

# PM, Lankan minister talk ways to boost economic ties

UNB, Dhaka

Sri Lanka wants to import rubber, ceramic products, jute and jute goods from Bangladesh as part of its initiative to bolster bilateral cooperation.

The interest was expressed when visiting Sri Lankan Minister for Enterprises Development, Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Prof G L Peiris MP made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon.

G L Peiris, also Minister for Constitutional Affairs, is leading a 14-member business delegation to Bangladesh. He has already held meetings with Bangladesh Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Industries Minister M K Anwar and Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

The visiting minister is scheduled to meet Foreign Minister Morshed Khan today as part of his mission, with business promotion on bilateral plane between the two SAARC countries on top of the agenda.

During the meeting with the Prime Minister Peiris pointed out possibilities of expanding cooperation among the countries of the region which can help economic growth. "A huge market exists in the region itself," he said.

Begum Zia hinted at the possibility of exporting pharmaceuticals, leather goods and fertilizers from Bangladesh to Sri Lanka. She said the Island could also take more jute to produce environment-friendly shopping bags.

"There is ample scope for increasing bilateral trade and joint-venture investment among the countries of the region for economic growth," said the Prime Minister.

Besides the spirit of SAARC, she noted, there are opportunities for

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# BNP-Jamaat will be tried in people's court for treason: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday brought allegation of 'treason' against the BNP-Jamaat alliance and warned that they would be tried in peoples' court for this.

"They're destroying the country's economy for self-interest, they want to turn Bangladesh into a nation of beggars again. One day BNP-Jamaat will be tried in peoples' court for this," Hasina said while addressing a function in the city marking the golden jubilee of the historic Language Movement of 1952.

Awami League organised the programme at the Mohanagar Natya Mancha. She also launched a publication on International Mother Language Day and distributed certificates among winners in an essay competition on the Language Movement.

Hasina bitterly criticised Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for accusing Awami League of 'treacherous activities'.

"Awami League liberated this country and this party can't do treachery against Bangladesh," she asserted.

The AL president came down heavily on the government for allegedly torturing her assistant private secretary Bahauddin Nasim at the cantonment.

"We're not living in a martial law regime. DGFI can't torture a civilian. Nasim was tortured by military and was forced to sign a blank sheet of paper," Hasina alleged. They can write on the blank sheet anything and the prime minister can claim whatever she likes, Hasina said.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Students of Bharateshwari Homes charm the audience by creating a human-wave during the opening ceremony of the Seventh Bangladesh Games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

# Khulna police now say Only a shotgun was snatched, PBCP not involved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police Commissioner Ali Imam Chowdhury has said there was no rifle in possession of the patrol police who came under attack by miscreants at Custom Ghat Saturday evening.

Only a shotgun was snatched in the attack, he said and hoped that the snatched shotgun would be recovered shortly as miscreants involved in it have been identified.

Investigation Officer of the case SI Md Abdul Bari said the shotgun

might have been snatched by a 'newly emerged' terrorist gang in the city, not by PBCP outlaws.

All police stations and outposts in the city have been put on high alert following the incident.

A total of 82 firearms were looted, most of them from law enforcers by outlaws, in the six districts of Khulna division in the last six years. Of these, 69 are yet to be recovered despite several combing operations.

These include one sub-machinegun, one SLR, 51 rifles, 20

guns, six revolvers and two pistols.

Of these, 12 rifles were looted from Ansars at Noapara Akij Jute mills on January 19 of 1999. Outlaws looted three rifles from Ansars at Koyra on May 5, 1998.

On August 1 in the same year, six rifles, four guns and over 1000 bullets were looted by outlaws from Shiromoni cable factory.

The most sensational incident took place on September 5 in which

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## 200 shops gutted in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT

About 200 shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Manikchhari Sadar Bazaar in Khagrachhari in the early hours of yesterday.

A burning mosquito coil at a shop sparked off the blaze that engulfed the entire area at around 2.30 am, police said.

Firefighters from Khagrachhari came to the spot in the morning and brought the fire under control.

There is no fire brigade stations at Manikchhari or its adjacent upzila.

Local people have been demanding for a fire brigade station in the area for long.

## One shot dead in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A middle-aged man was shot dead by unidentified gunmen while his wife received bullet injury at Chowdhuripara Sunday night, police said.

According to neighbours, an armed gang went to the house of Auchhimong Marma, 35, called him to come out and opened fire indiscriminately after they opened the door. The gang then fled away.

Hearing the gunfire the neighbours came to the spot to find Auchhimong dead on the spot. They then sent Marma's wife to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

# Japan for effective role in fostering BIMSTEC-EC

UNB, Dhaka

Japan wants to play an effective role in fostering the BIMST-EC, as it believes that the five-nation sub-regional bloc can act as a bridge between the ASEAN and the SAARC.

Ambassador of Japan in Dhaka Jiro Kobayashi conveyed his country's readiness to extend economic collaboration to the sub-regional bloc in terms of trade, investment and official development assistance (ODA).

Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic

Cooperation can be considered a milestone of regional development and might also act as a bridge between the ASEAN and the SAARC, the envoy said, outlining Japan's role in the process at a dialogue on BIMST-EC at the BIIS yesterday.

Kobayashi referred to the economic cooperation between his country and the ASEAN, which accounts for 15 per cent of total Japanese trade and one-third or 37 per cent of total ODA from Japan.

In comparison, economic cooperation between Japan and the SAARC countries is not yet so signifi-

cant both in terms of trade and ODA, he said. And the trade between Japan and the BIMST-EC countries is about 4.5 times larger than one between Japan and the SAARC while Japanese ODA to the BIMST-EC is around 1.5 times larger than one to the SAARC countries, he mentioned, hinting at Japan's regional priorities.

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS) and Japan Study Centre of Dhaka University co-organised the dialogue, attended by representatives of the BIMST-EC member

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PHOTO: STAR

Lawyers in Chittagong brought out a procession on court premises yesterday to protest attack on the Labour Court on Saturday.

## Lawyers boycott court in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Lawyers here yesterday boycotted all courts, including the district Judge and Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, protesting Saturday's attack on Labour Court by pro-BNP port workers.

The court boycott called by district Bar Association brought activities in 59 courts to a complete halt.

Workers of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal under the banner of Coaster Hedge Workers' Association attacked the Labour Court at Katalganj in Panchlaish thana Saturday to pre-empt the verdict on a case.

The District Bar Association members also held a rally and brought out a procession yesterday in protest against the attack.

## Hearing of Kamal murder case adjourned till Apr 2

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The First Additional Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka Sunday adjourned the hearing of the Kamal Hossain murder case till April 2.

Judge Mohammad Resaul Islam adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

The defence lawyers submitted a petition, seeking adjournment of the hearing. They stated that Jahangir Mohammad Adel, the main accused in the case, was earlier admitted in Sikder Medical College Hospital, Mohammadpur, Dhaka for treatment of his (Adel) heart

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# Vajpayee won't allow activity at Ayodhya site till court ruling

AP, New Delhi

India's prime minister said yesterday that no activity would be allowed at the site of a destroyed mosque in northern India until a court rules on whether to let Hindu fundamentalists hold a religious ceremony there for a proposed temple to be built over the ruins.

A smoldering nine-year dispute between Hindus and Muslims over the ruins of the Babri mosque in the northern city of Ayodhya exploded late last month into the country's worst religious rioting in a decade.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was speaking to parliament two days before the Supreme Court was to rule on whether to permit Hindu priests and fundamen-

talists to hold a ceremony dedicating the stones of a proposed temple that might eventually stand on the disputed site.

"The government will not allow any activity in Ayodhya until the Supreme Court, which is going to hear the case on March 13, pronounces its verdict," Vajpayee was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India.

Reuters from Ahmedabad adds: Two people were killed and six injured when police fired at a mob torching Muslim homes in a fresh outbreak of religious violence in western India where 700 people have died in recent clashes.

A curfew was imposed in the village of Panvad , some 100 km from Gujarat state's main city of

Ahmedabad, after Sunday night's violence, police said.

"We had to open fire to disperse a mob which was trying to set houses on fire. Two Hindu tribesmen were killed and six injured and around 30 to 40 houses of Muslims burnt," police official Naval Singh told Reuters by telephone yesterday.

He said all was quiet yesterday.

Ismail Soni, a teacher in Panvad, said about 800 to 1,000 Muslims living in the village had fled the violence that started on Sunday afternoon.

"The mob attacked, looted and burnt Muslim houses, shops and

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# Harmful heavy metals Drinking water samples now to be tested regularly

STAR REPORT

Drinking water samples collected from across the country will henceforth be tested regularly for harmful heavy metals to ensure supply of safe water.

The decision was taken at a recent meeting at the office of the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) following a report in The Daily Star on February 20, sources said.

The report headlined 'Drinking Death in Groundwater' said a wide range of heavy metals including uranium, boron, manganese, sulphur and barium were detected in drinking water samples collected from hand-pumped tubewells.

Tests of 3,534 random samples collected from 61 districts, done in a laboratory in UK, showed presence of some of the metals much above WHO-prescribed safe levels. The tests were sponsored jointly by the British Geological Survey and the DPHE.

Currently, the DPHE tests drinking water for pH factor, iron, chloride, manganese, arsenic, hardness and electric conductivity. The tests are not done on regular basis.

The meeting attended by water experts from different agencies including DPHE decided to regularly test groundwater samples collected both from hand-pumped and deep tubewells for the heavy metals detected in groundwater so far.

The tests will be done in four DPHE laboratories and a protocol will be prepared soon for this.

Dr Firoz Ahmed of BUET who attended the meeting said, "We thought the newspaper report was quite alarming and took serious note of it. On the basis of the report, we have decided to form a protocol that will include a wide range of heavy metals and chemicals for test".

A senior DPHE engineer who also attended the meeting said, "In fact, till now, Bangladesh has no protocol for testing drinking water. This is for the first time a protocol is being prepared following a newspaper report."

A copy of the Daily Star report was distributed among the participants at the meeting.

Dr Firoz Ahmed of BUET, Rodney Dyar of DFID (Department for

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