

Tofail urges Japanese investors

Set up industrial park in Bangladesh

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed called upon the visiting Japanese investors yesterday to set up an exclusive Japanese industrial park in Bangladesh to cash in on business prospects, reports UNB.

"We will provide you all-out support to this effort and it will be a win-win investment deal as Bangladesh is enjoying preferential market access to developed countries," he told the Japanese observation mission on investment environment.

The team, led by Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commerce and Economic Cooperation (JBCCEC) chairman Koji Nojima, called on the minister at his official residence.

Tofail said that Japan is the biggest development partner of the

country, and has been receiving generous support to the development initiatives since independence.

Welcoming the Japanese investors in the joint venture, he said Bangladesh wants to diversify the relationship by getting Japanese investment here. He particularly referred to Chittagong Steel Mills for joint-venture investment.

"The government took the initiative to resolve the outstanding issues relating to KAFCO and we with the support of all parties, including Japanese government, have resolved most of the issues."

He assured the Japanese delegation that the remaining issues will also be resolved by this month.

Tofail also sought Japanese supports for the development of IT

sector in Bangladesh.

Appreciating the development efforts of the government, Koji Nojima said Japan is very sincere to strengthen its bilateral relations with Bangladesh.

"Strategically Bangladesh is very important in continuation of development of Asian countries," he was quoted to have said, adding that in near future Bangladesh will have to play a vital role in coordinating Asian Development.

Besides, he observed, Bangladesh will develop on its own as it has got huge natural resources.

He said Japanese investors will come up with new investments as their target is to strengthen investment relation with the country, said an official handout.



Rangs Motors Ltd held its Marketing Conference 2001 at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday evening. Picture shows Managing Director of the company Abdur Rouf Chowdhury addressing the meet. --Star photo

Peace talks postponed

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Israeli military sources said, According to preliminary investigations, he was kidnapped Sunday by three or four Palestinians who stole his car and killed him inside the vehicle before disposing of the body.

His car was later abandoned and set alight by masked men, Palestinian sources said.

The Israeli official said the Islamic resistance movement Hamas was suspected.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak called the murder "a blow against the peace process" in a statement released by his office.

"The prime minister calls for ... Arafat to put an end to the acts of violence, because they do not serve any of the parties. Israel will not give way to violence," the statement said.

After Tzalah's body was found the Israeli army reimposed tight restrictions on the Gaza Strip, including the closure of roads, the Palestinian airport and crossing points into Israel.

The restrictions had been eased following marathon talks between security officials and peace negotiators of both sides overnight Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers struck back, fighting Palestinians and setting fire to their fields, fruit trees and greenhouses by Gush Katif, Israeli radio reported.

The Israeli army designated the area a closed "military zone" and took few steps to restrain the settlers, the radio said.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav called for a freeze on negotiations as long as the Palestinians pursue attacks on Israelis.

"We cannot negotiate while our civilians are assassinated, and without Arafat publicly condemning these barbarous acts in an address to his people," said Katsav, who belongs to the hardline Likud party.

In the West Bank an Israeli soldier was slightly hurt in a shootout with Palestinians near the northern West Bank town of Nablus and the Arab village of Salim, witnesses and Israeli radio reported.

Also near Nablus the body of a Palestinian whom locals described as having been known for collaborating with Israel was found dumped on his doorstep, witnesses said.

Residents of the Arab village of Burjain said Mohammed Musa Abdel Rahman, 38, was shot four times in the body.

Two Palestinians were executed separately in Nablus and Gaza City Saturday by the Palestinian Authority for having collaborated with Israel. Two more were sentenced to death for collaborating and two received life sentences from a security court in Bethlehem.

The settler's killing brought the death toll to 378 since the beginning of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, on September 28, including 320 Palestinians, 13 Arab Israelis, 44 other Israelis and a German.

Hawkers' rehab

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Nurul Hossain Morol said the designated places are not suitable for the business they do.

An attempt to rehabilitate hawkers at the place near the Motijheel Ideal School about two and half years back was foiled due to a clash between two groups, sources in DCC said.

When asked about so many factions of hawker associations, Morol claimed that his organisation was the largest one and that vested quarters formed different hawkers' associations with ill motives.

Recalling previous experiences, a number of DCC officials said existence of so many organisations of hawkers will be another obstacle in their rehabilitation.

According to Morol, around 1.5 lakh hawkers were evicted during the recent drive. He, however, failed to say the number. Genuine hawkers in the city are being counted, he said.

A number of leaders of hawker associations alleged that they used to pay toll to police and some DCC men.

The thanas concerned used to appoint 'lineman' to collect toll in exchange of allowing them to occupy the pavements.

The understaffed Estate Department took several attempts earlier to evict hawkers, but failed due to lack of adequate police force.

"But this time we are getting good support from DMP and we are adamant to keep the pavements and parts of roads hawker-free," said DCC's Chief Estate Officer Fazle Elahi.

Kashmir rebels hopeful of Pak mission

SRINAGAR, India, Jan 15 : The chairman of Kashmir's main separatist alliance said Monday he was still "optimistic" of sending a delegation to Pakistan, despite delays in India issuing travel documents, reports AFP.

"We don't believe in days and dates," said Abdul Gani Bhat, chairman of the All Party Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference.

The Hurriyat had originally planned to send the delegation on Monday for talks with Pakistan-based militant groups, but only two of the five-member mission have valid passports.

"I am still optimistic that relevant documents of my colleagues will be released sooner than later," Bhat said.

"There is no alternative left. If the peace process is to be taken forward Delhi will have to issue passports."

The Hurriyat mission was aimed at building on India's ceasefire initiative in Kashmir, which has seen counter-insurgency operations against Muslim militant groups in the region suspended since November 27.

Bhat named his five-man delegation on Thursday and urged the Indian government to respond

HC hearing on PSA

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The petitioners were represented by Barrister Ishfaq Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain, M A Malek, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and some others.

AAG Mahbub-e-Alam was assisted by deputy attorney generals M Faruq, Bazlur Rahman Chhana, Shamsuddin Manik and others.

In the case filed against the lawmaker and his son, they were accused of ransacking a sweetmeat shop in Chittagong and looting Tk 45,000 from it on December 26 last. Though the shop owner had filed the case under penal code, police had allegedly tampered with the FIR and turned it into a case under PSA, their counsels told the court.

In a brief order, Justice Abu Saeed Ahmed and Justice Choudhury said, "Since this Rule has been issued to consider the views of a particular piece of law, namely, Public Safety Act, it involves constitutional questions inviting national importance and as such it is viewed that this Rule should be heard and disposed of expeditiously, as it bears urgency and accordingly this Rule is fixed for hearing on 30.1.2001 at the top of the list subject to part heard and considering the facts and circumstances of the connected criminal case being Kulshi P.S. case No.15 dated 26.12.2000. It is ordered that the petitioners shall not be arrested or disturbed by the police till disposal of the Rule. Since the learned Additional Attorney General along with some Deputy Attorney general and also the learned Assistant Attorney general have already appeared for the respondents, the service of notice upon the respondents is dispensed with and the Rule shall be treated as ready. However, the investigation of the case may continue."

PDB, Marubeni

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Meghnaghat phase-2 power plant as per terms and conditions of the Meghnaghat phase-1 plant that is now being developed by the US company AES.

"The free electricity option of AES, which would be available from next year, would tremendously help PDB financially. But how can we compare that benefit with a package that is applicable after 22 years? What would be its worth to PDB then. Besides, Marubeni is grossly violating its original understanding and actually offering a potentially loss incurring package," commented a source.

"Till late 1999, Marubeni was very eager to pursue the Meghnaghat 2 and would do anything to get the project. But from early last year, it started using different pretexts including the KAFCO issue to delay the Meghnaghat 2 negotiations," he added.

Marubeni began unsolicited negotiations for the Meghnaghat phase-2 in late October. The Japanese company is offering free electricity worth 5.7 million dollars at the end of 22 years. After the end of the 22-year contract period, it would give the plant to PDB as a gift. The power plant after 22 years of service should be worth 31.4 million dollars according to Marubeni.

Providing very weak technical papers, it argued that the plant would have such high value even after 22 years because it has a 35-year life span. However, it noted that the plant would need an overhaul on the 26th year costing around 25 million dollars. But the value of the plant would still be 31.4 million dollars even after the overhaul cost.

Marubeni added that unlike the 70-acre land required for the first phase AES Meghnaghat plant, it would only need 35 acres. This would save PDB another 1.9 million dollars.

AES had signed a contract with the government to provide electricity for a levelised 2.79 cents for the next 22 years.

Law minister demands

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the House, PM's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta and Jatya Party Whip Fazle Rabbi also strongly condemned the January 11 incident. Home Minister Mohammad Nasim also spoke on the matter during question-hour.

They said found that the two judges were appointed as per constitutional provisions and the convention.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid who was in the chair termed the incident "very unfortunate and condemnable."

He said, "The appointments (of judges) were made as per provisions of the Constitution. We must follow the Constitution despite attempts to create controversy over constitutional steps."

Khasru said, "Nobody has seen such an uncivilised incident in the 200-year history of the Supreme Court. The protest was also aimed at protecting the killers of Bangladesh."

The law minister observed that Bar members were not trade unionists. "Their language of protest should be dignified, lawful and constitutional. The Supreme Court is not a mere brick-made structure but a symbol of dignity and justice."

Referring to the debate on seniority of judges, the minister said seniority is not the only factor considered in appointing SC judges. "Had it been so, there should not have been constitutional provisions for consultation before appointment of judges," he said. "Competence, wisdom and commitment to rule of law are also considered."

The minister showed a list of judges who were elevated to the Supreme Court from the High Court (HC) superseding their seniors at different times. "It is nothing new."

Dismissing allegations of partisan attitude in appointment of the

Senior jurists

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two High Court (HC) judges superseded by the two new SC judges, elevated from the HC, should also be promoted.

The proposal carrying signatures of lawyers of all the sides was handed over to the Law Minister and he assured that he would take up the matter with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the sources said.

Justice Ruhul Amin, one of the two, Ruhul Amin, was appointed despite the fact that he acquitted five of the accused in the Bangabandhu murder case.

About the other judge, Golam Rabbani, he quoted BNP leader Nazmul Huda as saying that he (judge) had very close links with the then seven-party alliance led by the (Huda) party.

Suranjit Sengupta said that the president appointed the two judges on advice of the Chief Justice and in consultation with the Prime Minister as per provision of the Constitution.

"The President shall act as per the Constitution and not at the dictate of the lawyers," he said.

He also criticised the group of five senior lawyers for working on a compromise formula. Suranjit advised them not to take responsibility of violation of the Constitution.

Suranjit termed the "rowdy protest" at the SC as "disgraceful" for the entire judiciary and wondered why no contempt proceedings were drawn against those lawyers.

Mohammad Nasim told the House the government has the right to take legal action against the pro-BNP lawyers for resorting to "unprecedented vandalism" at the Supreme Court.

He alleged that the BNP lawyers led by Nazmul Huda MP kicked the doors of the Chief Justice's chamber and used abusive words against the judges including the Chief Justice.

He said it was BNP that politicised the judiciary by appointing a district committee leader of the party as a judge of the High Court.

Fazle Rabbi said the January 11 incident at the Supreme Court was "heinous, sad and frustrating". He demanded a statement from the law minister on the issue.

On the consensus formula, he said, "The Constitution does not provide for a formula for appointment of judges in consultation with lawyers."



United Nations Association of Bangladesh recorded a reception to the visiting team of United Nations Association of China at Hotel Purbani International in the city yesterday. -- Star photo

Kibria's statement distortion of fact: BNP

Opposition BNP protested the remark of Finance Minister SAMS Kibria on Khaleda Zia's meeting with diplomats, saying that it was misconceived and based on gross distortion of facts, reports UNB.

"It was most unfortunate that Mr Kibria would make such comments..." said M M Rezaul Karim, member of the BNP Council of Advisers, in a rebuttal yesterday.

The Finance Minister termed Khaleda's presentation of certain demands relating to next general elections, before the foreign diplomats as a matter of shame for the nation.

"How could Begum Zia holding a responsible office of the Leader of the Opposition place her demand in an official manner to foreigners," Kibria said in a reaction.

Protesting the statement of the minister, also chief election coordinator of the ruling Awami League, Rezaul Karim observed the statement constituted not only a travesty of truth but represented a sinister attempt to malign the leader of the opposition and her political party.

"The fact was that the BNP chairperson, in reply to a question, informed the diplomats present of various impediments to the holding of a free, fair and impartial election."

She clearly stated that the demand for removing these impediments was directed to the Bangladesh authorities concerned, present

Khaleda sets Jan 18

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Nizami and IOJ chairman Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Huq addressed the meeting organised by All-Party Action Council of Comilla south unit.

Presided over by Col (ret'd) Akber Hossain, the meeting was also addressed by convener of local APAC, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, JP secretary general Nazim Rahman Manjur, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Majaheed of Jamaat and A R M Abdul Matin of IOJ.

Recalling the post-independence rule of Awami League, Khaleda said it could not remain in power by introducing one party rule. Now they want to return to power again by abusing the Public Safety Act.

Khaleda said Awami League wants to cling on to power by applying PSA against its opponents. But their dream will not be fulfilled as people are united against this repressive law.

She was critical of the government for politicising vital institutions. She said no rules and regulations are followed in promoting their henchmen.

Controversial persons are promoted superceding seniors, she said in a veiled reference to promotion of judges in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. They did not even spare the Army. People will be deprived of justice if such situation continues, she added.

Rubel murder Cross-examination of ex-ASP Shawkat continues

By Court Correspondent
A B M Shawkat Ali, the then ASP of CID as well as the 27th prosecution witness in the Shamim Reza Rubel Murder Case was cross-examined in the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

Judge, Mollah Mostafa Kamal adjourned the proceedings of the case till 2.30 pm today. Shawkat will be cross-examined again today.

Shawkat in his statement said that he had been in Dhaka since 1998 as an assistant police super of the CID. After taking over the charge he examined the handwritings of the two accused AC Akram Hussain and Mukuli Begum as an expert on handwriting, Shawkat added.

He also told the court that he examined the handwritings of the letters, exchanged between Akram and Mukuli regarding the punishment of Rubel and submitted his opinion report before the court on September 9, 1998.

The handwritings of the letters between the two accused were proved, Shawkat added.

Shamim Reza Rubel, 24, a BBA student of the Independent University was picked up by DB police from his Siddeswar residence on July 23, 1998 and was tortured to death in the custody the same day.

All the accused including AC Akram and Mukuli Begum, a local Awami League leader, were present in the court during the proceedings.

One bill passed Alleged mugger succumbs to injuries at DMCH

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it. But the objection was rejected by voice vote.

Both the bills were soon referred to the standing committee for scrutiny.

Another bill, the Standards of Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill 2001 was introduced in the House by Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed.

The identity of the man aged about 25 could not be known till filing of this report last night. His body was sent to DMCH for autopsy.

A case was filed with Ramna thana in this regard.

In another incident, Badda police recovered the body of a new born boy from DIT project area yesterday morning.

Police recovered the body at about 10 am and sent it to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Badda police in this connection.

JS body Textbook trouble

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notebooks and supplied those for distribution. Taking advantage of non-availability of textbooks, dishonest traders are also charging higher prices for the notebooks.

"It is unprecedented that notebooks are available before publication of textbooks," a leader of the printing and publication industry said.

The NCTB is yet to respond to the proposal from the industry to help solve the problem, he added.

Obituary

Maulana Abdur Rob of Kanudaskathi of Rajapur thana of Jhalokathi in Barisal died of old-age complication at his residence yesterday, says a press release.

He left behind seven sons, three daughters and a number of admirers to mourn his death.

His namaj-e-janaza will be held today after Zohr prayers at Islamic complex maqbarah and he will be buried at family graveyard beside the complex.

JS body

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next meeting, sources said.

On procurement of four gantries for the Chittagong port, the meeting suggested that the CPA send all necessary documents to the ministry with two weeks for an early approval. Three international companies were considered for the procurement bid. State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury, Deputy Minister for Food Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, Shawkaot Ali Daru, Mahmuda Shawkat, Golam Faruk Ovee and Zafrul Islam Chowdhury, all members of the committee, attended the meeting among others.