

Industrial sector may crumble in 2 years'

Commerce Minister M K Anwar Sunday warned country's industrial sector may crumble in next two years unless something positive is done to improve the deteriorating situation in power supply, reports UNB.

Addressing the 22nd meeting of Export Promotion Council yesterday morning, he stressed strict rationing of power and also hinted at allowing installation of power generators in industrial units.

There have been reports of frequent loadshedding across the country, seriously affecting production in mills, field and factories, besides causing suffering to the people. PDB recently said there would be 300mw loadshedding a day for shortfall in power generation.

Giving positive signs in export performance this year despite initial sluggishness, the Commerce Minister told the council meeting that country's export earning in 1991-92 would cross the target due to positive steps taken by the democratic government.

Though we were lagging behind in the first three months, we have gradually picked up and expect to surpass our target at least by 20 per cent in terms of money," he said.

Held at a local hotel, the meeting reviewed 12 suggestions for inclusion in and deletion from the two-year export policy (1991-93).

Chamber leaders, representatives of the trade associations, high officials, including Commerce Secretary Nazem Ahmed Chowdhury, also addressed the meeting.

The Minister hinted that the government would squeeze its responsibility in administering country's trade and commerce.

"We want to narrow our sphere of activities and make private sector more dynamic," he told the businessmen.

To objections raised by the chamber leaders to the implementation of certain export-related decisions, Anwar said "You have to accept the reality... arranging interministerial meeting is a long drawn process."

He said the two-year export policy would be reviewed in due time and sought recommendations from the trade and chamber bodies in this regard.

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Zarif's killers yet to be nabbed

By Staff Correspondent

Police could not arrest the killers of Kazi Mohammad Zarif till Sunday night.

Zarif, a contractor and supplier and also a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A), was shot dead in the premises of Suhrawardy Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city Saturday.

Meanwhile, postmortem examination of the body was done at Forensic Department of the Dhaka Medical College Saturday. Doctors said that it was a homicide, but Tejgaon police said they did not receive the report.

A Suhrawardy Hospital source said, Zarif was enlisted there and had been supplying food of the patients of the last four years. Zarif had rivalry with some other contractors whom he did not allow to submit tender, the source added.

Police sources said, Zarif was wanted in at least a dozen cases. He had cases lodged with several police stations including Tejgaon, Mohammadpur, Mirpur in Dhaka and Golechha in Barisal. A warrant of arrest was issued against him by the Tejgaon Police Station a few days before his death and police were hunting for Zarif, the sources added.

Bomb hurled at CPB office

By Staff Correspondent

A cracker was hurled at the central office of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at Purana Paltan in the city last night.

Witnesses said, two persons came by a rickshaw one of whom hurled the cracker at about 8.45 pm in the office compound and fled away.

CPB General Secretary, Nurul Islam Nahid, told the Daily Star that he was in the office room and had heard the blast. No one was hurt in the incident, he added.



The reexcavated Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal of the Arahazur Upazila, Narayanganj. — Star photo

A canal people pin hopes on

By Staff Correspondent

KALLYANDI(Narayanganj), Apr 26: For some 30,000 people, mostly share croppers, the Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal in this remote union in Arahazur upazila epitomizes hope. Hope for more crops, optimum utilisation of arable land and self-sufficiency in food.

The seven-kilometer canal, about 46 kilometers off Dhaka, is the first one which has been re-excavated completely under the national canal digging programme re-initiated by the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

On April 21, the Prime Minister formally let the water flow in the Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal which was completed within one and a half month before the scheduled construction in three months.

Addressing a big public meeting later at the local Shahid Manzur Stadium, she announced that her government was determined to see that all of its development programmes succeeded despite all hindrances.

Begum Zia said that the nine-year autocratic rule had left behind a legacy of destruction and plundering of national assets. The nationalist force was determined to take the nation on the path of development through national consensus, she added.

The Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal which flows through Sadasadi, Fatepur and Mahmudpur unions and falls into a branch of the river Meghna would bring 2,500 acres of land under irrigation facilities in the dry season.

The land was losing its fertility while the deep irrigation tubewells were pumping out less water, he said explaining the objective of re-excavation of the canal.

The agricultural produce of the upazila was rice — irri and aman, jute, sugarcane, potato, pulses and mustard.

Arahazur upazila parishad officials said.

The open-end canal would also help free another 500 acres from seasonal water logging, they hoped.

The officials said that the irrigated land would annually produce 5,500 metric tons of surplus crops, estimated at Taka 3.25 crore.

Besides, an estimated 35 metric tons of fish, worth Taka 18 lakh, would be produced in the canal every year, they said.

The three-lakh residents of the upazila need 42,939 metric tons of food a year — 6,457 tons deficit from the total requirement.

"The Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal can be a boon for the local people," said Aatur Rahman, the local member of parliament.

He said that re-excavation of the canal cost 106.66 metric tons of wheat. The amount was half of the total estimated cost and the canal was dug one kilometer longer than the original plan, he said.

Rahman said despite the two mighty rivers — the Lakkhya and the Meghna — flowing near the area, ground water level had alarmingly gone down causing difficulties in irrigation during the dry season.

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Abdur Rahman Bhuiyan a farmer of the nearby Laxmibhardi village in Sadasadi union, said that most of the land in his locality produced double crops and with increased irrigation facilities three crops could be produced in the area.

"The canal will also reduce the operation cost of the deep-dug pumps saving about one thousand taka for every acre," he said. "We are keeping our fingers crossed."

According to the local agricultural office, the present crop intensity - number of harvests on a piece of land a year - is 100 per cent.

Local officials estimate that crop intensity would reach 235 per cent with better irrigation facilities in the area.

However, the hopes of the local people are on the balance as success of the whole project is helplessly depending on construction of a sluice gate across the Ramchandradi-Kalyandi canal.

Officials of the Arahazur upazila parishad said that only a sluice gate, that costs Taka 6 lakh, could stop draining out of water from the 10-foot-deep canal, filled up during the monsoon.

They said that a proposal to construct a sluice gate had been submitted to the government for approval. However, they admitted that it would take "some time" to start constructing the sluice gate.

Interestingly, the cost of 106.66 metric tons of wheat (an estimated 6,000 taka a ton) is a little more than the estimated cost for construction of the sluice gate.

BNP poll pledges

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ene collection and savings to generate internal resources.

The Finance Minister pointed out that if the present rate of income and expenditure continued then about 18 to 19 per cent of the allocation of the Annual Development Plan (ADP) could be financed from internal resources. He said the target was to allocate 25 per cent of the ADP from internal funds by next year and a minimum of 35 per cent by 1995.

Bangladesh received a commitment of 2.1 billion US dollars in aid for the 1992-93 fiscal year at the April 20-21 Aid Club meeting held under the auspices of the World Bank.

The consortium members, however, were critical about the performance in the micro-economic sector, the Minister pointed out, adding that the management problems, excess manpower and the continuing losses in the public sector corporations including PDB, DESA, Railways, Jute Corporation and the Jute Mills Corporation were particularly singled out.

Agreeing with the assessment of the donors, the Minister noted that nearly one-third of the project aid was currently used to cover the losses.

The primary thrust in the immediate would be to cut down on system losses, reduce excess manpower and improve management and marketing practices, he added.

The absence of a relationship between wages and productivity was also criticised by the donors. "The sine qua non of the support of donors is to link wages with productivity," Rahman said.

Replying to a question, the Minister said that the excess manpower in the public sector corporations would be reduced in stages under a 'rational compensation plan and a safety net'.

He said that the retrenched workers could be re-located in alternate avenues and added that a number of re-training centres would be set up around the country.

Development partners at the meeting were also critical about the 'shortcomings' and 'lapses' in utilizing aid money. "The administrative machinery and the implementation process has to be re-activated," the Minister said.

Rahman pointed out that although there was no shortage of resources, the government's education, health and rural credit programmes were facing problems due to bottlenecks in the implementation process.

He said that institutional improvements were needed to enhance the pace of project implementation.

The rural credit delivery problem had been accentuated by the failure of the Krishi Bank to reach the rural people. "New institutions should be built to provide directed credit" in line with the government's poverty alleviation and rural development programmes, Rahman said.

However, the Minister said, the donors noted that the project aid utilisation would accelerate as the situation was congenial for the speedy implementation of projects.

The Finance Minister said that the implementation process could also be delayed because of conditionalities.

Referring to the fourth population and family planning project, he noted that it was delayed for several months because of the conditionalities of two co-financiers. He said that from now on only a few co-financiers would be included in an aided project.

In this connection, some qualitative and procedural improvements were agreed upon with the donors at the meeting, he said. It was agreed that the moment 75 per cent of a project's funding was committed, the project would get started and would not be delayed for the remaining portion of the funds.

Replying to another question, he said that the unused aid funds, of over \$ 5 billion, in the pipeline was divided into passive and active portions.

He said that the passive portion of the pipeline was difficult to use because of budgetary constraints of the donor countries.

Negotiations were being conducted with the development partners so that the pledges which remained unused could be utilised in other areas.

Calling for concerted efforts of all to revitalise the nation's economy in an increasingly competitive international environment, the Finance Minister said that economic considerations had to prevail over 'rhetorical' politics. "My personal priority is that we have to do more economic thinking and less politics."

Planning Commission member Dr Sheikh Maqsood Ali, Economic Relations Division Secretary Enam Ahmed Choudhury, Internal Resources Division Secretary N H Khan, Food Secretary A N M Yusuf, ERD Joint Secretary Fazur Rahman Choudhury and ERD Deputy Secretary Moshfiq Swalehin assisted the Finance Minister at the press briefing.

The Midnight File

Streicher leading in Austria's election

VIENNA, Apr 26: Social Democrat Rudolf Streicher emerged ahead of his rival Thomas Klestil in the first round of presidential voting in Austria today, according to early estimates. With just over 30 per cent of the votes counted, a television estimate gave Streicher 41.5 per cent of the vote, with 35.5 per cent to the conservative Klestil, reports AFP.

Iraq must implement all UN resolutions: Russia

KUWAIT CITY, Apr 26: Iraq must implement all United Nations Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis sparked by its invasion of Kuwait, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said here today. Kozyrev, whose country filled the former Soviet Union's seat as a permanent Security Council member, said the international community must ensure the implementation of all the resolutions, the Kuwaiti News Agency KUNA reported, says AFP.

Battle for Kabul

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took place near the presidential place.

"Jamat forces appeared to have prevailed, perhaps with the collusion of Hezb defectors," a diplomatic source said.

The fighting broke out the same day that Hekmatyar warned he would launch a major assault on Kabul which the Soviet installed regime virtually gave up without firing a shot Saturday.

Hezb and Jamiat troops poured into the city and took control of various parts in a race to grab strategic location.

Colonel Omar Agha, a Dostam commander directing operations in the city, said the Brahmaputra waters

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gency of the problem even failed to behave in a 'correct' way with the Bangladesh team.

The Indian Irrigation Minister, Vidyacharan Sukla did not receive or see-off the Bangladesh Minister at the gateway. He was, however, represented by Irrigation Secretary Dr. Chetani while preferring to wait in the lounge of the airport.

Despite repeated requests from the Bangladesh side the Indian side expressed its inability to arrange a meeting with its Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The Bangladesh delegation was told that Rao had no time because of 'political preoccupations' and that the gift meant for the Indian Prime Minister could not be handed over.

Sources further said that during formal discussions the Indian side said that it was not interested in discussing sharing waters of the Ganges and the Teesta nor was it interested in reviving the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC).

Delegation sources further said that once in Delhi they got the feeling that India was bent on applying the 'tactics of brinkmanship' against Bangladesh. The Indian side was blunt in expressing that a Bangladesh suffering from acute water crisis was of no significance to it, sources said.

Incidentally, the Bangladesh delegation was put up in the same floor of the hotel and across the rooms where the family of ousted Afghan President Najibullah is living in exile.

The Secretary-General emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire, a declaration of general amnesty for all, respect for human rights, guarantees for personal safety, security and personal property.

In a statement released in Islamabad just after his departure by plane for Tehran, Boutros-Ghali urged all Afghans to avoid further bloodshed and civil war.

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Sher-e-Bangla Jatiya Smiti Sangsad, Bangladesh Jatiya Baktitta Gabeshana Kendra, Bangladesh Manabdhikar Sangatan and Sher-e-Bangla Jatiya Foundation have jointly chalked out programmes to observe the day.

The programme include milad mahfil and placing wreaths at the mazar at 8 am, discussion meeting at 8.30 am and seminar at 4.30 pm at the mazar premises today.

The discussion meeting will be attended, among others, by Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Abdus Samad Azad, justice Ruhul Islam, Abu Rusd Matinuddin, and Dr Ashraf Siddiqi.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in a message on the occasion said the ideals of Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq would inspire the nation to work for the amelioration of the lot of common people and consolidation of newly established democracy.

Begum Zia said the politics of the Sher-e-Bangla for the welfare of poor peasants as well as the common man had imbued and inspired the people of this region to build the nation with the spirit of nationalism.

The Prime Minister said the Sher-e-Bangla was the friend of the people and farmers. She said the unique contribution of the leader to the establishment of democratic values, spreading of education, improvement of peasants' lot and Muslim renaissance in the sub-continent especially in Bangladesh would remain unfaded.

Begum Zia prayed for the peace of Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq.

Deputy Minister for Law and Justice ABM Zahidul Huq, Red Crescent Chairman Shahidul Huq Jamal, MP, Roushan Elahi, MP, and Additional Secretary in charge of Relief Ministry accompanied the Prime Minister.

The rally at Torondia was also addressed by local MPs Moorjahan Yasmin, Hazrul Islam, Khurram Khan Chowdhury and Anwar Hossain Khan Chowdhury.

SAARC special session begins in Colombo today

By Staff Correspondent

COLOMBO, Apr 26: The Foreign Secretaries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal arrived in Colombo Sunday for Monday's special session of the Standing Committee of SAARC Foreign Secretaries.

Foreign Ministry sources told Lankapuvath that Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan and KK Bhargava, former SAARC Secretary General at present a Secretary at the Indian Foreign office, would be arriving Monday.

No alternative

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trying Azam was the question of existence of the majority who support the cause of independence.

"The Jamatis are being financed and armed by some foreign countries and the government is giving them sanctuary," she complained and said "bad days are coming as the fundamentalist forces are planning another mass killing."

The pro-independence forces are bolstered only by power of self-confidence and integrity and they will not leave the street until the demand is met.

Imam urged the people to oust 'Jamaatis and Shibirites' from mosque saying that "they are exploiting the common man by using Islam".

She categorically said that the Nirmul Committee was totally a non-political body but a section of newspapers were publishing fabricated news to break the unity of the forum.

"I am now 64 and I have nothing to gain or lose so I have no political ambition," she told the people referring to a news item in which it was hinted that Imam was going to head a political party.

She urged the patriotic people to donate to committee fund (account No 2004) at the Elephant Road branch of United Commercial Bank Limited.

Imam urged the participant to continue rallies and processions until May 17 by forming committees in every corner of the country.

Abdur Razzak said that the government had not yet taken any action against Jamaat although it violated the Constitution by electing Pakistani citizen as its Ameer.

"This is the final war and we have to win it," he said adding that "no government can be in power ignoring people's opinion."

Aref Ahmed said that during anti-autocracy movement people gave their verdict through mass upsurge and now against anti-liberation forces they gave it through people's court.

Dhaka-Yangon accord

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get back their rights when they return home.

Bangladesh believes that without an international guarantee for their safety, there might be another influx causing a similar trouble the country had encountered in 1978-79 and is presently facing.

Yangon authorities told a UN special envoy early this month that they were ready to take back the refugees provided they could produce some evidence of their residency in Myanmar. During the on-going

bilateral talks that began Friday, Myanmar leaders have been reiterating the statement but are learnt to be reluctant in accepting a supervisory role of the UN.

Bangladesh side has also suggested some kind of monitoring by the UN even after the repatriation.

Sources say that Myanmar has agreed on almost all major points except for the UN involvement.

A 14-member Myanmar delegation led by Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaaw flew in the capital Thursday and held first round of formal talks the day after. At the first meeting, the political members of the two sides resolved to entrust the senior civil servants with the task of working out the details of a possible repatriation agreement.

The Working Group met informally Saturday.

The Myanmar team is expected to call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia today.

The visitors are scheduled to leave Tuesday, and Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaaw is likely to address the press before departure.

Till date, more than 2,25,000 Rohingya refugees have crossed into Bangladesh from the bordering Myanmar province of Arakan. They have been sheltered in 12 temporary relief camps in Cox's bazar and Bandarban districts.

Additional Foreign Secretary A H Mahmood Ali and Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Mustafa Faruq Muhammad represented Bangladesh side at yesterday's meeting held at the conference room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

BSS adds: The visiting Foreign Minister of Myanmar, Ohn Gyaaw, called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban Sunday.

During the meeting, the Myanmar Foreign Minister assured the President that his country would settle amicably all existing problems with Bangladesh.

President Biswas said that traditional relationship was existing between the two countries and hoped that all the problems would be resolved in the spirit of mutual understanding. He said Bangladesh always believed in friendship with all particularly the neighbouring countries.

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