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Hanoi to support Dhaka in joining Asean forum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vietnam yesterday assured Bangladesh of its full support for Dhaka's bid to join the Asean Regional Forum (ARF).

It will also help Bangladesh become a member of the Mekong-Ganges Cooperation.

Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong gave the assurance during official talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the International Conference Centre, where two agreements on avoidance of double taxation and agricultural co-operation and a protocol on cultural exchange were signed.

Luong and Khaleda also had a 30-minute exclusive meeting before the official talks.

Luong was quoted as saying that Bangladesh, being a member of Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation), and Vietnam, as a member of Asean (Association of South East Asian Nations), can work together to promote inter-regional cooperation.

He appreciated Bangladesh's role in South Asia through Saarc and its 'Look East' policy.

The president termed the one-hour meeting at the International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office a success. He said his visit will help enhance cooperation between Bangladesh and Vietnam at both bilateral and multi-lateral levels.

He invited Khaleda to visit Vietnam, which she accepted and

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TALKS HIGHLIGHTS

- Hanoi assures Dhaka of its support for its bid to join ARF (Asean Regional Forum)
- Agreement on avoidance of double taxation
- Agreement on agricultural cooperation
- Protocol signed on cultural exchange



PHOTO: STAR

Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong, right, calls on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office after he arrived in Dhaka on his maiden visit to Bangladesh yesterday.

Watch on secretariat staff beefed up in commotion scare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is watching the activities of some secretariat officials with close ties to the past Awami League government for their alleged involvement in provoking anti-government sentiment among colleagues.

A high official of the home ministry said watch on half a dozen pro-opposition officials was increased and steps were taken to foil any move to create indiscipline in the secretariat that houses key government offices.

Quoting intelligence reports, home ministry sources said half a dozen officials recently held

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WB to provide \$150m for pry edn plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine donors including the World Bank (WB) have agreed to bear 37 percent cost of the \$1,850 million Primary Education Development Programme of the government.

The WB will provide \$150m, England's Department for International Development (DFID) \$150m, Asian Development Bank (ADB) \$100m and five other donors including the UNDP \$294m.

WB Country Director Christina I Wallich and Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Mirza Tasaddug Hussain Beg signed the agreement for the mega plan at the ERD yesterday.

The government, on recommendation of donors, has taken up the comprehensive education

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Hamas chief killed in Israel air strike

Militants pledge all-out war

AFP, Gaza City

Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was killed yesterday in an Israeli helicopter strike in Gaza City, prompting the radical Islamist movement he founded to declare all-out war on the Jewish state in revenge.

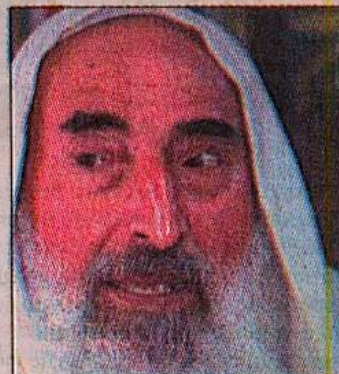
The 67-year-old wheelchair-bound cleric was killed along with seven other Palestinians when a helicopter fired three missiles as he left a mosque in the Sabra quarter of

the city, witnesses and security sources said.

Two of his bodyguards and his son-in-law were among the victims, said sources at Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital, where an AFP correspondent saw Yassin's body.

Israel had made little secret of its intention to eliminate the leadership of Hamas in the aftermath of twin suicide bombings in the southern port of Ashdod last week, claimed by both Hamas and the

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Sheikh Ahmed Yassin

Azad blames attack on Islamists

Writer flies to Bangkok for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned linguist and writer Humayun Azad has blamed Islamic fundamentalists for the brutal attack on him nearly a month ago.

"People who nurture the ideals of Islamic fundamentalism made the attack on me," he told journalists at Zia International Airport before leaving for Bangkok for further treatment of his injuries in the knife attack.

Accompanied by his brother Manjurul Kabir, Azad left Dhaka by Thai Airways for his treatment at

Bumrungrad Hospital on government funding. A publisher of his books also accompanied him on his own.

The writer said, "The way Inqilab and Sangram (dailies) wrote against me and what Delwar Hossain Saidee (lawmaker) spoke about me in parliament indicate their links to the attack on me."

Asked if he can identify his assailants, Azad said, "No, I can't. I can't recollect that incident."

He went on, "I don't have any personal enemies. I am the first prey

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Mob gouges out eyes of 6 'robbers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An angry mob gouged out the eyes of six alleged robbers at Rampal upazila of Bagerhat yesterday.

Police said local people caught the robbers when they went to a shrimp purchasing centre at Rampal to sell Tk 1 lakh worth of shrimp fries looted from a trawler they hijacked on Baleswar river earlier in the morning.

The mob gouged out their eyes before handing them over to police.

The alleged robbers are: Abdul Majid, 25, Dulal Farazi, 45, Yunus Howladar, 25, Abdul Jalil, 35, Masum Shakh, 20, and Aleem Akand, 22. They are now undergoing treatment at Rampal Health Complex.

Police seized the trawler and recovered seven local guns, 31 cartridges, a large dagger, an arrow and a crowbar from the vessel.

Jamuna Group chief's bail plea rejected, attempted rape case filed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday turned down a bail prayer for Jamuna Group Chairman Nurul Islam Babul over a killing charge, a day after a woman filed an attempted rape case against him.

Babul was denied bail for the third time since arrest in his home in Gulshan-2 on Sunday over the killing of dredger worker Alam Pramanik on September 1 last year.

Earlier, the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate rejected Babul's first bail prayer and turned down the second moved by his lawyer Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud to reconsider the judgement on sending him to jail.

The leading businessman and owner of frontline Bangla newspaper, Dainik Jugantor, was not named in the first information report (FIR) on the killing and was implicated in the supplementary FIR six days later as part of a conspiracy, Rokonuddin told court after forwarding yesterday's bail prayer. "There was no documented allegation against him," he said.

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CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

JS body scrutinises bill, lone opposition MP favours changes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry yesterday started scrutiny of the much-talked-about bill seeking 14th amendment to the constitution with opposition lawmaker Abdul Kader Siddiqui attending the meet and proposing a set of new provisions.

The Krisahk Sramik Janata League lawmaker's proposals are on display of the portraits of Bangabandhu, General MAG Osmani and late president Ziaur Rahman, declaration of independence by Zia and 150 reserved seats

for women in parliament.

The main opposition Awami League (AL), two factions of Jatiya Party and an independent lawmaker did not attend the meet, despite invitation of the committee.

The meeting was adjourned and the committee would continue its efforts for opposition participation at its next meeting.

AL President and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked Deputy Leader Abdul Hamid to reassert, if contacted again, that their party rejected the bill and that it would not participate in any discussion on it.

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CONTEMPT OF COURT HC asks IGP to explain his holding office

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued rule upon Shahudul Huq to explain under what authority he has been holding the office of Inspector General of Police (IGP) after conviction for contempt of court.

A division bench of Justice MA Matin and Justice Syed Rezaat Ahmed issued the rule, returnable in three weeks, upon a writ filed by advocate M K Rahman challenging the legality of Huq's holding the office of the IGP.

Opposing the petitioner Attorney General AF Hassan Ariff submitted that the petition could not be entertained as appeal of the IGP against the High Court judgment was pending with the Supreme Court.

He also tried to convince the court that the offence for which the

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Roads deptt accuses DCC of low quality street work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Roads and Highways Department (R&HD) has complained that Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) does not repair roads properly after digging by service providers despite taking compensation from them.

The complaint was made in a letter to the DCC chief engineer on Sunday.

The letter sent by Director of Dhaka Urban Transport Project under the R&HD Shahabuddin said the department builds roads with bituminous premix asphalt but the DCC repairs those simply with brick, soling in most cases although the service providers pay it compensation for digging. Even bricks are also

not used in many of the roads, it said.

A brief list given in the letter consists of Bailey Road, roads from Satrasta to Moghbazar and Banglamotor to Moghbazar, roads in Siddheswari, Shapla Chatter, Fakirapool, Kakrail, Bijoynagar, Hatirpool, Tophkhana and Dholaikhal areas.

A senior official of the R&HD said the DCC took Tk 18,31,541 from service providers only for repair of Bailey road to Siddheswari stretch of the road (less than one km) but it was not repaired properly.

Sometimes only sand or brick is used to repair the dug roads. Besides, pitch is used in a substandard way to repair many roads, he alleged.

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PHOTO: STAR

Prominent writer Humayun Azad talks to newsmen at Zia International Airport yesterday before flying to Bangkok for better treatment at Bumrungrad Hospital.

Govt wants China projects to get going on any terms

Trade ties with Taiwan to deepen

SHARIEF KHAN

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has asked officials to get three shelved China-led projects off the ground on 'whatever terms China feels happy with' in a bid to please China and let the Taiwan issue die

down.

The government, however, intends to continue widening relations with Taiwan, said well-placed sources at the PMO.

"We are trying to tap business opportunities with Taiwan without

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'Anti-constitution' aspects of CHT peace deal needs review MK Anwar tells JS

UNB, Dhaka

The minister in charge of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs in parliament MK Anwar yesterday told the House that some provisions of the CHT peace accord which are inconsistent with the constitution needed to be reviewed.

Those provisions, he said, would be placed before the House for consideration.

Replying to a supplementary question from Mehdi Ahmed Rumi (BNP), the minister said apart from such inconsistent provisions in the accord, signed by the previous Awami League government, the government has been implementing the peace accord.

Anwar said many provisions of the CHT accord, specially those about the Ministry of CHT Affairs, CHT Regional Council, rehabilitation of tribal refugees, have been implemented. He said preparation for the voters' list in the CHT could not be compiled because of a court stay order.

Replying to another question from Maj (ret'd) Manjur Kader (BNP), the minister admitted that there were problems in carrying out development works in the CHT because of the existence of two

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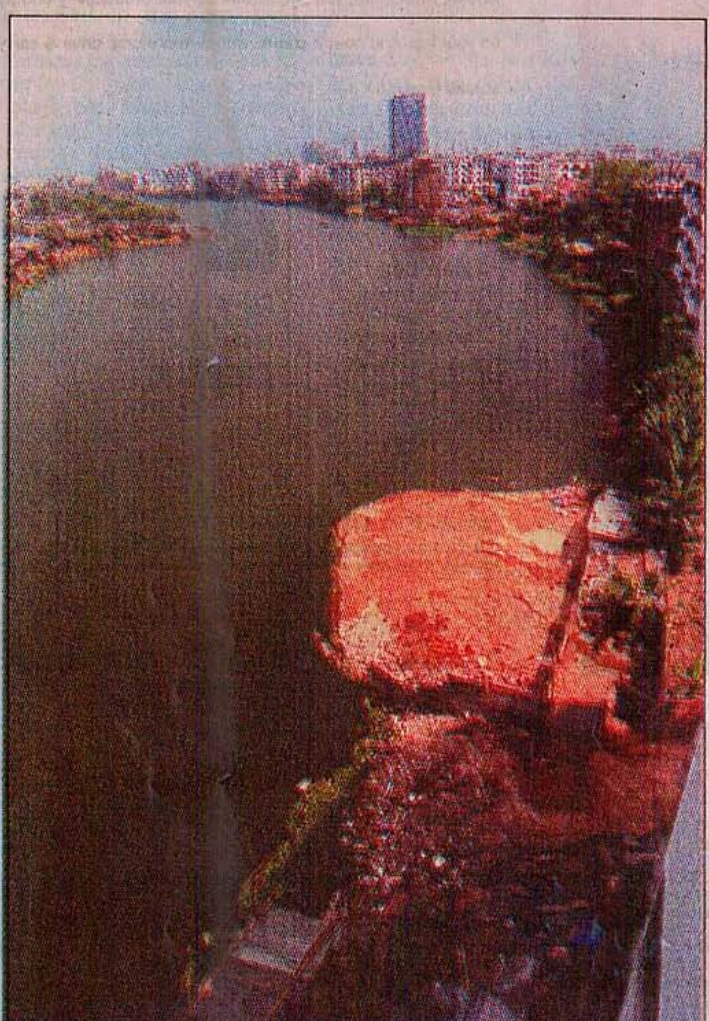


PHOTO: STAR

Part of the Gulshan Lake at the end of Road No. 29 has been reclaimed for development of plots for sale. Such encroachment of water-bodies has added to the environment concerns of Dhaka city with over one crore people.

Gulshan lake under renewed assault

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some grabbers are filling up a large chunk of Gulshan lake at the end of Road-29 to develop it as a plot for sale.

Local residents said labourers work throughout the night as truckloads of rubbish are brought to the site to be dumped into the water. They added that a group of musclemen supervise the earthfilling work that starts at around midnight.

Chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) Iqbal Uddin Ahmed said he does not know of the matter and asked for publication of a news report on it so that Rajuk could take action against the grabbers.

"I do not know anything about it. Our officials visited the site but did not notice any fresh encroachment there. You should do a story with photographs. I want to take action," he told this correspondent who witnessed rubbish being dumped into the lake just behind the 'Parasad' apartments.

The grabbers have also opened a mini restaurant on the filled-up area, which a group of local musclemen frequent.

Nearby, a signboard claiming ownership of the 0.21 acres of land refers to a Supreme Court Writ Petition No. 5917/2001 asking authorities not to interfere with any development work at the site.

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Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited

DISTRIBUTION OF DIVIDEND WARRANTS

Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited (DBBL) has declared dividend for the year 2003 in its 8th Annual General Meeting held on March 21, 2004. The Dividend Warrants are ready for delivery. Honorable shareholders are requested to collect their dividend warrant personally or through duly authorized person from DBBL, Head Office, during office hours on or before March 31, 2004.

Dividend warrants not collected within the specified date will be sent to the address recorded in the Company's Member Register by Registered Post/ Courier Service at own risk and responsibility of the Shareholders.

Dated: Dhaka, March 21, 2004

Abul Hashem Khan
Company Secretary

Notice

Today's issue contains a special supplement on Bangladesh Business Awards 2003.