

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.

Volatile turn in politics

has been no reply yet to that letter from the government side.

Sources said BNP is foot-dragging in responding to the opposition letter and naming government representatives in the dialogue due to Jamaat's pressure. Jamaat high-ups have met the prime minister and insisted on including Jamaat men in the government team.

No dialogue on reform proposals would take place without participation of Jamaat leaders, Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid declared at a rally in Lalmonirhat yesterday.

He said, "If Jamaat is left out from the dialogue on reform proposals, it would go for tougher movement and foil the consensus reached through the dialogue at any cost."

Also yesterday, an AL Presidium meeting accused the prime minister of speaking against the electoral reforms and Mannan Bhuiyan of dilly-dallying in correspondence about the dialogue, as he has failed to respond to the opposition letter even after a week, the highest decision-making body of AL observed.

"Alongside the electoral reform agenda, we will continue movement in the streets exposing the government's failures and corrupt practices," AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak told newsmen after the meeting.

Another presidium member, Tofail Ahmed, said, "We will focus on street agitation more, even if there is any dialogue with the government sans Jamaat on reforms in caretaker government system, Election Commission and electoral rules."

ISPs lock horns

huge bandwidth," Akhteruzzaman 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) 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 BTTB'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 Sumon 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 ISPs.

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

The Prime Minister's Office recently blasted the BTTB 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 BTTB will need to increase the capacity of its

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 firefighter.

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 Satsashgram.

Police seized a scissor 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 Tariqul 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 Tarigul 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 Udyan where BNP leaders Motiquil Hasan Tripti and Zahuruddin 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 Dhamondi-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.

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, Pinakhi Hira, Dipankar Biswas, Vaskar, Biswajit, Avijit and Swapan.

Witnesses said JCD hall unit President Biplob 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 (Duja) 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 Pinakhi 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 September 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.

The new prime minister nominee will now face the task of putting together a national unity government, meaning divvying up the ministries among Shia, Sunni and Kurdish parties.

One source of conflict is likely to be the powerful Interior Ministry, which currently is held by SCIRI. Sunnis probably will push for a change and demand the uprooting of Shia militias from the ministry's security forces.

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 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 draw-out deliberations over the new constitution passed last year

BDR foils push-in bid in Kushtia

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world's number one team hard in the first Test at Fatullah but also maintained a very good home record in recent times.

The Tigers caused one of the biggest upsets in one-day history in June 2005 when they inflicted a five-wicket defeat on Australia during their England tour. But most importantly, they have won a match each in the series against India and Sri Lanka apart from series victories over Zimbabwe and Kenya to take their record to 15 wins in 122 matches.

Meanwhile, the home side picked left-arm paceman Syed Rasel – ignored in the two Tests – in the lineup for the first game. Opener Javed Omar, Tushar Imran and right-arm pacer Shahadat Hossain will have to sit out.

All-rounder Alok Kapali who missed the last one-day against Kenya due to injury, returned to the side while the selectors kept their faith in Rajin Saleh, who hammered a hundred against Kenya in the last match. He is likely to open the innings with fellow all-rounder Nafees.

Ricky Ponting's men will definitely try to come down as hard as possible to erase the Johannesburg nightmare – their last limited-overs game – where South Africa chased down 434 runs to rewrite history.

Australia's one-day squad is altogether a different one from the Test side as only five players – Ponting, Adam Gilchrist, Brett Lee, Michael Clarke and Michael Hussey – switch from all whites to colour dresses. Clarke, however, looked a doubtful starter after a head injury during swimming yesterday. Off-spinner Dan Cullen is likely to make his one-day debut after Test baptism also in Chittagong.

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 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 and the violence and lead to the beginning of democracy."

The demonstrations came hours after King Gyanendra's