level delegation, led by a senior cabinet minister, is also preparing to visit the new republics of former Soviet Union to look for potential markets. The visit of the delegation, which will include private sector representatives, is likely to take place early next month.

To build up economic cooperation with the former Soviet republics, the government has also moved to set up a Joint Economic Commission with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In the proposed trade agreement with Russia, the sources said, both sides might prefer barter trade at this stage in view of serious foreign exchange scarcity in Russia.

Russia, however, is now pressing Bangladesh to repay credit in foreign currency, used to be paid earlier in kind.

Trade between Bangladesh and former Soviet Union remained snapped since the last barter expired in March last year and Moscow refused to renew it. Under the latest barter agreement, both the countries exchanged commodities worth 19 million pound sterling each way.

The former Soviet Union was a major buyer of Bangladeshi tea, jute and jute goods while Dhaka used to import crude oil and chemicals.

Both officials and business circle here said apart from traditional items, the CIS could be a big market for Bangladeshi goods like ready-made garments, toiletries and ceramic wares.

Many Asian countries, including India and Pakistan, have already entered into the newly opened markets in the former Soviet Union in an aggressive way with offers of liberal export credit.

Bangladesh's effort without similar credit offer might face tougher competition from other exporting countries, business and officials circles said.



President Abdur Rahman Biswas seeing off the Thai Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn at the Zia International Airport yesterday. —PID photo

Fresh date for framing two more charges Court's 'no' to Ershad's prayer for staying verdict on money case

A division bench of the High Court yesterday rejected a review petition of former president HM Ershad seeking stay of judgement in the corruption case against him set for January 27, reports UNB.

"We find no substance in the application, and therefore it is rejected summarily," observed the learned judge while rejecting the petition.

Ershad is awaiting judgement of District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Ali Khan in the corruption case in which he was accused of amassing wealth, including a cash of Tk 1,90,81,565 found in his officials residence Senabhaban, beyond his known sources of income.

"Much money and labour has been spent by both prosecution and defence in conducting the case all these months. At this stage, postponement of the delivery of judgement would be totally unwarranted," the learned judge further observed.

The trial of Ershad in the corruption case began on March 20, 1991 in which as many as 58 prosecution and defence witnesses were examined and cross-examined.

The division bench comprising Justice Anwarul Haq Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Abdul Karim heard arguments of both sides on the review petition for the third day yesterday, before the judgement is delivered.

Justice Chowdhury who pronounced the exhaustive judgement also observed, "in exercising revisional jurisdiction, this court would not interfere in the description of another court."

A similar petition, seeking postponement of trial of the

former president, was rejected earlier by the Special Court. The petition had said a civil suit was filed by Jatiya Party claiming the money found in Ershad's residence and that his trial in the case be postponed till disposal of the civil suit.

Maudud Ahmed who appeared for the petitioner said he will move the Appellate Division against rejection of the review petition. A provisional appeal will be filed in a couple of days, he added.

Talking to reporters immediately after the judgement, Maudud said the corruption case against Ershad was instituted "on political grounds to victimise him for political reasons.... It is discriminatory and malafide."

Attorney General Aminul Haq appeared for the state. He was assisted by Hasan Mohammad Arif and Farid Hossain.

BSS adds: HM Ershad was produced before the court yesterday for bringing formal charges against him in two cases of misappropriation of government money and abuse of power.

However, because of the objections of the defence lawyers charges could not be read out. The District and Sessions Judge, Nasiruddin Ahmed, who presided over the Special Court, fixed February 11 as the date for framing the charge.

Former works minister Shaful Ghani Swapan and former DIT chairman late Abul Bashar are the other accused in the case. Swapan and Litu were in the dock with Ershad.

Maudud Ahmed, second accused in this case now on bail, was not in the court by exercising the privilege of a sitting

MP as provided by law. The defence lawyers said that they could not procure relevant documents and that because of short notice they could not consult the clients.

After hearing a mild objection from prosecution, the court fixed February 11 as the date for framing the charges.

In the second case, the former President and the former chairman of Rajuk (former DIT) Rahamatullah have been accused by the Bureau of Anti Corruption for violation of Rajuk rules in awarding residential plots to 49 persons depriving the genuine applicants.

The favours were done to politicians and people of other professions including journalists without taking application in prescribed form, which was in violation of the set rule.

The charges are that the accused persons in collusion with one another and by violating the Rules of 1953 and misusing the power had allotted residential plots at Gulshan, Banani and Uttara. The accused persons by doing so had committed offence under Section 2 of 5(2) of the prevention of Anti-corruption Act of 1947.

Rahamatullah, who is handicapped because of illness, was helped to the dock to sit beside Ershad.

The prosecution side was headed by Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan and assisted by Mohammad Hanif PP A K M Mostafa APP and Nurul Islam APP.

Former Justice Abdul Malek, Motinul Haq, Shamsul Haq and Sharfuddin Khan Mukul appeared on behalf of the accused.

'Govt firm to remove curse of illiteracy'

NATORE, Jan 21: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that government was determined to remove the curse of illiteracy from the society by putting in its all-out efforts, reports BSS.

Begum Zia was addressing a spontaneous gathering after laying the foundation stone of the academy building of Ramshabani College.

The Prime Minister said one of the major targets of the present government was to improve the education sector by attaching topmost priority to it.

Begum Zia said despite resource constraints her government was trying ceaselessly to solve the existing problems in all the sectors in phases. Principal of the college Kamaluddin Ahmed also spoke.

Earlier, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the academy building to be built at an estimated cost of Taka 23 lakh.

Earlier, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the Narod bridge in the town.

The bridge will be constructed at an estimated cost of Taka 1.50 crore.

Begum Zia also inaugurated the 300-new line circuits of Natore Telephone Exchange.

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Telephone and Telegraph Minister Keramat Ali, State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman Patal and Selima Rahman, MP, accompanied the Prime Minister.

At a workers rally held at the lawn of Uttara Ganobhaban Begum Khaleda Zia called upon the workers of BNP to gear-up party activities and help implement various government programmes aimed at welfare of the vast population.

Zia said "Insha Allah the present government will fulfil all its commitments one by one".

Presided over by District BNP President Mohammad Strajul Islam the meeting was

also addressed by State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman, District Party Secretary Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar and former District Party Secretary Kazi Golam Morshed.

Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Social Welfare Minister Tafiqul Islam and Selima Rahman, MP, were also present.

Cabinet meet

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the problems of the Chalan Beel. It was also decided that a full-fledged television centre would be set up in Rajshahi.

The meeting also decided that the girl students from class six to class eight would get free education outside the municipal areas with an aim to promote women education in the society.

The education upto class five under the compulsory primary education programme introduced recently by the present government has already been made free for all.

Another report adds: The ministers who came here to attend the Cabinet meeting today extensively visited development projects under their respective ministries and institutional set up in the areas.

The ministers including Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal ibne Yusuf and Social Welfare Minister Rafiqul Islam saw the progress of the concerned projects and institution to know about the difficulties by the projects and institutions.

Govt accused of rehabilitating Golam Azam

By DU Correspondent

The government was yesterday criticised for what was termed its 'rehabilitation' of Jamiat Amir Golam Azam.

The criticism was made by speakers at a discussion held at the Dhaka University.

The speakers also demanded the immediate trial of Golam as a 'war criminal' at a discussion arranged by the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) in observance of its 8th founding anniversary at the 'battala' of the Dhaka University.

They urged the government to ensure a peaceful academic atmosphere in all the educational institutions.

The discussion was participated by JSD leader Hasanul Huq Inu, SCF former President Mostafa Faruque, Chhatra League (N-S) leader Nazmul Huq Proddhan, SCF General Secretary Razeekuzzaman Ratan, Badruddin Umar, and BSD Convener Khalekuzzaman. SCF President Belal Chowdhury was in the chair.

The Five-Party Alliance Convener Hahanul Huq Inu said that Khaleda Zia would lose power if she failed to break the tradition of sheltering razzakars, followed by all the governments after independence.

The government has not realised any of the demands for which we launched the nine year anti-autocratic movement Nazmul Huq Proddhan said in his speech.

He also demanded implementation of the students 10-point charter of demands immediately.

Five-Party Alliance leader Khalekuzzaman urged the student community to move against terrorism.

Badruddin Umar said that Golam Azam was a symbol of an 'enemy' so it was the duty of the people of the country to launch a vigorous movement against him.

Vajiralongkorn leaves for home

Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn of Thailand left for home Tuesday after a six-day state visit leaving an impression that the two Asian nations may enter a new age of cooperation in days ahead, reports UNB.

Officials in Dhaka described the tour as "very successful".

Dhaka now looks forward to further expanding its relations with Bangkok and other capitals as the main global economic activities are gradually shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific region, they said.

The Thai Prince was given a hearty send-off when he flew for home this morning. President Abdur Rahman Biswas saw him off at the Zia International Airport.

A smartly turned-out contingent drawn from the three services gave the Prince a guard of honour. He took the salute and inspected the guard.

The Thai Crown Prince, while visiting abroad, represents the king who normally does not undertake foreign trips.

A tiny lot presented the Prince with bouquet.

A 19-gun salute boomed to mark the departure of the heir to the Thai throne.

Four aircraft of Bangladesh Air Force escorted the Thai royal special plane carrying the Prince up to exit of the Bangladesh airbase.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, heads of diplomatic missions, high civil and military officials and Thai community members were present at the airport.

The salient feature of the Thai Prince's week-long visit is his talks with President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

During the talks, Bangladesh showed interest in joint collaboration in industries, tourism, agriculture, family planning and rural development.

The Thai Prince appreciated Bangladesh's development efforts, particularly in economic fields, and hoped further expansion of bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

Trawler collision leaves three missing, 14 hurt

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 21: Three people were missing and fourteen others injured when an engine boat collided with another and capsized in the river Jamuna near here this morning, reports UNB.

The Strajganj-bound boat with 17 passengers on board capsized when it was hit by a mechanized boat coming from opposite direction. The collision as visibility became poor due to dense fog.

UP elections

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Commission, 17,444 candidates, including 115 women, are contesting for 3,849 posts of chairman while 1,06,968, including 1138 female, for 34,801 member posts.

EC statistics show 4.48 candidates contesting on an average for one post of chairman this year against 4.30 in the previous elections (1988). For each post of member, the average number of candidates is 3.05 against 2.97 in 1988.

A total of 4,95,00,676 persons have been listed as valid voters for the elections.

Each union parishad is the lowest tier in the elected local administration, comprises a chairman and nine members.

Voting at a 19,585 centres will be conducted by 2,93,979 election officers.

Nearly 1,00,000 security-men including members of police and ansars along with volunteers will be deployed at the polling centres. Besides, reserve forces will also be kept on standby.

In the country's offshore islands naval personnel will be added to the land forces while army units and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will be put on full alert.

Pre-election violence has left over a dozen people dead in different parts of the country.

The Election Commission announced a ban on all sorts of electioneering 48 hours before the holding of the election to a union parishad.

According to EC polling arrangements voting will be held as per the following schedule: On the first day, January 22-voting will be held in 600 unions, on January 23-653 unions, Jan 25-517 unions, Jan 26-94 unions, Jan 27-352 unions, Jan 28-201 unions, Jan 29-310 unions, Jan 30-171 unions, February 1-408 unions, Feb 2-176 unions, Feb 3-301 unions, Feb 4-160 unions, Feb 5-229 unions and Feb 6-329 unions.

Four elections to the union parishads have been held since the independence of the country. Those were held in 1973, 1977, 1983 and 1988.

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The Midnight File

Kashmir militants kidnap airport security chief

NEW DELHI, Jan 21: Muslim militants abducted the security chief of a Kashmir airport today in the first kidnapping of a senior police officer in the troubled northern Indian province, the Press Trust of

India (PTI) reported. Deputy Inspector General of Police Hafizullah Dar was abducted in the busy Srinagar district of Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, by armed men while he was returning from a hospital, PTI said.

Tiger ambush, blast kill 37 govt soldiers

COLOMBO, Jan 21: A jungle ambush and an explosion at an armoury in eastern Sri Lanka left at least 37 government soldiers dead today military spokesman said. At least 17 people were killed and about 60 injured in a huge explosion near an armoury where weapons and ammunition are stored at an air force base in eastern Trincomalee district, spokesman said, reports Reuter.

Riyadh decides to cut oil production

RIYADH, Jan 21: Saudi Arabia announced today it would reduce oil production by 100,000 barrels a day from its current 8.5 million - barrel output to shore up world prices. Anxious to ensure stability in the oil market, the Saudi Kingdom has decided to reduce immediately its crude production by 100,000 barrels a day, Oil Minister Hisham Nazzer told the Saudi Press Agency.

Opposition plans bargain

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Workers Party, when contacted, said "before extending support to the amendment bill I will ask for support to the other amendments pending their (BNP) approval." Menon added he was awaiting decision on the bill asking for measures against illegal takeover of power. Shamsuddoha, leader of the parliamentary group of CPB said "there will have to be a new package deal on the basis of declaration by three alliances in exchange for our support to the amendment bill."

Termining the news 'not surprising', Maulana Muttur Rahman Nizami leader of Jamaat parliamentary party avoided a direct answer and said "Jamaat wants to maintain

a working relationship with all parties and to give democracy and institutional shape this working relationship is important."

Barrister Maudud Ahmed, leader of the Jatiya Party parliamentary party said, "let the bill be placed and only then we will decide our course of action."

For creating the post of a Deputy Prime Minister the Constitution will have to be amended by two thirds majority. The ruling party has 170 members, which falls far short of the number. The Opposition, altogether, commands a strength of 160 members. In such a situation, an influential leader of the ruling party commented "we will have to reach an understanding with some party before moving the amendment."

AL hopes UP election will be fair

Leaders of Bangladesh Awami League Tuesday expressed the hope that the Union Parishad elections would be held in all fairness to reflect the aspirations of the people honestly and give democracy an institutional shape, reports BSS.

Acting President of Awami League and Deputy Leader of the opposition Abdus Samad Azad and General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury in a statement in Dhaka Tuesday on the eve of Union Parishad elections beginning day said that the future of democracy largely depended on holding the Union Parishad elections fairly because these elections played a vital role in forming the local governments.

The Awami League leaders called upon the Election Commission to play its role properly in this regard.

They said the people of the country had achieved the right of franchise by ousting the autocratic Ershad government through a long struggle and exercised this right to vote in February 27 Jatiya Sangsad elections.

But they expressed their dismay that many people had been killed and injured in clashes since the Union Parishad election dates were announced.

EC won't tolerate

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Election Commission was determined to hold the Union Parishad elections in a peaceful and neutral atmosphere.

He said in view of the bitter experience of the Union Parishad elections of 1988 arrangements had been made for staggered polling spread over 16 days.

All possible measures have been taken to keep under "complete control" the law and order which is the prime requisite for a free and fair election, he added.

Justice Rouf made it clear that the Election Commission would not tolerate any violence during the Union Parishad polls. The commission would also not hesitate to conduct repolling as many times, an necessary if unfairness or illegal acts were detected at any place, he said.

The Chief Election Commissioner said the success of elections also greatly depended on the roles of the agents and polling agents of contesting candidates. Therefore, he said, arrangements had been made for distribution of a special guide to them so that they could perform their tasks properly.

He underlined the importance of Union Parishad elections saying that this local body was the main basis or rural development structure. A greater part of national development activities centred round the Union Parishads, he added.

Justice Rouf said Chairmen and members of four Union Parishads had already been elected unopposed and now polling will be held in phases for 3,899 Union Parishads.

He said a total of 17,490 candidates are contesting for the post of Chairman while 1,07,258 others are running for the post of member. The Chief Election Commissioner said 19,586 polling centres had been set up across the country where three lakh polling officers would be engaged.

Teachers' strike

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An agreement was signed between the government and the teachers' federation on November 26, 1979 for an equal pay scale and facilities to both government and non-government teachers.

It was observed for the last 12 years but the present government did not include the non-government teachers and employees' in the new pay scale, the BFTA added.

However, the students of secondary and higher secondary levels are now passing their day in a disrupted academic atmosphere.

Their parents are anxious about when their children would again start their normal classes.

The government has already fulfilled the government teachers' and employees demands including their inclusion in the new pay scale. But the government is still maintaining the role of a silent spectator regarding the problems of the non-government institutions.

The Bangladesh National Awami Party president Professor Mozaffar Ahmed and the general secretary Panikaj Bhattacharya in a joint statement yesterday called for ensuring congenial academic atmosphere by implementing the demands of the non-government teachers and employees immediately through holding talks with them.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Teachers Association (BTA) announced its programme to hold a procession on January 23. The procession will start at 2 pm from the National Press Club and disperse near Jatiya Sangsad.

Collaborators

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during the War in the Mujibnagar Government that led the War. The coteries of Khondoker Mushtaque Ahmed, Mahbulul Alam Chashi and Taheruddin Thakur finally fulfilled their pledge to their Pakistani masters in 1975, the statement said.

The leaders of the organisation also resented the activities of a section of Awami League leadership in the post-Liberation days and accused them of sabotaging the national development efforts.

The successive governments after 1975 were all strikingly similar in their programmes for rehabilitating the "razzakars" said the statement.

"That is why the freedom fighters had to remain silent when a controversial personality was elected to the country's highest position after 20 years, he said". The two aspirants for the post of the president sought blessings from Golam Azam.

Now is the time for proper evaluation of all the activities of the past, they said.

Editor : S. M. Ali
Executive Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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