

Dhaka to revive

FROM PAGE 1
Diplomacy is an essential ingredient of Bangladesh foreign policy and the United Nations is center in this regard.

Talking to The Daily Star, the foreign ministry officials hoped that Dhaka's latest role would help local readymade garment exporters to leverage in international trade negotiations to open up major European and North American markets.

African countries have led the Group of LDCs for the past five years.

As a bloc, African countries have pushed for greater access and better prices for commodities and raw materials in the world market, which pushed down the priorities of Asian countries which have moved to manufacturing and service-oriented industries.

"We will lead the debate in the international economic negotiations on behalf of LDCs, particularly for greater aid, investments and market access," Iftekhar said.

He said the UN would also be Bangladesh's forum to negotiate its demands to mitigate the effects of climate change, as Dhaka is pushing hard for a three-pronged approach.

The adviser said Dhaka's new charge for mitigating the effects of climate change also hinges on UN mechanisms that include Bangladesh's call to build a UN-based low-premium insurance for high-prevalence natural calamities, which may provide financial cover for Bangladesh's frequent flood damages.

Launched by Chief Adviser

2 JMB men

FROM PAGE 16
The JMB activists detonated explosives at six places in Sunamganj on August 17, 2005 following which police filed six different cases. The two JMB men got the latest sentences for their role in bomb blasts at the deputy commissioner's office in Sunamganj.

Earlier on October 6, the same court gave them 10 years' rigorous imprisonment in two cases each relating to the series blasts.

Hanif was also given 14 years' rigorous imprisonment on September 12 for storing explosives at a Sylhet house.

KL employers

FROM PAGE 16
I have asked the manpower department officials to have a look at the complaints. It is true that there are employers who recruited the foreign workers, but did not pay the due salaries, we will not compromise with them (the employers). They will be penalised. We will bring them to court," Onn said.

The minister expressed his disappointment over the situation as it projects a negative image of the country and said that the employers could be charged under the Employment Act.

The 770 disgruntled Bangladeshi workers alleged that they had arrived in Malaysia between January and April this year and were employed at four textile factories with the promise of a monthly salary of Malaysian Ringgit (RM) 1,200 each. However, each worker wound up receiving only RM 200 or less a month.

Meanwhile, reports are surfacing in Malaysia about the existence of organised syndicates of outsourcing companies who bring in foreign workers into the country using the names of unsuspecting factories.

These foreign workers, given false promises by recruiting agencies in their home countries, are eventually exploited by different employers. Thousands of such Bangladeshi workers, despite possessing valid visas on their arrival in Kuala Lumpur, have been stranded at Kuala Lumpur International Airport for weeks as their employers did not show up to receive them, said sources concerned.

Malaysian newspaper The Star yesterday reported that the ploy of a syndicate was discovered as a factory, Rightool Metal Industry Sdn Bhd in Sungai Petani, found out that its name was used to bring in 20 workers from Bangladesh.

CT Tew, managing director of the factory, said he was taken aback when labour department officials went to his office yesterday morning and told him that the 20 foreign workers, purportedly brought in by his factory, were among the 3,000 Bangladeshis still stranded at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Denying the allegation, Tew said, "The only time we applied to the authorities for foreign workers was in 2005. Approval was given to hire 15 workers, but we recruited only nine Nepalese."

Senior Assistant Director Mohd Jais Abdullah of Labour Department in Sungai Petani city said his officers revealed that no approval was given to Rightool Metal for hiring the Bangladeshis. He advised the company to lodge a complaint with police.

Hasina, family

FROM PAGE 1
supervision. The district land registration officers were asked to examine documents regarding ownership of land.

The notices to the managing directors of 41 banks asked to find out if they have any savings or fixed deposit accounts in the name of the former premier and her family members. The banks were also asked to see if there is any investment or share in their names.

Hasina submitted her statement of wealth worth about Tk 3.10 crore to jail authorities on September 2 after a twenty-day legal debate in the higher court over the legality of ACC's issuing the notice upon her regarding submission of wealth statement.

The Supreme Court on August 27 stayed a High Court order that had imposed a freeze on the operation of the ACC notice for Hasina to declare her wealth.

Following a writ petition filed by Hasina, the High Court on August 7 halted the operation of the ACC notice.

Hasina was arrested on July 16 and the ACC served the notice on July 17 giving seven working days to submit the wealth statement.

According to the ACC rules, a person will be punished with a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment if the person is found guilty of suppressing information in the wealth statement submitted to the commission.

Arrest warrant

FROM PAGE 1
Jamaat MP Shahjahan Chowdhury for concealing information about his Range Rover jeep in the wealth statement submitted to the commission and Faisal Morshed Khan for abetting him in the act.

The CMM Court shifted the case to the Special Judge's Court the following day. The court then ordered Shahjahan Chowdhury and Faisal Morshed Khan to appear before it on October 9.

Earlier on July 1, ACC Deputy Director Abul Kalam Azad filed the case with the city's Bandar Police Station.

According to the case, Faisal Morshed, managing director of the Pacific Motors, helped Shahjahan Chowdhury make a forged document for the luxurious jeep.

Shahjahan Chowdhury imported the jeep from England on MP quota, but it was not shown in his wealth statement. The jeep was later seized from a business establishment of Faisal Morshed Khan.

Ex-BNP MP Munshi

FROM PAGE 1
Munshi. These include -- a flat in Gulshan-1, a Mercedes Benz car, a Nissan car and 3,619 shares of National Commerce and Credit Bank Ltd worth Tk 3.62. Both the cars were seized by the law enforcement agencies following Munshi's arrest.

The court, however, ordered that the former lawmaker's family can get back the seized cars if they pay Tk 2.24 lakh for the Mercedes and Tk 2.38 lakh for the Nissan, as Munshi concealed information about the amount of money in the prices of the cars shown in the wealth statement.

The judgment had been deferred twice earlier as Judge Ashraf Hossain fell sick on September 20, the first date fixed for delivering the judgment.

The judge read out the judgment after examining the investigation report, depositions of 49 witnesses, including two in defence of Munshi, statements of the accused and arguments of the prosecution and defence lawyers.

The joint forces arrested Munshi on May 28. ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed filed the case with the Gulshan Police Station accusing the four of earning wealth and properties worth Tk 4.92 crore illegally that was kept concealed in their wealth statements.

The ACC issued a notice upon the lawmaker on February 18, 2007 asking him to submit wealth statement in 72 hours as he was included in the first list of high profile corruption suspects.

His wealth statement submitted on February 25 shows properties worth Tk 3.33 crore in his name and in the names of his wife and sons. Munshi later submitted a supplementary wealth statement of Tk 5.29 crore after ACC filed the case against him.

An ACC investigation found that Munshi had concealed information about his wealth worth Tk 1.17 crore and had earned Tk 5.37 crore illegally.

The ACC framed charges against the accused on July 9 while the charge sheet was submitted on June 17.

RMG workers

FROM PAGE 1
to the spot and assured them of meeting their demand by today.

"We take to the street as the authorities of the factories are yet to pay our leave allowance," said a worker wishing anonymity.

He also said the authorities had already paid their salaries and Eid bonus.

Kabir Hossain, general manager of one of the factories, said they usually pay leave allowances ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Owners asked to pay

FROM PAGE 1
owners to pay the workers their wages and bonuses by October 11, so nobody can bank on the workers' resentment to create unrest in the sector.

Intelligence agency officials yesterday pointed out that 31 garment unit managements in Narayanganj, 93 in Gazipur, and some in Mirpur of the capital expressed their inability to pay the workers' wages and bonuses by tomorrow.

"Business was not good in July, August and September due to the ramifications of the political unrest at the beginning of the year; we're not in a good position," said Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Farvez, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Pointing out that it will be difficult for many factory owners to meet the October 11 deadline, he said, "We earlier used to pay the workers their bonuses and basic salaries before the Eid and the rest we used to pay when they would come back to work again. By fixing the deadline for both the salaries and the bonuses, the government is pitting us against the workers."

The BGMEA president, however, was hopeful about being able to pay the workers before the Eid, as the Bankers' Association assured them on Monday of 'out of the way payment' on the basis of their January to June performance following their request for the soft loans.

If the owners fail to pay the workers their wages and bonuses, Adviser Anwarul Iqbal suggested, they should sit with the workers to explain their constraints and a possible date for the payment. "The government will not take any responsibility," the labour adviser said.

Differing with the government proposal for a unified bonus policy, President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) Fazlul Haq said such a regime will deprive the workers who are now getting higher bonuses than some of the workers in other factories.

The defaulters in implementing the minimum wage have been given one month's notice and the government will take them to the Labour Court and lodge cases against them if they fail to comply, the adviser said.

Of the 2,818 members of BGMEA, 65 have yet to pay their workers the minimum wages, the BGMEA president told the meeting adding that they are working to persuade the non-complying 65 to implement the rule in their factories.

Saying that the factories that pay the minimum wages and are members of BGMEA or BKMEA also get affected when there is unrest in the factories that do not pay the minimum wages and are not members of either of the two owners' associations, Adviser Anwarul Iqbal sought the sector leaders' suggestions regarding the matter.

"We can't be responsible for them! You can do anything with them, you can even shut them down!" BGMEA President Anwar Farvez told the labour adviser.

The labour adviser suggested the RMG leaders not to let such errant units get sub-contracts.

When the BGMEA president requested the adviser for Rab and army patrol in Ashulia, Gazipur, and Narayanganj areas as a precautionary measure for preventing any outbreak of violence over trivial issues, the adviser asked them to specify the

factories in those areas where such occurrences might take place.

Criticising the garment owners for sudden shut downs of factories, the adviser said, "No way can this be called proper management."

A day before the workers of Nassa Garments erupted in violence in Tejgaon on September 22 over iftar allowance, an owner of the factory declined to even talk with the agitating workers, saying he has 20 factories and that he didn't bother if he had to shut down one of them, complained a high level police official of Dhaka.

"He bowed to the workers' demand only after they had taken to the street damaging public properties. Isn't it then only normal for the workers to think that they cannot achieve anything without resorting to violence?" he demanded an answer from the RMG factory owners.

"Sit with your workers, solve the problems of your factories. Why should other people suffer if your workers turn violent and take to the streets?" the labour adviser asked.

He also asked the owners to contact the Crisis Management Cell of the RMG sector if any problem develops in any factory, so that the cell can help to settle the matter peacefully.

The adviser asked the police administration to call in reinforcement from outside of Dhaka, if necessary, to strengthen the patrolling in the garment factory areas.

The adviser also asked the police to file cases against the organisers of any protest march brought out while the state of emergency is in effect.

When the representatives of intelligence agencies and the BKMEA president said some leaders of the 42 workers' federations and NGOs are involved in instigating labour unrest in the RMG sector, the adviser asked the Special Branch of police and the National Security Intelligence officials to create a list of the federations and NGOs involved in such activities.

He also underscored the need for bringing reforms to the labour federations and NGOs working in the sector.

Meanwhile, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday stressed on the need for forming a committee to ensure wages and bonuses for the workers in the RMG sector.

He said, "A committee is needed, which will scrutinise the issues related to workers' interests as well as to make sure that the owners take care of their responsibilities."

Presiding over the seventh meeting of the social compliance forum for the RMG sector at the Ministry of Commerce, he also advised the garment factory owners of releasing the cash incentives for their soon.

"I will discuss the issue with the central bank today so that the cash incentive is released as soon as possible," the adviser said yesterday.

Nobel Prize

FROM PAGE 16
Working independently, Fert and Gruenberg discovered in 1988 that minute magnetic changes in a GMR system lead to huge differences in electrical resistance.

These differences in turn cause changes in the current in the read-out head, which scans a hard disk to spot the ones and zeroes in which the data is stored.

As a result, the readout head is able to read smaller and weaker magnetic areas -- and this sensitivity means information can be packed more densely on the hard disk.

Matin Durrani, editor of Physics World, a journal published by Britain's Institute of Physics, said the award was fitting.

"Most people draw up short lists (of potential winners) for fun -- of course we don't know who will win -- and they are two people we suspected might win it," Durrani said.

"I am really pleased that it has gone for something very practically based and rooted in research relevant to industry. It shows that physics has a real relevance not just to understanding natural phenomena but to real products in everyday life."

Last year, the Physics Prize went to US space scientists John Mather and George Smoot for a pioneering space mission, which supports the "Big Bang" theory about the origins of the Universe.

Saarc route map

FROM PAGE 16
nations in an ever-changing complex world, Jaiswal said. "We need to evolve a shared vision of the future for our region. Such a vision must be rooted in our common values and based on our individual and collective strengths that will enable South Asia to realise its full potential in the 21st century," he added.

The minister said Saarc countries must "make effective use of the regional three-tier mechanism to share experiences, information and data, learn from one another's successes and mistakes."

At the conference, delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka would focus on sharing their experiences in tackling terrorism and strengthening cooperation in various issues regarding law enforcement.

Proposing to work out a road map for greater cooperation to ensure peace in the area, Jaiswal said law and order in the region was taking newer hues with criminals using latest technologies to access databases of their targets.

The challenges the police forces of the region encounter have changed substantially in recent years and the revolution in technology and communication has altered the law and order scenario substantially, he added.

Nowadays, the modus operandi of the criminals is based more on technology, Jaiswal said adding the police tactics must, therefore, keep up with the changes.

The conference would provide a window of opportunity for the Saarc countries to consolidate their gains in regional cooperation and to forge a blueprint for exchanging resources -- both human and material, the state minister for homes said.

The conference, also being attended by officials of home and foreign ministries, will discuss the modalities of organising joint training programmes and discuss strategies to improve mutual coordination in tackling terrorist activities, drug trafficking and organised crimes.

Ashraful

FROM PAGE 1
party's front organisation -- at the AL's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue.

Ashraf said they have not yet got any formal proposal from Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, who mooted the idea of a national government a couple of days ago, to join such an administration.

"If we get any proposal to that end, the Awami League will decide on it after discussing the offer at the party forum," said the AL leader.

He, however, said questions over accountability might rise if there is no opposition in the parliament.

When asked to comment on Law Adviser Mainul Hossain's statement in which he said the government wanted to keep the two former prime ministers -- Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina -- out of the country, the acting AL general secretary said it is a bad signal for the nation.

Wondering whether the government would have acquitted Khaleda and Hasina had they agreed to stay out of the country, Ashraf said the AL president returned home from the US with a view to facing any situation.

But it would be very unfortunate if the 'false cases' against her were filed for her coming back home in violation of the government's ban to that end, he added.

On AL leader Mohammad Nasim's 13-year sentence for corruption at a special court, Ashraf said the party will comment on it after the case is judged at the higher court. He hoped that Nasim would get justice there.

2 officials of Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16
of the workers in Malaysia and recruiting lawyers in some Malaysian states to see the workers' rights issues.

The foreign adviser said, "We will take immediate actions after reviewing the recommendations to create a favourable environment so that our workers can work safely and enjoy due rights."

Quoting a letter of Bangladesh High Commissioner M Khaizuzzaman sent to him yesterday, the foreign adviser said that the Malaysian government had made it clear that Kuala Lumpur would withdraw freeze on hiring Bangladeshi workers after solving the problems among the workers, Bangladesh recruiting agencies and Malaysian local agents.

"It's very important to improve the procedures of overseas employment. Codes of conduct of the Bangladeshi recruiting agents and Malaysian local agents should be changed," felt the foreign adviser.

He said Malaysia has already approved appointment of 3.47 lakh Bangladesh workers and 1.92 lakh of them are already there. The remaining workers would go there

as per the schedule, he added. Acting secretary of the expatriates' welfare ministry said from now on the high commission officials would have to attest the job demand letters only after inspecting the employers' factories physically.

He said the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training would strictly monitor the activities of recruiting agencies and send reports to the Bangladeshi missions about the workers sent abroad.

The secretary admitted to the fact that the recruiting agencies are charging higher amounts for sending workers to Malaysia.

He said the government is working on introducing a mechanism to eliminate middlemen from the system.

The secretary said about 770 Bangladeshi workers, who met Bangladesh high commission officials on Monday regarding underpayment by their employers, have agreed to join alternative jobs.

He said the government has already cancelled licences of four recruiting agencies and obstructed nine from getting new job demand letters from Malaysia.

Bombings, shootings

FROM PAGE 16
The trucks were loaded with barrels of gasoline and caused massive fireballs when they exploded.

Violence also raged in Baghdad, where at least 12 people were killed and more than 60 wounded in four bomb blasts, including one which ripped through crowds in a central square, Iraqi officials said.

In northern Mosul city, the deputy commander of Nineveh police, Brigadier General Abdul Aal Thannoun Mubarak was killed when unidentified gunmen attacked his convoy, police said.

Another policeman was killed in a car bomb attack on a police patrol in Mosul, that also wounded two other officers.

The attacks come a day after a suicide bomber killed 14 people when he exploded his truck at a police post near another town in Salaheddin province, Samarra, midway between Baiji and Baghdad.

al-Qaeda in Iraq had warned it would ramp up attacks during the holy month of Ramadan, which ends this week. It also warned it would target Iraqis who join US forces in fighting local members of Osama bin Laden's global jihad group.

"We do not accept the acts of al-Qaeda," said Dhari, head of the influential Muslim Scholars' Association, Iraq's main Sunni clerics' organisation.

Fighting in Pak tribal belt

FROM PAGE 16
Afghanistan, but security officials insisted the dead were only Islamists fighters.

The unrest puts extra pressure on military ruler Musharraf -- a key ally in the US-led "war on terror" -- as he waits for the Supreme Court to ratify his victory in a presidential poll.

Chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said at least 150 militants and 45 soldiers had been killed in battles that first erupted on Sunday after pro-Taliban rebels ambushed an army convoy.

Another two troops died in a roadside bombing on Tuesday, a statement said.

"There were militant hideouts in the area near Mir Ali, aircraft targeted these hideouts on Tuesday but I don't have the number of casualties from that," Arshad told AFP.

Security officials in the north-western city of Peshawar said another 50 militants were killed in Tuesday's airstrikes and a similar number were injured.

Residents, however, said bombs dropped by fighter jets hit the main bazaar in Khedar Khel, a village near Mir Ali.

"Some 50 people including women and children have died in the bombing," resident Noor Mohammad, 45, told AFP by telephone.

"The number of injured is even more."

Most of the 50,000 inhabitants of Mir Ali had fled after more than 50 houses were damaged and the army placed the town under virtual curfew, residents said.

"Our homes have been damaged severely, most of the families have migrated to relatives' homes in neighbouring towns," tribesman Faridullah Khan said as military helicopters circled overhead.

Desperate locals used mosque loudspeakers to beg the military not to fire at their homes, tribal elder Malik Iqbal Khan said.

Army spokesman Arshad said that tribal elders had called a council or jirga involving tribesmen, militant representatives and the local administration in a bid to halt the violence.

But the military indicated that it was in no mood to compromise.

"The army is fighting well-trained militants. There are linkages with Afghanistan. Many of them are getting money and weapons from across the border," Arshad said.

and wounded in each incident. The first bomb exploded at the home of police chief Nifous, killing at least seven people, including his uncle and two nephews.

Minutes later, a second suicide truck bomber crashed his explosives-packed truck into the house of Atallah, who escaped the attack. The identities of those killed and wounded were not immediately clear.

A small mosque next to the house collapsed under the impact of the blast.

Atallah is the third member of the Salaheddin Awakening Council, a coalition of tribes in the Tikrit district formed to fight al-Qaeda, to come under attack in less than a week.

Last Thursday, a roadside bomb near Samarra killed the leader of the council, Sheikh Maawia Najj Jabara, and wounded his deputy Sheikh Sabah Mutashar al-Shimmary.

The attack on their convoy was claimed by an al-Qaeda group in a statement posted on the Internet.

Leading Iraqi Sunni cleric Harith al-Dhari, meanwhile, urged Iraqis not to join US forces in fighting al-Qaeda, arguing that by doing so they are siding with the occupier.

"We do not accept the acts of al-Qaeda," said Dhari, head of the influential Muslim Scholars' Association, Iraq's main Sunni clerics' organisation.

Donors

FROM PAGE 16
projects as well as by fresh funding.

"World Bank has already provided \$75 million for budgetary support and we are expecting another \$130 million from them," the ERD secretary told the reporters.

He said the World Bank will reallocate its funding in different ongoing projects to facilitate the post flood rehabilitation cost.

"The donors will send a proposal shortly with a list of projects from where they will shift money to the post flood rehabilitation programme," he said.

The ERD secretary also said the Asian Development Bank (ADB) hinted that it might provide \$30 million for the post flood rehabilitation programme. The ADB and other donors will generate another fund of \$130 million for the same purpose.

At the meeting, Planning Secretary Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury placed a report assessing the damage done by the recent flood and the funds required for the rehabilitation programme.

The report said a total of Tk 2,689 crore is necessary to meet the rehabilitation cost. Tk 1,120 crore of which is required for the local government and engineering department, Tk 690 crore for the roads and highways division, Tk 538 crore for the Water Development Board, Tk 38 crore for Bangladesh Railway, Tk 30 crore for the education ministry, and Tk 253 crore for the agricultural ministry and other ministries.

Sources said the meeting also discussed the possible agenda of the forthcoming meeting on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to be held in Dhaka on November 18 and 19, which is likely to be topped by the issues of governance and the power sector.