

Bangladeshis face

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taken initiatives for negotiations and everything would be done in this regard.

"The state minister for foreign affairs recently visited Malaysia and requested them to extend the job tenure of Bangladeshi workers there," Quamrul said.

The Malaysian government is formulating a policy in this regard. "We are yet to get any response from them but we hope that job contracts of Bangladeshi workers would be extended, he said.

The authorities there were also invited to visit Bangladesh and see the condition here, Quamrul added.

Secretary General of BAIRA Ghulam Mustafa said, "A delegation from Bangladesh led by a minister immediately after the four-party alliance came to power hardly produced any result. This time initiatives should be from the highest level of government."

He told this correspondent that a team of BAIRA leaders plans to meet Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia soon and urge her to visit Malaysia to take up the issue at the highest level there as it involves several lakh people -- the workers and their families.

According to him, the country is going to lose huge employment opportunities in Malaysia due to 'lack of appropriate approach and consistent negotiations' with the government of that country.

At least three lakh workers can be sent to Malaysia within a very short time if proper initiative is taken, he claimed.

The Malaysian government became unhappy as many investment proposals by Malaysian companies were rejected during the tenure of the immediate past government, sources pointed out.

Some BAIRA sources said many Bangladeshi workers went to Malaysia illegally, creating a bad image of the country. "Besides,

7 murder cases

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Jessore Saiful Alam Mukul and the carnage at a Udichi cultural function in Jessore.

Charge sheets in five out of the seven murder cases have already been submitted to courts.

Top priority will be given to start trial of the cases within one month, the sources said.

Besides, directive has also been given to submit re-investigation report on the Udichi bomb explosion case and charge sheet in Abdul Awal murder case by 30th of this month.

PM: Tight security

FROM PAGE 1
Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadek Hossain, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk, Home Minister Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Food Minister Abdur Al Noman and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar attended the meeting chaired by the prime minister.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Secretary for Home Affairs Dr Sa'dat Hossain, Secretary for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab H Ahmed, Information Secretary in-charge, Inspector General of Police Mdabbir Hossain and senior officials concerned were also present.

Khaleda Zia said there was no doubt among the people regarding the sincerity of the present government to improve law-and-order, but the progress, so far, was not up to their expectation.

The prime minister told the high-profile watchdog body on law and order that she expected to see significant progress in its next meeting, now that they are armed with a new law to deal with the crime situation.

Yesterday's was the 22nd meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, and the sixth chaired by the prime minister herself, who had announced during the last polls a war against crime.

Khaleda Zia asked the bosses of the law-enforcing agencies present in the meeting -- and through them to their forces -- to be more active with necessary measures geared

some Bangladeshis created social problems there as they married Malaysian girls and came back home, leaving them behind with children."

BAIRA leaders said a person should not spend more than Tk 60,000 for going to Malaysia for a job of Tk 14,000 per month.

A 12-point proposal by them stressed introducing a comprehensive package system for sending people abroad and protecting them from cheating or spending higher amounts for low paid jobs.

They proposed setting up a data bank and a service centre at the BAIRA office where all sorts of information and service for going abroad would be available.

If any recruiting agency fails to send a person or cheat a person after taking money, BAIRA would take punitive action against it and ensure return of the money within 14 days, they said.

US consultant

FROM PAGE 1
and in the process, slowed down Shell's recovery of investment.

The Petrobangla chairman defended his organisation's position. "Under the Gas Purchase Sales Agreement, Petrobangla was supposed to purchase 160 mmcfd of gas from five gas wells. However, one of the five wells of Sangu failed and Shell can produce gas from four wells. The agreement said that the gas purchase would depend upon the number of producing wells. So, we purchased 128 mmcfd."

He noted that while he was hopeful of an amicable solution to the dispute, Petrobangla or Shell might disagree with the Burns' opinion. "There is no legal binding over it. If we disagree, we may further discuss the issues with Shell. Or if it turns out to be unfavourable, we may seek arbitration in the international court."

Bahauddin Nasim

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Immigration officials and officials of the Zia International Airport (ZIA).

The IO in the charge sheet mentioned that the authorities seized a passport from Bahauddin Nasim in which no dollar was endorsed. However, he was illegally carrying 6,600 US dollars and Bangladeshi currency worth Taka 7,490.

Police arrested Nasim from ZIA on February 28 along with the seized local and foreign currencies and some video cassettes.

towards checking any troubles during the forthcoming city corporation elections.

Referring to Friday's incidents of violence at Adamjee Jute Mills and abduction of a housewife at Narayanganj, she ordered the police administration to handle the situation impartially with a strong hand.

In her comprehensive directives for the law-enforcers to get to grips with the situation effectively, the prime minister asked them to intensify vigilance by plainclothes police at various points.

She expressed her satisfaction at the improvement of law-and-order in many districts and asked the concerned to maintain the situation. She told them to be active in curbing crimes in other districts.

The home secretary informed the meeting that decisions taken in the committee's meetings were being implemented and the overall situation in the last six months had improved compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Hasina cancels tour plan

UNB, Dhaka

The two-day planned visit of Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina to Rajbari, Kushtia and Meherpur districts on April 16-17 has been cancelled.

Party sources said the Awami League chief has cancelled the trip as she fell sick suddenly.

AL rally in city Apr 20

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It also debated the proposed agitation against the 'farcical election' to the country's three city corporations on April 25. But no specific programme was taken on the day of the polls being boycotted by the AL, as it believes 'no fair voting could take place under the present set-up of the Election Commission'.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman said to the press, "We're least bothered about the already decided election. We're actually indifferent to the issue."

The meeting expressed concern at the government's apathy during the series of bomb explosions that marked the last days of the AL rule.

It regretted that the judicial commission formed by the government to investigate the bomb attacks had virtually made no progress.

The AL meeting formed a four-party body headed by former home minister Mohammad Nasim to monitor progress in the bombing cases.

Passport forgery

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Both the application and the inquiry report were sent to the Immigration and Passport Office and Prene got his passport.

The forgery was revealed when Abdul Hye went to the Canadian High Commission for visa of his son. During interview, Prene told the High Commission officials that he wanted to go to Canada with his father Abdul Hye. On suspicion, the officials interrogated Prene and the truth came out.

Prene later confessed to them that he was not the son of Abdul Hye and his father's name was Anser Ali. He also said that he is an Awami League activist in Jhenaia.

Abdul Hye was supposed to go to Britain. After the incident, the British High Commission also cancelled his visa.

Sources claimed that Abdul Hye earlier sent three other party workers to Italy, Japan and Britain, identifying them as his sons.

The SB has written letters to the embassies of Japan and Italy and the High Commission of Britain to provide information regarding issuance of visas to three other 'sons' of the AL legislator.

Inspector Abdur Rab of SB filed a case with Gulshan thana against Abdul Hye and Prene on Monday.

Shah Alam, Sub-Inspector at Gulshan thana, is investigating the case.

US envoy

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attended, among others by Congressmen Joseph Crowley, James McDermott and Rush Holt.

The US Ambassador emphasised that Bangladesh is different from other Islamic countries and it is truly a moderate Islamic democracy. She hoped that new investigations by other reporters currently underway would exonerate the wrongly portrayed image of Bangladesh.

Ambassador Peters discussed relations between the US and the new government of four-party alliance focusing particularly on identifying avenues through which the US government can assist the administration in further investment and development of Bangladesh.

She highlighted a number of programmes designed to increase availability of education of men and women as well as the programme to educate Imams of mosques in Bangladesh on gender issues.

Development of Chittagong Port, export of natural gas, political stability and absence of the main opposition party from parliament also came up at the meeting.

Ambassador Peters also addressed issues relating to immigration and visas following the September 11 incident.

Peace deal

FROM PAGE 1
Last week, the LTTE reiterated an apology to the minority Muslim community for driving out some 100,000 of them from the Tamil-dominated Jaffna peninsula in 1990 under a policy of ethnic cleansing.

Hakeem, who was accompanied by six other senior SLMC members, said Prabhakaran gave an assurance that the LTTE will immediately stop "taxing" Muslims.

Both sides agreed to set up committees to arrange for the resettlement of Muslims in their original homes and to establish a mechanism to address day-to-day issues affecting the two communities.

"It is the very first time that a delegation from the SLMC was meeting the LTTE. It was a very historic meeting and we found the atmosphere very friendly," Hakeem said. "It far exceeded our expectations."

Hakeem said the two sides did not take up contentious issues such as the role of the Muslims in a proposed interim administration for the embattled northern and eastern regions, leaving them for the talks in Thailand due to take place in May or June.

The latest LTTE-Muslims talks began three days after Prabhakaran held his first press conference in 12 years and called for peace with the Muslims.

A statement from the US embassy here Friday praised Prabhakaran's "commitment to peace and a negotiated political settlement".

Justice KM Hasan would retire and a new judge will be appointed, allowing the appellate division to have three judges who can hear the case.

At present, the division consists of seven judges and five of them cannot hear the Bangabandhu Murder Case. For two of them -- Md Ruhul Amin and Mohammed Fazlul Karim -- have already heard it at the High Court and the others -- Syed JR Muddassir Husain, Abu Sayeed Ahmed and KM Hasan -- expressed their embarrassment at the appellate division.

Justice Abu Sayeed Ahmed will retire on June 1, 2006; Justice Karim on September 30, 2008; Justice Hasan on January 27, 2004; Justice Husain on March 1, 2005 and Justice Ahmed will retire on August 23, 2003.

Among the seven justices of the appellate division, Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury will retire on June 18 this year. According to seniority, Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury is supposed to replace him. Justice Kazi Manowar Uddin now at the High Court would then be appointed at the appellate division to fill up the vacancy.

But the appointment of Justice Manowar would not solve the problem since the appellate division would still have five judges who are already embarrassed or have already heard the case.

Net borrowing from savings instruments also rose sharply this fiscal till December.

According to the report, the government collected Tk 2,308 crore from savings instruments during the first six months of this fiscal year. The figure was Tk 1,856 crore for the same period last fiscal.

Denmark slaps graft charges

FROM PAGE 1

Hansen, who is also the head of Bilateral Programme in Danida, Copenhagen, came here for Annual Consultation with the government that was held on April 8. Hansen left Dhaka yesterday ending a six-day tour here.

Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Niels Severin Munk and other Danish officials were present at the briefing.

According to sources, the problem emerged some two months ago over rehabilitation of four ferries provided by Denmark. The repair was also to be done with Danish assistance.

The Danish authorities wrote letters to different ministries about the matter through letters about one and a half months back. Later, the shipping ministry wrote back to the Danish authorities, explaining its position.

However, the minister came up with a totally different story. He said as he demanded open tender and 'transparent procedure' for awarding the repair job, the Danish authorities brought allegations.

Akbar added that about one and a half years back the Danes negotiated with the previous Awami League government for repair of 10 ferries.

"The repair cost of each ferry was fixed at Tk 24 crore, while we can purchase a new ferry at Tk 25 crore," he said.

Later, he said, it was decided that four ferries would be repaired. According to the Danish proposal, the engines of the four ferries were to be taken to Denmark for repair at a cost of around Tk 25 crore, while the hulls were to be repaired in the country at a cost of Tk 70 crore, the minister said.

"The engines can be repaired in the country since we have all the parts available here which were brought from Denmark five years ago. Anyway, we have agreed to the Danish proposal but asked them to detail the cost breakdown," the minister said.

However, there has not been any clear directive from the administration in this regard, sources in the BRTA said.

The BRTA has been strict in issuing documents all right; however, it cannot chase the two-stroke vehicles out of the city by December, they said.

"We do not have any clear directive from the ministry or anywhere else about the phase-out drive within this time," said a BRTA source.

added.

"However, they later differed with us on the open tender option and wanted to have it done through a secret negotiation and at a much higher price. They also wanted to have the job awarded to a Danish joint venture."

The minister alleged that the Danish authorities earmarked Tk 70 crore for the repair of the ferries. "But our dockyards of Bangladesh Navy at Narayanganj and Chittagong have quoted Tk 14 crore for repairing the hulls," he added.

The Danes selected the navy

Autorickshaw

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Meanwhile, there has been an increase in theft of BRTA tokens over the last two months, autorickshaw drivers complained.

The BRTA refuses to replace the stolen tokens even if a police report is produced, they said.

"Strict measures taken against the three-wheelers have definitely curtailed their number, the fare hike is a good indicator," said a BRTA official.

Drivers and owners claim that many autorickshaws are now lying idle in the garages because they do not have proper documents. Many others have shifted to the city peripheries, they said.

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