

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 (JBCCCEC) 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.

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 Burin said Mohammed Musa Abdul 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

settlers 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.

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

Sharon's office has denied that he might stand down in favour of Peres ahead of the elections, while Peres has told his supporters to work 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 Naiila 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.

HC judges

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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.

According to Morol, around

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.

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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 Pakistani-based militant groups, but only two of the five-member mission have valid passports.

"I am still optimistic that travel 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 swiftly.

HC hearing on PSA

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The petitioners were represented by Barrister Ishaq Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain, M A M a l e k , K h a n d a k e r Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud and some others.

AAG Mahbub-e-Alam was assisted by deputy attorney generals M Faruq, Bazlur Rahman Chhanna, 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."

Esale Sowab mahfil tomorrow at Dariapur

The 67th annual Esale Sowab and waz mahfil, founded by Ala Hazrat Qutbul Alam Alhaj Moulana Shah Sufi Toazuddin Ahmad Rahmatullah 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 Pia Sahebans of Farfura Sharif and Huzur Keblas of Dariapur Sharif, religious scholars from home and abroad, will deliver speeches.

Khatme Quran, zikr mahfil, Huzur Keblas's major sharifijara and concluding 'doa' (Sowab Risani) will be held in the mahfil.

The Pir of Dariapur Sharif, Hazrat Moulana Shaha Sufi Alhaj Abdul Hasan Muhammad Abdul Quayyam, 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 mazda and he will be buried at family graveyard beside the complex.



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

PDB, Marubeni

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Meghnagarh phase-2 power plant as per terms and conditions of the Meghnagarh 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 Meghnagarh 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 Meghnagarh 2 negotiations," he added.

Marubeni began unsolicited negotiations for the Meghnagarh 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 Meghnagarh plant, it would only need 35 acres. This would save PDB another 1.9 million dollars.

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