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Mahathir blasts West

By Special Correspondent

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday accused the West of taking steps to undermine his country's economy but said "We have been able to fend those off so far".

Describing as a "clash of civilisation", something which he said the West wants in poor and developing countries, Dr Mahathir said "botched attempts had been directed to destabilise our country".

The Malaysian Prime Minister was addressing a press conference at the Winter Gardens of Sheraton Hotel yesterday afternoon.

At the hour-long press conference, he replied to numerous questions on the detention and trial of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, whom he described as a "friend of the West which wanted to see him as Prime Minister".

Dr Mahathir dwelt on the "invasion by currency traders" to undermine the economies of Malaysia and other Asian tigers (Thailand and Korea), the stability that Malaysia has attained after fending off the See Page 12 Col 1

Eight leaders enjoy river cruise

The D-8 leaders had a river cruise yesterday on board BIWTC vessel VS Masud, reports UNB.

Earlier, in the morning Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the distinguished guests from Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Indonesia and Nigeria on their arrival at Pagla Ghat from where the river cruise started.

During the three-hour cruise on the rivers Buriganga, Dhaleshwari and Meghna, the D-8 leaders enjoyed the scenic beauty of riverine Bangladesh.

While enjoying the enchanting sights stretching from Pagla Ghat to Gazaria, they greatly complimented the tremendous development works taking place on both sides of the rivers. In course of the cruise, the leaders of the eight developing countries also informally discussed in a cordial atmosphere, the possibilities of meaningful cooperation among the member nations.

The leaders expressed their hope that, as the new chairperson of the D-8, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would place the D-8 resolutions before various international See Page 12 Col 4

JS session resumes today

The current session of the Jatiya Sangsad resumes its sitting at 4:30 pm today after a 12-day recess, reports BSS.

The 12th session of the Seventh Jatiya Sangsad began on January 25 and was adjourned on February 18. During the period the Parliament held 13 sittings.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed addressed the Sangsad on the first day of the present session.

Inside Today

Article

Dialogue Offers a Way Out of the Blind Alley

Column: The Outside Story
by Sabir Mustafa
Page 4

Focus

Micro credit programmes and poverty alleviation
Page 5

Business

Task force meets today to hammer out export-boosting strategies

India eases monetary policy

DSE, CSE price quotations
Pages 8, 9, 10

Prayer Timings

March 3		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:29	5:34	5:34
Johr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:30	4:35
Maghrib	6:05	6:08
Esha	7:25	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Cairo to host next summit in 2001

D-8 adopts Dhaka Declaration

By Staff Correspondent

The two-day Second D-8 Summit concluded in the city yesterday with the adoption of the Dhaka Declaration pledging steps to turn the new grouping into an effective trading bloc and greater cooperation in 13 thrust sectors.

The Summit was a turning point in infusing dynamism in the D-8 that represents eight most populous Muslim countries having a total of 800 million people, nearly one seventh of the global population, the Declaration said.

The D-8, launched in June 1997, comprises Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey. The third Summit will be held in Cairo in 2001.

Through the Dhaka Declaration, the D-8 leaders recognised trade and business as one of the most potential areas of cooperation and collaboration

and resolved to convene a meeting of ministers of trade and commerce at an early date.

The Declaration called for establishing a Federation of D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industries and asked the members to expedite implementation of the already assigned priority projects at the earliest by utilising available resources and capabilities.

The Declaration acknowledged the benefits of globalisation but cautioned that the D-8 should recognise the accompanying risks of destabilisation and increased inequality between developing and developed countries.

The D-8 leaders decided to consult with relevant international institutions to minimise the effects of the global financial crisis and to contribute to reforms in the international financial system in cooperation with other developing countries.

The 33-point Declaration agreed on the need for creating a permanent coordinating centre to facilitate conference and secretarial services and instructed the D-8 Council of Ministers to finalise it before the end of 2000.

The Dhaka moot adopted some concrete measures to shape the cross-continent D-8 grouping into a strong trading bloc through adoption of multi-farious programmes, including holding meetings and seminars, and constituting various forums and groups, according to UNB.

The summiters decided to consult relevant international institutions both to minimize the effects of the global financial crisis and also to contribute to efforts aimed at reforming the international financial system in cooperation with other developing countries.

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Call for launching D-8 Business Forum

A productive alliance forged: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent



Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the new chairperson of the D-8, has described the second summit as an event that has succeeded in forging a productive alliance for partnership for development and economic cooperation.

She said the private sector will be the main engine of growth and development with the governments of the D-8 countries facilitating the process and called for creating a Business Forum as early as possible to ensure private sector's involvement in the development process.

"We have been able to chart out pragmatic and practical steps which would benefit the ordinary people of the eight member countries that represent a population of about 800 million," Sheikh Hasina told a crowded post-summit press conference yesterday evening.

The Summit has agreed that as the Chairperson of D-8 she would take the initiative to inform other international bodies and groupings, particularly the G-8, of the views of the new organisation, Hasina said.

Hasina said the Dhaka Summit had the first opportunity to review the progress of the nascent alliance which had identified 13 non-exhaustive areas of cooperation.

She stated that all the member-countries had already taken major steps in their respective thrust sectors, which has been reflected in the Dhaka Declaration.

Hasina said freer access to international markets, increased foreign direct investments could enhance the efforts of the D-8 countries.

See Page 12 Col 2



Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the Bangabandhu Museum at Dhandmondi in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Business leaders say D-8 to promote trade, investment

Economy, not politics, should be the main component in cementing relations and yielding benefits to the peoples of D-8 countries, business leaders in the city said yesterday, reports UNB.

Welcoming the emphasis laid on the private sector in the Dhaka Declaration of just concluded D-8 summit, the business leaders lauded commitment of the summiters to seek reforms in international financial system for functioning of economic globalisation.

Business leaders in Bangladesh see a good prospect of promoting investment, transferring technology and expanding market in the eight-member inter-continental economic bloc.

He identified two areas where the member countries can share benefits: transfer of medium technology and investment among the member states.

Malaysia and Turkey are capable enough of making investments in and transferring medium technologies to other member countries in the grouping, especially Bangladesh and Iran.

Mintoo appreciated the clause 15 and 16 of the Dhaka Declaration, that floated ideas of holding the first D-8 Business Forum and forming a Federation of D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"I hope our Prime Minister, who took over as the new Chairperson of D-8, will initiate positive steps towards implementing the decisions," said the apex trade body chief.

He said political relationship will yield nothing because See Page 12 Col 3

D-8 leaders visit Bangabandhu Museum

"This is a fitting memorial for the struggle of a great patriot," wrote Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad, in the visitor's book after going round the Bangabandhu Museum yesterday morning, reports UNB.

The Malaysian leader took a keen look at many historical photographs of Bangabandhu at the ground floor of the house-turned-museum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Going to the first floor, Mahathir sadly looked at the bedroom of Bangabandhu, where all the articles on display were used by the great leader over 23 years ago.

While moving round the museum, the Malaysian premier stood for a while in front of a life-size photograph of Bangabandhu kept at the family drawing room. Then he stared at the spot on the stairs where the bullet-riddled body of Sheikh Mujib lay for sometime after his assassination by a group of disgruntled army officers.

See Page 12 Col 1



The concluding session of the Second D-8 Summit at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

2 boeings for Hajj pilgrims to arrive by Mar 10

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman signed an agreement yesterday with China Southern Airlines to get two Boeing-777-200 aircraft on lease to ferry Hajj pilgrims.

Biman officials said the planes would be available by March 10, providing it the much-needed bailout to ferry an estimated 18,000 to 20,000 pilgrims. The wide-bodied aircraft are capable of carrying 380 passengers each.

A botched agreement with a US operator through its local agent, said to be an influential person's son, landed Biman in rough waters, forcing it to divert its aircraft from international flights to carry the pilgrims.

The US operator, Air Chartered World, had earlier promised to provide Biman with the same aircraft from China Southern, but backed out at the last minute without giving any satisfactory explanation. Biman officials described it as a breach of contract.

Details of yesterday's agreement with the Chinese airline, the first direct signing by Biman with an airline, were not immediately available.

Kibria to meet Kafco shareholders Mar 7

Star Report

In a bid to resolve various problems of the troubled-fertiliser company Kafco, its partners will hold a meeting with Finance Minister S A M S Kibria on March 7, sources said.

The meeting would try to address Kafco's pending gas bill issues, poor machinery replacement and loan issues.

The sources said the meeting will be participated by Kafco Japan Investment Company President Yoshinori Matsuura, Chairman of Haldor Topsoe A/S, Copenhagen, Dr. Holder Topsoe and IFU representative Martin M Kristensen.

Industries Secretary and Chairman of Kafco KM Ejazul Huq, Chairman of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation M Anwarul Hoque and others will also participate in it. The Kafco partners will also meet the Industries Minister afterwards.

Sources said that the foreign partners of Kafco are likely to press the government further to accept the commercial settlement proposed by general contractors Marubeni and Chiyoda. Both these companies are also lenders of the Kafco project.

The government has also formed a nine-member committee headed by the Finance Minister to probe into irregularities in Kafco.

Since inception in 1995, Kafco has incurred a loss of US\$ 120 million due to mechanical failures. The plant was shut down as many as 37 times since it was put into place. The export-oriented fertiliser factory, which gets natural gas at a rate much lower than any other consumer in the country, has not also paid over US\$ 12 million in gas bill.

The government's refusal had prompted the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan to put pressure on Bangladesh.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed in a meeting with OECF last month said that the plant was poorly built with low-quality equipment resulting in frequent breakdowns. He said, "if the plant is accepted as it is, See Page 12 Col 4

Sharif to visit Rangamati today

RANGAMATI, Mar 2: Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is due to visit this hill town tomorrow, reports BSS.

According to district administration, the Pakistani leader, immediately after his arrival here will go on a cruise on Kaptai Lake. The Pakistani team will visit the tribal museum and witness a cultural programme, to be presented by a group of tribal artists.

Khaleda calls on Demirel

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia called on Turkish President Suleyman Demirel at his hotel suite in the city yesterday and discussed activities of D-8 and its Dhaka declaration, reports UNB.

Begum Zia thanked Demirel for his initiative in forming the organisation of developing eight countries by holding its first conference at Istanbul in 1997.

She said the D-8 member countries could achieve progress by implementing its objectives.

The Turkish President said the D-8 member countries would be able to achieve their goals by performing the responsibilities they have been entrusted with.

Demirel told Begum Zia that a task of making small aircraft for agricultural activities has fallen on the shoulder of Turkey while Bangladesh has been entrusted with setting up of rural based small industries.

All the D-8 member countries have been given different jobs. The Turkish president informed the BNP chairperson about its European Union membership and the problem with Cyprus.

Dacoits kill ACI guard, loot office in Kushtia

From Our Correspondent KUSHTIA, Mar 2: A dacoity was committed in the office-godown of ACI Company at Kamalapur near police lines of the town last night.

Police said, a gang of armed dacoits stormed into the company's office at dead of night, killed its guard Abdul Alim, 32, and looted medicines and other products worth about Tk five lakh.

Police recovered the body this morning and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

Ctg port: New container yard opens today

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Mar 2: The Chittagong port authority has taken preparation to commission the newly built container yard inside the port jetties tomorrow, port sources said.

The new yard, built at a cost of about Tk six crores, will have the capacity to accommodate 550 containers. This will help ease the container congestion at Chittagong port, the sources added.

During the recent 66-hour hartal enforced by opposition, Chittagong port faced a severe space crisis with a burden of about 14,000 containers against the capacity of 10,000 containers inside the jetties.

With the commissioning of the new container yard, the capacity for accommodating containers will increase, the sources said.

Interview with The Daily Star Demirel defines D-8 goals

By M Anwarul Haq

President Suleyman Demirel said that the Dhaka Summit has set an important milestone in the D-8 process in terms of progress and achievement towards its goal.

"It is less than a two-year old organisation. The remarkable thing is that by identifying specific projects we have been able to put the D-8 on a sound footing," said the Turkish President in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star at his hotel suite yesterday.

He said he felt the potential of the eight-nation alliance is 'tremendous'.

"On one end is Nigeria and the other end is Indonesia. Opportunities for new avenues of cooperation abound in Islamic geography, and this could certainly be achieved through our efforts," said Demirel, who presided over the launching of

D-8 in Istanbul on June 15, 1997.

Turkey, he said, as part of its commitment to D-8, has already designed an agricultural aircraft and that it would have its first experimental flight by the end of the year.

The Dhaka Summit, he said, provided an opportunity to the leaders of the eight countries to look into the core areas of cooperation.

"We also had the opportunity to exchange views on global economic issues confronting all of us today," Demirel said.

At the meetings and forums, the Turkish President said, discussions focussed on increasing trade volume "among ourselves", establishment of a Joint Business Forum, the mutual promotion of investments, the stock markets, banking and See Page 12 Col 2



Suleyman Demirel

Bagerhat SP refuses to accept case Discovery camera crew assaulted by hoodlums in Sundarbans

By Staff Correspondent

Armed hoodlums invaded a vessel to assault a wildlife cameraman from the America's Discovery Channel on February 24 after he protested acts of pollution in the Sundarbans.

Mike Herd, the cameraman, and his local assistant were on a vessel, M.V.Chhuti, anchored at the Katka Forest Station, Herd and the vessel owner said.

The incident occurred when a group of seven assailants from the M.V.Royal Gondola, a tourist boat also anchored at Katka, allegedly boarded the Chhuti carrying automatic pistols and hockey-sticks, and assaulted Herd and his field assistant Rubaiyat Mansur. Herd was filming a documentary on tigers in the Sunderbans.

"At about 5:30 pm, on February 24, a group of seven men led by one Faruk -- the owner of the Khulna-based Royal Hotel and Royal Tours and Travels--

boarded our vessel, M.V.Chhuti, brandishing clubs and an automatic pistol. Once aboard, they grabbed my Field Assistant Rubaiyat Mansur by the hair, pulled him downstairs and beat him with the clubs. They then held a gun to his head. Several Chhuti crew members and two Bangladesh tourists were also beaten trying to stop the violence. Faruk made many threats about killing people and sinking the Chhuti... He attempted to hit me but was distracted," Herd said in a letter to the British High Commission. A copy of the letter was forwarded to The Daily Star.

Several members of the crew as well as tourists aboard the Chhuti sustained injuries while attempting to stop the violence.

This incident appeared to have been prompted by a previous encounter between the Discovery man and Faruk earlier that afternoon when Herd, during a routine visit to the filming site, noticed that the M.V.Royal Gondola had been dumping all its garbage into the waters of the Katka canal.

Having picked up the mass of empty beer cans floating in the water, Herd and Mansur reportedly took them to Faruk and "in all politeness" requested him not to dump non-disposable waste in the canal.

According to Herd, Faruk took offence at this and boarded the Chhuti within an hour of the incident.

According to Section 23 of the Wildlife Preservation (Amendment) Act of 1974, dumping solid waste-matter in a wildlife sanctuary is a punishable offence. The law also says that it is illegal to carry firearms within a five-mile radius.

See Page 12 Col 6