

# EC chief calls EU, Japan to boost tech cooperation

AFP, Kobe, Japan

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso yesterday called for Japan and the European Union to increase cooperation in science and technology research.

With the EU and Japan both facing an ageing population and increasing pressures from low-cost producers, Japan and the EU must both pursue their common goals of economic reform and developing new technologies, he said.

"We cannot base our prosperity on primary resources and we don't want to base our prosperity on cheap labour," Barroso said in a speech to students at Kobe University in western Japan.

"For both of us, our future prosperity depends on knowledge," he said, calling for "open cross-border cooperation" in research and development.

Barroso also sought to allay any concerns about whether the EU was "a fit partner" for Japan after the turmoil in the 25-member bloc last year sparked by French and Dutch voters' rejection of the draft EU constitution.

"As the saying goes, the EU thrives on crisis. We certainly got something of a shock to the system, and a strong reminder that our principal task is to focus on what our citizens want," Barroso said.

The European Union had not faltered in pushing ahead with an agenda for increased prosperity and jobs, said the former Portuguese premier, who arrived in Japan on Friday for a five-day visit.

"We are very much open for business, and open for contacts with our friends and partners, open to those, like Japan, who share our values and aspirations."

Barroso and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will take part in a three-way summit Monday with Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel of Austria, the current EU president.

Barroso said bilateral trade, the environment, energy, science and technology would be on the agenda, along with global issues including East Asian diplomacy, development assistance and reform of the United Nations.

## US, India agree

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"Both sides agreed to share information on a real time basis, respond to counterterrorism assistance requests expeditiously and collaborate to upgrade preparedness and capability to deal with acts of terrorism," it said.

The discussions "advanced" bilateral cooperation in areas of common concern such as bioterrorism, aviation security, cyberterrorism, terrorism related to weapons of mass destruction, terrorist finance and money laundering and "violent extremism," according to the statement.

The meeting also agreed to schedule joint counterterrorism exercises and develop specific training programmes in "priority areas," it added.

Joint efforts to improve current mechanisms for extradition and legal cooperation were discussed, the statement said without elaborating.

The United States and India set up the joint working group on counterterrorism in 2000.

India has emerged as a key ally of the United States in its "war on terrorism" and the two powers in July last year agreed to build on a "strategic partnership" ranging from military cooperation to sales of civilian nuclear equipment.

US President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh clinched a landmark deal in March under which Washington would provide civilian nuclear technology to India to help the Asian giant cope with its energy needs.

## 50 injured

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College Hospital (DMCH). There are three staircases in the building.

Hearing screams of the seventh-floor garment workers, other workers on the fifth and sixth floors also rushed to the stairs.

Workers of Sweater Concern, a sweater factory, situated on the second to fourth floors, also rushed to the stairs causing a stampede. Mega Tex workers were injured during the stampede as they failed to come down due to crowding by workers of the sweater factory.

Thirty-two Mega Tex workers were admitted to DMCH while the rest of the injured were treated at local clinics.

"Our team went to the spot, but returned as it was not a fire," said a fire fighter.

## Rab man

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adjacent room, rushed out to the yard where the robbers repeatedly stabbed him in the chest until he collapsed.

As Delwar was lying on the ground, the gang looted valuables including seven tolas of gold worth about Tk 1.5 lakh, family members said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and took Delwar to Combined Military Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

He was buried at their family graveyard in Satashgram.

Police seized a scissors and a sandal left by the robbers.

Delwar left behind his wife, 4-year-old daughter Dolon, and 2-year-old son Abir.

Rab arrested Shaheen Hawlader, 35, an accused in a robbery case, from Board Bazar in Tongi yesterday noon suspecting his involvement with the incident.

## Criminal killed

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fire on them triggering a gunfight.

Sentu fell in the line of fire when he tried to escape. He was taken to the Bagha Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Sentu's accomplices managed to flee the scene.

Police recovered a shutter gun and three rifle bullets from the spot.

A member of the notorious Panna gang, Sentu was accused in seven cases, including three for murder, with police stations at Daulatpur in Kushtia and Bagha in Rajshahi, police said.

## 12 bodies

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Ten passengers including the groom managed to jump out of the bus window and swam to the shore safely while 23 are still missing.

Lt Commander Tariquul Islam of Bangladesh Navy accompanied by six divers reached Narail after hearing the news of the accident and started rescue work at 7:00pm on Friday.

Another team led by Lt Commander MAkik also went to the spot yesterday morning.

Soon after the incident, Environment and Forest Minister Tariquul Islam and deputy minister for water resources rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue work.

The Navy divers left the area after ending their rescue operation yesterday afternoon.

The district administration formed a three-member probe body headed by ADM of Narail Benjamin Hambren.

# New US envoy

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conflicting political situation is not good for a developing democracy and suggested resolving all disagreements through talks.

"We see the government and opposition talking [as] very encouraging," she said and urged all political parties to avoid the path of violence and strikes, which is "really very disruptive to average citizens".

She said the democratic institutions must be active in solving problems. The media and parliament can also play a vital role in halting confrontational politics, she added.

Observing that the government, the opposition and people are preparing for the next general elections, she called for participation of all political parties in the forthcoming general elections in a level playing field and ensuring free and fair elections, free from violence, intimidation and attempted cheating.

Earlier at 9:55am, Butenis placed wreaths first at Zia's grave at Chandrima Udayan where BNP leaders Mofiqul Hasan Tripti and Zahiruddin Swapan received her.

Saluting the late president, she described Ziaur Rahman as "a great leader in Bangladesh's struggle for independence". She wrote her

remarks in the condolence book.

Later around 10:25am, the newly appointed US ambassador went to Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi-32 where she placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Awami League Presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim took Butenis to different rooms of the historic house. She witnessed the bloodstained spots of the carnage on August 15, 1975, and pictures depicting Bangabandhu's long struggle for the country's independence.

Butenis stayed there for half an hour, keenly observing the mementos of the assassinated leader.

"I am very moved and saddened by the tragedy that took place at this house and for the great suffering of the people of Bangladesh throughout their shocking but proud history," she wrote in the visitor's book at Bangabandhu Bhaban.

"The way to honour Sheikh Mujib's memory is through free and fair elections," she added.

# Iraqi lawmakers

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The second blast was timed to hit emergency crews arriving at the scene.

The first bomb exploded at 7:30 a.m. in the middle of Muqadiyah, about 60 miles northeast of Baghdad, causing a large fire, police said.

When fire engines arrived, the second bomb went off, killing a firefighter and a civilian, and wounding 17 civilians, police said.

The bullet-ridden bodies of 10 Iraqis were found in and around Baghdad, many blindfolded with their hands and legs bound in rope. Some appeared to have been tortured, and one had been decapitated, police said.

Police also found a body with signs of torture floating in the Tigris River in Kut, 100 miles southeast of Baghdad, said Hadi al-Ittibi, an employee of the Kut Forensic Center.

In Baghdad, gunmen in a speeding car sprayed a police patrol with machine-gun fire, killing one officer, police said. Gunmen killed a civilian riding in a car, and a roadside bomb wounded two policemen, police said.

On Friday, at least 22 Iraqis were killed, including six in a car bombing in Tal Afar in western Iraq and six off-duty Iraqi soldiers slain in Beiji in northern Iraq, police said.

An Australian soldier shot himself in the head in a "tragic accident" inside Baghdad's Green Zone housing the US Embassy and Iraqi government buildings, Australian defense officials said Saturday.

He was the Australian military's first casualty since the Iraq war began in 2003. Last year, an Australian-British citizen serving in Britain's Royal Air Force was killed.

Al-Maliki has a reputation as a hard-line, outspoken defender of the Shia stance raising questions over whether he will be able to negotiate the delicate sectarian balancing act.

From exile in Syria in the 1980s and 1990s, he directed Dawa guerrillas fighting Saddam Hussein's regime. Since returning home after the Saddam's fall, he has been a prominent member of the commission purging former Baath Party officials from the military and government.

Sunni Arabs, who made up the backbone of Saddam's ousted party, deeply resent the commission.

Al-Maliki also was a tough negotiator in drawn-out deliberations over the new constitution passed last year

## BDR foils push-in bid in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel yesterday foiled an attempt by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to push 15 Indians into Bangladesh through Chilmari frontier in Doulatpur upazila of Kushtia.

BDR and local sources said the BSF members of Charvadra camp under Jalangi Police Station of Murshidabad district brought 15 Bangla-speaking Indians to the border point and tried to push them into Bangladesh.

Witnesses said the BDR men of Chilmari outpost pushed the Indians back.

## 2 killed

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He was the son of Ibrahim Hossain of Milpara in Kushtia and was an inmate of room 111 of A F Rahman Hall. His parents have taken his body home.

Meanwhile, Akhteruzzaman Akhter, a masters student, died on the spot when a speeding train hit him at Khilkhet Railway Station at about 9:40am.

He was the son of Haji Nurul Islam Sarder of Khiraiakandi under Debidwar upazila in Comilla and was a resident student of room 206 of AF Rahman Hall.

## JCD men

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11:30pm. He said the group mostly of freshmen armed with hockey sticks and iron rods pushed him off the window of his room 283.

He said he had an altercation with some JCD activists on Wednesday night at the hall's TV room and the JCD men ousted him from the dormitory threatening to beat him up.

Minar, as he was bleeding on a DMCH bed, said he had informed the matter to JCD DU President Hasan Mamun about the incident. He told him to return to his dormitory and assured him that no one will beat him. "But as soon as I returned they entered my room and beat me up," he said crying in pain.

Minar mentioned the names of a few of the attackers. They were: Subrato Sharma, Partho Dev Mandal, Sanjay, Apurba, Niloy, Pinaky Hira, Dipankar Biswas, Vaskar, Biswajit, Avijit and Swapan.

Witnesses said JCD hall unit President Biplab Pande Bipu was present while Minar was being beaten and he did not try to restrain the attackers.

Teachers and students of mass communication and journalism yesterday brought out a silent procession on the campus and submitted a memorandum to the Vice-chancellor (VC) demanding punishment to the attackers.

VC Prof SMA Faiz received the memorandum and assured them of immediate stern actions against the attackers.

An urgent meeting of the academic committee of mass communication and journalism department demanded expulsion of the attackers from the university and bearing the expenses for Minar's treatment by the university.

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) and Dhaka University Journalists' Association (Duj) condemned the attack on Minar and demanded immediate expulsion of the attackers.

Meanwhile, JCD expelled three of its activists, Partho, Sanjay and Vaskar, from the organisation for their involvement in the attack and stripped the JCD hall unit Vice President Pinaky and hall unit Joint Secretary Diponkar of their posts.

## Shazneen

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residence of her father yesterday afternoon.

Shazneen was murdered inside their house on April 23, 1998 at the age of 15.

On November 2, 2003, a trial court convicted six perpetrators and sentenced them to death for the killing. The death reference and hearing of appeal against the lower court's verdict is now being held in the High Court.

## Hasina urges

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Calling for international investigation, as militancy is an international problem, the opposition leader said if a UN special team is allowed to investigate, involvement of the prime minister and her family will be revealed.

"This government has created militancy, patronised the militants and used them in its own interest," she alleged.

Terming the government repressive, Hasina said the government wants to cling on to power through repression on opposition members, women and journalists.

Hasina expressed her concern over price hike of essentials. She refuted the prime minister's claim for increasing production and development.

Newly elected President of Bangabandhu Textile Engineers Association Alhaj Mozaffar Hossain, and Secretary General Shafiqur Rahman also spoke.

## BB mulls

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banks and monetary policy-related functions. Consequently, it now needs people who have expertise in these matters.

The board observed that along with creating a separate pay scale, the bank should also come up with plans regarding these issues.

Sources pointed out that the government has problems in allowing a separate pay scale for the BB staff since it is already under pressure for separate pay scale for the National Board of Revenue staff and the police.

BB board sources said a new pay scale for the central bank staff won't put additional pressure on the budget since it is an autonomous body and it makes a huge profit every year.

The bank made a profit of around Tk 2,000 crore last year, sources said.

Then bank reform committee headed by Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud also proposed a different pay scale for the central bank staff. But side by side, it also recommended some other reforms in the bank.

The Central Bank Strengthening Project financed by the World Bank also recommended a separate pay scale for the BB staff.

Moreover, former BB governors suggested a separate pay scale for them on different occasions.

# Nepal opposition

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torrential rain hit the capital and witnesses reported thousands of demonstrators leaving the city centre.

Mobile phone services in the capital were cut as the rallies mounted, apparently to prevent protest organisers from communicating. So mobile phones failed to work in the capital from mid-afternoon. No officials from Nepal Telecom were available to comment but cutting off mobile phone service has been a popular regime tactic to hamper protests.

The opposition leaders also met with European diplomats, who urged them to consider the king's offer.

"The parties don't think he (king) has done enough, but we think it is basis on which we can build and move forward," British Ambassador Keith George Bloomfield said after the meeting.

Paule Mustonen, Charge d'Affaires of Finnish embassy, added, "We have explained to them that this would lead to a process that could help end the violence and lead to the beginning of democracy."

The demonstrations came hours after King Gyanendra's announcement late Friday asking Nepal's seven-party opposition to appoint a prime minister in an apparent dimdown after two weeks of mayhem against his absolute rule.

In his televised speech after tumultuous demonstrations in Kathmandu and sustained international pressure, the king called for "a meaningful exercise in democracy" with elections "as soon as possible".

But the opposition rejected the offer and vowed to continue protests on the 17th day of strikes and demonstrations against the king who seized power in February last year.

"The king in his royal proclamation has failed to address the issues of the seven-party alliance's roadmap and the understanding reached with the Maoists," the parties said in a joint statement.

"There is no way we can join the government and our general strike and peaceful protest will continue."

The alliance wants a constituent assembly to decide the future of the

monarch, who sacked the government 14 months ago saying it was corrupt and had failed to stem a bloody Maoist revolt.

The Maoists, who have fought a 10-year insurgency that has left some 12,500 dead, said the "so-called royal address" by the king was meaningless.

In a statement, their leader said they would continue to oppose the king, who held out no olive branch to the Maoists in his speech. They are seen as key to any settlement as they control swathes of the country.

The Maoists and their former foes from the opposition parties struck a loose alliance in November to oust the Hindu monarch, who is believed by many in Nepal to be a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, the protector.

Gyanendra's announcement drew cautious praise from the international community, with the United States, the United Nations, Britain and India welcoming the move as a first step on the path to democracy.

The alliance of opposition parties launched a nationwide general strike on April 6 to force the king to relinquish absolute power.

Gyanendra responded with a security clampdown, which left more than a dozen dead, hundreds wounded and even more under arrest.

The king had reiterated an offer of general elections, without fixing a date, in a Nepalese New Year address April 14.

But the alliance refused to back down, and with the popular movement strengthening, called Thursday for the strike to be intensified.

Hundreds of thousands of people responded, pouring into the outskirts of Kathmandu on Thursday and again Friday despite a curfew and shoot-on-sight orders.

# US attorney confirms

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yesterday said he was abducted and the case is still under investigation. Asked about his whereabouts, top police officials at an exchange of views programme with journalists yesterday bypassed the question and suggested reporters to contact the police station concerned.

An AP news report posted on The New York Times website yesterday reported that Sadequee, 19, who is accused of making materially false statements in connection with an ongoing federal terrorism investigation, was arrested in Bangladesh and was en route to New York City to be arraigned.

Sadequee's father, Sarder Md Sharif, in Dhaka said the allegations against his son regarding involvement with militancy are totally baseless.

He also confirmed to BBC that his son is now in custody of FBI.

A top official of the US Embassy in Dhaka told BBC Bangla Service yesterday that they are not sure whether Sadequee was handed over to FBI.

However, Sharif yesterday told a news conference that the US Embassy in Dhaka asked him to send Sadequee's medicine and inhaler to them after they had come to know about his son's illness. He also said he had given those to them on Thursday.

The AP news report also said another US citizen of Pakistani origin, Syed Haris Ahmed, and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee traveled to Canada to meet with Islamic extremists to discuss 'strategic locations in the United States suitable for a terrorist strike', according to an affidavit made public Friday.

Ahmed and Sadequee, both of whom grew up in Atlanta area, met with at least three other targets of ongoing FBI terrorism investigations during a trip to Canada in March 2005, an FBI agent's affidavit said.

The affidavit also said the men discussed attacks against oil

refineries and military bases and planned to travel to Pakistan to get military training at a terrorist camp, which the authorities said Ahmed then tried to do.

The AP report said Sadequee is accused of lying about a trip he made in August when he was interviewed at John F Kennedy International Airport as he was about to leave for Bangladesh.

The affidavit also said Sadequee had said he had traveled alone in January to visit an aunt.

When Sadequee's suitcase was searched at JFK, agents found a CD-ROM containing encrypted files that FBI has been unable to decode and a map of the Washington area hidden in the lining of the suitcase, the affidavit said.

One day later, federal agents interviewed Ahmed, who was coming back from a month-long trip to Pakistan, at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. He said he had gone to Toronto with Sadequee, according to the affidavit.

Federal agents found that money for both men's 2005 bus trip from Atlanta to Toronto was withdrawn from Sadequee's account, AP reported.

## IOJ leaders

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Friday night. As the local residents laid siege to the house to capture the two Imams at night, the Imams boasted of having blessings of an influential person and told them that the police could not touch them, said a witness.

Later, local people led by the ward commissioner caught them.

Police, quoting the call girl, said the IOJ leaders themselves did not take sexual favours from her, but they hired her for a VIP client for Tk2000.

Allegations are rife against the two IOJ leaders that they supply call girls for an influential person, said a source.

# ISPs lock horns

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huge bandwidth," Akhtaruzzaman Manju, president of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

The country was hooked up to the 20,000-km SEA-ME-WE-4 (South-East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 4) submarine telecommunications cable in October last year.

But it has yet to start making use of the huge bandwidth to be carried through optical fibre thanks to BTB's failure to complete the installation of 156-kilometre fibre-optic link between the cable landing station in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

Except for Bangladesh, all members of the 16-party international consortium are already earning a substantial amount of revenue from the cable.

ISPs demand that the government form a committee with representatives from different stakeholders for managing the submarine cable project for the sake of transparency.

"A major portion of the bandwidth might remain unsold for a long time, creating room for a shady market. So, it is necessary that a proper monitoring system is in place," said Sunun Ahmed Sabir who represents the ISP association in the committee working towards a broadband policy.

He said there is no logic behind the move to incorporate in the broadband policy the provision for a fresh licence for the ISPs.

ISPs allege that corruption has been rampant in different phases of the submarine cable project and two chairmen of the BTB had been 'removed' in the face of corruption allegations.

The Prime Minister's Office recently blasted the BTB for missing several deadlines including the latest in March for opening up the submarine cable. The state-run telecom service provider took flak also for its failure to finalise the usage policy.

The data transfer capacity of the cable system is 10 gigabyte a second, around 68 times higher than the country's existing capacity.

Telecoms experts said BTB will need to increase the capacity of its

International Transit Exchange (ITX) at Mohakhali and interconnection capacity of all other exchanges across the country with ITX to tap the vast bandwidth offered by the submarine cable.

Besides, an infrastructure to provide last-mile solution for the end users will have to be developed to increase the utilisation, they observed.

When contacted, a BTFC official said the policy is yet to be finalised and there is still scope to make changes.

## Hartal today

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during the hartal.

These include Noor Hossain Square, Russel Square, Dhanmondi Road-27, Mirpur-10 roundabout, Pallabi cinema hall, Tikatuli truck stand, Malibagh Biponi Bitan, Sabujbagh Biswa Road, Fargate, Fakirerpool, Jatrabari, Posta, Mohakhali and Nabisco intersections, Kamrangir Char, Kuril Biswa Road, Azampur bus stand, Kazi Alauddin Road, Sayedabad bus terminal and Jurain rail crossing.

Razzak also warned the BNP-Jamaat alliance government that it would be entirely responsible for the consequences if it tries to obstruct