

Fresh trade accord signed Dhaka, Beijing to use convertible currency

Bangladesh and China yesterday signed a fresh trade agreement in Beijing for three years terms rearranging trade in convertible currency, a message received here from Beijing said, reports BSS.

The new trade agreement comes into effect from January. Under the new agreement trade will now be carried out only in convertible currency, however, counter trade (barter) between private business houses and corporations of the two countries will be allowed, the message said.

The new agreement also provides for continuation of most favoured nation status to each other.

Commerce Minister MK Anwar, who is now in China and Chinese Minister for Foreign Economic Relations and Trade (MOFERT) Li Langqing signed the agreement on behalf of their respective countries. The new agreement will work as an 'impetus' to hold the trade between the two countries grow in a more balanced manner, the message pointed out.

Anwar spent a busy day yesterday holding separate discussions with Li Langqing and his Chinese counterpart Hu Ping. During a lengthy meeting with MOFERT Li Langqing, Anwar pleaded for Tariff reduction so that Bangladesh exports like

raw jute and jute goods, tea, urea and leather get easy entry into the Chinese market. Bangladesh Commerce Minister also asked the Chinese Minister to send trade mission to Bangladesh to boost Bangladesh exports to China.

Anwar requested the Chinese authorities to set up joint venture projects specially in urea, textiles leather and machine tools.

The Chinese Minister for Foreign Economic Relations and Trade assured the Bangladesh Minister of his government's sympathetic consideration of the requests. He also showed keen interest in setting up medium size urea fertilizer factory under joint ventures in Bangladesh.

The two ministers also discussed the possibility of signing two more agreements: (i) Protection of each other's investments and (ii) Avoidance of double taxation for further facilitating Chinese participation in joint ventures in Bangladesh.

In his meeting with Hu Ping, the Commerce Minister of China, MK Anwar evinced keen interest in the ways and techniques followed in China to maintain adequate supply and price stability of essential items in the context of the present process of the free economy China pursuing.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visiting the gallery after inaugurating the 10th National Art Exhibition at Shilpakala Academy in city yesterday.

Art gallery ULFA threat: 21 French experts flee Assam

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their works. Mahmudul Haq of the Institute of Fine Arts got the first prize which carries a cash of Taka 30,000, a certificate and a crest.

The recipients of three other prizes of honour are Mansurul Karim of Chittagong University, A Sattar the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University and A K M Qayyum, Chittagong University.

Each prize carries a cash of Taka 10,000 a certificate and a crest.

A total of 247 works of 207 artists are on display at the exhibition.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, parliament members, diplomats and cross section of people attended the function.

The Prime Minister paid tributes to the contributions of the artists litterateurs during the War of Independence and democratic movement. She said expected progress in various fields was possible provided the elements of the national culture were nurtured in the right direction.

Begum Zia said the government would take steps for the preservation of works of Shilpakarya Joyntul Abedin.

Later, she went to the gallery where the works were on display.



Employees of the Roads and Highways Department demonstrating in city yesterday to realise their demands.

Comilla AL leader freed on bail

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, Dec 21: Local Awami League (AL) leader and former chairman of local municipality, A K M Bahauddin Bahar was released on bail from Comilla Jail.

The bail was granted by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. He was arrested on December 16 following a clash between the activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Benazir

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The meeting was seen as important amid speculation that the PDA might boycott Tuesday's presidential address by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and its deputies might resign en masse to force him to dissolve the assemblies and order new elections.

AFP adds: Asif Ali Zardari, the jailed husband of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, will be allowed to attend a joint session of parliament, National Assembly Speaker Gohar Ayub Khan said today.

The official Associated Press of Pakistan quoted the Speaker of the Lower attend the session on Tuesday and the government and also given a 'favourable response.'

The Midnight File

Malaysian rulers talk constitutional amendment

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 21: The rulers of eight Malaysian states met informally Monday to discuss the government's proposal to amend the constitution to revoke the rulers' immunity from prosecution for any wrongdoing. The sultans of Johore, Kedah, Pahang, Terengganu, Perlis and Negri Sembilan and the crown prince of Perak and Selangor states attended the meeting, the national news agency Bernama reported, reports AP.

Observers find irregularities in Serbia's presidential polls

BELGRADE (Yugoslavia), Dec 21: International observers said Monday that there were irregularities in Serbia's presidential voting and preliminary figures indicated that a runoff would be necessary. With no official results available by Monday afternoon, exit polls showed a close race between incumbent Slobodan Milosevic in a dead heat with his main challenger, Yugoslav President Milan Panic, reports AP.

Sub-Inspector's pistol recovered: five arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police recovered the snatched pistol and 12 bullets from inside a drum at Khilgaon Community Centre Monday afternoon.

A group of muggers beat up Sub-Inspector Noor Hossain of Mirpur Police Station and snatched his pistol with 16 bullets at Khilgaon while he was passing the area Saturday.

Sabujbagh police also arrested five persons from the area on Sunday and remanded them in the Sabujbagh Police Station for two days yesterday.

The arrested Abdul Maleq, Ali Hossain, Khairul, Kazi Monirul and Mohammad Wazed were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court Monday and the magistrate granted police two-day remand for each.

8 hurt as rival JCD groups clash in Pabna

PABNA, Dec 21: At least eight students were injured as two groups of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists clashed here today over selection of Chairman candidate for coming Pourashava election, reports UNB.

Fahd

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In September, the Saudi Council of Grand Ulama — the highest religious authority in the Kingdom — denied that its leader, Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ibn Baz, was involved in an appeal for reform addressed to King Fahd by Koranic teachers and students.

On March 1, King Fahd announced the creation of a 60-member consultative council of appointments — promised during the Gulf crisis — but only its president has been chosen.

At the end of the Gulf war in February 1991 diplomats said religious leaders had protested the presence of 'infidels' on Saudi territory, in reference to the multinational forces that ousted Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

Rival workers' clash leaves 35 hurt in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Dec 21: At least 25 persons were injured, three of them seriously, when two rival groups of workers of Karnaphuli Cotton Mills at Anwara, clashed today, reports BSS.

Chittagong Medical College Hospital sources said that 12 of the injured workers had been admitted to the hospital, where condition of the three was stated to be critical. Rest of the injured workers were given first aid, the seriously injured could not be identified immediately.

The clash occurred over a dispute relating to a demand of releasing of one of their arrested leaders.

Rao defeats

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centrist National Front's 47 members abstained from voting.

Rao said he would take firm action against those responsible for the destruction of the 16th century mosque.

"The vandals cannot be allowed to take advantage of the vandalism committed by them," he said.

The left front had accused Rao of not doing enough to protect the mosque after it came under attack by frenzied militants, among a crowd of 200,000 who used pickaxes and bare hands to demolish it.

Rao denied the charges and said federal paramilitary forces could not have saved the structure because there was the possibility of the mosque being bombed by the militants.

"They could have done it with the help of the BJP government, if that was its desire, with a bomb the size of a tennis ball, from 200 yards (metres)," Rao said, adding that it was time for recriminations.

"There is no need today to go into history now. We have to make new history."

Rao said it was for the first time in Indian history that "all secular parties had come together against communalism."

Earlier, BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee broke "his protest fast and re-entered parliament, ending the latest round of the battle between the party and the government."

"We wanted to establish our democratic rights and protest peacefully against the government's policies," Vajpayee said on his arrival.

Vajpayee started his fast after being arrested and briefly detained on Sunday as the BJP was trying to hold a meeting.

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