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PM hopes more investment from Sweden

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said Sweden could increase bilateral trade and investment to help Bangladesh attain self-reliance.

"We need to increase trade and investment that would lead to employment generation for the ultimate progress and prosperity of the country," she told the outgoing Swedish Ambassador Borje Mattsson who made a farewell call on the prime minister in her office in the afternoon.

The envoy said Swedish investment has increased and the trade volume between the two countries has doubled during the last four

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Largest ever VGF drive from Sept 20

Stabilising staple prices to avoid political risk-taking main aim

REAZ AHMAD

With hoarders persistently pushing up the price of rice, the government embarks upon the largest-ever vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme from September 20, seeking to stabilize staple prices to avoid political high risk-taking and consumers' wrath ahead of election

time.

Official sources confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday that despite having a bumper output of Boro in April-May this year, prices of coarse varieties soared up to Tk 20 a kilogram due to hoarding by a section of millers and big farmers. Besides, increased input costs and enhanced domestic procurement by the public

sector also attributed to the high market prices of rice, causing a severe dent in the pockets of the poor.

As the bullish trend in the rice market remained persistent over the last five months, the government at last decided to launch a VGF programme covering 45 lakh people

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Hotel manager gunned down in city

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

Criminals gunned down a manager of a residential hotel in Mohakhali in the capital yesterday. The goons also shot a boarder and an employee of the hotel.

Several witnesses said the gang, having six members, stormed into Suryamukhi Residential Hotel at around 8:30am and inquired to Suman Ahmed, 26, the hotel manager, about the whereabouts of the hotel owners.

Suman told them he did not know where the owners were. The intruders then asked where the manager was.

Sujan, an employee who

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Tough anti-terror steps must to protect image

EU, UK envoys advise Morshed

UNB, Dhaka

Head of EC Delegation Ambassador Esko Kentschynskyj and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in separate meetings with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said Bangladesh has to take the terrorism issue seriously to protect its trade, investment and image abroad.

"It has to be taken seriously," Kentschynskyj told reporters after his farewell call on Morshed at the minister's office.

He however appreciated the government steps taken so far to deal with the post-August 17 situation.

"We're encouraged by the steps taken by the government and we hope trade relations between of the European Union (EU) and Bangladesh will continue the same way as it was in the past," he said.

Asked about any negative impact on Bangladesh's image after the blasts, he expressed the hope appropriate measures to arrest and punish the culprits would restore confi-

dence of the EU and others in Bangladesh.

Describing the August 17 serial bombings as a sad incident, he said, "It's important to ensure that what has happened will not happen again."

The European Union diplomat also expressed the hope Bangladesh would continue enjoying good trade relations with its largest export market, the EU.

Meantime, British High Commissioner Choudhury said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Pickpocket's day out

STAR REPORT

The pickpocket had his eyes on the bag carried by a bearded man, thinking he had a big catch.

He had been following the man for about 20 minutes on the Satkhira court premises on August 17, waiting for the right time to nick the booty. But the bearded man was hell-bent on not losing the bag, clutching it tight. But the pickpocket was also desperate, more so because he thought the bag must contain something valuable.

The bearded man sat under a tree, he looked tense and nervous, looking at his watch every few minutes. The pickpocket waited patiently, from experience he knew he really had a big fish that day.

The bearded man started

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

AUG 17 BLASTS

Bomb making materials seized, 11 more held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested 11 more people on Saturday night and yesterday in Khagrachhari and Tangail for suspected links to the August 17 countrywide blasts and recovered bomb-making materials and publications of Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The arrestees include a person believed to be the mastermind behind the attacks in Khagrachhari.

Police recovered a live bomb from a madrasa at Abhaynagar in Jessore. They raided Barpakha Kwami Madrasa at Delduar in Tangail and held seven suspected JMB activists late Saturday night.

Meanwhile in Dhaka, a rickshaw-puller yesterday succumbed to the injuries he sustained in August 17 blast at Joypurhat.

KHAGRACHHARI Khagrachhari police arrested four suspected JMB leaders and activists and recovered bomb-making materials, remote control devices, and JMB publications.

Police said of the arrestees, Mohammad Nasir, 35, who is the ameer of JMB district unit, has masterminded the blasts in the district. He was arrested at Panchhari Bazar.

The three other suspected JMB activists - Sagar Miah, 18, of Chapainawabganj, Sakib Khan, 18,

of Rangpur, and Shabuj Ali, 22, of Jhenidah were arrested at Nasir's Islampur residence in Khagrachhari town.

Police said they made the arrest following leads obtained from the already detained Emdadul, ameer of Dighinala upazila unit JMB, and Shahidul, an Ansar involved with the militant group.

The seized JMB publications include booklets describing how to make bombs, training manuals, and JMB constitution.

The arrestees have admitted their involvement in the blast incident. They said Nasir was the key person behind the explosions in the district.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Post-heist scene at Venus Jeweller's at Gulshan Navana Tower from where burglars took away gold ornaments worth about Tk 5.15 crore on Saturday night.

3 entrances to Dhaka to be widened

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to double the width of three main roads to Dhaka with a view to upgrading the entrances to the capital and smooth transportation in the city to international standard.

According to the decision, the three main entrances to Dhaka through Gabtoli, Kanchpur and the Zia International Airport will be widened to eight lanes from the existing four to five lanes.

The decision was taken yesterday

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Plan to produce 430mw electricity falters

SHARIER KHAN

A poorly conceived government programme to generate 430 megawatts of electricity before the next election crashed before it could develop due to financial constraints, further exposing the country to power deficiencies in the year ahead.

Industry insiders described the crash programme to produce power as unrealistic while the planning

ministry simply rejected the plan in mid-August on the grounds of its cost.

As the government's power bids have remained bogged down by corruption allegations and bid manipulation for the last four years, only a few power projects are in the pipeline, power division board (PDB) sources said.

Of those, Barapukuria's coal-fired 250-megawatt plant appears to be the nearest project, which will go

into operation in two phases in December and January. Again, this is two years behind the last revised schedule. The Barapukuria Plant was planned a decade ago under a Chinese supplier's credit. The third phase of the 70-mw Mymensingh Power Plant will also be in operation from next year.

There is a small chance that another 90-megawatt plant in Fenchuganj will go into production

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

JS RESERVED SEATS Media gag on BNP nominees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The would-be lawmakers of ruling BNP in women's reserved seats have been asked not to talk to journalists following their open criticism of a government circular, which restricted import of duty-free cars.

A number of BNP candidates on Saturday expressed resentment over the circular while talking to reporters after filing nominations with the Election Commission (EC).

The women candidates declined to talk to media persons on the EC premises after receiving verbal

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

4,000-tola gold looted from jewellery shop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Burglars took away gold ornaments weighing about 4,000 tolas and other valuables worth about Tk 5.15 crore, breaking through the ceiling of a 15-storeyed modern shopping complex in posh Gulshan in the city Saturday night.

Bangladesh Jewellers' Association has called a daylong shutdown at jewellery shops in the capital for today to protest the heist at the showroom of Venus Jewellers situated on the third floor of Navana Shopping Complex in Gulshan-1.

Police could not recover the

stolen jewellery until last night but they picked up 17 members of private security agencies, Cobra and Martinet.

Coming to work yesterday morning, the employees of Venus Jewellers found most of the show-cases empty.

Hearing the news, owner Gangacharan Malakar rushed to the showroom and found gold ornaments and some decoration materials were missing.

"The miscreants entered the showroom through a ventilation shaft in the ceiling," said an

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

2nd blowout at Tengratila costs Tk 26-cr gas

Tamim committee reveals UNB, Dhaka

The second blowout at the Tengratila gas field damaged about two billion cubic feet (bcf) gas worth around Tk 26 crore because of inept drilling operation by a foreign firm, says the latest enquiry committee report.

The committee headed by Buet Prof Dr Tamim determined the extent of damages caused to the hydrocarbon resources at the gas field in Sunamganj district that blew out for a second time on June 24 this year.

The committee, formed on June

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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