

## WB threatens to stop financing physical infrastructure projects

### Bring radical changes in institutional governance: Temple

Star Report

The World Bank will not finance any more physical infrastructure projects in Bangladesh, unless the government brings about radical changes in institutional governance.

"The government has to deal with institutional governance issues before we decide to invest in physical infrastructure projects. Bangladesh has to do it. No outsiders can do it," said the bank's Country Director, Frederick T Temple, while responding to queries from the business community at a luncheon meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

It is important that the society demands governance and political leaders respond to this demand, Temple observed.

As regards the WB affairs, he said that the bank is mostly dealing with analytical work.

FICCI President Wali Bhuiyan pointed out that that over the last three decades the World Bank has financed many projects in order to eliminate poverty and related problems, but there has not been any significant dent on poverty. He then sought the bank's views on the impact of its projects on the country's economy and society.

In reply, Temple said that such a view may not be completely true, as Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing country of the world and has made achievements in many areas.

"The country has made achievements in food grain production, micro-credit programmes and adult education. School enrolment is higher and there are more export-oriented industries.

"Presently, the political situation may look messy but you now have democracy in the country.

"The problem is that the number of poor are growing at a faster pace than the number of poor going above the poverty line."

However, the WB is not satisfied with progress in other areas like physical infrastructure, privatisation, pace of reforms and institutional achievements, he said. "The rate of accomplishment in physical infrastructure is 85 per cent and 25 per cent in case of institutions."

In response to FICCI president's suggestion that the WB should consider debt relief for the country, Temple said it is unlikely because Bangladesh does not fall in the category of highly indebted country (HIPIC).

A WB-financed project may have failed either because it was been ill-conceived or due to poor implementation where the bank itself was involved in some way or the other, both in conception and implementation of the project, Bhuiyan had argued.

Temple blamed poor operating environment in the private sector for the country's dismal performance in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

"FDI as a per cent of GDP in Bangladesh is small compared to Malaysia and Thailand. Improving the operating system would probably do

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Students from different schools in the city chant slogans against corrupt officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and Beximco as they march towards the Ministry of Education yesterday. The processionists demanded trial of the people responsible for delay in printing and distribution of textbooks for the current academic session. --Star photo

## Blast at rally PM hints at Khaleda's involvement

BARURA (Comilla), Jan 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday indicated her political rival opposition leader Khaleda Zia's involvement in the bomb incident at CPB's meeting, reports UNB.

"How can she give interview with BBC just 45 minutes after the bomb blast at CPB meeting at Paltan Maidan, how can the procession of BNP be brought out within a very short time?" she questioned.

The Prime Minister hit back at Khaleda Zia barely a day after Khaleda, the ex-premier, at a meeting in the capital on Tuesday blamed the ruling party for the bomb incident.

A powerful bomb exploded at the meeting of the Communist Party of Bangladesh on Saturday

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## Proceedings of Jail Killing Case adjourned till Feb 4

By Court Correspondent

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the Jail Killing Case till February 4.

The judge, Ahmed Jamil Mostafa adjourned the proceedings as Nurul Islam Manzoor, one of the eight accused, now in the custody, was not produced before the court due to his illness.

Kazi Abdul Awal, the then DIG (Prison) as well as the complainant of the case, was present in the court.

Advocate Abdul Majid Munshi, lawyer of the two accused KM Obaidur Rahman and Nurul Islam Manzoor submitted two petitions before the court. In the first petition, he stated that an earlier court order for proper treatment of the accused was violated by the jail authorities.

He also told the court that one of the eyes of KM Obaidur Rahman was damaged for lack of proper treatment. He prayed for proper treatment of the accused outside the Jail Hospital.

In the second petition, he stated that a criminal revision petition against the framing of charges was filed with the High Court and it was heard for three

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## Protest against edn ministry PM's Office asks again for legal action

Star Report

Hundreds of students yesterday staged a demonstration in the city against the Education Ministry protesting non-availability of textbooks for secondary level students.

Earlier, the students brought out a procession from the Dhaka University and gathered in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

The students, mostly from different high schools in the city, chanted various slogans against the "corrupt" officials of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and Beximco for the delay and irregularities in printing and distribution of textbooks.

They demanded trial of the officials of NCTB, Education Ministry and Beximco involved in the 'irregularities'.

Their other demands include immediate supply of textbooks, withdrawal of the books containing error an end to irregularities

in printing textbooks. Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) called the demonstration.

Meanwhile, for the second time, the Prime Minister's office asked the Education Ministry to take legal action against the printers and distributors for their failure to supply textbooks in time.

The PM's office earlier this month gave the same instruction but there was no response from the ministry, sources concerned alleged.

Instead, after a long delay, the ministry just forwarded a note with some reports of NCTB regarding 'progress in printing and distribution' of textbooks.

The Prime Minister's office on January 2 asked the Education Secretary to take legal action against the defaulting printers within a week.

The PM office has expressed dissatisfaction over the issue

and asked for "specific comments" from the Ministry whether the printer performed the job properly.

Taking the advantage of poor supply of textbooks, a section of unscrupulous businessmen in different part of the city are selling textbooks of secondary level at higher prices, sources said.

Allegations have it that Pustaka, a Beximco concern, has given its dealership to owners of petrol pumps and sellers of construction material and homeopathic medicine instead of real booksellers for distribution of textbooks printed by it.

The SCF held two rallies, one in front of the DUCSU building on the Dhaka University campus and the other in front of Jatiya Press Club before and after the procession respectively.

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## Lawyers protest elevation of 2 judges, demand repeal of PSA

By Special Correspondent

Pro-opposition lawyers brought out a silent procession in the city yesterday protesting the appointment of two judges in the Supreme Court superseding two others in the High Court (HC) and in demand for repeal of the Public Safety Act (PSA).

They renewed their demand for elevation of the two HC judges to the Supreme Court (SC).

The lawyers also denounced the killings at Saturday's CPB rally at Paltan Maidan in the city.

The silent procession, organised by Sarbadaliya Ainjibi Parishad, started from the SC Bar Association (SCBA) office premises following a rally there and terminated near the Jatiya Press Club.

Convenor of the Parishad Barrister Nazmul Huda, who led the procession, urged the people to support their 'democratic movement.'

The Parishad will hold a rally on Sunday on the SCBA premises to press its demands, he said.



Pro-opposition lawyers brought out a silent procession from the Supreme Court Bar Association office premises yesterday, protesting appointment of two judges in the Supreme Court superseding two others, demanding repeal of PSA and denouncing killings at Saturday's CPB rally. --Star photo

## Trade gap with India widens 10 times over last decade

By Rafiq Hasan

The annual trade deficit with India has only widened over the last decade, reveals a study by independent think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The study, presented by CPD Research Director Dr Mostafizur Rahman at a recent Indo-Bangla dialogue, says that yearly trade gap between two countries has increased 9.5 times while import from India 15 times over the last ten years. There has also been expansion of the country's import base in this period.

Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that Bangladesh's trade imbalance with India was 768.12 million US dollars during the last fiscal year.

According to the study, the deficit stood at approximately 1.18 billion dollars in 1999. Bangladesh officially imported goods worth 1.22 billion US dollars from India against total exports of 48 million US dollars in 1999. Besides, Indian goods worth 1.84 billion dollars entered the country through unofficial channels, the study pointed out.

According to the CPD estimate, total trade deficit between the two countries, which share around 4,000 kilometres of

common borders, would be around 2.74 billion dollars.

India has become the country's most important source of import and officially it is eighth on India's list of export destinations.

"If unofficial trade is accounted for Bangladesh's rank as an export destination of India jumps from eighth to third," the study said.

Bangladesh's export base, on the other hand, has been limited

and concentrated on a few items. There is only about six items with an annual export volume of more than one crore taka.

Six items including jamdane sari, chemical fertilisers, raw jute and frozen fish accounted for about 95 per cent of the country's total export to India in 1999. This trend has remained more or less the same over the 1990s, as India expanded its export base.

Bangladesh has imported as many as 2,129 commodities from India during the 1990s, including cereals, textiles, machinery, equipment, chemicals and base metals, the study observed.

When contacted a high official at the Ministry of Commerce said that the trade deficit has widened due to the huge quantity of rice imported from India following the devastating flood in 1998. Otherwise the gap between the two countries would have been much lower.

Last year, for example, rice import from India was low, causing a decline in the total import volume to 827 million dollars against an export volume of 63 million dollars, he said.

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## Khaleda addresses jt rally at Jessore today

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 24: BNP chairperson and leader of the opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia will address a joint rally of the four-party alliance in Jessore Eidgah maidan tomorrow.

Jatiya Party presidium member Raushan Ershad, Ameer of Jamaat Moulaana Matiur Rahman Nizami and IOJ chairman Shaikhul Hadith Moulaana Azizul Huq.

## Akhter's JS seat Showcase on EC to explain its order

By Special Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the Election Commission (EC) to show cause within two weeks why its order vacating Kishoreganj-2 parliamentary seat of expelled BNP leader Maj (rtd) Akhtaruzzaman should not be declared unlawful and unconstitutional.

A Division Bench of the High Court (HC) comprising Justice Abu Sayeed Ahmed and Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury issued the

Rule following a writ petition filed by five voters from the constituency.

Chief Whip of BNP Delwar Hossain MP, the Speaker, the Law Secretary and Akhtaruzzaman have also been made parties in the writ petition.

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|        | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Jan 25 |           | 5.40 pm  |
| Jan 26 | 6-42 am   |          |

| Prayer Timings |       |        |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| January 25     |       |        |
|                | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fazr           | 5-30  | 6-10   |
| Zohr           | 12-45 | 1-20   |
| Asr            | 4-05  | 4-20   |
| Maghrib        | 5-40  | 5-45   |
| Esha           | 7-15  | 7-35   |

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Rivalry over phensidyl trade leads to slum fire: Thousands homeless

By Staff Correspondent

At least 20 people were injured when a devastating fire gutted about 2000 shanties at Bashpatti Slum near Moghbazar rail crossing in the city yesterday afternoon.

A number of slum dwellers were seen wailing for their "missing" relatives though police and fire brigade said they did not find any dead body in the debris till filing of this report last night.

One of them, Nazma, was looking for her eight-month-old baby Hasan.

The fire followed a clash between two rival gangs of local "terrorists" over control of the slum, known for phensidyl trade for long.

A good number of the slum dwellers said the fire was not accidental. A number of crackers were exploded at the slum just before the fire broke out, they alleged.

Sources said Kiran, reportedly a local Jubo League leader, leads one of the two gangs of "terrorists". The other is led by Sobhan who is allegedly involved in drug trading and terrorist activities in the slum.

During the fire, the entire slum was covered with thick smoke which could be seen from far away places. According to witnesses, most of the slum dwellers including women were outside when the fire broke out at about 3:30 pm.

Marzina, a victim, told The Daily Star that she was sleeping with her two children inside her shanty. "I woke up hearing a number of explosions around. The fire broke out immediately".

Earlier, at about 10:30 am yesterday, members of the two rival

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A devastating fire burnt to ashes 2000 shanties at Bashpatti slum near Moghbazar rail crossing in the city yesterday. The fire followed a clash between two rival gangs of local terrorists over control of the slum, a notorious den of phensidyl traders. At least 20 people were injured. --Star photo