

PM for removing trade imbalance with Pakistan

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for removing Bangladesh's widening trade imbalance with Pakistan.

She said there is huge potential lying untapped for enhancing the bilateral trade. She said this when Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Bashir Khan Babar paid a courtesy call on Hasina at her office yesterday.

The PM and the Pakistan envoy discussed various bilateral issues, including trade and investment and terrorism.

As the issue of terrorism came up for discussion, Hasina stressed the need for joint efforts to root out terrorism to establish peace in the South Asian region.

"Terrorism and the terrorists have no boundary and religion," she told the diplomat. Pakistan is now at war with

the Taliban on the domestic front.

Hasina said there is huge potential for enhancing bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan. "Due importance should be given to rectifying the widening trade imbalance between the two countries," she said.

The two-way trade in the recent years has been in the range of \$300-\$350 million, and Bangladesh's exports have hovered around \$70

million only.

Hasina emphasised general understanding on granting zero tariff access to each other under the Early Harvest Programme to reduce the expanding trade gap.

She also expressed the hope that Pakistani investors would take interest in investing in Bangladesh in the sectors of pharmaceuticals, textiles, information technology, telecommunications and agro-based industries.

Hasina recalled her recent meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Sharm el Sheikh on the sidelines of the 15th Asian Summit and stated that they had fruitful discussions on how to work together to improve the quality of people's life through eradicating poverty from the region.

She said regional cooperation would have to be institutionalised and collective strength of the South Asian countries be harnessed to face the challenges in the region.

The Pakistani High Commissioner expressed interest in bilateral exchange of information with Bangladesh on different sectors.

Prime Minister's Office Secretary Mollah Waheeduzzaman, Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Ambassador M Ziauddin were present during the meeting.



PHOTO: PID

Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Bashir Khan Babar pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday.

DRAFT NAT'L HEALTH POLICY

Call for more consultation with stakeholders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors for Health and Environment (DHE) at a press conference yesterday urged the government for more consultation with the stakeholders before finalising the national health policy.

They said as the government sought public opinion about the draft policy through website without thinking how many people have online facilities, very few people could share their views to update the policy.

DHE organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium to draw the attention of the government about the public participation in the review of the proposed health policy through online.

DHE President Prof Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub, who was

also the former president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), said it is not clear whether the proposed health policy would be able to ensure people's health rights or it will make healthcare a commodity.

"After going through the drafts it seemed to me that the government is not eager to ensure health services for all, rather it tends to privatise the health service as a commodity," he said, adding that before preparing the drafts the authorities concerned should have more consultations with the stakeholders to assess their needs.

It is said in the draft policy that healthcare would be ensured for the poor especially the vulnerable group, but it didn't say how and what types of facilities they would get, he opined.

Presenting the keynote

paper Dr Shakeel Akhtar, general secretary of DHE, proposed 12 percent of national revenue allocation in the health sector and formation of health committee at local level involving local people to develop healthcare services.

He stressed the need for developing a system to produce adequate doctors and nurses to overcome their shortage.

To improve the draft policy, Dr Shakeel also made some recommendations that include availability of lifesaving drugs free of cost, health insurance for all, and quality management of other treatment systems like Homeopathy, Ayurvedic and Unani system.

Dr Kazi Rakibul Islam, a paediatric of Health and Hope Ltd, also spoke at the press conference.

Huge gingers, chemicals seized: 6 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized 13 tonnes of gingers, 150 jerrycans of chemicals and a covered van, which were snatched on August 2 from Chandina in Comilla, and arrested six people in this connection in Gazipur yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Abu Musa, 40, Reaz Uddin, Sohrab Ali, 50, Ripon, 20, Mizanur Rahman Khan and Musa Ahmed, 40, of different areas in Gazipur.

Rab-3 sources said they caught the muggers red-handed while they were selling some snatched goods at Tongi kitchen market around 3:00am. The crime busters aided by police personnel from Tongi and Joydevpur police stations recovered the remaining goods from a warehouse owned by Musa at Mollapara in Salna.

In the preliminary grilling, the arrestees told Rab that they got into the covered van in the guise of passengers on the way when the van was heading towards Dhaka from Chittagong port area on August 1.

They took control of the van at gunpoint the following day, Rab men said, adding that they then took the goods to the warehouse after dropping the van driver Ashrafur Islam and his helper on the road.

Following the incident, the van owner filed a case with Chandina Police Station in this connection the same day.

The gang used to commit such crimes on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway for long, Rab sources added.

Convention on disaster risk reduction concludes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national convention on 'Disaster risk reduction through schools' concluded yesterday with a 10-point declaration.

The declaration includes demand of adequate fund for disaster risk reduction and inclusion of guidelines for expansion of climate and disaster reduction education.

ActionAid Bangladesh organised the two-day convention at the National Museum. ActionAid Bangladesh country director Farah Kabir chaired the concluding session.

Earlier, a policy dialogue on 'Duties to build the climate aware future generation, capable of facing disaster risk' was held at the National Museum.

Chairman of the parliamentary committee on food and disaster management ministry Md Sayedul Haque chaired the dialogue. Bangladesh Economic Association President Dr Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Dr Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, writer Selina Hossain, Mahabub Ara Gini, MP, among others, spoke at the dialogue.



PHOTO: STAR

Honor Flanagan speaks at a seminar at BLISS office in the city yesterday. On her left are Dr Abdur Rob Khan, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed and Maj Gen Sheikh Monirul Islam.

Steps taken to introduce ADR system

Law minister tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said steps are being taken to introduce Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system with a view to reducing backlog of cases and people's suffering.

"We have instructed the Law Commission to amend the relevant law to introduce Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). This system will help clear huge backlog of cases and save people's time and money," said the minister at a seminar as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised the seminar on 'Bangladesh Human Security Assessment, 2007', at its office in the city.

Explaining ADR, the minister said that after a case is filed under ADR, the parties involved would get the chance of mediation and the case would be disposed of within a month.

Such facilities will be appli-

cable to both civil and criminal cases, he said.

About the independence of judiciary, the minister said, "The rule of law is a fundamental element in a democracy. The rule of law depends on judiciary and it should be run in such a way that the people receive quick justice at courts."

Shafique Ahmed also said that over the years the country had been run by extra-constitutional forces in phases, disrupting democratic process and creating human insecurity.

A research paper on 'Human Security Assessment, 2007', funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), was presented at the seminar, which recommended establishing a separate ministry for human security like in Thailand, Chile and Latvia.

Dr Abdur Rob Khan presented the paper while Maj Gen Sheikh Monirul Islam, director general of

BISS, presided over the seminar.

The research paper said that income deficiency and food shortage have been dominant human security concerns in 2007. "Violence against minorities, extortion and drug abuse, for instance, have declined since politically backed activists or terrorists left their areas. With the declaration of a state of emergency, political violence declined from the levels of previous years."

British High Commissioner Stephen Evans discussed the issues of police reforms, disaster preparedness, food security and climate change.

Strengthening human security is a multi-faceted approach, he said.

Prof Syed Anwar Husain, former ambassador Qazi Anwarul Masud, former IGP Nurul Huda, Maj Gen (Retd) AMSA Amin, Brig Gen (Retd) Shahedul Anam Khan, and former secretary Sohail Chowdhury also spoke.

Container terminal to be built in N'ganj

Says shipping minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan has said a container terminal would be built in two months in Narayanganj.

He said all rivers including the Shitalakhyia would be freed from the clutches of the grabbers.

The minister was talking to reporters after a meeting of the

parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry in Narayanganj yesterday.

The meeting was held at Chashara Labour Welfare Centre with the committee Chairman and Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan in the chair.

Committee member and State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Munnun Sufian, lawmakers Monoranjan Shil Gopal, Shahiduzzaman Sarker, Mosharraf Hossain, Md Israfil Alam, Begum Rawshan Jahan Sathi, Nasim Osman and high officials of the ministry

attended the meeting.

The state minister said government land is being grabbed due to wrong decisions of the local administration.

"One after another the government land is being grabbed by influential people as the deputy commissioners and police superiors do not take any action against them, she added.

Munnun Sufian said the grabbed government land would be recovered and dormitories, hospitals and educational institutions would be built up there for the welfare of women workers.

Earlier the committee visited the illegally occupied land of the Labour Welfare Centre which was built on one acre 13 decimal land.

But at present a local influential quarter has occupied 10 decimal land worth Tk 5 crore and constructed two multistoried building there.

Committee members said the grabbers would be summoned and steps would be

taken to free the land from their occupation in consultation with them.

Otherwise, the illegal occupants would be evicted through legal action, they added.

During the meeting the students of an evicted English medium school formed a human chain to draw the attention of the committee.

The students who participated in the human chain said the main campus of their school Mount Royal Academy was situated on a land adjacent to Chashara Labour Welfare Centre.

But during the tenure of the last caretaker government in 2007 their school was demolished using bulldozer without giving any notice, they added.

The students urged the committee to solve their problem.

When asked by the journalists, the shipping minister said if the school were demolished illegally the government would definitely look into the matter.

Critically injured youth flees DMCH OT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A critically injured youth yesterday escaped from the operation theatre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday sensing the presence of policemen.

Hospital sources said the youth was taken to the Operation Theatre with serious injuries on both of his hands, but he fled the hospital sensing presence of police there.

The youth identified as Sohel, 25, sustained injuries the same day when crackers went off at a shanty at Shahidbagh under Pallabi in the city where the crackers were being made on the eve of the holy Shab-e-Barat.

The victim was then rushed to the hospital with injuries on both of his hands.

Quoting the slum dwellers, Sub-Inspector Monirul Islam of Pallabi Police Station said hearing a loud bang, they rushed to the shanty and found him groaning in a pool of blood with injuries around 4:00pm.

Locals told Islam that ahead of the Shab-e-Barat, Sohel was preparing crackers which have a great demand to children.

DCC to clean surface drain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has taken a crash programme to clean the surface drain and storm sewerage lines in the city.

DCC also has taken initiative to repair the roads, footpaths and drains damaged during recent heavy downpour.

It also asked the city dwellers to refrain them from dropping solid waste, mud and concrete materials into the storm sewerage lines and surface drains.

The corporation also requested the city dwellers to lodge complaints about roads, which are needed immediate repairing, over phone (9556012, 9565981 and 9560680) or dropping complaints into the box at DCC office.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Antim Chandra Roy, a freedom fighter, passed away due to old-age complications at his village home upazila on Thakurgaon sadar upazila on Monday at the age of 60.

He left behind his wife, sons, daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His funeral was held with state honour yesterday.



MA Khan's death anniversary tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 25th death anniversary of Rear Admiral Mahbub Ali Khan, former Navy Chief and minister for communications and agriculture, will be observed tomorrow.

Elaborate programmes including placing wreaths at his grave, milad mahfil, Qurankhwan and distribution of foods at different orphanages have been taken up to observe the death anniversary.

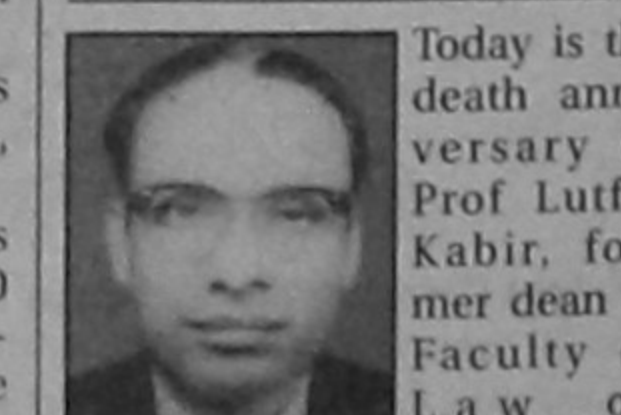
A milad mahfil will be held after Maghrib prayers today at Mahbub Bhaban (House-40, Road-5, Dhanmondi) in the city.

Rear Admiral Mahbub Ali Khan Memorial Committee will organise a discussion on his life and works in Sylhet and milad mahfil and destitute feeding programme at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) tomorrow.

Bangladesh Navy will also arrange milad mahfils at its all bases.

Prof Lutful Kabir

METRO DESK



Dhaka University, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at the residence of his son at Banani in the city.

Technical edn a must to turn people into resources: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday underscored the importance of expanding technical as well as timely education to turn the country's huge population into skilled human resources.

"In the past, we overlooked the technical knowledge-based education system. That's why, we are still legging behind," he said.

The minister said, "We will have to put stress on technical and vocational education system for the betterment of the country."

Speaking as the chief guest, Nahid said this while addressing a certificate awarding ceremony organised by Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS) at Chhayanaught Sangskriti Bhaban auditorium in the city.

At the programme, the students, who participated in the Peace Camp in Italy organised by Universal Forum of Cultures Foundation, Barcelona, shared their experiences during the camp.

The government spends only two percent of entire education budget for technical and vocational education, he said, adding, "But we should ensure additional budgetary allocation for technical and vocational education system."

Praising the campers, he said, "Participation in such an international camp will strengthen the confidence and skills of Bangladeshi students."

State Minister for Women and Child Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury stressed the need for women empowerment through cultural exchange between Bangladesh and other countries.

BNPS Executive Director Rokeya Kabir presided over the programme where world-renowned fashion

designer Bibi Russell, participants and their teachers also spoke.

Universal Forum of Cultures Foundation organises the camp after every three years to promote cultural exchange among the students aged between 13 and 14 from different cities of the world.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions and at a few places over Dhaka.

Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls also to occur at places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions during the period, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:39pm today and rises at 6:30am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Barisal and lowest 25.0 degrees Celsius at Satkhira.

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	34.2	27.6	81	77
Chittagong	31.8	26.7	79	81
Rajshahi	35.0	26.0	92	78
Khulna	33.6	26.4	80	--
Barisal	35.5	27.0	80	97
Sylhet	32.4	26.7	92	93
Cox's Bazar	34.0	26.6	73	88