

## BLUE DART

EXPRESS LIMITED

PLEASE CONTACT:

BANGLADESH AIR EXPRESS INT'L

For more information call Head Office: 9565114, Gushan: 607657,  
887771, Chittagong: (031) 712127, Khulna: (041) 743004

ON BOARD COURIER  
EACH DAY EVERY DAY  
TO INDIA





Kazi Zafar Ahmed (L) Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury (C) and Shah Moazzem Hossain (R) after Kazi Zafar's press conference at his residence in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## IJC session opens in city Jute facing dual challenge: IJO chief

Total acreage of jute cultivation in the major jute-producing countries has been on the decline in recent years resulting in lower global output of the fibre, reports UNB.

The world production of raw jute reduced from 3.4 million tons in 1991-92 to 2.58 million tons in 1995-96 fiscal year.

This was disclosed at the opening function of the three-day 25th session of International Jute Council (IJC), organised by the International Jute Organisation (IJO), in Dhaka yesterday morning.

It was further informed that the production of jute goods also declined from 3.46 million tons in 1990 to 3.07 million tons in 1995.

The world export volume of jute and jute products which was in the range of 1.5 million tons in 1990 declined to 1.23 tons in 1995.

"This scenario indicates that jute is facing a dual challenge -- at the consumer end, jute has been facing a challenge from synthetics and other substitutes and also the modern technique of bulk handling while at the farmers end, jute is facing competition from other crops which are becoming more remunerative than jute," said IJO Executive Director K M Rabhani.

Fiancee Minister S Shah A M S Kibria inaugurated the IJC session being participated by representatives of all IJO member countries, observers and others concerned.

Kibria said the jute question is not simply related to marketing, but it is deeply interlinked with the question of very survival of the renewable natural fibre in the face of serious competition from synthetics and other substitutes.

He said the problem had been compounded by the fact that farmers were not getting remunerative price for jute, operation of the jute mills was not efficient because of old machines and a variety of other reasons related to labour and shortcomings.

State Minister for Jute and Textiles A K Fazlul Huq said the government was deeply concerned with the progress and

welfare of millions of jute-growing farmers and thousands of industrial workers engaged in a number of downstream activities.

The minister informed that the government had fixed a production target of 47.09 lakh bales of raw jute and the export target of 14.00 lakh bales during the current 1996-97 fiscal.

Export of raw jute has already exceeded the annual target during the last nine months as the country exported 14.29 lakh bales fetching Tk 384.25 crore.

Moreover, export earning has increased by around 62 per cent and 50 per cent during the year over the corresponding period of last year.

K M Rabhani placed before the council a set of new proposals for restoring the glorious past of jute, the golden fibre.

The proposals include strengthening of extension network and organising farmer training programmes, ensuring fair price of jute to growers, keeping buffer stock of good quality seed to meet emergencies, improving management and administrative efficiency in jute mills and IJO countries to expedite and promote the diversified uses of jute.

## 3 killed in road accident

NARSINGDI, Apr 26: Three rickshaws and a bus were involved in a road accident on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Shibpur thana here today, reports UNB.

The deceased were identified as Mokter Hossain, 30, of Shibpur thana, Lokman, 35, and Sadhu Mia, 50, of Polash thana in the district. Injured Moslem, 40, Nasir Uddin, 32, and Anwar Hossain, 38, were admitted to local hospital.

The mishap occurred when a Bhairab-bound truck hit a rickshaw van at Baraitala in the thana at 12:30 am today that left three people killed and three others wounded.

Police seized the truck, but its driver managed to flee the scene.

## South Asian countries

From Page 1  
lack of political will and distorted priorities between defence and development as in Pakistan and India," the report remarks.

The report sums up the low status of women in South Asia and says that this is the only region in the world where men outnumber women. All over the world there are on average 106 women to 100 men. In South Asia the ratio is dramatically reversed to 96 women to 100 men.

The report observes that Bangladesh's current five dollars investment for per person a year on providing education and health services is "very low" compared to 10 dollars in Pakistan and 14 dollars in India, let alone 150 dollars in Malaysia and 160 dollars in South Korea.

Presenting the report Mahbub ul Haq said that the problems in the South Asian countries would have to be addressed by the civil societies and NGOs and not by the governments alone.

In his speech, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria said the

present government wanted economic growth with equity and social justice.

He added that in order to be more attentive to the basic needs of the society, "we must look to register a growth rate of seven per cent."

Kibria described the report as "excellent" and recommended that debate should be generated on the vital issue of development in Bangladesh.

The executive vice president of Human Development Centre (Islamabad), Khadija Haq, also spoke on the occasion while the World Bank resident representative Pierre Landel-Mills, former Finance Minister Dr A M Muhiut and Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam participated in the discussion on the report.

The launching ceremony was attended by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Members of Parliament, foreign dignitaries, NGO representatives, researchers, scholars, academicians and representatives of UN agencies and other development partners.

### Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Email: dstar@bangla.net

## Dhaka urged to support Cuba's struggle against US embargo

By Staff Correspondent

Roberto Mackchaser Siveright of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with Foreign Countries yesterday appealed to the people of Bangladesh to extend moral support to their struggle against 35 years of United States economic blockade against Cuban people.

"We passionately appeal to the people of Bangladesh to support us in our struggle against the US economic sanctions on Cuba," he said.

Siveright, who came to the country on a three-day visit on Friday, made this appeal while participating in a citizens' dialogue in the city last evening. The dialogue was organised by some eminent citizens including Matur Rahman, editor of The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, Barrister Lutfur Rahman of the Jatiya Ainjibi Parishad, Farhad Majhar of the forthright Chinta, Hassan Arif of the Odhikar and Talea Rahman of the Democracy Watch.

Explaining the recent Helms-Burton Act of the United States that intensified the decades-long sanction, the Cuban official said it was aimed at enabling the Cuban right to self determination.

Siveright said under the law, the product of any country containing raw materials from Cuba is forbidden to enter into the United States, while no US company is entitled to export any item which is used in the USA to Cuba. "Besides, any foreign ship that leaves Cuban port after offloading anything is not allowed to touch any port of the United States within six months from the date of leaving."

The law is not only affecting the economic growth of Cuba, but also substantially curtailed the rights of other nations to operate in the free market world economic system, the Cuban official said claiming.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

that Canada and the states belonging to European Union are poised to appeal against the law to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for their own interest.

Replaying to a query about the allegations of human rights violations in Cuba, Siveright said it was just propaganda of the Western media. "Should you call the Cuban state a human rights violator, when it provides education and healthcare to facilities to its entire population free of cost," he said adding that its literacy rate is 99 per cent, life expectancy of Cuban people is 75 years, and we have one doctor for every two hundred people, while our infant mortality rate is only eight per cent.

Talking on the issue of women rights in Cuba, he informed the audience that the women literally enjoyed equal rights in his country. "A woman worker gets nine months of maternity leave — three months before the delivery with full wages and six months after the child birth with some sixty per cent of her monthly wages."

Confronted by a question regarding democracy, Siveright said that Cuba had its own concept of it. "The workers in the factories and people in their localities enjoy hundred per cent freedom to choose their representatives. Besides they take active participation in planning their development projects," he said. On the leadership of Fidel Castro, he said it was the people who wants to see him to lead the nation.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.

At the end of a two-hour dialogue, Barrister Lutfur Rahman told the audience that we should demand of the government to invite Castro to visit our country, especially after the visit of great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Yaseer Arafat.



## Compact Food Processor

Perfect gift for someone special

Transcom Electronics Limited

Official licensee of Philips Electronics N.V.  
for lighting products, radio and TV sets

Dhaka: 815306-9, 819625-9, 889993  
Ctg: 716353, 723578, Khulna: 720304, Bogra: 6215

Let's make things better

PHILIPS

## India 146/6 in 39 overs

Sports Reporter

India were 146 for six in 39 overs against West Indies when rain interrupted the first one-day international at Queen's Park Oval yesterday, according to Star Sports.

Wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia and vice-captain Anil Kumble were at the crease with 19 and 9 runs respectively. Skipper Sachin Tendulkar, who chose to bat after winning the toss, made a quick 44 of 43 deliveries before being caught behind off Curtly Ambrose.

West Indies have omitted fast bowler Ottis Gibson and leg-spinner Ravi Lewis from their squad of 13 when play commenced in cloudy conditions.

India have included Trinidad-born allrounder Robin Singh, who did not play in any of the preceding five Tests.

## Office ransacked Sadat College teachers begin indefinite strike

TANGAIL, Apr 26: Teachers of Sadat Govt University College began an indefinite strike from today to protest an alleged threat against them and ransacking the office of the Chairman of the Economics Department by some outsiders, reports UNB.

The incident ensued over the admission in the first year honours classes, the college sources said.

Immediately after the violent incident Principal Abdur Rashid called an emergency meeting of the teachers association and took the decision of indefinite strike to bring the culprits to book.

The outsiders stormed the office of the Chairman of the Economics Department and threatened to kill him when he refused to accept their demand for illegal admission of a student in the first year honours in Economics.

## JS body on Shima's death to visit Ctg again

The parliamentary committee, formed to probe the incident of death of Shima Chowdhury with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad as its chairman, will undertake a two-day visit to Chittagong from April 29 for on the spot re-investigation of Shima's death in "safe custody in Chittagong district jail," an official release said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

The committee will receive testimony of different persons who brought Shima Chowdhury to "Rouzan thana" and those who were in touch with the incident till her death.

The inquiry committee, if required, will visit the Chittagong district jail and Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The committee held four meetings in this regard and went to Chittagong on March 2 for on the spot investigation.

## DU classes resume

Classes of the Dhaka University resumed yesterday after a nine-day Eid-ul-Azha vacation, reports BSS.

## 'We don't believe in vengeance'

From Page 1

nation anywhere. I take great pride in reassuring you that our politics is not of vengeance but of extending the hand of cooperation," he asserted.

Begum Zia said, "Let me make it clear once again that unlike our predecessors in the opposition, we intend to ensure political stability for the sake of the well-being of our people. We are not the ones who would create any obstacles in the way of development for the sake of party politics."

Continuing she said, "We do not believe that one can serve democracy by simply saying 'yes' to everything proposed by the government in the parliament or by pretending to be in agreement with the government on anything and everything. If it were so, there would be no accountability of governments and there would be no democracy... as the essence of democracy lies in the process of practicing simple things like 'agreeing to disagree'."

Stating that her party was making all efforts to make parliament the focal point of all activities, she regretted that the government had not honoured the 4-point agreement signed with her party. The Speaker still continued to behave in a partisan manner and none of the 40 parliamentarian standing committees for establishing accountability of the government departments was set up as yet, she went on.

The BNP Chairperson also told the members of the American Chamber in Bangladesh that the electronic media was

being used for party propaganda and for character assassination of the opposition politicians.

She alleged that opposition party members were being prosecuted with political motive and that in the last 10 months, more than 150 BNP leaders and workers were killed and nearly 4000 people detained using the Special Powers Act without any warrant or charge.

"These are instances of clear violation of basic human rights," she observed. Speaking about SAARC, Begum Zia said through this organisation, it has been possible to make progress in the most critical areas of regional concern which, she said, were poverty alleviation and preferential trade.

"Bypassing the SAARC to initiate another smaller sub-regional grouping will not only duplicate a lot of earlier efforts, which would imply loss of time and money for poor countries of South Asia, but also give rise to misgivings between partners of cooperation in the whole of South Asia," the BNP chief said.

Mentioning the concept of sub-regional grouping, Begum Zia said, "It is likely to further intensify the imbalance between size, population and economy of the various countries in this region. Any hurried decision in this regard may even go contrary to the concept of the so-called development quad."

"We have recently watched how a hurriedly concluded water-sharing treaty failed to achieve its objectives because due consideration was not given to the technical as-

pects like water availability and environmental sustainability," she continued.

The opposition leader also observed that ideas related to the establishment of "the Ganges or the Jamuna River Basin authorities are also being explored currently in line with the Mekong River Authority."

"What is really needed in this respect is again detailed discussion and review and analysis of technical information before we can embark on such a venture," she added.

After the delivery of her prepared text, Begum Zia answered questions from the audience.

Replying to a query as to why her party had called a hartal, she said that only a half-day hartal was called to vent the accumulated frustration of the people over the government's failed economic policies. "It is not a pattern but a single instance," she observed.

In reply to another question Begum Zia said her party was against politicising students or the labour force for political gains. Every section of society was now politically conscious.

The luncheon meeting was chaired by Forrest Cookson, President of Amcham.

Begum Zia was flanked by her party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and former finance minister Saifur Rahman and US Ambassador in Bangladesh David N. Merrill. Former BNP state minister for planning Moyeen Khan was also present among the guests, who included leading businessmen and western diplomats.