

Germany to maintain high level of assistance

Says German state secretary

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Germany will maintain high level of assistance for Bangladesh despite current international financial crisis.

"There is a strong commitment by our government that the countries we are working with should not suffer from international financial crisis," said the visiting German State Secretary Reinhard Silberberg after official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Tuhid Hossain in the capital.

Addressing a joint press conference at the state guesthouse Padma, Silberberg said, "We will keep high level of assistance and will increase it further step by step as part of our Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) policy and this is a commitment that we will not put into dark."

His visit comes as the first highest-level official contact between the two capitals after the new government took office in Dhaka.

During the talks that lasted one and a half hour, both sides discussed entire gamut of bilateral and international issues of common concern.

Trade, investment, aid and cooperation figured prominently in the talks, officials said.

Germany has so far provided 4.4 billion

euros (5.8 billion dollars) as direct assistance or indirect multilateral aid contributions to help fight poverty, protect human rights and achieve economic development in Bangladesh over the past 37 years.

On German investment in Bangladesh, Silberberg said the investment is made by private companies but "What we can do we can talk about improvement of the framework for foreign investment."

"I think something could be done for further improvement of environment for foreign investment in Bangladesh," he added.

About trade between the two countries, Silberberg said Bangladesh has been enjoying trade surplus with Germany and EU, and "We have positive trend in bilateral trade and we favour a lot of Bangladeshi exports."

According to official figure, Germany is the second-largest export destination for Bangladesh after the United States. The annual trade volume between the two countries is set to reach about two billion euros, with Bangladesh enjoying a trade surplus of more than 1.3 billion euros annually.

The trade volume between the two countries increased by 16 percent in the first half of 2008.

Although readymade garments are still the main export product from Bangladesh, other business fields are also expanding in trade with Germany.

Dhaka has lately received a significant volume of work orders for shipbuilding from Germany, which offers Bangladesh imports of textile machinery, chemicals and solutions for green energy, among others.

Replying to a question whether Germany can extend cooperation to Bangladesh government in holding the trial of war criminals, Silberberg said this is a question of national interest and it must be dealt at national level and it would definitely be wrong to give advice from abroad.

"If we can give support to this process, we feel definitely not to fail to do so, but it's a national question," he added.

The German state secretary said his visit here should be seen as a sign of encouragement to the newly elected government through a free and fair election.

He said Germany and the international community stand ready to support Bangladesh in its new approach.

Earlier, Tuhid said they had extremely free and frank discussions on bilateral trade, aid and investment as well as cooperation in international organisations.



Stalls are being set up on the pavements near Bangla Academy ahead of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

FOOD MINISTER MEETS BRITISH MINISTER UK agrees on feasibility study for farm projects

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Britain agreed to undertake feasibility study for new projects in Bangladesh's agriculture and food sectors, especially in the vulnerable areas like coastal, hilly and river belts.

The accord came when Bangladesh sought the United Kingdom's support in initiating new projects in agriculture sector for increasing food production to ensure food security, a global concern of the day.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr M Abdur Razzaq made the request when he held a bilateral meeting with British State Minister for Development Evans Lewis on Tuesday at Congress Palace in

Madrid, the Spanish capital where an international meet on food security ended Tuesday.

He requested the British state minister to give preference to the agricultural sector so that food security could be ensured and the prices of essential commodities reduced.

The British minister assured his "all-out cooperation", according to a message received here yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed the progress in ongoing DFID projects and programmes in Bangladesh and also agreed to enhance DFID's support to Bangladesh.

Later, Dr Razzaq attended the concluding session of the high-level meeting addressed by UN

Secretary General Ban-ki Moon and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, among others.

Ban-ki Moon urged the national governments, international agencies and development partners to be more active and vigilant for enhancing global partnership in order to ensure food security for all.

He requested the developed nations to allocate 7 per cent of their annual budget for food security which they pledged in Rome in June 2008.

The Spanish prime minister announced an assistance of Euro200 million for providing food support to the poor nations, especially for children and women of poor nations.

New Navy chief takes over

METRO DESK

Rear Admiral ZU Ahmed took over as the new chief of naval staff on Tuesday.

He replaced Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam who went on retirement on completion of his tenure, says an ISPR press release.

A handing-taking over ceremony was held at the Naval Headquarters in the afternoon.

Rear Admiral Ahmed formally took over the command of Bangladesh Navy from the outgoing naval chief by signing the handing-taking over book.

All naval area commanders, all principal staff officers of Naval Headquarters and Admiralty Dhaka were present.

Earlier, in the morning, Vice Admiral Nizam started the day by placing wreath at the Shikha Anirban and paid his homage to the members of the armed forces who embraced martyrdom during the Liberation War in 1971.

On his arrival at Naval Headquarters, a smartly turned out naval contingent presented Guard of Honour to the outgoing chief of naval staff.

Later, Admiral Nizam was ceremonially seen off by street lining according to naval tradition.

Unb adds: Earlier Vice Admiral Nizam made a farewell call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban.

During the meeting, Vice Admiral Nizam expressed deep gratitude to the president for giving all-out support and cooperation in performing his duty as the naval chief.

The president thanked Nizam for his immense contributions in developing Bangladesh Navy as well as in nation-building activities during his tenure as the navy chief.

He also praised the role of Bangladesh Navy in helping the distressed people hit by devastating cyclone 'Sidr' in 2007 and preparing national ID with photographs last year along with their regular duties.

Secretary of the President's Office M Sirajul Islam and Military Secretary to the President Major General Muhammad Ruhul Amin were present on the occasion.



PHOTO: STAR

Security was beefed up on the Jagannath University campus in the city yesterday in the wake of clashes between police and students on Tuesday.

20000 live on pavement

NGOs take five-year project to ease their suffering in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several non-government organisations (NGOs) have jointly undertaken a five-year project to ease the suffering of people who pass their nights on the pavements in the city by providing them with skills-oriented training, other facilities and developing a sense of self-respect.

Over 20,000 people live on the pavements of roads, railway stations, bus and launch terminals in the city, they said, adding that at least 10,000 such poor people will be taken under the project at its first phase.

Speakers said this at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday.

At an estimated expenditure of Tk 16 crore, the project titled 'Amrao Manush' has been jointly launched by Concern Worldwide Bangladesh, Sajida Foundation, Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP), Nari Moitri and Social and Economic Enhancement Program (SEEP) to give them different aid in achieving

skills to earn their livelihood, gathering other knowledge and set up different service centres for them.

The project aims at saving people from storms, floods and various natural calamities, forming groups among people to train them so that they can earn their livelihood, taking steps to create self-respect among them through advocacy and making them aware of five fundamental rights to enjoy.

The speakers said they have already set up seven service centres targeting such people across the city with facilities of taking bath and toilets, cooking foods, taking rest during daytime, various awareness programme, saving systems, locker system, health care and day care centres for the street children.

Contrary to popular belief that such people are involved in different crimes such as drug and arms peddling, they have also contribution to the city dwellers as they do the jobs of rickshaw-van pullers, domestic helps, porters and daylabourers, they added.

So, people from all social strata should change their

attitude towards the poor and underprivileged, they added.

Assistant Country Director Humaira Aziz of Concern Worldwide, Executive Director Shaheen Akter Chowdhury Doly of Nari Moitri and Executive Director of CUP took part in the programme.

Huge heroin, cannabis seized, one held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on Tuesday night seized one kilogram of heroin worth Tk one crore from a passenger coach in the city.

The BDR team also arrested one Ilias Hossain with 25 kilograms of cannabis from the same bus.

Commanding Officer of 38 BDR Battalion Sylhet Lt Col Salah Uddin Ahmed led the drive at about 10:00pm.

DU JCD leaders call for security in dormitories

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday threatened to paralyse Dhaka University by calling strike if their security is not ensured in dormitories.

They gave the threat from a rally at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla on the campus protesting the beating of two JCD activists. Several JCD men were beaten on the campus in the last few days.

JCD General Secretary Shafiq Bari Babu said JCD is the biggest student body in the country and it knows how to capture halls.

JCD Central Organising Secretary Abdul Kader Bhuiyan Jewel, Dhaka University unit President Hasan Mamun and General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz were present at the rally.

Attack on New Nation editor condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different journalists' organisations and forums yesterday expressed grave concern and condemned the threat to Editor of the New Nation over cellphone and attack on him.

The editor fell victim of a terrorist attack near Purabi Cinema Hall at Pallabi on January 24 while he was returning home by his car.

National Press Club President Shawkat Mahmud and General Secretary Kamal Uddin Sabuj, BFUJ President Ruhul Amin Gazi and Acting Secretary General Nurul Amin Rokon, DUJ President Abdus Shahid and General Secretary Md Baker Hossain and DRU President Shamim Ahmed and General Secretary Pathik Saha decried the attack on the editor's life.

Terming the attack a bar to the way of free journalism, they demanded legal action against the attackers.

PALESTINE ISSUES

Dhaka urges Muslim countries to be united

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday called for concerted efforts of all Muslim countries to resolve the long-standing issues concerning Palestine.

"Bangladesh strongly believes that all Muslim countries should be united in making concerted efforts to resolve the long-standing issues," Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said while presenting country statement at the 8th Islamic Conference of Information at

Rabat, according to a message received here yesterday.

He condemned the recent Israeli aggression on Gaza and said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also condemned the unlawful aggression just upon assumption of her new office.

"Let me announce unequivocally that Bangladesh condemns terrorism and unlawful use of force in all its forms and manifestations," he said.

He also underscored the

importance of IT and the media sector in the present world and proposed improvement and cooperation among the Muslim countries in the field.

He along with many other countries supported a Saudi proposal for making the role of information in consolidated interfaith dialogue a mandatory item in the agenda of all future Islamic conferences of information ministers.

He highlighted the goal of the government to achieve 'Digital Bangladesh by 2021 and solicited all possible help and cooperation from OIC and its member countries in this regard.

The working session was presided over by Khalid Naciri, Minister of Communication of Morocco.

The inaugural session of the ministerial conference began with Saudi Minister of Culture and Information Ayed Ben Amin Madani in the chair. OIC Secretary General Prof Ekmeleddin Ehsanoglu also addressed the conference.

Clash over control of Babupura market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of traders locked into a clash over establishing control of a market at Nilkhet in the city yesterday.

Followers of traders Siraj and Ismail of Babupura market clashed each other and ransacked the office room of the market when they tried to take its control.

Police said trader Siraj had an enmity with Trader Ismail over the issue for long and both the traders would control certain parts of the market.

When Siraj was arrested a few months ago in this connection, his rival group took control of the entire market, they added.

Market sources said freed on bail from the jail a few days ago, Siraj along with his gang tried to establish his control last night that triggered the violence.

Officer-in-Charge Anisur Rahman of New Market Police Station said additional policemen were deployed in the area last night, while a meeting was going on in the market to settle the matter.

Domestic help tortured by doc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female doctor tortured her minor domestic help with a hot iron stick over a trifling matter at Adabor in the city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rony Akter, 11, domestic help of Dr Kaniz Wahida alias Diba of Shyamoli Housing Project.

Police said Diba took Rony to the kitchen at around 7:00am and tortured her with the hot iron stick, leaving her seriously injured as she made a delay in baking breads.

The doctor tortured the domestic help on Tuesday as she could not cook rice properly, police said, adding Diba used to torture her even over a matter frequently.

Officer-in-Charge Mahub Alam Khan of Adabor Police Station said police rescued the child from the house after the victim's mother Fulchha Begum filed a case with the police station against Diba under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Police are trying to arrest the torturer.



PHOTO: ISPR

Rear Admiral ZU Ahmed takes over the command of Bangladesh Navy from the outgoing naval chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam at the Naval Headquarters in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Executive Director of Nari Moitri Shaheen Akter Chowdhury Doly speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. On her left are Humaira Aziz and Mostafa Quayyum Khan.

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Mr. Nahid Ahmad nahid.ahmad@gmail.com
 Contact Number: 88 01711 643 998

Office of Admissions: DHA, Lahore Cantt. 54792, Lahore, Pakistan
 Phone: +92-42-5896512 Ext. 4221 Fax: +92-42-5725048
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