

Daud meets Prime Minister Pak businessmen invited to open joint ventures

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday invited Pakistani businessmen to invest and open joint ventures in Bangladesh.

There is an ample scope for investment in the polyester and bamboo-and-cane industries and in the light engineering sector where the Pakistani investors can take the advantage of attractive incentives, she said.

The offer was given when visiting Pakistani Commerce Minister Abdul Razak Daud made a courtesy call on the prime minister at her office yesterday afternoon.

There is an immense potential for shoring up regional trade in the spirit of SAARC forum, Khaleda pointed out. "The SAARC member-countries have the scope to increase bilateral business which will enhance regional trade."

Showing keen interest in business and trade partnerships, Daud assured that Pakistani businessmen would come forward to help grow light industries in Bangladesh.

The Pakistani minister suggested that cooperation in service sectors like banking, insurance, medical education and cargo shipping between the two countries be increased.

Referring to his meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart, the Pakistani minister informed that they had focused on strengthening of bilateral trade relationship to the mutual benefit of the two countries.

Daud apprised the prime minister that Bangladesh had requested for duty-free access of 21 items to the Pakistan market to reduce trade imbalance now with a slight tilt to Pakistan.

Apart from tea and jute, which top the list of proposed exports, the

Winter

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Sathkira during the next 48 hours beginning at 6pm yesterday.

The night temperature may fall slightly across the country today, the met office said, adding that light rain or drizzle are likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Khulna, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places of Barisal and Chittagong today.

In Dhaka City, a thick shroud of fog and an overcast sky blanketed the sun almost throughout the day, and occasional drizzles with winds swept down the metropolis.

Streets wore a deserted look as many rickshaws stayed off the road and people mostly stayed indoors. The few rickshawpullers who braved the weather charged high fares.

Auto-rickshaw drivers also reaped a bonanza, taking advantage of the situation.

Street side tea vendors did a brisk business.

The city had a total of 5mm rain till 6pm yesterday. Rajshahi had 10mm, Chuadanga 11mm, Tangail 8mm, Bogra 6mm, Dinajpur 2mm, Khulna 3mm, Jessore 8mm and Sylhet had 4mm of rain.

Our correspondent from Narayanganj adds that the rain and cold disrupted normal life and business at the river port and industrial town yesterday.

Drizzles continued in the evening forcing people to stay indoors.

AL: Join JS session

FROM PAGE 1
"We must attend parliament proceedings, but government's actions and attitude keep us away from the House. The government has to restore an atmosphere in which the opposition can play their role parliament."

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told newsmen after a three-and-a-half hour meeting of ALPP.

"Harassment of opposition leaders by filing false cases is still on," he said. Thousands of opposition leaders and activists cannot stay at their homes due to police harassment and repression by ruling party-men. Many other people are also not being spared, he alleged.

The ALPP meeting observed that the government has deprived the people of their fundamental rights by 'pressurising' both private and state-run electronic media not to air the Opposition Leader's address to the nation.

In reply to a question, Abdus Shahid said the ALPP meeting formed two committees to give reports on government-backed 'torture and repression' and 'sacking' of government officials 'without any reason.'

Abdul Hamid heads the committee on 'torture and repression'. It would visit places where 'massive torture and repression' have taken place and then report to the party.

Responding to another question,

Shipu murder case

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said.

The people of the market took the manager Abul Kamal Azad and Shipu to Metropolitan Hospital for treatment and later the victim Shipu was shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) where he (victim) died at about 1:30 am, Ishtiaque added.

The witness further told the court that he came to know about the incident from the manager, shopowners and other people of the market and filed a murder case with Gulshan thana accusing three people including Jewel, son of former Awami League MP Kamal Ahmed Majumder, the following day.

The victim Shipu also told the complainant and other people at the hospital that the accused Shafiq Alam, Zobyayer and Jewel went to the shop for the same intention, the witness said.

The witness further said, the bloodstained shirts and pants of the accused -- Shafiq, Shaikat and Zobyayer -- were recovered from the residence of another accused, Sagar. Later the witness identified the three accused -- Kazi Sharif Ahmed Saikat, Kazi Arif Ahmed Sagar and Joy Hasib in the dock.

Accused Saikat, Sagar and Joy were present at the court but three others -- Jewel, Zobyayer and Shafiq Alam -- have been absconding since the incident.

Iftakher Ahmed Shipu, 38, a mobile phone trader at UAE Market in the city's Banania area was shot dead on the night of May 24, 2000.

Advocate Mahub Ahmed and Shamim Ahsan appeared for the accused.

Bitter pills

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base, reforming the taxation policy, having in place an energy pricing policy to increase fuel prices from time to time, reforming public expenditure and revenue and putting in place a regulatory body to fix power and gas tariff by passing an electricity act and a gas act.

The cabinet will also look at proposals to set up the Patenga port terminal, make telecom tariff competitive by eliminating the government control.

Sources said the list prepared by a committee headed by Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan reflects on many of the World Bank's suggestions.

Morphine

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have licences to manufacture the drug in Bangladesh.

When contacted, an official of the Gonosasthya Pharmaceuticals at Savar said the production of the drug has been stopped since December last year. However, he said the company would soon go into commercial production.

Currently, the drug is being manufactured on a trial basis.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital and National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, which are major users of the drug, said the supply has run out. Some other hospitals in the city have echoed similar complaints.

Attack on US office

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in Hazaribag, was being run by a Dubai-based Indian, Aftab Ansari, who he said is also known as Farhan Malik.

Pandey alleged that Ansari "operated this terrorist module in conjunction with Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba," which Pandey said are two Pakistan-based terrorist groups.

It was the first mention by Indian officials of any alleged participation in the Kolkata attack by Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, one of the main Pakistan-based militant groups fighting to separate Kashmir from India and merge it with Pakistan.

The Pakistan government and Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami denied India's allegations last week that they were involved in the attack on the American Center.

AFP adds: Earlier Indian Home Minister LK Advani said today that two Pakistani nationals had been arrested in connection with the recent attack on the American cultural centre in Kolkata.

The two suspects were arrested on Sunday night in the northern state of Jharkand.

"Both the accused were injured while they attempted to flee and have been hospitalised," Advani was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India.

"Both are Pakistani nationals," he added.

Lagos explosion

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from the scene of the explosions, independent radio stations reported.

Lagos State Police Commissioner Mike Okilo said panicked residents had jumped and driven into the canal as they fled the blasts at the Ikeja military base Sunday evening. But he had no information on the number of people killed or injured.

Dozens of explosions, which began shortly before 6:00 pm. Sunday, sent a fireworks display of artillery ammunition hundreds of metres (yards) into the sky.

The blasts, which shook the city's northern neighbourhoods and broke some windows at the international airport 10 kilometres away, continued into the early morning hours.



Models wearing leathers participate in a catwalk on the closing ceremony of the Dhaka International Leather Fair 2002.

Mob takes law in hand again

FROM PAGE 1
oblige and at one stage, the miscreants fired on them. Hit by bullets in his hands and the neck, Arju collapsed on the ground, the witness added.

Meanwhile, some BD Corporation employees, who had gone to the bank to withdraw money, watched the incident. They along with some bank staff and other people chased the gang, who tried to speed towards the Shapla Chattar. But people from the opposite side of the road also chased the alleged muggers into an alley near Sonali Bank Head Office.

Chased by another mob, the miscreants tried to make an exit through Gulistan. But when they reached the road between the Biman Bhaban and BIWTC building, they were caught.

Angry people started beating the three, while others set fire to the motorbike, witnesses added. At one stage, they tossed the suspected muggers onto the burning motorbike. Two of the muggers were roasted alive, while the other succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The mob also did not allow firefighters to douse the flame. Mohammad Amir, sub-inspector of Motijheel Police Station who also carried out the inquest report, told The Daily Star, "We are sure that the three were muggers as a revolver and some money were found on their person."

Asked why the police could not save the three, he said, "A huge crowd gathered around the (suspected) muggers and we were short of personnel. So, we could not act timely to save the three from the grip of the mob."

Fire fighters were also late to arrive at the spot and douse the flame, another police sub-inspector said. Moreover, had the firemen arrived in time, in all probability they would not have been allowed to do their job, as the mob was hell-bent on punishing the suspected muggers, he said.

"Mugging businessmen in the presence of police in the busy Motijheel commercial area is a common phenomenon. At the same spot the day before, muggers took away Tk 4 lakh from a man," an employee of a Motijheel firm said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Quyum told The Daily Star

appointments to a total of 206 officials at different levels.

A senior official said the government could give contractual appointments to retired government servants under the article 5 (3) of the Public Servant (Retirement) Act of 1974.

He said contractual appointments are basically given to people who are skilled and have expertise in various development projects. Moreover, there is a shortage of people proficient in English.

The official said that although the government has so far given many contractual appointments, it is trying to limit such appointments in the future.

He said the government could also cancel the contractual appointments at any time if the appointees are found to have violated the conditions of the contract or if it is deemed necessary for public interest.

UK may deport thousands of Afghan asylum-seekers

AFP, London
Thousands of Afghan asylum-seekers in Britain may be ordered to return home now that the oppressive Taliban regime has been ousted, the independent newspaper reported yesterday.

Immigration Minister Jeffrey Rooker told the paper that Afghanistan was becoming a safe country which could take back people who had previously been seeking refuge.

"Afghans, month in, month out, are in the top three of people coming here to claim asylum. Nine times out of ten, they are young single men and they have been fleeing the Taliban."

"Well, the Taliban's not there anymore now are they?" said Rooker.

He added that asylum claims were being examined on a case-by-case basis, using the same criteria employed to determine the status of refugees from the breakaway Yugoslav province of Kosovo.

"Most of them (Kosovars) have gone back, they have been returned because of stability and nation building. Afghanistan will be in that position," Lord Rooker told the paper.

New mancha

FROM PAGE 1
Hayat, who was then home secretary, was one of the pioneers of the "Janatar Mancha".

The forum demanded immediate termination of and stern legal action against the serving secretaries, who expressed solidarity with the Mancha.

It said incumbent Home Secretary Dr Sadat Hussain, Health Secretary Fazlur Rahman, Cabinet Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Communications Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat, Information Secretary Syed Marghub Murshed, Agriculture Secretary Ayub Kaderi, Chairman of Sonali Bank Ayubur Rahman, Chairman of Agrani Bank Dr ATM Shamsul Huda, Chairman of Employment Bank Syed Ameer-ul-Mulk and Advisor to the Prime Minister Mofazzel Karim had joined the "Janatar Mancha".

It urged the government to cancel actions taken against mid-ranking officials and low-income employees on charge of joining "Janatar Mancha" until the top brasses are removed.

The meeting demanded legal action against and termination of services of 35 secretaries including the then cabinet secretary Ayubur Rahman for organising the Mancha.

It demanded immediate interference by the prime minister for ensuring justice.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by ABM Salehuddin Khan, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Tajul Islam Mia, Subashis Roy, Mahub Hossain, Enamul Haq Akand, Foyez Ahmed, Arshad Ali, Nazrul Islam and Matiar Rahman Patwari.

People became very angry as the muggers fired indiscriminately on them, and when they ran out of bullets the mob caught and killed them," the commissioner said.

Another senior DMP officer said the three suspected muggers were tied with the motorbike and set on fire.

An employee of BD Corporation, who witnessed the incident, said five men on two motorbikes swooped on his colleagues. Three were burned to death, while the rest fled the scene.

Where did the loot go?
Meanwhile, a controversy has arisen over the recovery of money. Initially, police said they recovered Tk 50,000 from the muggers. Later, Motijheel police said they recovered only Tk 2,500, while SB sources said police recovered Tk 32,000. Yet another senior police officer said all the money was burnt in the flame.

At least 35 people were beaten to death by mobs in and around the capital in the last two months.

The first meeting ended with a decision to proceed with the SARI project, the second one agreed on work plans for cooperation, while the third decided to pursue a couple of specific activities including undertaking a pre-feasibility study for power exchange.

Beckman said the study aims at analysing technical and economic feasibility of power exchange among these four countries.

"We are aware of the political tension among the countries in the region," he said. "But there are many instances of successful regional cooperation among countries having political tension among them. The people involved in SARI Energy are also aware of the regional conflicts, but they are guided by a certain vision."

Representatives from the ADB, the USAID, the US State Department for Energy, the US Department of State, the US Asia Environmental Partnership, Academy for Educational Development, Nextant, Core International, the US Energy Association and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu will also participate.

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NHA changes plan

Flats, not plots to be sold at Mohammadpur

BSS, Dhaka

The National Housing Authority (NHA) has decided to construct flats, changing its earlier plan of distributing plots at Mohammadpur in the city.

A proposal in this regard was sent to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council for its approval, sources said.

Acting Chairman of NHA Abu Sayeed told the news agency that the authorities after a thorough examination cancelled the earlier plan of allotting plots and decided to build flats at Mohammadpur (F Block) and sell them to the people of fixed-income bracket.

He said those who applied for the plots before would be able to buy the flats on the basis of their interest.

In 1997, as many as 30,000 people applied for 150 plots in the F Block. Later, the NHA decided to build flats instead of distributing plots. Meanwhile, many applicants took their security money back for the delay in taking the final decision by the authority.

Sources in the NHA said it has been decided to build 720 flats under the project with 300 of 1,000 square feet (SFT) and the remaining 420 of 800 SFT each.

The sources said that total cost of the project is estimated at Tk 104 crore 46 lakh 21 thousand. The estimated price of each of the 1,000-SFT flats will be Tk 17 lakh 72 thousand, while the 800-SFT flats will be Tk 14 lakh 71 thousand.

A summary of the revised project containing a proposal for allocation of Tk 3 crore in the Annual Development Plan (ADP) has already been sent to the ministry concerned, the sources said.

The sources said illegal slums, which could not be evicted from the project area have been a big problem in implementing the project.

The NHA has taken up more projects to ease the housing problem in the city. The projects include construction of 500 flats at Lalmita, 648 flats at Mirpur for the wage earners and 10,000 flats at Section 9 of Mirpur, the sources said.

Power exchange

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technical activities and other issues. The Asian Development Bank will present a paper on regional energy activities.

Secretaries and high officials of energy, power and planning ministries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka will participate in the meet to be addressed by Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters and State Minister for Energy Mosharruf Hussain, among others.

"We are trying to build a network among the professionals dealing with the same type of issues," Beckman told journalists yesterday, adding that SARI brought together some 500 professionals of the region.

He noted that apex business groups like the federations of business chambers of the participating countries were also involved in the process.

Giving a brief background of SARI, Robert W Beckman said the USAID have been giving assistance to energy related projects in the region for a long time. Three years ago, it felt that it was time to promote regional cooperation in energy sector for the benefit of these countries.

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New e-mail bug 'My Party'

REUTERS, London

A new computer bug that tries to trick computer users into clicking on a virus-infected Web link masquerading as party photos emerged in Asia yesterday morning and began spreading to Europe, computer experts said.

The so-called "My Party" worm, which is not considered destructive, spreads by infiltrating popular e-mail software Microsoft Windows Address Book and Outlook Express Database.

The worm emails itself to every person in an infected users' email log making it look as if the worm comes from a colleague or friend, experts said.

Anti-virus specialist Trend Micro gave it a medium risk rating. Security firms said that compared with past email worms, such as Nimda and Sircam, the number of reported "My Party" infections thus far is moderate.

The virus arrives as an email with the subject line "newphotos from my party!". It contains an innocuous looking file attachment called www.myparty.yahoo.com. A message in the body of the email reads: "Hello! My party... It was absolutely amazing! I have attached my web page with new photos! If you can please make color prints of my photos. Thanks!"

Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos Anti-Virus, said because it carries what appears to be an authentic link from the popular Web portal Yahoo and appears to come from a colleague or friend, the worm has the potential to spread quickly.

As of 1200 GMT, Sophos received reports of infection from corporate clients and academic institutions in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Sophos has devised a patch at: <http://www.sophos.com/virus/info/analyses/w32mypartya.html>.

PM may address

FROM PAGE 1
unknown reasons.

The sources also indicated that there are some differences among some BNP leaders about the message and content of the speech.

They said a few days ago some senior BNP leaders, including party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Dr Khandaker Mosharruf Hossain, Haris Chowdhury and Nazrul Islam Khan in presence of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia gave necessary directions to her speechwriters about the content of the speech.

As per their directions, the speechwriters prepared a draft of the speech and later sent it to the editor of a Bangla weekly for the purposes of editing, and then it was again sent back to the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister is now herself examining the draft of the speech, which will be recorded by BTV after her final approval. BTV sources said they are yet to get any instruction from the PMO about the recording.

Preferring anonymity, a leader who was present during drafting of the speech, told The Daily Star yesterday that the BNP leaders differed on the issues of whether the speech should adopt a modest tone about achievements and whether there should be a call for the opposition to join the parliament.

A hard-line BNP leader present during the discussion was strongly opposed to making any appeal to the opposition and wanted projects

that were initiated by the previous government but inaugurated by the present government to be also included in the speech as government successes.

Khaleda Zia however opposed the idea and advised that there must be an appeal to the opposition as well as the people. She also refused to take credit for the previous government's programmes that were inaugurated either by herself or her ministers since the 4-party government assumed power.

Finally, it was decided that there would be an appeal for the opposition to join the upcoming Jatiya Sangsad session beginning January 31.

Sources said the Prime Minister in her speech may not claim any success regarding improvement in the field of law and order, but she would inform the nation about the relentless efforts of her government in this regard.

Source said there would be mention of success stories of programmes implemented in the 100-day timeframe. Besides, there would be mention of the progress rates of various programmes that have already been launched but are yet to reach completion.

Meanwhile, the government has yet to take any decision about the much-speculated second round of 100-day programme. Sources said another round of similar 100-day programme is unlikely.