

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 mission.

The team, led by Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commerce and Economic Cooperation (JBCEC) 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 Katzav 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 Katzav, 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 Burqin 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.

On the Israeli political front the latest opinion poll, by Gallup in the daily Maariv, showed right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon leading Barak by 17 points ahead of elections on February 6.

The previous polls it suggested that Peres, who is not a candidate, would narrowly beat Sharon.

Barak's office has denied that he might stand down in favour of Peres ahead of the elections, while Peres has told his supporters to working on his candidacy, saying "This is not the time."

Barak was further undermined Sunday with Health Minister Roni Milo resigning in protest at the prime minister's acceptance of peace proposals put forward by US President Bill Clinton.

In another move, the Israeli Supreme Court decided to hear a case aimed at halting the Israeli policy of killing Palestinian leaders suspected of conducting attacks against Israel, the lawyer for a slain Palestinian official's widow said.

The court had ordered Barak's office to submit a brief explaining the policy by January 30, lawyer Naila Atiah said.

An Israeli official said Barak's office would answer the court, but defended Israel's tactics against the Palestinians. "Everyone whom we have shot was someone carrying out an active attack or preparing one," the official said.

# 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.

# Marketing confce of Rangs Motors held

**Star Business Report**

Rangs Motors held a marketing conference-2001 at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

Presided over by A Rouf Chowdhury, Chairman, Rangs Group, the conference was attended by Sujit Kumar Dey, President of Hindustan Motors Export Limited as special guest.

Speaking at the function, Rouf Chowdhury said Rangs Motors is assembling buses and trucks of the world famous Mitsubishi and Hindustan brands.

Rangs Motors presented crest, gold medal to its five dealers for their good performance.

Around 200 dealers and customers participated in the conference.

The conference was followed by dinner and a cultural function.

Rangs Limited, Rangs Workshop Limited, Rangs Industries Limited, Rangs Properties Ltd, Ranjas Limited, Shield Security Services Limited, Yellow Lines Limited and Gulf Oil Bangladesh Limited are other sister concerns of Rangs Group.

# 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 government and future caretaker administration. "Common sense dictates that such demands cannot be met by foreign diplomats and it can therefore never be placed with them," the BNP advisor said.

He made it clear that the principal purpose of the meeting was "to expose the nefarious design of the Awami League to win election with the help of the draconian Public Safety Act 2000 and various unlawful devices."

Khaleda's comment was to urge upon the international community represented in the country to exercise vigil and observe developments leading to the next general election, Karim said.

He said Khaleda also called upon the Heads of Mission, individually and collectively, to send many more observers well ahead of the election date in order to make an objective assessment of the situation and be more effective in fulfilling their task.

The meeting was part of a periodic exchange of views with diplomats which had, in fact, been initiated in the first place by the Awami League itself when it was in the opposition, he said.

There was no question at all of encouraging foreigners to interfere in the domestic affair of the country, the BNP advisor added.

# 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 Nazimur Rahman Manjur, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahed 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 Siddeswari 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.

# Two boys die after drinking 'Tang' in N'ganj

**From Our Correspondent**

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 15: Two boys died and two others fell sick after taking 'Tang', a soft drink, at village Birebo under Rupganj thana this morning.

Nazmul, 10, son of Rahimuddin and Imran, 6, son of Taleb Ali of the same village fell sick after drinking 'Tang' which was bought from Atlapur Bazar today, police said.

Rustam, 28, and his wife Saleha, 20, also fell sick after drinking 'Tang'.

Nazmul and Imran died on the way to hospital. Rustam and Saleha were admitted to Rupganj thana health complex in a critical condition.

**Pakistan, Turkey to intensify contacts**

ISLAMABAD, Jan 15 : Pakistan and Turkey have agreed to formalise regular bilateral contacts to promote closer political and economic cooperation, Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said Monday, reports AFP.

Speaking after a "comprehensive exchange of views" with Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, Sattar said both sides had decided to hold consultations on a "regular and continued basis."

"We are intensifying our contacts on contemporary international issues, both political and economic," he told a joint press conference.

# One bill passed

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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.

# Alleged mugger succumbs to injuries at DMCH

**By Staff Correspondent**

An alleged mugger, who was beaten up by a mob in the city's Hatkhola area on Tuesday, died at the Dhaka Medical Hospital on Sunday night.

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.

# D-8 Commission

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In reply to a question Dr Ali said it is too early to think about free trade among the D-8 states. It would solely depend on how businessmen take interest in doing trade.

He said Egypt has proposed the establishment of an international marketing and trading company for promotion of trade among the member countries. Islamic Development Bank has agreed to finance the feasibility study. Bangladesh proposed a business forum with shipping lines from all the D-8 countries.

# 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.

# 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 of 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.

# HC judges

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Three judges retired from the Supreme Court (SC) recently. To fill up the vacancies, three judges of the High Court (HC) were elevated to the SC.

Besides, two HC judges resigned and two others retired recently, creating a shortage of judges there. The new appointments would ease the situation to some extent, the sources noted.

Over one lakh cases are now pending with the SC. The number of judges compared to the number of pending cases is inadequate, court sources mentioned.

There was also a lack of office space in the SC for new judges. With the inauguration of the SC Annexe last week, 40 more judges can now be accommodated.

The reported appointment of six new judges in the HC was a matter of discussion among lawyers at the HC yesterday. Some of them alleged that one of the six is 'getting preference' because of his close link with an influential minister.

# Esale Sowab mahfil tomorrow at Dariapur

The 67th annual Esale Sowab and waz mahfil, founded by Ala Hazrat Qutubul Alam Alhaj Moulana Shah Sufi Toazuddin Ahmad Rahmatullahi Alaihi, will be held tomorrow at Darbar-e-Dariapur Sharif of Sreepur thana under Magura district, says a press release.

In this holy mahfil, including Pir Sahebans of Farfura Sharif and Huzur Kebbas of Dariapur Sharif, religious scholars from home and abroad, will deliver speeches.

Khatme Quran, zikr mahfil, Huzur Kebba's majar sharif ijarat and concluding 'doa' (Sowab Risani) will be held in the mahfil.

The Pir of Dariapur Sharif, Hazrat Moulana Shaha Sufi Alhaj Abul Hasan Muhammad Abdul Quayyum, will conduct the day-long mahfil.

# 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 maidan and he will be buried at family graveyard beside the complex.

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the House, PM's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta and Jatiya 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 Bangabandhu".

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."

# Chief Justice

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year.

Justice Ruhul Amin, one of the two judges of the Death Reference Bench, in his 355th judgement acquitted five of the 15 accused.

The other judge, Justice Khairul Huq, confirmed the death sentence of all the 15.

Four of them are in the death row at the Dhaka Central Jail. They are Lt. Col. (dismissed) Syed Faruqur Rahman, Lt. Col. (Rtd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Maj. (Rtd) Bazul Huda and Lt. Col. (Rtd) Mohiuddin. Mohiuddin is among the five who was acquitted.

The others are absconding. Most of them are believed to be out of the country.

The 15 were sentenced to death by a trial court on November 8, 1998 for murdering Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of the members of his family on August 15, 1975.

# 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.



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