

Ensure political harmony for economic progress

Security experts tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country can achieve rapid economic progress if political harmony is established, security experts said at a discussion yesterday.

They also said the country faces no major security threat from other countries. Rather, internal security threat is the main cause of concern, they added.

The importance of this region is increasing day by day as countries like India, China, Korea, Japan and

Malaysia are making significant progress both in the economic and technology sectors, the experts said.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BIIA) organised the discussion on 'Great power security interactions in the Asia-Pacific region' at its auditorium in the city, with BIIA Director Ambassador Wali-ur-Rahman in the chair.

Dr Mahmud Ali, senior editorial coordinator, Asia-Pacific region, BBC, Maj Gen Aminul Karim, military secretary of the president, Maj

Gen (ret'd) Ansa Amin, Ambassador KM Masud, Afsarul Quader and Capt SAMA Abedin, director, FRAB, DGF, took part in the discussion.

The speakers said the country faces no major external security threat as it maintains friendly relations with the neighbouring countries as well as all other countries.

"Bangladesh pursues a peaceful foreign and security policy and the bedrock of our foreign policy is 'friendship to all and malice towards none'," said Wali-ur-Rahman.

OCs asked not to assign more than 9 cases to IO at a time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities have ordered officers-in-charge (OC) of all police stations in the city not to assign more than nine cases at a time to an investigation officer for ensuring fair investigation.

The authorities have also directed the police stations not to register any case before checking its authenticity. The move has been taken to reduce harassment of people through false cases.

DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed disclosed these moves to the press after his regular crime conference at Rajarbagh Telecom auditorium yesterday.

"Police will take legal measures if anyone files any false case," Naim Ahmed told newsmen replying to a question.

He said the move to assign no more than nine cases has been taken to reduce burden on the case investigation officers and ensure fair investigation.

Replying to a question, the DMP chief said under DMP Ordinance punitive measures have been taken against 45 policemen while 20 policemen lost their jobs after their involvement in corruption were found in two months ending on December 31.

The DMP commissioner said the overall law and order situation has marked a gradual improvement in the last three months. The statistics show a total of 2,304 cases were filed in October while the number of cases filed in November and December were 2,248 and 2,148 respectively.

However, the number of robberies has increased during the last three months. A total of 72 incidents of robbery were recorded in December, 61 in November and 54 in October.

The DMP commissioner said they are sincerely working to combat crime and succeeded in bringing down the number of crimes.

He said they have already formed a special squad in each police station in DMP to combat snatching. The teams have been working for the last one week, he added.

He also said they are working to increase quality of police service to the residents of the metropolis.



Dhaka University students stage a demonstration in front of the Aparajeyo Bangla on the campus yesterday as part of their movement for reduction in 55 percent quota in the BCS exams.

HC asks govt to submit report on steps for safety of construction workers

The High Court on Tuesday asked the government to explain within four weeks why its failure to establish a government agency to enforce the Bangladesh National Building Construction Code, 2006 is not in breach of the law, says a press release.

The High Court also directed the government to submit a statement setting out what steps it has taken to ensure the safety of construction workers since the Code became a law in November 2006.

The rule was issued upon the secretaries of the ministries of housing and public works, labour and manpower, and environment and forest, the chairman of Rajdhanee Unnayan Katrappakha (Rajuk) and REHAB, an organisation of the developers.

The rule came following a public interest petition filed by Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

The petitioners argued that the failure by the government to establish of a functioning agency led to deaths of at least 50 construction workers, which were reported in national newspapers in 2007. The actual number of deaths in this sector is likely to be much higher.

Implement election roadmap to boost investors' confidence

US Charge d'Affaires urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

US Charge d'Affaires Denise Rollins yesterday urged the caretaker government to continue implementation of its commitment to the election roadmap to boost investors' confidence and give business greater certainty.

"The more the CG can show its commitment to the roadmap, the greater confidence the investors will have in Bangladesh," she told the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB) at Hotel Sheraton.

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif stressed the need for more and more interaction between the government and the stakeholders to remove bottlenecks and improve the investor confidence and the better business climate.

"Business problems will be solved to a large extent through continued interaction in the Better Business Forum," he told reporters after the plenary session.

IBFB President Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury voiced concern over the fear factors of the business community and urged the government to eliminate the fears.

Rollins said the government's election preparations, anti-corruption campaign and efforts to reform rules and regulations all impact on investors while invest-

ment does not happen in a state of uncertainty.

"The government needs to adhere to the election roadmap to ensure elections by the end of the year," she said, adding that the government has so far voiced repeatedly its commitment to the roadmap, and most of the roadmap milestones are being met in a timely fashion.

Rollins also stressed the need for carrying out anti-corruption campaign in a fair and transparent manner as lack of fairness or transparency might make investors nervous about whether their ventures would be subject to investigations.

She said the government is working to reform its regulatory environment and create mechanisms for business to voice concern to the government. "This is a

massive undertaking that must be sustained over the long term."

She urged the investors living and working in Bangladesh to provide their continued support to the government's efforts to reach elections by the end of 2008.

As Bangladesh nears elections, she said, the focus will shift to how Bangladesh's next elected government will address the challenges like corruption and regulatory reforms.

"An elected government, hospitable investment regulations, and a stable economy are essential for attracting necessary investors, foreign and domestic."

Rollins urged the businesses to set priorities that lead to and encourage much needed investment to assure sustainable and progressive economic development in Bangladesh.

Ekushey Book Fair begins tomorrow

DU CORRESPONDENT

The month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2008, country's largest and historic book festival, will begin tomorrow on Bangla Academy premises in the city.

The Fair Management Committee has completed taking all necessary preparations, including allocating stalls and ensuring stern security measures to avert any untoward incident.

The fair venue was very busy yesterday as the stall owners' were taking the last-minute preparations. The publishing houses and presses are working round the clock to make the fair a success.

Amar Ekushey or 'Immortal February 21' commemorates the Language Movement of 1952. On this day, our language martyrs Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiq sacrificed their lives to establish the rights to our so loved mother tongue, Bangla.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) declared the Day as International Mother Language Day in 1997 and since then the whole world observes the day with utmost solemnity.

The Bangla Academy, an out-

come of the Language Movement, has been organising the fair since 1972. It was named Amar Ekushey Book Fair in 1984.

Fazlur Rahim, director (institutional planning and training department) of the Academy, said the publishing houses are working to prepare their stalls now and that would end up before the fair begins.

This year 370 stalls will be allocated to over 250 publishing houses, some voluntary, government and non-government organisations -- Red Crescent, fire brigade, blood donation centres. Last year a total of 400 stalls were allocated to 255 publication houses, Academy sources said.

The reason behind the reduction in the number of stalls is that in the previous years too many stalls on the fair premises made the venue congested, that was inconvenient for the visitors.

Fazlur Rahim said the fair authorities at a press conference today would give details about the fair.

All books, excluding Bangla

Academy's, will be sold at 25 percent commission at the fair, while last year they were sold at 30 percent commission.

However, books of Bangla Academy will be sold at 30 percent commission. Academy's older publications will be sold at 50 percent commission, Fazlur added.

Foolproof security measure will be taken to avert any subversive activities during the fair. Twelve close-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras would be set up at different points on the Academy premises. Apart from deployment of regular law-enforcing agencies, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), armed battalion members and members of intelligence branches will be deployed at the fair venue.

Seminars, symposiums and cultural functions will be held everyday at the academy stage where eminent litterateurs and academicians will take part.

The fair will remain open for all from 3:00pm to 9:00pm everyday.

However, on holidays, the fair will remain open from 11:00am with a two-hour break from 12:00noon. On February 21, the International Mother Language Day, the fair will continue from 8:00am to 10:00pm without any break.

BCL demands release of Hasina

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League (AL), yesterday demanded release of AL President Sheikh Hasina.

Leaders of the BCL at a press conference at Dhaka University (DU) also demanded release of its general secretary Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Roton, who has been in jail over a year without a trial.

They also demanded lifting of the state of emergency immediately and trial of the war criminals and ban on political activities of Jamaat-Shibir.

This was BCL's first ever move publicly since the state of emergency was declared in January last year.

BCL Central President Mahmud Hasan Ripon read out a written statement at the press conference at DU Journalists' Association (Dujja) office.

He alleged that false extortion case has been filed against Hasina and now a conspiracy is on against her to make her unfit for the election.

Ripon said Azam J Chowdhury on January 24 declared he did not file the case against Hasina. "Then who filed the case against Hasina; is it the government?"

Quoting Canadian Lawyer Akavan Payum, he said the case against Hasina has no base. He urged the government to stop conspiracies against Hasina and demanded her release and withdrawal of all cases against her.

"Otherwise BCL would launch a movement to get her released", Ripon added.

He alleged government did not take proper measures for the treatment of Hasina although she has been ill.

He also urged the government to withdraw all cases filed across the country following last August campus violence. The DU vice chancellor should take necessary steps to ensure the release of BCL general secretary, Ripon said.

BCL acting general secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Office Secretary Nasim Al Momen Rupa, BCL DU unit President Sohail Rana Tipu and General Secretary Sazzad Saqib Badsha were present.

DU English dept get-together postponed

The annual get-together of the English Department Alumni Society of the University of Dhaka, which was scheduled for tomorrow, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, says a press release.

Fresh date will be announced soon. However, the River Cruise, which was scheduled for February 8, will go ahead as planned.

Death anniversary

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Asghar Husain, an educationist, social worker, and one of the organisers of the liberation war, says a press release.

He is the father of Ittehar Husain, principal information officer of Press Information Department (PID) under Information Ministry.

On the occasion, milad mahfil, Qurankhwani and destitute feeding programme will be held at his village home at Debidwar Upazila in Comilla.



Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. The daily Bhorer Akash organised the roundtable.

CPD training on WTO, trade policy

As part of its programme for capacity building in trade related research and academic works, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) initiated a two-week training programme on WTO and Bangladesh Trade Policy that began yesterday, says a press release.

The programme is being implemented in collaboration with UNDP. The participants include 23 faculty members from various public and private universities and training institutes.

It is hoped that the participants, after successful completion of this training will be capable of understanding, interpreting as well as teaching trade related issues and policies to students, trade policy researchers, journalists and others having interest on trade policy and WTO related issues.

The course curricula cover the basics of WTO, evolution of GATT/WTO as an institution, decisions of major GATT/WTO Rounds, current negotiating agendas and perspectives of the major stakeholder groups and impact as well as prospects of trade related issues on Bangladesh. The course has three major learning tools: lectures, assignments and negotiation simulations.

Resource persons for this workshop include Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director, Dr Utam Deb, head, Research Division, Dr Fahmida Khatun, senior research fellow, Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research fellow, Kazi Mahmudur Rahman, senior research associate, Nafisa Khaled, research associate of CPD; Suhel Ahmed Chowdhury, former secretary to the Ministry of Commerce, and Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, joint chief, Bangladesh Tariff Commission.

'Take nat'l programme to combat diabetes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (DAB) at a press conference yesterday urged the government to take a national programme to combat diabetes as around 60 lakh people in the country have been suffering from this non-communicable disease.

The DAB is working on preparing the draft for national programme on diabetes to boost the activities in preventing the disease, speakers at the press conference said.

DAB organised the press conference at its auditorium at Birdem hospital where it also accorded a reception to Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury for his role in the passage of a Bangladesh resolution adopted by the United Nations to designate the World Diabetes Day on November 14 as a United Nations day.

The UN announced the Diabetes Day as UN day in December 20, 2006. Iftekhar was the permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN during that time.

Termining the recognition from UN a milestone for Bangladesh and other countries to combat the disease, Iftekhar said the announcement from

UN will strengthen the activities to prevent diabetes. Around 30 crore people across the world have been suffering from diabetes.

Although the country had been observing the Diabetes Day every year as elsewhere across the globe with the support of International Diabetes Federation (IDF), there was no national programme on diabetes. But as the UN has recognised the day, all the member countries would formulate national policy and would increase awareness programmes in this regard, the speakers said.

Different government organisations would be incorporated to implement the programme, they added.

Though 65 percent diabetes is preventable, a huge number of people have been suffering from the disease and the number of diabetic patients has been increasing day by day. If we can change our diet system and exclude fast food from the diet, give up smoking and engage ourselves in physical activities much, we could easily prevent the disease, the experts said.

DAB President Prof AK Azad Khan, Secretary General Prof Saifuddin and Prof Hazera Matab were also present.

Second Gandhi memorial lecture held at DU

BSS, Dhaka

The Dhaka University Vice Chancellor SMA Faiz yesterday said Gandhiji's mission was to convert every Indian as well as Englishmen to nonviolence for regulating political, economic, social relations.

Speaking as the chief guest at the second Mahatma Gandhi memorial lecture, jointly organised by the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies of Dhaka University and the Indian High Commission, he described the late leader as a staunch soldier against untouchability, drugs and alcohol and interfaith divide.

He underscored the need for peace, economic justice, human rights, promotion of non-communal and harmonious cooperation of all the peoples on the earth.

Referring to lack of international peace in today's world marked by clash of civilisations, preemptive attacks by powerful countries, unjust aggression by major powers on the weaker countries in the name of democracy and human rights, he said, it was time to look back to Gandhi.

Chaired by Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, other speakers included Dean of Social Sciences Faculty of the university Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Chairman of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies Dr Rafiqul Islam, Prof Anisuzzaman, and Counselor of the Indian High Commission Ajit Gupta.

DHAKA TODAY

PIB seminar

Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) organises a seminar on leadership vacuum in the national level and creation of new leadership. Venue: PIB seminar room. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) and Global Economic Justice Forum 2008 will organise a seminar on 'Social exclusion of South Asia and the INSA process'. Venue: WVA auditorium. Time: 2:30pm.

Workshop

Oxfam GB and PRIP Trust jointly organise a workshop on 'PRSP and violence against women'. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium. Time: 9:00am.

Seminar

Society for International Development (SID), Bangladesh Chapter organises a seminar on aid effectiveness. Venue: WVA Auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Conference

The inaugural ceremony of the Second South Asian Capital Market Conference 2008, Dhaka, hosted by Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd (DSE), will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 9:00am.

Ex-R&H chief engr killed in road crash

UNB, Gazipur

Former chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department was killed and two others were injured in a road accident at Salna on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as M Salahuddin, 69, hailed from Munshiganj and resident of Kalabagan in Dhaka.

Witnesses said a bus rammmed into a Dhaka-bound jeep, leaving its passenger Salahuddin dead on the spot and his wife Mahmuda and the jeep driver injured.

The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Light rain or drizzle likely

UNB, Dhaka
Light rain or drizzle is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Met Office said, adding that night temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

Highest temperature 27.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 8.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:44pm today and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

| City/Town | Temperature in Celsius | | Humidity in percentage | |
|-------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
| | Max | Min | Morning | Evening |
| Dhaka | 19.0 | 12.8 | 71 | 84 |
| Chittagong | 24.3 | 12.9 | 65 | 67 |
| Rajshahi | 14.5 | 12.4 | 85 | 95 |
| Khulna | 24.8 | 12.5 | 85 | 90 |
| Barisal | 25.0 | 09.8 | 84 | 71 |
| Sylhet | 19.4 | 11.6 | 65 | 92 |
| Cox's Bazar | 26.8 | 12.7 | 55 | 61 |