

Dhaka, Beijing to boost cooperation

7 MoUs including two on power projects signed

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Beijing yesterday emphasised their desire to further boost bilateral economic and commercial cooperation and as a manifestation of growing ties signed seven accords including one on infrastructure building and two on power projects.

According to Dhaka's request, Beijing also assured that it would take steps to reduce the yawning trade gap and offered zero tariff facility for entry of Bangladesh jute and jute products to Chinese market.

China also agreed to assist Bangladesh in infrastructure building projects involving roads, railways and flyovers and also in energy and construction sectors.

The accords were signed at the end of official talks between Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and visiting Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji at the Prodhana Mantri Bhaban yesterday evening.

One to one talks were held between Khaleda and Zhu for about 20 minutes, preceding the official talks participated by aides

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia receives Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji (L) on his arrival at the Zia International Airport yesterday. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan is also seen on her left.

Int'l confce on arsenic menace opens today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 4th international conference on groundwater arsenic contamination in Bangladesh opens in the city today.

Over 100 participants including 40 experts from across the globe will take part in the two-day brainstorming sessions titled Arsenic Contamination of Underground Water in Bangladesh: Cause, Effect and Remedy.

Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH) that pioneered the detection of arsenic victims in Bangladesh, and the School of Environmental Studies (SOES), Jadavpur University, West Bengal, India, are jointly organising the conference.

Prior to the start of the conference, a press briefing was held for journalists from all national dailies about the focus and outcome of the conference.

Prof Quazi Quamruzzaman, SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Khaleda invited to visit China

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji invited Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to visit Beijing.

Khaleda gladly accepted the invitation and said she would visit China at a convenient time.

Rongji also conveyed Chinese President Jiang Zemin's greetings to the Bangladesh Prime Minister.

INSIDE TODAY

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Cry, my country, cry: Simi Banu and women in development in Bangladesh
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Dilara Choudhury

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Remittance marks 20.5 pc growth during July-Nov

Weekly stocks roundup

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 12	5-30	6-00
Jan 13	6-44 am	

Prayer Timings

Jan 12	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-40
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

FIFA bans Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Football's governing body FIFA has banned Bangladesh.

The Zurich-based authorities imposed the ultimate sanction late on Thursday night after the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) violated the FIFA and AFC (Asian Football Confederation) regulations that strictly support a democratically elected committee.

In March last year, Guinea was banned for a similar offence. The BFF has been affiliated to FIFA since 1974.

FIFA General Secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen, in a letter to the BFF, said: "We wish to inform you that the FIFA emergency committee has discussed the situation regarding your association and consequently has decided to suspend the Bangladesh Football Federation."

"This decision has been reached because the situation prevailing at your national association violates the Statutes of both FIFA and the AFC. This suspension will apply until the situation returns to

normal, namely the elected executive committee members are re-installed in accordance with FIFA and AFC decisions."

The suspension prevents Bangladesh from participating in any international football activities (official and friendly matches of national team or club level football) and the BFF's right to vote at the FIFA and AFC congresses.

Also, it means the BFF will now lose the right to host the seven-nation South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship, scheduled for a January 26 in Dhaka.

Worse still, Bangladesh will not have access to any financial assistance to run the BFF development programmes. Bangladesh's application to share a pie of the million-dollar FIFA 'Goal Project' will also be shelved.

The FIFA action followed the dissolution of the Harun-ur Rashid-led executive committee last month. The government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia replaced the elected body with an ad-hoc committee

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Hosts run over

AL-AMIN

Bangladesh sports suffered two terrible blows yesterday. The cricketers were beaten out inside three days by Pakistan in the first Test of the Coca-Cola series while their footballing brothers were banned by FIFA.

The ban on the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) by the football's world governing body upstaged the third day's play at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Predictably though, Pakistan lashed the home side by an innings and 178 runs. Set to score an improbable 330 to make the visitors bat again, Bangladesh were bundled out for 152 just after tea.

Bangladesh's latest defeat in their tenth Test appearance was, however, consistent with their records -- an innings defeat on most occasions. The Test infants have lost seven matches in such ignominious way.

They lost the inaugural Test against India by nine wickets and conceded a seven-wicket loss to Zimbabwe last April. Their only draw came against Zimbabwe at the courtesy of rain in Dhaka last November.

Although a defeat for Bangladesh was always on the cards, but the meek surrender of wickets was a painful experience for the holiday crowd at the big bowl after Pakistan declared their first innings at 490 for nine.

Resuming the day on 436 for six, Waqar Younis called his men back after

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Damage of deity Protesters attacked, 10 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least ten people were injured during a clash between members of the Hindu community and some roadside vendors while a procession of the Shankhari Bazaar Mandir Committee was passing by the Babu Bazaar police box in the city yesterday evening.

Sources said the incident took place when a previously announced procession of the Hindu community were parading different streets protesting the damaging of a deity of the Hindu goddess Kali at a temple at Shankhari Bazaar recently by a young man.

Some unidentified people attacked the processionists as they reached near the Babu Bazaar police box, they said.

At least ten people were injured during the attack that lasted for quite sometime.

Massive campaign to combat arsenic menace soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said the government has decided to soon launch a massive nation-wide campaign against arsenic contamination based on available information.

"We will urgently commence nation-wide activities based on available information without waiting for perfect solution as the urgency to combat the problem is acute," he said.

Addressing the inaugural session of a two-day international conference on "Arsenic Contamination in Groundwater: Media Strategy" at CIRDP auditorium in the city, he said Bangladesh wants friends in aid of the hapless people becoming victims of arsenic contamination.

The health minister said that as part of a two-pronged strategy the government would also extend all-out support for the "vigorous efforts" for scientific studies on the crisis to obtain "more definite answers to the yet unan-

swered questions" on the causes and remedies of the arsenic problem.

World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ) in collaboration with Forum of Environmental Journalists (FEJB) organised the conference being attended by 125 experts, journalists and officials from Japan, India, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and host Bangladesh and several international organisations.

Secretary general of WWFJ and Chairman of FEJB Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided over the inaugural session.

Participants are to fix a media strategy to combat the arsenic menace in groundwater in Bangladesh and other affected countries including Laos, China and Cambodia.

Dr Mosharraf said under the planned strategy, four sets of activities would be launched for change of "behaviour pattern" of the people on water uses, in service and pre-service training for health workers, research on epidemiology and arsenicosis management, and follow-up training on clinical research and treatment options.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

India 'ready for war'

Musharraf may unveil fresh curbs on Kashmir militants today

REUTERS, New Delhi

India bluntly warned Pakistan yesterday it was ready for war, stepping up pressure ahead of a key announcement by Islamabad that could ease tensions or trigger fresh diplomatic retaliation.

Indian and Pakistani troops fired mortars and heavy machineguns at each other in the latest daily exchange in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, where Indian troops also killed seven rebels in two separate gunbattles.

Indian army chief General S Padmanabhan said his forces

massed along the border with Pakistan were ready for war and also had the capability to strike anti-Indian militants in Pakistan.

"I have not gone to do an exercise, I have gone to be ready for war, to defend my country," he told a news conference.

AFP says, Padmanabhan warned that if Islamabad dared to unleash its new nuclear arms, India was prepared to hit back with its own arsenal.

"The perpetrator of that particular outrage shall be punished, shall be punished so severely that the continuation of any form of fray will be doubtful," he said.

India has adopted a no-first strike policy over its new nuclear weapons, unlike Pakistan.

But Padmanabhan warned: "We are ready for a second strike. Take it from me that we have enough" arms.

Padmanabhan reiterated the official Indian government line that Pakistan must take tougher action against anti-Indian Islamic militants based on its soil and added New Delhi knew how to strike against their training camps.

Analysts said the tough talking

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Gen S Padmanabhan

Abducted BRTA employee yet to be rescued

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

The whereabouts of abducted BRTA employee Mostafizur Rahman could not be known even four days after the incident despite several raids by CMP and district police at different places.

Mostafiz, head assistant of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Chittagong Office, was abducted at gunpoint from the city's Oxygen intersection Tuesday (January 8) morning while going to his office near Oxygen Gate from his Tutatali residence at Nasirabad.

A powerful criminal syndicate that controls all illegal arms dealings on the Dhaka-Chittagong route was involved in the abduction, sources in the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) said.

The syndicate demanded a ransom of Tk 50 lakh on the telephone for release of Mostafiz, the sources added.

The syndicate led by Toufique, a CMP-listed terrorist, and his brother Tanvir of Amaan Bazar area, in connivance with some BRTA staff, allegedly controls all underground dealings with the BRTA office, according to preliminary findings revealed by the police.

"Our preliminary findings say Mostafiz had close links with the criminal syndicate and had a share of money earned through the

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Hasina returns home today : Overhaul of leadership likely

NAZRUL ISLAM

The Awami League (AL) will take initiatives to rejuvenate the party that faced debacle in the last general election and launch a massive street movement to unseat the BNP-led coalition government once party chief Sheikh Hasina comes back home today.

The AL chief and former prime minister, who was charged with two graft cases filed by the government, returns home this morning after more than a month's private visit to the United States and the United Kingdom.

Hasina will be accorded a reception on her arrival at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) at 6:45am from London. The former prime minister is scheduled to meet visiting Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji at 3:50 in the afternoon, party sources said.

Hasina left Dhaka for the US on December 8, only 58 days after the new government took office.

Hasina will appear before the High Court to seek bail in the two graft cases -- one for the purchase of Mig-29s and the other for appointment of a foreign lobbyist for readymade garment industry.

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam told The Daily Star that they have not fixed the date to move the bail petitions,



Sheikh Hasina

but completed necessary papers to be produced before the court.

The AL central leaders are likely to apprise the party chief of the country's latest political developments immediately after her return. After a review, the party will call an extended meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee, the supreme body of the party, to fix its immediate agenda to overhaul party leadership.

"Changes in party leadership

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Stop telling lies, Kibria reacts to Saifur's remarks

UNB, Dhaka

Former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday clobbered his successor M Saifur Rahman for some reported comments and asked him to stop "telling lies."

Kibria also invited the finance minister to a sober and responsible debate on any matter that Saifur may choose, but in "the language used by gentlemen."

He said recent remarks by Saifur Rahman seem to suggest that he "lost his mental balance" and questioned whether the problem of the macro-economy was too much for him.

Kibria said he was shocked to read about reported remarks about him by the incumbent finance minister "in a language that is difficult to believe."

"He has in fact, used words such as 'rubbish' and 'stupid' in referring to me at a meeting of the officials of the NBR. The press was present and therefore, there are many witnesses who heard him," said the finance minister of the past Awami League government.

"I cannot go down to his level and use such abusive language against him or against anyone else. But I certainly wish to register my strong protest against such defama-

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Young man shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man was shot dead in front of the DESA office at English Road under Kotwali thana in the city yesterday.

Police quoting local people said unidentified assailants shot Nantu, 25, at about 6 pm and fled the scene.

Local people rushed him to the Mirford hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

No case was filed with Kotwali police in this connection till 8 pm yesterday.

Acid thrown on 4 of a family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four members of a family sustained burn injuries when a young man allegedly threw acid on them while they were sleeping at their house at Uttar Nagar in Comilla's Daudkandi in the early hours of yesterday.

The victims are Laxmi Rani Sarkar, 25, her two daughters Purnima Rani, 20, and Jaba Rani, 15, and their brother Shohug, 4.

Family sources accused a local youth named Babul for the acid attack. They said Babul had a relationship with Jaba and wanted to marry her but her guardians opposed their marriage.

All the four injured were first sent to a local hospital and later shifted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The attending doctor at the DMCH burn unit however released them within an hour of their admission after giving them first aid, which is contrary to the normal practice of keeping acid victims under observation for at least 24 hours at the hospital.



Although the DITF opens today, a lot of work inside the fair ground and construction of the entrance gate remained unfinished yesterday.

DITF opens today

UNB, Dhaka

The month-long Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) begins in the city today.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the fair at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar at noon.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and State Minister for Commerce Barkat Ullah Bului will be present at the inaugural function as special guests.

Ministry of Commerce and Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) jointly organised the fair to be opened for the visitors at 5 pm today while tickets will be available from 4 pm.

The DITF 2002 will remain open for the visitors everyday from 10 am

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Bus-truck collision kills 8 in Rangpur

UNB, Rangpur

At least eight people were killed and 20 others injured in a bus-truck collision on Rangpur-Dinajpur highway near Lalchandpur in Gangachara upazila yesterday.

Police and local sources said three of the victims, including the driver and the helper of the bus, died on the spot while five others on way to hospital.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when a Syedpur-bound bus collided head-on with a Bogra bound cow-laden truck at about 7:45 am.

Six of the dead were identified as bus driver Rezaul, 32, helper Asraf, 22, Waliur Rahman, 26, Roman, 20, Tarik, 40, and Rezaul Karim, 28.

The injured were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Traffic on the highway remained suspended for over an hour as local people blocked the road protesting the accident.

In Kurigram, a head-on collision between two minibuses on the Kurigram-Bhurungaman road yesterday left one person dead and 30 others injured, nine of them seriously.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place near Kachari Pioradanga Shibomdir in Nageswari upazila at about 8 am when a Bhurungamari-bound minibus of "Mohan Enterprize" collided with

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