

# Belarus keen to expand trade

## Envoy tells prime minister

BSS, Dhaka

Belarus Ambassador Uladzimir A Sakalouski yesterday expressed his country's keen interest to increase trade and expand cooperation in other areas with Bangladesh.

Sakalouski showed the interest to bolster ties between the two countries when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon.

The prime minister stressed the need for enhancing trade relation between Dhaka and Minsk to increase further cooperation between the two nations.

Khaleda urged Belarus to import

more garments, tea, ceramics, pharmaceuticals, jute and leather products from Bangladesh.

Sakalouski, resident in Delhi, underscored the need for further enhancing cooperation and expressed the hope that Bangladesh and Belarus would soon have full-fledged missions in their respective capitals -- Minsk and Dhaka.

He said the friendly ties should be made more active and successful through expanding areas of cooperation and development.

The envoy extended Belarus President Alyaksandr Laka Shenka's invitation to Khaleda Zia to

visit Belarus at a mutually convenient time.

Laying importance on the visit of Khaleda Sakalouski said any such top level visit would open the areas of cooperation and development.

Khaleda accepted the invitation and also urged the envoy to convey her invitation to Belarus President to visit Bangladesh.

The Belarus ambassador said a trade fair would be held in Minsk and invited Bangladesh to participate in the trade fair.

Sakalouski, who is visiting here for the third time, praised the present development trend in Bangladesh and wished its suc-

cess.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamaluddin Siddiqui was present.

The ambassador also called on Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at his office.

The foreign minister appreciated the commitment of support of Belarus to Bangladesh for its candidature for the ECOSOC membership this year, a foreign office press release said.

Sakalouski sought the support of Bangladesh for his country's candidature for the ECOSOC. In this regard, the foreign minister also gave assurance to support Belarus.

The ambassador extended an invitation to the foreign minister to visit his country at a convenient time. The minister accepted the invitation and the visit might take place in May or June next year.

The foreign minister emphasised on frequent visits of the high-powered business and investment delegations to both the countries to explore greater areas of cooperation in trade and economy. Bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly 7 million US dollar which is very insignificant, he added.

Bangladesh imports surgical equipment, machinery, furniture, tractors and tractor spares from Belarus and possible exportable items from Bangladesh are tobacco, pharmaceuticals, knit apparels, hides and skin, ceramic products, cotton yarn fabrics, jute and jute goods, tea and leather bags.

They hoped that bilateral cooperation between the two countries especially in the field of trade and investment would grow further in the days ahead.

PHOTO: PID

Belarus Ambassador Uladzimir A Sakalouski called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon.

# 61 more dists to be brought under irrigation, flood-control systems

UNB, Dhaka

A donor-funded small-scale water resource development project entered into its second phase of work to develop small irrigation and flood-control systems in 61 districts.

During this phase, 300 sub-projects will be undertaken to bring 180,000 to 200,000 hectares of arable land under integrated water resource management structures meant for preserving water for irrigation as well as controlling

floods and waterlogging.

These structures will have canals, embankments, sluice gates, regulators, flap-gates and box-sluices, suiting the needs of an area.

Project officials hoped that about 280,000 families of farmers would reap the benefits on implementation of this phase by December 2009.

The second-phase work would cost Tk 425 crore, with funds expected from Asian Development

Bank and the governments of the Netherlands and Bangladesh.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has been implementing the project with support from the ADB, the Netherlands and International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). The first phase was implemented between 1996 and 2002 at a cost of Tk 300 crore.

A total of 280 sub-projects were implemented in the first phase, covering about 165,000 hectares

of land and benefiting 142,300 families, project officials told a group of journalists at LGED Bhaban recently.

The second phase would be extended to all districts, excepting three hill districts. Letters have been sent to union parishad offices across the country, inviting sub-projects, which will be scrutinised on the basis of set criteria.

Community participation and ownership in implementation and maintenance of every sub-project made the project different from many other ventures under government auspices.

Institutional arrangements are in place to ensure local people's participation in project selection, planning and designing, execution and post-implementation maintenance, a senior executive of the project said.

## MOU on elimination of child labour at Fatulla

BSS, N'ganj

A Tripartite memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Bangladesh Mohila Sanga (BMS), Bangladesh Pathar Baboshayee Samity and Programme Facilitating Committee (PFC) on prevention and elimination of child labour at Narayanganj Press Club yesterday morning.

Farida Aktar, Executive Director of BMS, Alhaj Nurul Islam president and Alhaj Abdul Ahad vice-president of Pathar Baboshayee Samity, Monirul Alam Sentu president of PFC signed the MOU at a press conference on behalf of their organisations.

11 proprietors of stone crushing enterprises from Pagla, Dhapa, Aliganj and Panchoboti also expressed their willingness to uphold the rights of the children through the elimination of child labour.

About 652 children belonging to the age groups between 4 and 17 will be withdrawn from stone crushing job and they will be given education, healthcare facility and vocational training to groom them up as worthy citizen.

Farida told the journalists that BMS in co-operation with Pathar Baboshayee Samity and International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Kutubpur union parishad will bear the expenses of food, lodging, schooling and training of these underprivileged children.

She said it is a prototype programme of BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO which was initiated on July 4, 1995 in Bangladesh.

AT Siddiki, sector co-ordinator, US Dol project ILO, Dhaka, and Shahana Khanam Chowdhury president BMS were present on the occasion.

## Two get life for raping schoolgirl

BSS, Jamalpur

A court here yesterday sentenced two persons to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) for abducting and raping a schoolgirl.

The convicts are Ranju and Ripon of Baruamany village under Jamalpur Sadar upazila.

The court also fined them Tk 5000 each, in default, to suffer two years more RI.

The prosecution story in brief is that the convicts abducted the girl, a student of class eight of Baruamany JK High School, on April 13, 2002 on her way home from the school.

They took the girl to a house at Shreepur village and violated her. Later a case was filed with Jamalpur Sadar thana.

After examining witnesses and evidence, Judge of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal S.M. Helal Uddin handed down the verdict.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League presidium member and former minister for agriculture Motia Chowdhury speaks at a press briefing on agriculture sector at the party's central office in the city yesterday.

# AL blames govt for decrease in foodgrain output

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League yesterday said the ruling alliance has ruined the agriculture sector and blamed the government's incompetence, mismanagement and corruption for it.

"Inefficiency of the BNP-Jamaat government has led to a decrease in the production of foodgrains by 3.2 percent in 2001-2002 fiscal, forcing the authorities to import about 22 lakh metric tons of foodgrains till March this year," said AL presidium member Motia Chowdhury at a press briefing.

The country was self-reliant in food production but it became aid dependent in the two years of the present government, said Motia, also former minister for agriculture.

The AL organised the press briefing to inform the people about the actual scenario of agriculture sector following Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's speech to the nation on October 10.

"The government did not take any new project in the agriculture sector in the last two years," she said and

blamed the government for its 'mis-management' in distribution of wheat seeds and failure to supply Boro seeds in the last Boro season.

Criticising the PM's speech, Motia said there was no reflection of reality in her speech and the prime minister did not highlight the agriculture sector because her government could not achieve success in this sector.

She also criticised the government for squeezing the facilities for farmers and said they are not getting fair price of their produces.

Quoting newspaper reports, Motia said a large number of people in northern districts are starving due to severe scarcity of food and some of them have died.

Instead of extending loan facilities, the government has been harassing the poor farmers by filing certificate cases against them, she said.

She also demanded distribution of loans to farmers and adequate supply of agricultural inputs.

AL leaders Obaidul Kader, Mukul Bose, Dr Abdur Razzak, Dr Abdul

Jalil, Motahar Hossain Mollah, Meher Afroz Chumki and MA Karim were also present.

## Kathin Chibar Dan from tomorrow

BSS, Rangamati

A two-day Kathin Chibar Dan of the Buddhist community will begin at Rajban Bihar in the town tomorrow.

Devotes Parishad of the Bihar took different programmes including speech by Srimat Sadhananda Mahastabir, Principal of Rajban Bihar and Chief Buddhist Cleric of Chittagong Hill Tracts on the occasion.

Progyan Lankar Mahastabir, disciple of Mahastabir is expected to inaugurate the function, Bihar sources said.

Thousand of devotees from all over the country and abroad attend the function every year.

## New Chinese envoy presents credentials

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed described China as one of the tested friends of Bangladesh and hoped that Beijing would play an active role in the country's development.

The president said this when newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Dhaka Chai Xi presented his credentials to him at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

He said the relationship between the two countries is significant in various fields like economic and defence cooperation. "Both the countries will continue to work together on regional and international issues," he said.

Iajuddin Ahmed also hoped that the existing friendly relations between the two countries would further deepen through the diplomatic mission of Ambassador Chai Xi.

Earlier, the President's Guard Regiment gave the envoy a guard of honour on his arrival at the Bangabhaban.

Anisul Huq Chowdhury, secretary to the president, Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, foreign secretary, Major General Abdul Matin, president's defence secretary, and other high officials of the Bangabhaban were present at the ceremony, said a Bangabhaban press release.



PHOTO: PID

Newly appointed Chinese Ambassador Chai Xi presented his credentials to President Iajuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

# WEATHER

## T O D A Y

### Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions till 6pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and Rangamati and the lowest 21.5 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:22 pm today and rises at 6:03 am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.1	23.8	88	75
Chittagong	33.4	25.0	71	74
Rajshahi	30.4	23.3	81	92
Khulna	31.2	23.0	96	85
Barisal	31.0	23.0	93	89
Sylhet	32.2	25.0	93	83
Cox's Bazar	33.5	25.8	84	85

## Health minister meets WHO director general

BSS, Geneva

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain yesterday met with the Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Jong Wook Lee at the organisation's headquarters.

During the meeting Mosharraf said due to the success in the primary healthcare facilities in Bangladesh the life expectancy rose to 61 despite the country being a densely populated area with low per capita income.

He said Bangladesh has been working for the last three years to free the country from polio and giving vaccination to the children to fight Hepatitis-B disease.

Dr Lee evinced keen interest on the health condition in Bangladesh and expressed the desire to extend support.