

Master plan underway for upgrading port services

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: A ten month long study to prepare an integrated master plan for upgrading the services and facilities of the country's ports is on the anvil.

Disclosing this at a press briefing here today at the Port Training Centre Chairman of the Chittagong Port Omar Hadi said that the study project for a national ports plan, already awaiting final approval from the Planning Commission, would cost Taka 4 crore 45 lakh.

The integrated plan will provide advanced technology in cargo handling, extra port facilities and a uniform tariff system at the Chittagong, Mongla and Narayanganj ports, the chairman hoped.

He pointed out that the master plan, which was formulated for Chittagong port only in 1965, has not been updated over the past 30 years to cope with the latest cargo handling demands.

The port chairman, however, informed newsmen that Chittagong port had earned Taka 145.68 crores during the past nine months of the current fiscal (July '93 to March '94) by handling 69,72,519 MT of import and export cargo. During this period the country's main seaport handled 1,26,292 containers while 818 ships called at Chittagong, he added.

Giving a break-up of the corresponding period of the previous fiscal (92-93) he said that cargo handling had stood at 67,03,558 MT, 1,08,201 containers and 778 vessels.

In the '92-93 fiscal, Chittagong port handled 86,47,414 MT cargo and earned Taka 187.58 crores as revenue while during that period the revenue expenditure was recorded at Taka 143.44 crores.

He said that measures were underway to procure more equipment for handling container cargo at the port's newly-built multipurpose berths.

"To earn a better reputation for Chittagong port by providing required services and facilities to its users through ensuring quick transportation at the least cost is my main mission here," Hadi said.

'Labour force should be development partners'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a roundtable discussion on workers in free market conditions yesterday demanded that the country's labour force should be made development partners to attain better economic growth.

In a free market climate, the fate of the entrepreneurs and employers are closely linked to those of the workers, they said.

Making Our Economy Right (MOER), an organisation campaigning for a free market, organised the roundtable discussion at the National Scouts Bhawan in the capital to analyse and discuss the free market reforms in the country.

Conducted by Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud of the Dhaka University, the roundtable was participated by columnist Syed Ali Kabir, industrialist Faisal Siddiqui, Prof. Abu Ahmed, Hafez Ghanem of the World Bank, Zahiduzzaman Faruq, economic editor of the Daily Ittefaq, Nizam Ahmed, Syed S Kaiser Kabir, Awami League leaders M Akhteruzzaman and Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Zillul Hey Razi, Mujibur Rahman Bhuiyan of the Jatiya Samik League, KB Ahmed, Khaleda Anwar of the Jatiya Samik League, and Ataur Rahman of the Gano Forum.

Prof. Abu Ahmed said the labour force should not be considered as opponents to the entrepreneurs and the workers wage should be tied with productivity.

Faisal Siddiqui said that the country's transformation from a controlled economy to a free market should be made cautiously and the problems of the workers be identified to closely involve them with production.

Akhteruzzaman, however, said the concept of a free market economy might not auger well for the existing economic structure of the country.

Zillul Hey Razi said, "We have now no choice but to opt for a free market under the changed circumstance with the signing of the GATT."

Zahiduzzaman Faruq said the country's labour force has largely been viewed as a strong political rather than economic agent while the workers' rights have usually been realised by non-working labour leaders.

Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud suggested that the workers' wages should be congruous with the socio-economic condition of the country.

Any government intervention would only worsen the situation of the workers as well as national productivity, he pointed out.

Opposition strategies

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government immediately.

The JP leader also observed that if the Opposition were to choose the second option, it should prepare a calendar of anti-government agitations without delay, the meeting sources said.

Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganotantri Party (GP) felt that the Opposition had been left with no option but to keep on putting pressure on the government to meet the demands.

"We can consider a negotiation with the treasury bench only when it comes forward to discuss ways of resolving all the problems now hindering a sound growth of democracy," Sengupta said.

The GP leader also favoured entertaining any ruling party initiative for negotiations coming directly from the Prime Minister herself.

Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers' Party (WP) told the meeting that the Opposition must keep on bearing pressure upon the government to make sure that a congenial atmosphere was created for the Opposition to play a constructive role in the House.

Menon, however, felt that the Opposition should not boycott the coming session because it would give the government an upper hand in launching propaganda against the Opposition parties.

Menon also told the meeting that his party would not support an Opposition alliance with the Jamaat.

Moulana Obaidul Huq of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), although supporting a united opposition move, did not favour a continuous boycott of Parliament sessions. The IOJ leader observed that the boycott would only isolate the Opposition from the people.

Despite differences of opinion regarding attending the next session of Parliament, the Opposition parties yesterday were unanimous on the need for asserting the demand for the next national polls under a care-taker government.

Leaders of all the parties attending yesterday's meeting emphatically told The Daily Star last night that they were committed to removing their differences on the burning issues with a view to taking a strong and united position against the government.

The more than two-hour long party, which began at 12:30 pm, was attended by Sheikh Hasina, Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed and Mohammad Nasim of the AL, Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain Manju of the JP, Rashed Khan Menon of the WP, Suranjit Sengupta of the GP and Moulana Obaidul Huq of the IOJ.

Earlier, the American ambassador in Bangladesh David N Merrill called on Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament chamber at 11:30 am.

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US Ambassador David N Merrill called on the Opposition Leader in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhavan office yesterday. — Star photo

US envoy meets Hasina

US Ambassador to Bangladesh David N Merrill called on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her parliament chamber yesterday, reports UNB.

The new ambassador and the Awami League chief discussed matters relating to political, economic and social affairs of the two countries.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed, SAMS Kibria and Abul Hasan Chowdhury were present.

One held with 46 passports at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Immigration police arrested one Ismail Hossain, 25 with 46 passports at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

Ismail was due to fly for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by a Bangladesh Biman flight, BG 080 at 8:30 in the morning.

Immigrationmen charged Ismail on suspicion and found 46 passports hidden in his handbags.

Ismail was handed over to the Cantonment police and detained for interrogation.

The Immigration police arrested three persons with 220 passports at the ZIA on Friday last.

Dacoity at Khilgaon

By Staff Correspondent

A group of armedmen barged into the house of one Zakir at 433/C Khilgaon Chowdhurypara at around 4 am yesterday and looted Tk. 70,000 in cash and other valuables at gun-point and decamped with the booty within half an hour.

A case was lodged with the Sabujbagh police station.

DCC staff crushed under bulldozer

By DMCH Correspondent

A Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) staff — Mohammad Abul Hossain, 45 — died tragic death while bulldozing some unauthorized houses at Mirpur Section 12 yesterday afternoon.

Hossain slipped off and fell under the wheels of the bulldozer and died on the spot. He was a helper of the vehicle, police said.

A City Corporation team had gone on an eviction drive at Mirpur Section 12, Block-C around noon yesterday.

Japanese coalition

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Coalition representatives were due to meet later in the day to confirm a new policy platform and then get down to the business of choosing a successor.

Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata remained the coalition's favourite. But with new rebel groups emerging, it was possible the coalition — already divided into two opposing camps — could formally split and form new alliances.

On Monday six lawmakers became the latest dissidents to bolt the once-dominant opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), handing in their resignations to party headquarters.

"We want to work with the coalition since we agree with most of its policies," said Shokej Arai after resigning.

Arai and the five other rebels are all from the large LDP faction headed by ex-foreign minister Michio Watanabe. He has threatened to lead a large-scale rebellion, launch a new party and make a bid for the premiership himself.

LDP leader Yohei Kono met Watanabe on Monday to try to persuade the veteran politician to remain loyal.

Environmentalists demand 'Return US toxic waste immediately'

By Staff Correspondent

A group of environmentalists yesterday demanded immediate return of the US-manufactured toxic waste stored in Bangladesh to the country of its origin.

They said the Gastom Copper Recycling Corporation, one of the three US companies penalised for exporting toxic waste to Bangladesh, is not willing to arrange disposal of the waste unless it is paid 250,000 dollars by Bangladesh.

If the April 30 deadline for the payment is crossed, Bangladesh may have to pay 800,000 dollars to ship the toxic waste back to America for disposal, the environmentalists pointed out while speaking at a press conference.

UBINIG, the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) Nijera Kori and the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) jointly organised the press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Farhad Mazhar of UBINIG, Phillip Gain of SEHD and Shamsul Huda of ALRD spoke and answered questions from the newsmen.

Expressing grave concern over the deadlock over shipping back the toxic waste, they commented that stalemate was "artificial" and the result of non-cooperation by the US government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Some 6,300 tons of fertiliser was imported as Zinc Oxysulphate from the US in 1991 under an ADB credit. The consignment was later found to be highly toxic.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environment Control said the fertiliser, containing eight per cent lead and 0.05 per cent cadmium, was a threat to human health and to the environment.

A Senior US District Judge, in a sentence, fined the fertilizer manufacturing company one million dollars for their involvement in posing a grave threat to the environment in Bangladesh.

Under a guilty plea agreement, 600,000 dollars of the fine paid by Gastom Corporation could be used for transport and safe disposal of the fertiliser from Bangladesh.

This amount is 250,000 dollars short of the estimated disposal costs in the US, the environmentalists at the press conference said.

If the company failed to submit a detail disposal plan to the US court by April 30, the entire fine money would go to the US treasury, they cautioned.

Chakma repatriation

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Ragunath and Chairman of the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee Kalpa Ranjan Chakma MP were present at the airport.

During his four-day stay in Bangladesh, Bhandari would call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman and visit Parliament. He will leave for Khagrachhari in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on Wednesday.

During a 20-minute press conference at the airport's VIP lounge, Bhandari evaded questions on tricky bilateral issues by saying that he was here with a limited purpose. "Don't ask me any questions that I can not answer," Bhandari replied.

"I am on a limited mission. I am not a special emissary of the Indian Prime Minister," the former Indian diplomat, wearing a full-sleeved safari told reporters. "But hostility and distrust will not help either side," he added.

He said both the governments were in contact at different levels regarding the water-sharing issue, transit facilities and other related subjects. "Let my past remain in past," he said.

In reply to question as to why the Chakma refugee leaders would determine next course of the repatriation process, Bhandari said that they were now a party to the process.

"They (the Chakma leaders) never put any pressure on the refugees and their forthcoming visit will create positive feelings," the Tripura Governor said.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, who invited Bhandari, said: "Anyone can see the condition of the repatriated refugees because we made all possible arrangements for them."

He said the next round of talks with the Parbatyatta Chattagram Jana Sanghati Parishad (PCJSP) — the political umbrella of the so-called Shanti Bahini, the outlawed military wing of the rebel tribals who have been waging an armed insurrection for over a decade and a half — would be held on May 5.

Replying to another question, Romesh Bhandari said, "I don't think the Indian government is supporting the so-called Shanti Bahini." He also declined to comment on the ULFA issue, regarding the militant uprising in India's north-eastern state of Assam.

He said his was simply a goodwill visit after long nine years.

Responding to a question regarding the border issue between Dhaka and Delhi, he said "I don't find any tension along the border."

About his stay in New Delhi just before undertaking the tour to Bangladesh, Romesh Bhandari said, "I was in New Delhi for some personal reasons."

He recalled the meeting between Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Narasimha Rao in 1992 in Delhi where both the leaders agreed on an early repatriation of the Chakmas.

47 hurt in Kushtia bus accident

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 18: At least 47 persons were injured when a Bagra-bound bus skidded into a road-side ditch at Bahalbaria on the Kushtia-Ishurdi highway, nine miles from Kushtia at about 1:45 pm today.

Thirty-three injured persons were admitted to the Kushtia General Hospital, one was removed to Dhaka for treatment and the rest took first aid at local hospitals.

The condition of Riaz, 40, Jhantu, 35, Rahman, 50, Mantu, 30, Rahima, 40, Jesmin, 10, Nargis, 22, Badaruddin, 30, Mizan, 35, Khalek, 34, Zamirul, 25, Kalim, 30 and Lutfur, 25, were stated to be critical.

3 assaulted at DU hall

By DMCH Correspondent

Three students were severely beaten up at residential hall of the Dhaka University (DU) yesterday afternoon.

The victims are Abu Bakar Qureshi, first year BA (Hons) student of Dhaka College, Mithu, an intermediate student of the Government Science College and Martin, an SSC candidate.

Some unidentified people beat them up when they went to the Fazlul Haq Hall of the university at around 3 pm.

All victims were treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Ban on carrying political materials during Hajj

DUBAI, Apr 18: Saudi Arabia said today it would punish any pilgrims, found carrying banned political books, pictures or leaflets at this year's Hajj, reports Reuters.

An Interior Ministry statement, carried by the official Saudi press agency, said some pilgrims had been found carrying such banned material when they arrived in the kingdom to perform this year's Hajj due in May.

"The ministry points out that such material is absolutely banned... and hopes that everybody will abide by this and those who do not will be punished... according to the laws of the kingdom," the statement said. It gave no other details.

Saudi Arabia bans all forms of political activity during the Hajj which is performed by an estimated two million Muslims.

In 1987, some 400 people, mainly Iranian pilgrims, were killed in clashes in Mecca between security forces and Iranians holding a political rally.

The Saudi statement did not give the nationalities of the pilgrims it said were carrying the banned political material.

Iran's ruling clergy often urge pilgrims to hold rallies at the Hajj to condemn what they see as the main enemies of Islam — the United States and Israel. Iranian pilgrims are also known to carry pictures of their Muslim leaders.

A dispute arose this year between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the number of Iranians allowed to perform the pilgrimage.

A Saudi Haj official said on Friday that the kingdom has told Iran its pilgrims will not be allowed to hold any political rallies or activities this year.

JCD, JCS clash in Jessore

JESSORE, Apr 18: Tension was mounting in the town today following a clash between the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Jatiya Chhatra Samaj (JCS) on the City College campus that left three people injured, reports UNB.

College sources said a JCS activist named Tajul was allegedly stabbed by JCD supporters in the City College this morning. He was admitted to the Sadar Hospital.

In a sequel to the incident the JCS activists stabbed two JCD supporters, Nure Alam Panna, 20, and Makbul Hossain, 22, at the MM Ali Road in the evening, local people said.

They were also admitted to the Sadar Hospital where the condition of Nure Alam Panna was stated to be critical.

Police were deployed at different points of the town to avert further trouble.

16 injured in Kushtia clash

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 18: At least 16 people were injured, five seriously, as two groups of musclemen clashed at Sultanpur village under Kumarkhali thana this morning.

Five persons with stab injuries were admitted to the Kushtia General Hospital.

The injured men are Abdul Bari, 30, Shariful, 24, Omar, 14, Khiam, 29 and Monir, 40.

They said that the clash was a sequel to previous enmity between the two groups led by Abdul Bari and Mohir Uddin.

Bosnians protest

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President said.

Protesters carried banners that read, "Ghali, Akashi do you protect fascism", "Ghali, you are killing our children" and "Ghali what does a 'safe area' mean for you?"

Bosnian Serbs unleashed a barrage of shells today on Gorazde hitting the hospital roof and Red Cross centre for refugees, a UN spokesman said in Geneva.

Sylvana Foa, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees also said, a shell was falling every 20 seconds.

Meanwhile, president Clinton today defended the failure by the United States and its allies to stop the Bosnian Serb assault on the town of Gorazde.

Speaking to reporters in Washington, he said NATO had only the authority to respond to United Nations requests for air strikes to protect its peacekeepers and that the UN commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, decided that close air support at Gorazde would not be practical.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher today called the Bosnian war the "largest human tragedy in Europe since the descent of the iron curtain" and said the United States was urgently reviewing options for dealing with it.

The Midnight File

\$ 3.9m stolen from UN office in Mogadishu

NAIROBI, Apr 18: About 3.9 million dollars were stolen from the heavily-fortified United Nations compound in Mogadishu, UN spokesman Eugene Forson said today. Forson said the money was stolen by thieves who broke into the compound's finance department on Sunday night. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali immediately ordered an investigation into the theft, reports AFP.

Arafat arrives in Russia

MOSCOW, Apr 18: Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chief Yasser Arafat arrived in Russia today for an official visit that falls just before a planned trip by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. During his two-day visit, the Palestinian leader was scheduled to meet President Boris Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and parliamentary leaders, reports Reuters.

Syedabad water plant uncertain

Uncertainty looms large over the implementation of the proposed water treatment plant at Syedabad as to conflicting groups of Dhaka WASA are still at loggerheads with the terms and conditions of the Tk 400 crore project, reports PROBE.

Officials sources said the French government would withdraw its pledged tied grant for machinery of 150 million francs equivalent to Tk 106 crore if the formalities were not finalised by next June.

Work of the project, designed to meet the increasing demand of water in the city and minimise the use of excessive ground water, was scheduled to start last October and be completed in five years. The World Bank had pledged a loan of Tk 300 crore for the project.

The sources said vested quarters at Dhaka WASA have allegedly manipulated the terms and conditions of the proposed water treatment plant to favour a particular party.

The interested group had allegedly defied the suggestions of the WASA engineers and decided to make an exception to the usual practice of all other government agencies in Bangladesh in case of project specifications.

Following press reports on the alleged manipulation of the Division of External Economic Relations of the French Ministry of Economy last month set the rules for the evaluation of offers acceptable to all intending French companies.

But the vested quarters, asked the French authorities to change the evaluation system to suit one company and get a new set of rules issued within 10 days, the sources said.

Only one French company, Degremont, fulfils the requirements according to the new set of rules.

Technical experts at WASA said the project cost will increase if the new criteria are maintained. Subsequently, the consumers will have to bear the brunt of the additional cost.

Border

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caught by BDR at 3:00 PM on March 26. They were, however, pushed back to Myanmar the same day.

Appeal for proper treatment of Debu Bhattacharya

A number of intellectuals, writers, poets and singers have appealed to the government to make arrangements for the proper treatment of noted musician Debu Bhattacharya, reports BSS.

Teachers

From Page 1 Col 8

There was however, no word from the Education Ministry so far about the committee's claim of an allot strike in the country's 11,000 non-government schools and 640 colleges.

The demands of striking teachers include equal benefits and teaching facilities enjoyed by government teachers as well as job security.

The Action Committee meeting at the Jubilee School in city yesterday afternoon congratulated the teachers and decided to hold rallies and demonstration at all thana headquarters on April 21 and at district towns on April 24 to mobilise support for their demands.

The teachers' action, only two weeks ahead of the SSC examinations has caused serious concern among examinees and the guardians. About 700,000 candidates are due to appear in the SSC examinations under the country's four education boards.

Some 175,000 teachers in private schools and colleges constitute about 85 per cent of the teachers in secondary and higher secondary level education.

Left Front

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Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, the Samyabadi Dal and the Oikya Prokria.

Samajbadi Dal leader Nirmal Sen read out a written statement at the news conference describing a 16-point programme and the aims and objectives of the new alliance while other leaders replied to reporters' queries.

Each of the leaders of the LDF components will act, by rotation, as coordinator for six months, the press conference was told.

The 16-point programme of the LDF includes implementation of the democratic, secular and socialist spirit of the Liberation War, scrapping of the Constitution's Second, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh and Eighth amendments, restoration of the 1972 Constitution, and ensuring people's fundamental rights.

The press conference was also addressed by Mujibul Islam Selim of the CPB, Rashed Khan Menon, MP of the Workers' Party, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan of the BSD, A F M Mahbubul Haque of the BSD, Kazi Aref Ahmed and Hasanul Haq Inu of the JSD, Dilip Barua of the Samyabadi Dal and Nayeem Jahangir of the Oikya Prokria.

FM: China visit

From Page 1 Col 6

held official talks with his Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen, he also visited three important industrial cities of Yien, Shanghai and Shezen, he said.

The Foreign Minister said during tour he received positive response for investment in Bangladesh.

Additional Foreign Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed, Chinese Ambassador and Mrs Zhang Xiujiang were present at the airport.

Mostafizur Rahman said that he handed over an invitation from the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to Chinese Premier Li Peng, who accepted it and indicated that he would visit Bangladesh in the later half of this year.

He said he discussed with his Chinese counterpart bilateral and international issues and was happy to note that the two sides had shared similar views on all issues.

Replying to a question on Bosnia, Mostafiz said the UN was not taking as much action as it should have particularly because the Bosnians had thrown their lot with it (the UN).

Lingering talks at the UN is putting the lives of thousands of people in Bosnia into jeopardy, he said.