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## Tofail explains why Clinton visiting Bangladesh

Potential and prospect of Bangladesh reaching the middle income group by 2020 as forecast by international experts may have inspired US President Bill Clinton to include Dhaka in his South Asian trip, said Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday, reports UNB.

"His visit will further open up opportunities for prosperity," Tofail told UNB when asked how Bangladesh can derive benefit from the maiden trip of a US President scheduled for March 20.

Duty-free market access, US investment and technology for gas-based industries and 30 per cent quota increase for garment are among the issues of mutual interests that are likely to figure high in bilateral talks during the visit, he said.

Bangladesh's gas resources have already attracted US investment in energy sector and more US giants are showing interest in investing in

Bangladesh. US-Bangladesh Business Council that grouped multinationals willing to invest here also wanted Clinton to visit this country to pave way for increased partnership between the two private sectors, Tofail said.

The US President, while elaborating economic issues of his government at a recent function in Philadelphia, said poor countries also can be trade partners of US.

Bangladesh liberalised foreign investment policy to draw extensive foreign investment, which is crucial for the country's socio-economic development. Clinton's visit will bring in more US investment in the country's energy and infrastructure sectors, he hoped.

Till December 1999, Board of Investment (BOI) registered 72 US projects involving US\$3.48 billion, the highest from any single country. Most of the proposals came in the last three

years mainly in gas and energy sector. A number of US companies are involved in gas exploration and private power generation projects, BOI sources said.

Referring to Bangladesh's stand on behalf of least developed countries (LDCs) in the Seattle meet, the Industries Minister said the USA, Canada, Japan and EU have agreed on principle to extend duty-free market access of LDCs' products to the developed countries.

"The visit will help us get it," said Tofail.

Besides, Bangladesh will pursue for a 30 per cent increase in garment quota in US market that consumes bulk of the country's readymade garments.

He said the government favours value added product from gas reserves and will welcome US technological and financial assistance for gas-based power plants and fertiliser factories to meet country's demand and export.



Rickshaw puller Hira being treated at DMCH for burn injuries he suffered when pickets set fire to his rickshaw at Tongi yesterday morning.

— Star photo

## Strictly enforce PSA, PM tells policemen

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked the police officials to strictly enforce the Public Safety Act (PSA) for ensuring peace and security, reports AP.

"Strictly implement the new law... people will be spared of cruelty and have peace and security," she said yesterday directing the police officials to take stern action against the terrorists irrespective of party or group.

Addressing the senior police officials at the International Conference Centre in the morning, the Prime Minister said it is the duty of the police to ensure security of the people by eliminating terrorism from the society.

She said: "Economic development will not be possible without a stable environment. It is necessary to ensure peace and stability in the society for the interest of all."

Referring to hartals, Hasina accused the opposition parties of killing innocent people, including police, in the name of hartal. People have no support for such hartal," she said.

Hasina said the opposition has failed to forge their "so-called" anti-government movement without support from the people. The opposition is issuing threats of toppling the government from the beginning and giving ultimatum one after another.

"We'll call election in time, because we believe in people's voting right and democracy," she said. "People's welfare is the only goal of this government and it is working day and night for improving the lot of the people."

The Prime Minister said her government had tried to reach an understanding with the opposition through discussion. "But they did not respond."

She said the PSA has been enacted to check crimes effectively and asked police to apply the law properly to ensure public safety and security.

She also asked them to remain alert so that the law is not abused and mentioned the provision of punishment for abusing the law. Lapses in investigation will also be taken into account under the new law she added.

Hasina said, action would also be taken against those filing false cases. "It will be possible to ensure peace and security in public life with proper use of this law."

An improved trend in law

and order is already seen with the passing of the new law, she said and asked police to ensure that this trend continues.

Referring to various problems of the police force, the Prime Minister said the government is very much conscious about those and is taking necessary steps for their early solution.

She said the government has taken step to decentralise power through local government elections, including Upazila. The government will strengthen police and civil administration at Upazila level after election of the public representatives.

Hasina said the government would look into the problem of arms and ammunition, accommodation, wireless sets, communications and other equipment.

IGP A Y B I Siddiqui, AIG CID Nurul Huda, CMP Commissioner A T Ahmedul Huq Chowdhury, AIG Police HQ Awlad Hossain Mia, DIG Khulna Range Lutful Kabir, SP Gaibandha Raushanara Begum, SP Laxmipur Khairul Bashar, SP Jhenidah Khan Syed Hasan, SP Kishoreganj Benazir Ahmed, SP Netrakona Kazi Jaiul Abedin, SP Pirojpur A K M Alauddin Huq, SP Habiganj Rahmat Jahan Shikdar and DG Railway Rahman Bhuiyan took part in the discussion.

The president of the country which imposed sanctions is coming. On his visit here, the sanctions are about to go," Vajpayee said Saturday in the northern city of Lucknow while opening a teachers' convention.

A wide range of economic sanctions — including denial of export-import loans — were triggered under the so-called

Glenn Amendment when India and Pakistan conducted tit-for-tat nuclear tests in May 1998. Subsequently, the US Congress passed legislation that enabled Clinton to waive sanctions dealing with agricultural trade in an effort to help US farmers for a period of one year. That waiver was extended indefinitely in October.

But some analysts say the United States is waiving sanctions in the hope India will sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and if no progress is made, sanctions could be reimposed.

In his speech Saturday, Vajpayee did not say whether Washington had given any message that the remaining sanctions would be lifted.

**Pakistan tour**

A PTI report says, the question of whether to include Pakistan in US President Bill Clinton's visit to South Asia

## Lay-off at Pak Steel Mill

## Massive blast during strike in Karachi

KARACHI, Feb 28: A powerful explosion destroyed a small business in the southern port city of Karachi today at the start of a strike to protest massive layoffs at one of the city's biggest employers, the Pakistan Steel Mill, reports AP.

No one was injured in the explosion in the heart of Karachi, said police. But the authorities believe it was linked to the strike called by the Muttahida Qami Movement and Jeay Sindh, two ethnic-based organizations that have large followings in the city.

The MQM represents Indian Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from India.

The explosion occurred at 10:30 a.m. local time.

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Throughout the city the response to the strike was sporadic. In some of the more troubled neighbourhoods, where violence has occurred, many of the shops were closed. But elsewhere it was business as usual. Government offices, banks and the Karachi Stock Exchange remained open.

Yesterdays was the second day of a 13-day strike by the teachers of about 23,000 primary schools of the country. Besides, the teachers will bring out processions at every thana headquarters on March 6 and submit memorandum to thana education offices and TNO, said a press release of the organisation yesterday.

Earlier, primary school teachers observed a nine-day long sit-in programme from January 23 in the city's Osmani Udyan to press home their demands. They also observed a token hunger strike and a 36-hour hunger strike during that period.

Sheikh Hasina, when she was the opposition leader promised the primary school teachers in 1994 that if Awami League goes to power, her government will accept all their demands, it said.

But there has been no response from the government during their last movement in January, it added.

## Non-govt primary school teachers threaten tougher movement

By Staff Correspondent

The Non-government Primary School Teachers' Association has threatened to launch a tougher movement if the government does not nationalise the schools immediately.

The two organisations have accused the army-led government of laying off mostly ethnic Mohajirs and Sindhis.

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## Omission

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provision has been proposed providing that a tribunal shall not punish any one only on the basis of witness given by a person who has died or has been incapacitated or is not traceable, the source said.

The Section provided that the statement of prosecution witness may be considered without corroboration if the person concerned dies after registering police statement or becomes untraceable or becomes incapable of appearing before a tribunal.

The sources added, "No significant changes in the law have been made as regards grant of bail."

The PSA does not provide for grant of bail within 75 days, the period earmarked for investigation.

Albright's visit will have some political touch. She will receive a gold medal from Masaryk University in Brno and will go to Masaryk's birthplace at Hodonin. She will lay a wreath at his tomb in Lany, west of Prague, and go to the capital to unveil a Masaryk statue.

Albright's maiden name is Marie Korbelova. Her father was a Czech diplomat who took his family to London as Germany took over their homeland at the start of World War II. The family then moved to Denver in 1948 rather than serve under a communist Czechoslovakian government.

Albright's spokesman, James Rubin, would not discuss the matter Sunday. "The secretary is completely happy serving the United States," he said.

Albright's March 5-8 visit coincides with the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of national hero



Tomas Masaryk, who served as the first president of the Czechoslovak Republic after the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918.

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