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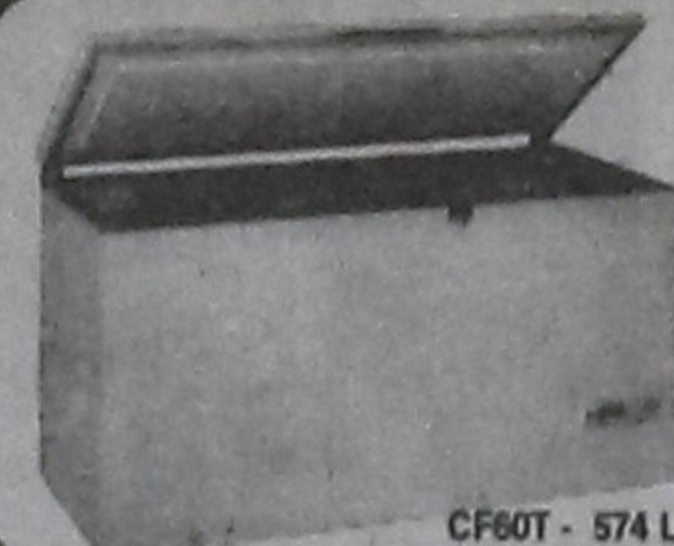
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IFC official observes Congenial atmosphere a must to ensure flow of FDIs

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting Executive Vice-president of IFC Peter Woicke has said that foreign direct investment (FDI) would not flow into Bangladesh until a congenial atmosphere for investment was created.

"Interruption in business is not good for FDIs," he said, deliberately refraining from making any comment on the prevailing political situation in the country.

He, however, observed that FDIs were urgently needed for the country to cope with the fast growing demand for employment.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) official was addressing a press conference at the end of his five-day visit to Bangladesh at the Dhaka office of the World Bank yesterday.

The World Bank country director Frederick T Temple and other members of the visiting team were present.

Peter Woicke, who is also the managing director of The World Bank, expressed his firm belief that private sector would come forward to make huge investments in Bangladesh if and when a favourable situation was created.

According to the figures provided by the IFC official, the total investment by his agency in Bangladesh was in the neighbourhood of 175 million dollars. Another 185 million dollars were in the pipeline.

Replying to a question, he said that he was not happy over the IFC investment in Bangladesh, because he wanted a 'greater volume' of investment.

Underscoring the need for accelerating various reform programmes in the country, the World Bank official said that the reforms should be speeded up, no matter whether it was in power, gas or the telecommunications sector.

Peter Woicke also emphasised the need for privatisation of telecommunication and electricity distribution system. He told newsmen that during his meeting with high government officials, he had advised them to take an immediate decision regarding gas export from the country.

"As gas export is a political issue in Bangladesh, the final decision would have to be taken by the government and that the world bank could only advise it," he said.

"There can be more debate on the issue, but the decision should be taken immediately," he emphasised.

Peter Woicke contradicted

the view of the government that a decision regarding gas export should be taken after determining the actual reserve in the country.

"Unless you explore gas you would not be able to determine the reserve, and unless you export it, foreign companies would not come to explore gas reserves," he pointed out.

He thought that Bangladesh should go for gas export as it could meet domestic demands for 30 years with the existing reserve.

"Otherwise the country would miss a great opportunity of earning much needed foreign exchange, like many others did in the past."

During his visit, the IFC official had called on prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, leader of the opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia and Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria.

To create job opportunity for millions of unemployed people, the government should open some other field for private investment and expand the telecommunication and internet facilities.

He also visited some IFC and World Bank funded projects in the power, telephone, cement manufacturing, micro-credit and infrastructure sectors. The IFC official also attended a business round table organised by The Daily Star.

Focusing on IFC's new investment in Bangladesh, Peter Woicke listed a hospital in the private sector, a new commercial bank in collaboration with BRAC, a cement manufacturing company and power projects. The IFC would invest up to 7 million dollars in the power project.

British citizen murder: Five arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Five people were arrested in connection with the killing of a Bangladeshi born British citizen at Balha Garden in the city's Sutrapur area on Sunday.

The arrested were identified as Sohel Ujjai, Ghaffar, Hossain and Jan-e-Alam. Sutrapur police said, adding the arrested had confessed their involvement in the killing.

Abdul Mannaf, 35, came under attack by a gang of muggers when he was returning to Fakirpur after meeting his relatives at Saderghat in the city Sunday afternoon.



A colourful procession was brought out from the TSC of Dhaka University yesterday marking the Valentine's Day. — Star photo

Big turnout of visitors at book fair

By DU Correspondent

The month-long Ekushey book fair experienced a big turnout of visitors yesterday, as an unusually large number of young men and women celebrating the Valentine's Day found the fair premises to be the most suitable venue for 'rendezvous'.

Books containing poems on love sold like hotcakes on the day, said some of the stall owners. "Specially the card sets of poems were in high demand", they added.

Some 20 books arrived at the fair yesterday including 'Gilgamesh' authored by Hayat Mahmud.

Bangla Academy held a discussion on the theme "Bangladesh of the 20th Century: Progress of Fine Arts" was held at the Boi-mela Mancha in the afternoon.

Prof. Matlub Ali delivered the keynote speech on the topic, while artist Aminul Islam was in the chair.

Among others, Prof. Abdur Razzaq, Prof. Syed Monjurul Islam, Dr. Syed Azizul Haq and Moimuddin Khaled took part in the discussions.

A discussion on "Bangladesh of 20th Century: Progress of Classical Music" will be held at the Boi-mela Mancha today at 4:00 pm.

Dr. Mridul Kanti Chakrabarty will present the keynote paper on the theme, while Omer Faruk, Nilufer Yasmin, Rawshan Ara Mustafiz, Shamima Parveen and Towhidur Rahman will be present as discussants.

Gulshan lake

HC restrains Rajuk from dumping soil

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday restrained Rajuk and the authorities concerned from dumping soil in the Gulshan lake.

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Haq and Justice Mohammad Abdur Rashid imposed the ad-interim injunction upon a writ petition filed by two residents of Gulshan.

The HC also ordered the respondents to explain why their action in filling up Gulshan lake should not be declared to be without lawful authority and is of no legal effect.

The court further ordered them to show cause why they should not be directed to refrain from filling up the Gulshan lake.

The HC also ordered them to show cause why they should not be directed to remove the soil already dumped by them in the lake adjacent to Road No 118, 121 and 123.

Dr Kamal Hossain submitted

Detention of Shikdar upheld

By SC Correspondent

The High Court in a judgement yesterday upheld the detention order of Ershad Shikdar saying that the allegations brought against him were 'very serious in nature'.

The order of detention on Shikdar was issued on July 30, 1999.

The order, however, said that it would be given effect from the date of his arrest. Shikdar was arrested on August 11.

After 120 days of detention, the advisory board constituted under the Special Power Act, 1974, also approved the further extension of his detention period.

The order of detention and its bases were served on him on August 11. The grounds of detention in 29 cases, including a dozen murder cases, were referred to in the order.

Police later discovered that he was an accused in as many as 63 criminal cases.

Challenging his detention, a writ petition was filed in the high court on August 22, 1999. The court issued a rule the same day upon the government to explain why he should not be brought before the court to satisfy itself that Shikdar had not been detained unlawfully.

Discharging the rule issued earlier, the high court yesterday passed a judgement in favour of his detention.

Hartal 'holiday' Chaos on the city street

By Special Correspondent

Home bound passengers, eager to take advantage of an eight-day 'holiday', created chaos on the city streets during rush hour yesterday afternoon.

The holiday makers' rushed to the city's bus stations, rail and launch terminals offering a bonanza to ticket touts.

Others out on business to the banks or businesses and schools added to the normal load of traffic, making it difficult for police to manage the chaotic traffic.

The great offer came courtesy of a three-day opposition-called hartal, beginning today, followed by the two-day weekend and a public holiday on February 21, marking the Language Martyrs Day. The smart ones would add to their package the only working day on February 20, skipping it as a 'casual' leave.

The offices, both government and commercial were deserted by afternoon following the home bound people rushing to their destinations.

Those who could afford to splurge left yesterday evening for holiday destinations such as Bangkok, Singapore, Dubai, London, Calcutta and Kathmandu.

Maid murdered in Dhaka Cantt

By Staff Correspondent

Robbers strangled a maid and looted Tk 37,000 in cash from a residence near Bangabandhu Museum at Dhaka Cantonment in the city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rahima Khatun, 32, of Tangail. See Page 12 Col 3

Faisal murder case

Maid accuses victim's cousin, three others

By Court Correspondent

Parul, an eye witness to the murder of a government official's teenage son, accused the victim's cousin and three others of the killing in her judicial statement at the court of the chief metropolitan magistrate yesterday.

Faisal, the 18-year-old son of Anwarul Hossain, was killed, and Parul, the maid, critically injured in their Azampur residence on February 3.

Hossain filed a case at the Lalbagh Police Station two days after the incident, but he did not mention any suspects in the murder. The accused would be determined on the basis of Parul's statement, stated Hossain in his FIR.

Parul identified Faisal's cousin, Sumon, as the main accused of the murder. The other three accomplices would be identified if they were produced before her, she said.

Parul said Sumon and three others came to the house in the

afternoon on the day of the incident and she opened the door for the visitors.

After they entered the house, the visitors went to Faisal's room where they demanded the key to a locker.

When Faisal refused to give them the key, the visitors grabbed him, stabbing him with a dagger that Sumon produced from his pocket.

Parul said she tried to intervene, but the visitors also attacked her with a stick. The maid said she fainted and could not remember what happened afterwards.

Parul said Sumon also visited the house earlier that day. Faisal's father asked him to take his breakfast, but Sumon refused. He said he had some urgent work to do.

Police have not arrested the prime suspect in the killing. Parul was taken into custody by the Lalbagh police after she recorded her statement.

Hartal paralyses life in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 14: Hartal paralysed normal life in the district today, the second day of the five-day hartal enforced by the All-Party (Opposition) Action Committee.

The All-Party (Opposition) Action Committee enforced the hartal demanding withdrawal of names of all buildings and halls of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

Vehicles, including rickshaws were off the roads while inter-thana bus services remained suspended during the hartal.

All trains ran behind schedule and Biman flights were operated with fewer number of domestic passengers.

All business establishments and educational institutions were closed and attendance in government and private offices was thin.

No untoward incidents were reported from anywhere of the district.

The Action Committee held a rally at the Court point in the afternoon with the District BNP President M A Haque in the chair.

It was also addressed, among others, by District Jatiya Party President Advocate Giasuddin, Central Nayebe Ameer of Khe-lafat Majlish Principal Habibur Rahman and City Jamaat Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman.

The speakers iterated their other demands that include re-naming of the halls and building of the university after the companions (saints) of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA), trial of the killers of the Shibir activists who were shot dead in BDR firing during agitation on December 25, removal of VC Habibur Rahman and withdrawal of the cases filed against the opposition activists.

They also threatened to continue their movement if demands were not met immediately.

Meanwhile, Vice-Chancellor Habibur Rahman said Chancellor of the university President Shahabuddin Ahmed has directed to raise the issue at the Senate meeting to end the stalemate.

He said the process of holding Senate election is going on and the new Senate body will take the decision on naming of the halls and buildings of the varsity.

MM Reza new Home Secy

By Special Correspondent

M.M. Reza, the former Health secretary, has been appointed the new Home Secretary by the government on a two-year contract.

Mr Reza, a member of the erstwhile CSP of 1968 batch, had gone on Leave Preparatory to Retirement (LPR) on December 13 after his last assignment.

Mr Reza, who has a distinguished service record, was called back following frantic efforts to find a proper replacement of Shafiqur Rahman, whose three year contract as Home Secretary terminated last month.

A number of Secretaries were considered for this very important government job. Initially Syed Rezaul Hayat, Secretary to the communication ministry was given appointment. But he declined to take over the charges, leading to a cancellation of his transfer order.

It left the ministry without a Secretary since January 31. The post of the additional Secretary also remained vacant.

M.M. Reza's appointment was signed by the Prime Minister on Sunday. Necessary orders would be made as soon as the formalities are completed, competent sources said.

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| • Bulgaria | • Ireland | • Slovenia |
| • China | • Italy | • Spain |
| • Croatia | • Latvia | • Sweden |
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