

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

UNB, Dhaka

Malaysia has proposed the biggest-ever 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

FROM PAGE 1

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) Motiur 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 Motiur 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.

Motiur said that the Mohakhali 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

FROM PAGE 16

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.

Tayabul 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, Bahar said.

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.

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-storied 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

FROM PAGE 16

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

FROM PAGE 1

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

FROM PAGE 16

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 Paikgacha upazila.

Abdul Wazed Hazra, 92, and Anil Krishna Sarker, 85, of Deluti village were among 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.

Woolmer murder

FROM PAGE 1

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 blight 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, numbed 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.

"Woolmer's death is a big tragedy for us and a terrible loss and the players are very upset. They are not suspects," he said.

Shields told Thursday's news conference that since Woolmer was a big man it would have taken "significant force" to have strangled him. They are looking for one or more culprits.

The competition soldiered on Friday with a match which normally would have cricket fans transfixed: India versus Sri Lanka in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Defeat for India would mean elimination at the first round stage and a cue for national outrage.

West Indies and Ireland contested the other match at Sabina Park.

CG won't stay

FROM PAGE 1

of law and the constitution," he said, adding, "Certainly, the military is backing my government. It's called upon to aid the civil administration in times of emergency—natural or man-made. That's not unknown in many [other] countries."

Asked about his role, Fakhruddin said, "I look upon myself as a champion or leader to carry out [those] fundamental reforms, to make it possible to hand over [power] to a government elected on the basis of a free, fair election. The objective is strengthening Bangladesh's democratic order."

On the reason for launching the anti-corruption campaign, he said corruption has emerged as a great threat to good governance and, in fact, to democracy. A really free, fair, credible election has to be held in an atmosphere where corrupt means and practices do not unfairly influence the outcome.

"What was happening was that money, muscle and misuse of authority—the three Ms—were working to win an election," said the chief adviser.

About the arrest of some big fish, he said, "If we can successfully prosecute some of the known big offenders, we will not only earn thanks from the people but also send strong signals which will work as deterrents against future corruption."

Asked if either of the two main political parties could have gone after corruption, Fakhruddin said a non-party caretaker government does not suffer from the burdens of political patronage. "Whether or not the political parties could have done so, I do not know. But they certainly lacked the political will and the courage in the past."

Asked if he worries about a backlash from the political parties, he said, "Not really. What we are doing has the overwhelming support of the people. Yes, there will be losers. In any reform process there are losers. And they may try to thwart the reform programme. But I wouldn't term that as a backlash."

On the possibility of his becoming part of that patronage system in case he stays in power long enough, the chief adviser said, "As long as we are focused on our objectives, as long as we are transparent in our actions, and as long as we feel that we are accountable to the people, the threat will not be there."

"We have to constantly think about what our objective is, what our focus is, and the fact that the people are behind us. We cannot let [them] down."

Asked about the reason for imposing emergency rule instead of holding fresh elections, Fakhruddin said, "Look at what was happening immediately before we came to power. Elections are meaningful if they're held in a free, fair and credible manner and are based on a voter list that is error-free and prepared by a non-partisan Election Commission."

"The absence of these conditions resulted in an impasse, which ultimately led to the declaration of an emergency; under the constitution, we were called in as a non-party caretaker government...While we are focused on establishing a level playing field, we are also taking measures for economic reforms to increase economic growth and alleviate poverty...[But] our core objective remains holding a free, fair and credible election."

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

Hawa Bhaban

FROM PAGE 1

Gulshan police filed a general diary in connection with the raid.

Our Manikganj correspondent reported that the joint forces yesterday arrested Ghior Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Meer Atoar Rahman on charges of misappropriating funds allocated for the UP, while police arrested two suspected extortionists Abu Saleh Uddin Mahmud Ponir and Anwar Hossain from Saturia upazila of the district with eight bullets in their possession.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reported that the joint forces seized 45 metric tons of rice worth about Tk 7.75 lakh meant for allowances of workers engaged in a construction work under Char Kajal Ashrayan Project, raiding two shops under Galachipa upazila headquarters and Ulania Bazar under the same administrative area.

Project sources said Char Kajal UP Chairman Ali Ahmed received the 45 tons of rice from a government warehouse.

Ali Ahmed however told The Daily Star over the phone that he received the rice 15 days ago and distributed it among the workers of the project.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna reported that police yesterday recovered 160 sheets of corrugated iron (CI) meant for government relief, from a pond at Mahashwarpasha in the city's Daulatpur area, but could not arrest anyone in connection with the recovery.

Robbers loot

FROM PAGE 16

covering their faces with black cloth, entered the flats and continued looting, keeping the inmates hostage at gunpoint, Shafiqul said.

At around 4:00am, the robbers left the house with the booty that include 15 tolas of gold ornaments, over Tk 2 lakh in cash and five mobile sets.

A case was filed with Dakkhin Khan Police Station, but police could not recover any looted goods or arrest anyone in this connection as of 7:15pm.

Jubo Dal man

FROM PAGE 1

On-duty officer at Savar Police Station Helena Parvin told The Daily Star that M Tanvir Hossain, medical officer of Savar Health Complex, filed an unnatural death (UD) case. In the UD case, Tanvir said Yaar Hossain was taken to the health complex around 7:00pm Thursday and he died there 10 minutes after he was admitted. He claimed Yaar died of a cardiac arrest.

The body was taken to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, sources in Savar Police Station said.

A Rab-11 officer requesting anonymity told The Daily Star that Yaar Hossain was a daring criminal even though there were no cases filed against him.

However, Yaar's family members said on Friday evening they were yet to have confirmation of Yaar's death from the law enforcers.

India gas plans

FROM PAGE 16

"The well-known opposition of the US is motivated by its partisan interests and its targeting of Iran."

Ties between Delhi and Washington have improved over the past few years with US firms eager to do business with India's booming economy.

Relations were boosted by a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement in 2005 that could let India buy US nuclear reactors and fuel.

But the US Congress attached several conditions to the deal that did not go down well with New Delhi and both sides have returned to negotiations.

BDR to run

FROM PAGE 16

headquarters yesterday.

The wholesale kitchen markets may be set up at Kanchpur, Mawa road, Aminbazar and Tongi, he said.

"We are taking steps to bring the products to the capital from villages to prevent the middle persons from cheating or depriving the peasants," he said, adding, "We will not go into any conflict with the businessmen as they will be taken into consideration for making this programme a success."

The government has already given BDR permission to set up the four wholesale markets, he said, adding that the process may take a year to materialise.

BSF

FROM PAGE 1

Our Kushtia correspondent reported that a BSF patrol team of Ratinagar under Karimpur Police Station of Nadia district fired on Fazlur Rahman while he was working on his paddy field just close to the border pillar no 153/3 at about 9:30pm.

Immediately after the incident, the BSF troops took the body to their camp.

The body was handed over to Bangladesh paramilitary troops through a flag meeting held at Pragpur border at about 10:30pm.

Iraqi dy PM injured in suicide attack

Two more US troops killed

REUTERS, AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salam al-Zobaie was wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a hall where Zobaie was attending prayers on Friday, police and an aide to Zobaie said.

Two guards were killed in the second assassination attempt on a senior member of the US-backed government in a month.

The aide said Zobaie, a member of the main Sunni Arab political bloc, was hit by shrapnel in the abdomen and shoulder. It was not immediately clear how serious his injuries were.

US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Garver said Zobaie was taken to the US military hospital but could give no information on his condition.

Police sources said Zobaie was targeted by two coordinated attacks – a car bomb at his home and the suicide bomber at the prayer hall where he was at the time.

One police source said four people were killed and 10 wounded in both attacks. Two of the dead were Zobaie's security guards and Zobaie's brother was among the wounded, he said.

Another police source put the death toll at five, including an adviser of Zobaie named Mufid Abdel Zahraa, with 12 wounded by the two bombs.

Zobaie, one of two deputy prime ministers, is a member of the Accordance Front, the main Sunni Arab grouping in Iraq's Shia-led national unity government.

Zobaie's spokesman said the minister survived the blasts which occurred near the foreign ministry where his home is located.

Insurgents have frequently targeted leaders of the US-backed government. Last month Iraq's Shia vice president Adel Abdul-Mahdi was wounded by shrapnel when a bomb killed six people inside the public works ministry.

On Thursday a rocket landed

Badruddoza

FROM PAGE 16

Manju's announcement to resign from active politics, he said Manju can do so as 'he has no party'.

Asked whether he would leave the country, the former president said he may go abroad for a few days but would come back.

Liberal Democratic Party President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury also termed 'untrue' the press report that he would quit politics soon.

"I am trying to introduce a politics that would replace the politics of power. It will be a politics of different trend to build up a united Bangladesh," the former president said in a statement.

"Perhaps, the report was made at the influence of those who would be benefitted if I remain out of politics," he said.

"Under the state of emergency, I am now inactive like other politicians and spending time on teaching and medical service," he added.

Manmohan says

FROM PAGE 1

We must be more open to our own neighbourhood."

Besides, he saw a similar mutually beneficial inter-dependence between India and the wider neighbourhood of the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific regions.

"For centuries our forefathers sailed westwards and eastwards – as teachers and traders, as merchants and monks. That is how we should once again approach the world," he said.

The prime minister told the Conclave on "Challenges for the Brave New World: Can India take the lead" that he believed that Indians have always been open to global influences and that "ours will always be an open society."

"Even in the economic sphere, we are today as open as any free market democracy in the world," Singh said.

Addressing the Conclave, which was attended by former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, the prime minister said, "I have often said, both in the context of domestic politics and international conflict, that there is no issue that cannot be resolved through dialogue and discussions."

"Violence and force have never offered lasting solutions to human problems," he said adding that consultative and consensual approach was what had kept the diverse nation together.

Observing that the consensual and accommodative nature had contributed to the richness of the composite culture and durability of the country's civilisation, he said India can bring a new approach to dealing with global challenges.

Rejecting suggestions from certain quarters that India was "an open society with a closed mind", the prime minister said he believes

yards from the prime minister's home during a news conference with the United Nations secretary general.

Iraqi and US security forces are engaged in a major security crackdown in Baghdad aimed at stemming sectarian violence that threatens to pitch the country into civil war.

US commanders blame al-Qaeda and other Sunni Arab militants for most of the car bombs and suicide blasts.

Meanwhile, the US military announced Friday the deaths of two more servicemen in Iraq, where American troops are battling a raging insurgency and sectarian bloodshed.

A soldier was killed on Thursday when a roadside bomb exploded alongside a military patrol in west Baghdad. A marine was killed in combat operations in the Anbar province, a Sunni insurgent stronghold west of the capital.

The deaths brought to 3,227 the US military's losses in Iraq since the invasion just over four years ago, according to an AFP tally based on Pentagon figures.

Iranian navy detains 15 British sailors

AFP, London

Some 15 British Royal Navy sailors were detained by Iranian naval vessels in the Gulf yesterday, the Ministry of Defence said, demanding their immediate release and seeking urgent clarification from Tehran.

"The British government is demanding the immediate and safe return of our people and equipment," the ministry said in a statement on the incident, which it said occurred after a routine boarding of a merchant ship in Iraqi waters.

Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett summoned the Iranian ambassador to seek clarification over the incident, which comes amid mounting tension between Tehran and the West over its nuclear programme.

"At approximately 1030 Iraqi time this morning, 15 British naval personnel, engaged in routine boarding operations of merchant shipping in Iraqi territorial waters...were seized by Iranian naval vessels," it said.

"The boarding party had completed a successful inspection of a merchant ship when they and their two boats were surrounded and escorted by Iranian vessels into Iranian territorial waters.

"We are urgently pursuing this matter with the Iranian authorities at the highest level and on the instructions of the Foreign Secretary, the Iranian ambassador has been summoned to the Foreign Office.

"The British Government is demanding the immediate and safe return of our people and equipment."