

Malaysia proposes to invest \$1.2b for construction of 198-km highway

UNB, Dhaka

Malaysia has proposed the biggest chunk of their investment worth \$1.2 billion in Bangladesh for construction of a 198-kilometre highway from Dhaka to Chittagong to open up a second land-route for easier transportation between the capital and the port city.

Ajimat Consortium, a conglomerate of six companies, made the proposal to Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin last Wednesday for consideration of the government. The proposal would be scrutinised by an official expert committee.

"We hope the government will actively consider the proposal and take decision in favour of the Malaysian consortium," Malaysian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Dato Abdul Malek Bin Abdul Aziz said in an interview with UNB at his embassy office.

The highway with four lanes has been proposed on Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis. If the proposed highway is constructed, the travel time from the capital to the port city will be reduced to three hours.

Citing the North-South highway in Malaysia, the high commissioner said the proposed Dhaka-Chittagong new highway would attract more foreign investment for setting up industrial units along the route and ease the transportation of goods to the Chittagong seaport.

He said the construction of the proposed highway would give signal to other investors to come to Bangladesh -- a country that economists believe holds huge unexplored potential for development.

Over 21,000 chickens

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traces of the virus only at four farms in Savar and two in Gazipur.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Adviser CS Karim and Health Adviser Major General (retired) Motir Rahman at a press conference yesterday said the government has taken all necessary steps to deal with the situation.

They called on everyone not to get panicked as no human infection has been reported anywhere in South Asia.

Quoting experts, they said the poultry or eggs are safe if cooked properly. But those handling the diseased fowls should sanitise themselves and bury the remnants.

"Bangladesh is not the only country with bird flu-infected chickens. At least 60 other countries are facing the problem. There's nothing to be panicked but we all should work together to do away with the risk," said Health Adviser Motir Rahman, also a renowned physician.

"There is no cases of bird flu except for Savar and a part of Gazipur," he added.

Though preparations have been there for the last two years, the authorities took further measures to stop a pandemic, the health adviser noted.

Motir said that the Mohakali Chest Hospital was kept ready to face any emergency while massive mock exercises are being practised to treat possible avian flu patients.

A large number of doctors have already been trained in diagnosis of bird flu. They have been asked to refer patients to the specialised health facilities in the capital.

The fisheries and livestock adviser said the ministry is going all out to contain the outbreak. It has decided to strengthen active disease surveillance.

Car sales

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Another seller, Md Anwar Hossain, managing director of AH Autos Ltd, experienced a drastic fall in business. He sold seven cars in February and only one in first 21 days of the current month.

Sellers of reconditioned vehicles have been facing dull business due to imposition of high import duty during the immediate past government's tenure.

According to Barvida estimate, the market share of reconditioned vehicles in Bangladesh is 85 percent.

Talking to The Daily Star, importers of brand new cars also expressed views similar to the reconditioned vehicles sellers.

However, they appreciated the government move against tax-free car imports by the former lawmakers.

Tabayul Bahar, director of REL Motors Ltd, said he sold 24 brand new Japanese Subaru vehicles in November last year. But the number was two in January, one in February and three in the current month so far, Baharsaid.

He said, "Customers have become very cautious about buying brand new cars. I don't know what the actual reasons are. But the flow of buyers dropped sharply after the proclamation of emergency."

Ariful Azim, general manager (operation) of Executive Motors Ltd, BMW's sole distributor in Bangladesh, however, said they did not experience any shortfall in sales.

Crucial tie

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declined a confident shout for lbw. But there were no problems in the last ball, when a thickish slash was lapped by Ajit Agarkar at third man.

Agarkar was the more consistent of the new-ball duo, despite the fact that he conceded more runs-per-over, and cranked up close to 140kph on a regular basis. He adjusted early to the left-left opening combination, landing it back of a length and moving it either way, and skidded it through. And he was rightly rewarded with the wicket of Jayawardene with a ball drifting down leg but Mahendra Dhoni, anticipating a leg-side take, moved early and pulled off a full-length one-handed catch.

Two killed

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filed against him with Kafrul and Gulshan police stations.

In Sherpur, criminal Mujibur Rahman Munshi, 42, was killed in an encounter with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Sarengakandi village in Sadar upazila of the district.

Rab sources said Mujibur was an accused in a number of cases, including three for murder.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab went to a den of criminals to arrest them. When they reached there at around 4:00am, the criminals opened fire, forcing the elite force to retreat.

Munshi received bullets during the "shootout" and died on the spot while his accomplices managed to flee, the sources added.

A gun and two bullets were recovered from the scene.

Fire damages documents at Bank Asia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fire burnt valuable documents of a corporate office of Bank Asia in Tejgaon industrial area in the city at about 5:00am yesterday.

Fire Brigade sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit in the storeroom of the bank on the fourth floor of the 20-storey building, damaging important papers and furniture.

Being informed by locals, fire fighters from Mohammadpur, Tejgaon and Fulbaria fire stations rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control at around 6:00am.

However, no one was injured in the incident.

Mozambique arms

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The difficulty is now to locate people because there are lots of children who are lost," she said.

"A lot of children died, because it was during day time."

Antonio also said that most of the injured were children.

"Very many of the casualties were children. There are so many children ... a lot of children were running in the streets," frightened by the initial blast and then hit by the impact of subsequent explosions.

On the nature of the injuries he said: "Most of them are amputations rather than burns."

While there was no official confirmation of the cause of the explosion, it was thought to be due to the intense heat of the afternoon.

"We have been experiencing high temperatures of 37 and 38 degrees in the past months and this accumulation could have resulted in the explosions," said ministry of defence spokesman Joaquim Mataruca on state television channel TVM.

The Mozambican government has been in the process of destroying the obsolete arms stored in a warehouse in the armoury.

"Recently we destroyed more than 100 tonnes of obsolete arms and we will be destroying more in the near future," he said.

"It's the biggest armoury in the country. It contains thousands of tonnes of weapons and ammunition," said Miguel Barreiro, a United Nations official in charge of the country's disarmament programme.

President Armando Guebuza visited the scene of the blast on Friday morning.

He had earlier appealed for calm among the citizens of Maputo following the explosion.

"Our defence forces are working to assess the situation. We call upon all our citizens to be calm until the situation is rectified," Guebuza said in a five-minute speech on the national television channel TVM.

Dangerous

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informed him of Farhad's demand. The OC asked the duty officer to give Farhad a pick-up van and a sub-inspector (SI), three constables and a driver, police said.

Farhad, a resident of Dania under Jatrabari PS, then went to the Dhaka University (DU) campus and started wandering aimlessly.

"Farhad's behaviour seemed very unusual," said SI Shariful Islam, who then asked the driver to go to the army camp on the DU campus.

At the army camp, its in-charge interrogated Farhad and arrested him after being confirmed of his false identity.

A case was filed with Jatrabari PS and the police referred Farhad to the court. He was taken on remand yesterday.

The police said Farhad was a student of Comilla Cadet College and was expelled from the college in 1999 on disciplinary grounds.

US teams

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C-47 plane that crashed on way to Kolkata from Burma (now Myanmar) during the war.

Information collected from different reliable sources confirmed that the fighter chased by two others crashed at Deluti village under Pakgacha upazila.

Abdul Wazed Haza, 92, and Anil Krishna Sarker, 85, of Deluti village were among many other witnesses to the incident that occurred at about 9:00pm in 1942. "I can still remember that the plane crash killed two or three pilots," Anil said.

Haran Dutt, 80, of Jalalpur Union under Tala upazila said a C-47 fighter plane crashed into the pond of late Indra Bhushan Banerjee on the same night in 1942. Another witness, Ranu Bala, 85, said she had seen two bodies inside the crashed plane.

Another fighter plane crashed into a paddy field also at Jalalpur Union the same night, said Ashalata Das, 88, wife of late Kalipada Das. She had seen charred bodies of a man and a woman in the ruins of the plane.

The chief adviser said to do that will require carrying out fundamen-

Woolmer murder

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its reputation as a "gentlemen's pursuit"; for decades countries such as India and Pakistan have followed the game with a fanaticism which rivals anything witnessed in football stadiums.

In 1996, a World Cup semi-final was abandoned because of a riot by Indian fans in Kolkata who saw their team were losing to eventual winners Sri Lanka. The Pakistan government ordered an inquiry into the team's World Cup failure the same year.

Nevertheless, the murder of such a high-profile figure is unprecedented and has very few parallels in any sport. The sport's governing body, the International Cricket Board (ICC), said the World Cup, which ends on April 28, would go on.

The immediate suspicion was that a "betting mafia" had been responsible for Woolmer's murder. Shields said every avenue would be explored.

Match-fixing in cricket has been a blemish over the last 15 years and in the late 1990s the South African captain Hansie Cronje was banned for life for the offence.

Woolmer was the South African coach during this period but he was regarded in cricket circles as being untainted by the Cronje scandal.

The Pakistan team, headed by Woolmer's death, woke in their hotel in Montego Bay on Friday after being flown there from Kingston at the behest of the Jamaican prime minister.

It followed a day of police interviews of players and other hotel guests.

Woolmer was found unconscious in his hotel room on Sunday morning less than 24 hours after his side's defeat by Ireland sent them out of the tournament in the first

round, one of the World Cup's biggest surprises.

He was pronounced dead later in hospital. The Pakistan team will be giving DNA samples on Friday but the team management stressed this was routine in such an inquiry.

The Pakistan Cricket Board chairman said none of its players was a suspect. Other teams had also been at the Pegasus Hotel in Kingston where Woolmer was murdered and also questioned.

The police are questioning everyone in the hotel in the case. Even West Indian captain Brian Lara and official Clive Lloyd have given their statements," Nasim Ashraf told Pakistan television.

He also said there was no restriction on the movement of the Pakistan team and they had gone to Montego Bay from Kingston to relax after the traumatic events of the last few days.

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