



Pranab arrives this morning

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian External Affairs Minister (EAM) Pranab Mukherjee is scheduled to arrive here this morning on a daylong visit for a first hand assessment of the devastation wrought by Cyclone Sidr.

His visit also aims to convey the Indian people's solidarity with the people of Bangladesh in their hour of need, said an official of the High Commission of India in Dhaka.

"In the aftermath of the severe cyclone in Bangladesh on November 15, 2007, which had caused heavy loss of lives and widespread destruction in coastal areas, India has readily come to the

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SLOW GROWTH OF INVESTMENTS

30pc fall in capital machinery import in first quarter

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

Import of capital machinery fell by 30 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year due to slow growth of both local and foreign investments.

Economists say uncertainty in political field and economic sector prompted the business community to keep away from new investments.

Officials of the central bank however anticipate that the government's recent initiatives for restoring confidence of the businessmen will help both local and foreign investments get momentum in the second quarter.

According to Bangladesh Bank

(BB) statistics, capital machinery worth \$366 million was imported during July-September period this year while it was \$402 million during the corresponding period in last fiscal year.

In total, L/C (letter of credit) opening for machinery import increased by 0.49 percent in the first quarter. But in case of machinery for big industries including textile, jute, garment, and pharmaceuticals, L/C opening and import decreased during the period.

Import of raw materials however went up by 18 percent with edible oil and oil seeds being half of the total.

Commercial bank officials think that imports of capital machinery

decreased due to slow investment growth.

BB statistics show industrial credit disbursement was not satisfactory in the first quarter of this fiscal despite having huge liquidity in the banking system.

The disbursement saw nine percent growth during this period as against 28 percent during the corresponding period of last year. The amount of excess liquidity in the banking system remained Tk 13,129 crore till the end of August this year.

Bangladesh received \$132 million Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in July-August this year, 3.64 percent less than the amount of

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A fisherman at Southkhali in Bagerhat tries to undo his fishing net tangled around a tree. Fishing nets of almost all the fishermen in the union on the bank of the Baleswar river were either lost or damaged in the wake of cyclone Sidr that severely battered the coastal districts.

BALI CONFERENCE

Dhaka to press for increased climate change adaptation fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will stress the need for increasing the climate change adaptation fund at the Climate Change Conference on the Indonesian island of Bali.

A 24-member official delegation comprising government and non-government organisation (NGO) officials will participate in the 12-day-long conference starting from tomorrow, said Environment and Forest Adviser Dr CS Karim while speaking at a press conference at the ministry's auditorium yesterday.

The delegation will explain how developing countries like Bangladesh have been suffering due to climate change, he said.

In his written statement, the adviser said they would mention the increasing number of natural

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Slum dwellers also come in aid of Sidr victims

PORIMOL PALMA

Generosity doesn't depend on means; that's what the dwellers of a cityslum have proved.

Touched by the sufferings and pains of thousands of homeless people affected by cyclone Sidr, residents of the Karail slum have come forward with whatever little they have.

It is not that these slum dwellers themselves have enough to eat and put on their backs. However their limited ability didn't stop them from thinking big when it comes to helping those worse off.

Karail Basti is located in between Mohakhali and Banani in the capital and is home to mostly very poor people working

as domestic aides, garments workers, rickshawpullers, petty shopkeepers and hawkers.

They have donated one truckload of clothes to Brac authorities for distribution among the now homeless inhabitants in Sidr-affected areas.

Taslima Begum, who maintains her four-member family selling rice cakes in the slum, donated two maxis, a new sari and some old baby clothes.

"I felt so bad when I saw the state of the coastal people on the television, especially women and children who now have nothing to eat and no clothes to wear during winter," she told The Daily Star.

"We do not have abundant

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Cry for baby food, warm clothes in Patuakhali

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The cyclone survivors of Patuakhali are suffering from severe crises of baby food and warm clothes as about two lakh families are passing their days under the open sky there.

Lack of food and warm clothes have already exposed around 20,000 children of the district to cold related diseases like pneumonia, typhoid, and fever.

As the decomposed carcasses of animals, perished in the cyclone, have begun to pollute the water bodies in the area, skin diseases and diarrhoea are also spreading.

Meanwhile, several thousand relatives of the survivors still remain missing, 15 days into the cyclone making landfall on the southern coast of the country. Some of the relatives of the missing were seen searching for the bodies of their loved ones on river banks.

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REPEATED SNAPPING OF SUBMARINE CABLE

BTTB in a fix over fixing backup optical fibre line

SHARIF KHAN

Despite its urgency, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) is unable to have a backup optical fibre line for its submarine cable as one option is too costly and the other -- 'free of cost' -- is being resisted by the telecom regulatory authorities 'arbitrarily'.

Having this backup line has become a priority issue for the BTTB due to repeated snapping of the original line between Dhaka and Cox's Bazar by miscreants. Each disruption deprives the BTTB of at least \$70,000 revenue per hour. The cable serves as the backbone of the nation's Internet and overseas call connectivity.

The backup line will be used only when the main line is disconnected for some reasons, and thus

uninterrupted telecom and Internet communications will be ensured.

The first option for a backup line is with the government-owned Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB), which is asking for Tk 19.4 crore as rental and other charges for a five-year term. Besides, the BTTB will have to install some machinery worth Tk 3.42 crore for this backup.

This cost factor is forcing the BTTB to think twice about striking this deal.

The second option is a swapping deal with private phone company Bangla Phone Ltd. Under this free-of-charge deal, the BTTB and Bangla Phone can automatically swap their cables when those are disrupted. This offer came following a BTTB bid to find the best

option from the private phone companies.

But Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) earlier this month had asked the BTTB not to sign a deal with Bangla Phone saying that this company has violated contractual terms, and legal action is being taken against it.

The BTRC appears to have taken a hostile stance on Bangla Phone from May staying the company violated its contractual terms by installing optical fibre lines "outside" its licensed area. But Bangla Phone is saying installation of the lines was its contractual obligation and that all these were done following approval by the BTRC. Till date, the BTRC has not changed its stance, and will not explain why

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Corruption main barrier to nation building

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said corruption is a violation of human rights and the main barrier to establishing the nation as prosperous and freeing it from discrimination.

"Corruption violates human rights. It is the key obstacle to developing the country and freeing it from discrimination," Dr Kamal said at the inaugural session of the 12-day long eighth human rights summer school at Koita in Manikganj.

"Corrupt persons have also created obstacles to using of the national resources for welfare of the common people," he added.

Empowerment through Law of the Common People organised the event at the Proshika Human Resource Development Centre in Manikganj. University Grants Commission Chairman Prof

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Distribution of food thru' VGF cards delayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Distribution of rice through Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards will not begin today as list of the cyclone victims has yet to be completed, BBC reported last night.

Earlier, the government has announced that a special VGF programme for 12 districts affected by Cyclone Sidr would begin on December 1 to continue for four months.

Relief and disaster management Secretary Ayub Miah last night told BBC Bangla Service that the programme would start as soon as the list is ready.

"Some places have reported that they need more time to

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PHOTO: STAR

Artefacts being loaded on trucks from Bangladesh National Museum yesterday for sending them to the Guimet museum in Paris for exhibition.

Sending artefacts to Paris starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday began sending artefacts to France for an exhibition in Paris.

At least 10 out of 23 boxes of around 200 relics collected from three museums were shipped in the first phase. The rest will be flown soon, said sources.

The exhibition will take place at Guimet Museum in the French capital. The date of the event, however, could not be known.

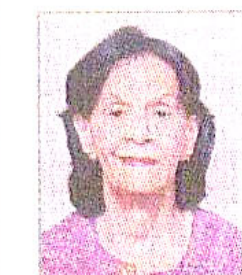
The government's decision to allow the ancient objects to be on display in France under an agreement signed between the cultural affairs ministry and representatives of the French government has caused a huge public furor.

Eminent citizens, civil society members, cultural activists, and students took to the streets

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OBITUARY

Your presence we miss
Your memories we treasure
Loving you always
Forgetting you never
In our hearts you remain forever.



Nazli Hirji, wife of late Mansur A. Hirji, mother of Danesh Hirji, Habib Hirji, Rohena Islam and Natasha Khan, passed away on 25th October 2007 at 4:05 p.m. in Bangalore, India at the age of 73.

She is survived by all her children and 11 grand children.

A Milad and Dua Mahfil has been arranged on 3rd December 2007 after Asr prayer at SYNERGIES, Road No. 1 (West Side), House No. 122/2, DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka-1206.

All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to attend the Milad and Dua Mahfil and pray for the salvation of her departed soul.

For further information, Please contact:
Phones: 01713 047 878, 01713 047 879, 01714 103 832

FLOODS, FERTILISER SHORTAGE

Aman output drops in 16 northern dists

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Production of aman rice dropped alarmingly in 16 northern districts in the current season compared to the last season's, due to the devastation wrought by this year's consecutive floods and a fertilizer crisis, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials and field level information.

The DAE officials said in some areas of the northern districts aman production decreased by 0.29 tonnes per 0.13 hectares or one bigha of land.

Belal, 33, of Fepra village under Khetlal upazila of Joypurhat said he got a yield of 0.44 tonnes sharna variety of aman from 0.13 hectares of land this season compared to last year's 0.55 tonnes. "Due to the

fertilizer crisis, I lost at least 0.11 tonnes of aman rice," he said.

Bishwanath, 45, of Pulnija village under the same upazila, said he got a yield of 0.37 tonnes aman cultivating BR-11 variety this season, compared to last year's yield of 0.59 tonnes from the same amount of land.

Akber, 55, of Borodhap village under Adamdighi upazila of Bogra, said he got a yield of 0.44 tonnes of aman cultivating masuri variety of the rice on 0.13 hectares this season compared to last year's 0.59 tonnes.

Sayed Ali of Dupchanchai upazila of Bogra said he got a yield of 0.33 tonnes of Lalpaizam variety of aman this season cultivating on 0.13 hectares of land, compared to last year's yield of 0.11 tonnes.

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Experience and Celebrate the Indigenous Culture of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Featuring

- Ethnic food.
- Traditional music and dance.
- Indigenous handicrafts (including handloom weaving, jewellery and more!!!).
- Exhibition of art, photography and artifacts from the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Numerous stalls will be selling arts and handicrafts, food, etc., and a stage performance of various performing arts will occur throughout the day.

When: 30 November (12 am to 5 pm) and 01 Dec (10 am to 7 pm), 2007.

Where: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.

European Union

UNDP Bangladesh