

IFC to back private ventures

Ryrie suggests changes in financial laws

International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank affiliate financing private business in developing countries, intends to finance private ventures in power, telecommunication and textile sectors in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The IFC's willingness was expressed by its visiting Executive Vice-President Sir William Ryrie during a luncheon meeting in Dhaka Sunday with the country's leading private sector representatives.

However, meeting sources said, Ryrie strongly suggested necessary amendment to the existing financial laws of the country and providing additional facilities to attract foreign investment.

He told the meeting that IFC is also interested in participating with equity in viable private projects here and extending credit to such ventures.

Sources quoting observations of the IFC chief executive at the meeting said Bangladesh is still to go a long way in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

The urgent need, according to Ryrie, is to further initiate deregulation and privatisation process to attract both foreign and local investment.

Also he reportedly stressed the need for promotion of a congenial environment for investment as well as implementation of policies to generate "confidence" among investors.

Bangladesh's private sector was represented at the meeting by Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President

Mahbubur Rahman, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Latifur Rahman, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President M Yunus, Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) President A M Subid Ali, Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Association President Salman F Rahman and former MCCI President Syed Manzur Elahi.

Business leaders at the meeting insisted Ryrie on IFC's equity participation, particularly in medium and small private ventures in Bangladesh.

They proposed opening of an IFC window in Bangladesh to familiarise investors here with IFC activities in investment promotion in the private sector.

Ryrie, however, offered to set up an "Information Advisory Centre" in Dhaka to be managed by IFC with direct participation of local private sector.

The proposed centre will be equipped to provide advisory services, including project appraisal, to the private sector entrepreneurs. According to business circle here, IFC's appraisal makes a project specially credible to international financiers.

To a plea by the private sector representatives for the IFC to invest in purchasing disinvested public enterprises in Bangladesh, Ryrie said his institution may consider such a possibility provided the projects are viable.

IFC's direct participation in Bangladesh is so far very insignificant.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurating the Handicrafts Show 93 arranged by BDR Women Welfare Association at Peelkhana BDR Complex in city Sunday. — PID photo

RU students

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Saturday. Saturday's clashes between the supporters of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and rival All-party Students Unity (APSU), a conglomerate of 13 student bodies, instantly left three people dead and some 500 others injured.

The clashes, seen as severest in the history of Rajshahi University forced the closure of the University sine die. The authorities also asked the students to vacate the halls.

More than 40 serious injured were still under treatment at RMCH while a number of others shifted to Dhaka for better treatment, on-duty doctors said adding that "we released some of them for better treatment in safety."

Initially the hospital admitted 150 students with 75 critically injured, he added. Three were shifted to Dhaka. Witnesses said that several hundred APSU supporters brought out a procession in the city with the body of Amjad, covered with BNP and National flags.

State Minister for Law Amirul Huq and a number of BNP and AL leaders were present at the procession.

The Rajshahi Metropolitan Police imposed a ban on meetings and procession in the city for one week from Sunday to avert violent incident.

Our Rajshahi University correspondent said that Tapan was a First Year student of Applied Chemistry Department and hailed from Madaripur district while Amjad was a student of Political Science who was from Pirganj.

The source said that all the students left the halls following authority's order and the campus was being guarded by the BDR and police.

Later, the All-party Action Committee held a press conference demanding removal of RMP Commissioner Rafiqul Alam. They also demanded resignation of RU VC and Pro-VC.

Local BNP leader Ekhlaique Hossain, AL leader Advocate Mohsin, Workers Party leader Fozle Hossain Badsha, Shaifur Rahman of CPB and Masum Ahmed of JSD (Inu) were present at the press conference.

Meanwhile, APSU has called a two-hour token hartal from 9 am on Thursday. It would also hold a rally on Wednesday.

UNB adds: In another development, Rajshahi Government University College was closed for two days following an attack on the principal's office by a group of unruly students.

Witnesses said the principal's office was ransacked Monday when a procession of Chhatra Oikya protesting the Saturday's incident in RU was passing by.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. But the authorities closed the college apprehending further untoward incident.

Another report says, Rajshahi Medical College was closed sine die yesterday.

Bangladesh Television quoting authorities last night said the RMC students have been asked to vacate their halls by 10 am today.

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RU probe body

RAJSHAHI, Feb 8: Rajshahi University (RU) authorities formed a three-member committee, with Prof Farrukhah as convener, to probe into Saturday's incident on RU campus, reports BSS.

The other members of the committee are Prof Fakhruul Islam and Syed Rafiqul Alam.

6 killed, 30 hurt in road mishap

NETROKONA, Feb 7: Six persons were killed and at least 30 were injured today when a Netrokona bound passenger bus from Mymensingh skidded off the road at Isabpur near Netrokona on Mymensingh-Netrokona Highway.

PM tells a reunion of BDR men Perform duties staying above all allurements

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Sunday asked members of "Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) to perform their duties with courage and confidence and staying above all allurements, reports UNB.

"Use iron hands in curbing smuggling in the greater interest of the country and the nation," she told the BDR men at a reunion at Peelkhana BDR headquarters here in the morning.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, Ministers, chiefs of the three services diplomats and senior civil and military officials were present at the BDR Reunion-93.

Begum Zia said smuggling is a curse on national economy as "it hampers production, brings stagnancy in industrialisation and increases unemployment."

Lauding the present role of BDR in checking smuggling, she expressed her firm belief that it will be totally stopped if the efforts are continued.

The Prime Minister also praised the BDR personnel for their role in maintaining country's internal security, law and order and ensuring safety to life and property of the people.

She said the contribution of BDR is memorable in the process of consolidating democracy through ensuring a peaceful and disciplined election.

She appreciated the BDR

activities for preventing illegal infiltration from across the border.

Reminding that the BDR personnel were also the sons of this soil, Begum Zia said they had scope of helping the people of the country in different ways. "While on leave, you can motivate the people of your area to participate in different development activities including education, tree plantation and family planning."

The Prime Minister said the present government is pledged to ensure overall development of the BDR and assured that all possible measures will be taken to modernise the force.

Begum Zia recalled the role of the Rifles during the Liberation War and paid rich tributes to those who laid down their lives for the cause of independence. She particularly mentioned the names of Shaheed Lt Nk Munshi Abdur Rauf Bir Shrestha and Shaheed Lt Nk Nur Muhammad Sheikh Bir Shrestha in this regard.

Begum Zia was given a guard of honour. She reviewed the parade and took salute.

The Prime Minister during her stay at the BDR headquarters also inaugurated the Rifles Mahila Kalyan Samity Handicraft Exhibition-93 at the BDR complex.

DESA snapping power lines without notice

Star Report

The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) is disconnecting power lines of consumers without prior notice.

An essential service, DESA is required to serve a detailed notice before disconnecting any power supply line as per rules of the Electricity Act.

According to experts, a notice to the concerned consumer with a minimum of seven days' time is mandatory under the law to disconnect any legal and authorised power line.

For quite some months, DESA is snapping electricity connections to domestic consumers who had allegedly failed to pay arrear bills.

As there is no prior notice, consumers have to face a lot of harassment during DESA's disconnection drive. Even domestic consumers who have no arrear dues, often fall victim to this operation.

DESA representatives go to the consumer's place during day hours on working days and disconnect power lines from the meter. They do not hesitate to snap the main connection from the pole outside the house, if they find the meter box or the consumer's house locked.

However, DESA people are kind enough to grant few minutes to the inmates of the consumer's house, if they find any, for showing the receipts of payment of all the arrear bills.

But, during working hours of the day, the owner of the house, or head of the family or even adults usually remain outside. So the inmates present —

Gopalganj

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At one stage, the villagers apprehended all the seven. Three of the critically wounded Sarbaharamen died on the spot while four others were admitted to Kotalipara Thana Health Complex and later shifted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

The next day another group of Sarbahara activists launched a second attack on the UP Chairman's residence in the early morning. They asked the villagers to keep out and started firing at the Chairman's house. Police returned the gunfire but at one stage retreated. Two villagers were killed in the crossfire.

Shab-e-Barat observed

The Holy Shab-e-Barat was observed throughout the country Sunday night with due solemnity and religious fervour, reports BSS.

Quran khwani, milad mahfil, discussions and night-long prayers were held at all mosques and mahallas at the aegis of Islamic Foundation and other socio-cultural and religious organisations seeking the blessings of Almighty Allah.

Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh, held night-long discussions on the significance of Lailatul Barat, the night of fortune, milad mahfil, Quran khwani at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

Bangladesh Strat Mission held Quran khwani, milad mahfil and discussion on the significance of the night at Patuati Jame Mosque. Similar discussion and milad mahfil were also held at all other mosques throughout the country.

Devotees visited the graves of Muslim saints and peers and their near and dear ones and offered Feteha there.

Muslims also fed the destitute.

The night-long prayers were followed by Akheri Munajat after Fajr prayers at all mosques including Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. People sought blessings of the Almighty Allah for the peace, progress and prosperity of the country and brotherhood of Muslim ummah.

The holy night was followed by public holiday yesterday.

Hasina

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While giving an account of the ruling party's "undemocratic" attitude towards her party, Hasina said the government was interfering with the independent functioning of the Election Commission. She cited the cases of recently held Mirpur by-election and the police atrocities on the AL activists across the country in support of her argument.

The alleged attempt on the life of Sheikh Hasina at Chittagong also came up at the meeting as a reference to the government's autocratic attitude towards the AL.

We shall protest the government's undemocratic activities in and outside Parliament peacefully until the AL is pushed to a point of no-return by the government," Hasina told the meeting. She observed that her party had a vital role to play in consolidating hard-earned democracy.

She instructed her colleagues in the Working Committee to make necessary preparations to make the countrywide half-day hartal scheduled for tomorrow a success.

The meeting felt for submitting a writ petition in the High Court against the government for its alleged interference in working of the Election Commission in conducting the Mirpur by-election.

"We have adequate evidence in favour of our claim relating to the government interference with the commission, a senior AL leader who was present at the Sunday's meeting told The Daily Star last night on condition of anonymity adding, "We shall produce evidence in the High Court."

Book fair

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Panna Kalsar, Prof Safuddin Ahmed, Prof Jubaida Gulshan Ara and Farida Akhtar took part in the discussion on the first book while Prof Mohammad Maniruzzaman, Dr Mohammad Hannan and Muhammad Jahangir, on the second book. Reading on language and literature and cultural shows followed the discussion meeting.

Earlier on Sunday discussions on "Rabindranath Nobel Pureshkarpo Geetanoli", edited by Abdur Rashid and "Bangla Sahityer Samalochana" by Afzalul Bashar were held at the academy premises. Prof Hayat Mamud, Dr Khaliquezaman Elias, Prof Azhar Hossain, Prof Jahangir Tarek and Prof Golam Mustafa participated in the discussion on the two books.

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote organised a recitation programme Monday afternoon at the Central Shaheed Minar on the occasion of the Amar Ekushey.

Meanwhile, a group of students took away a number of books from the stall of Oasis Books Sunday evening. One salesman of the stall told The Daily Star that the group of students earlier expressed its reservation about four books containing criticism of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League.

Today's programme of Bangla Academy: Discussion on "Promito Bangla Bananer Niom" of Bangla Academy and reading from Bengali prose and drama.

The Midnight File

Mitterrand, Kohl nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Feb 8: French President Francois Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl have been jointly nominated for the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize for working towards a united Europe, Norwegian parliamentarians said today. "Kohl and Mitterrand have both worked for a united Europe," said Tor Mikkel Wara, one of three parliamentarians from Norway's right-wing Progress Party who signed the nomination, reports Reuter.

80 burnt to death in Lagos

LAGOS, Feb 8: At least 80 people were burnt to death today when their passenger bus caught fire in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, state radio said, reports Reuter.

General election in Australia March 13

CANBERRA, Feb 8: Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating called a general election today for March 13. His announcement followed the Labour Party's defeat in state elections Saturday in Western Australia, reports AFP.

AL creating confusion

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election result was concerned, the BNP candidate won by a margin of 2592 votes."

According to the results announced by the Returning Officer, he added, of the total 1,66,578 valid votes cast the BNP candidate bagged 80,127 to the AL candidate's 77,535.

He noted that ballots were counted in all the 117 centres in the presence of the polling agents of the candidates. "None of the polling agents, either from the BNP or the AL, had raised any objection in any of the centres."

Saying that all the result sheets had been duly signed by the presiding officers, he added, "There was no scope at all for anybody, even for the Returning Officer, to change anything on the result sheets by any means and there had been no difficulty in checking the results."

The BNP Secretary General blasted the opposition Awami League for resorting to hartals, violence and chaos instead of accepting the verdict of the people as announced by the Election Commission, while noting that his party "always" accepted the verdict even when BNP candidates lost in three by-elections by narrow margins.

Noting that the Election Commission had conducted the 1991 general elections, union parishad, pourashava and all the by-elections with remarkable fairness and integrity, Talukder accused the AL of seeking to disregard the fairness and neutrality of the EC.

The press conference was also attended by BNP standing committee members, Communications Minister OH Ahmed, Food Minister Shamsul Islam and Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Joint Secretary General and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Mayor Mirza Abbas and Mir Shawkat Ali, MP.

Barrister Talukder regretted that the AL was trying to create confusion among the people by making an "unnecessary issue" out of the UNB report telecast by Bangladesh Television.

He said that the news agency's report could not influence the result as the polling had ended by that time and counting of ballots was done in presence of the polling agents. "It (the UNB report) could not in any way influence the results as the counting was completed earlier."

He added that preliminary unofficial results had always been declared and that there was nothing wrong with that. "No election rules are violated and it does not compromise the ethics of journalism," he said while noting that the unofficial results could either be given by the election commission or gathered by reporters from their own sources, because of a "competitive" environment.

He added that such incidents also happened before but BNP never objected to them.

The BNP Secretary General

Mahathir's visit

From Page 1 Col 5

He will fly to the port city of Chittagong the next day to visit the Export Processing Zone. The Malaysian Prime Minister will proceed to Pakistan from Chittagong on a three-day trip.

The five-year cultural cooperation accord that expired in 1983 is expected to be renewed while another agreement on assistance in sports is likely.

According to official sources, Malaysia will provide financial and technical assistance to lay astro turf on the National Hockey Stadium in Dhaka under the sports accord. The cultural accord provides for exchange of scholarships to students and cultural teams.

The Prime Minister will be accorded a civic reception by the Dhaka City Corporation when he will be presented with a key to the Dhaka city.

Heavy rocket attack on Kabul: 54 killed

KABUL, Feb 8: Rockets and mortars slammed into the presidential palace compound and surrounding neighbourhoods Monday, one of the bloodiest in three weeks of fighting between government troops and dissident rebels, reports AP.

State-run Kabul Radio said at least 54 people were killed and more than 100 injured by missiles that damaged homes, mosques and government buildings.

But doctors said the casualties were the heaviest in any single day of fighting since Jan 19, and government officials

said privately that the number could be in the hundreds.

"We don't have time to count them. We're too busy trying to look after them," said one nurse at Jamhuriat Hospital as he scurried down the corridor packed with groaning patients and their frightened families.

The radical Hezb-e-Islami and its Iranian-backed ally, Hezb-e-Wahadat, steadily pounded central and southeastern Kabul, hitting government military bases as well as abode-walled houses, apartment buildings and foreign embassies.

Firework frolic on Shab-e-Barat

By Masud Hasan Khan

Nayan, a 12-year-old boy from Mirpur, was groaning on the bed of Dhaka Medical College Hospital casualty ward with upper part of his body severely burned.

The skin of his entire face and neck was scaled off, part of his hair charred and there were blotches all over his arms and legs.

Nayan is one of scores of teenagers who landed in the city hospitals Sunday night with burn wounds — marks that were left by a fiery fun on Shab-e-Barat (the night of fortune).

There were many who suffered minor injuries took first aid from nearby drug stores or were treated at home.

Like many other Shab-e-Barat evening, city kids this year went for an all night fun setting off crackers and lighting other fire works.

A section of parents were also seen lighting gleefully the crackers to the joy of their children. At some places, kids were seen lobbing burning silver rains from pavement at the passersby.

Long night of prayers, in which fate is believed to be bestowed for the next year, was punctuated by innumerable cracker bursts and holler of the kids.

"I could not pray properly," said one devotee from Mottijheel government staff quarters, "it seemed that we were living in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

A section of the pavement vendors that sell incense sticks on the eve were also party to the fun. Some of them secretly supplied these incendiaries to the teenage boys. But to an enquiring adult, they claimed that all they sold were harmless agarbattis and candles.

"I know sales of fire crackers are banned and if police

Computerised information network opens today

By Staff Correspondent

An international network for exchanging information between traders in Asia and Europe will be inaugurated today (Tuesday).

Commerce Minister M K Anwar will open the computerised information network this morning at a seminar at Sonargon Hotel.

Traders, investors, businessmen, bankers and industrialists will take part in the seminar.

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