

## Invest in power, energy, shipbuilding

PM urges Swedish businessmen

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged Swedish businessmen to invest in the power, energy and shipbuilding sectors in Bangladesh.

The prime minister made the appeal during her meeting with the outgoing Swedish ambassador Britt Falkman Hagstrom at Ganobhaban.

She said the Swedish businessmen could invest in renewable energy, power generation, oil, gas and mineral exploration, ICT, tourism, telecommunications, roads and highways, agro industry, leather, textiles, electronics, and significantly in shipbuilding sectors.

Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters after the meeting.

Hasina requested the ambassador to help Bangladesh in facilitating work for skilled professionals in EU and in Sweden. She mentioned that Sweden could support development of institutions to train and develop skilled professionals as nurses, medical aides and caregivers, as well as

hotel and hospitality professionals with mechanisms for employing them in Sweden and other EU countries.

She also stressed the expansion of trade between the two countries.

In 2008-09 fiscal, exports from Bangladesh to Sweden totaled \$221 million. She mentioned that Sweden could import more woven garments, knitwear, footwear, special textiles, handicrafts, shrimps, ceramics, small and medium-sized ships, and pharmaceuticals.

Hasina thanked Sweden for keeping Bangladesh in its shortlist of August 2007 for assistance, which has been targeting rural development, primary and non-formal education, primary health care, and institutionalisation of the democratic process.

She sought scholarships for youths and urged more intensified cooperation in culture and tourism by making hotels and resorts with encouragement for Swedish tourists.

The prime minister also sought Sweden's support for Bangladesh's position on climate change at the upcoming

COP16 in Mexico this year.

She urged Swedish support for climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes with financing and transfer of eco-friendly technology.

She told the Swedish ambassador that for the very first time the country is going to adopt an education policy.

She also mentioned that her government is working hard to strengthen democracy in the country. She thanked the donor countries, including Sweden, and agencies for their support in restoring democracy in the country and their assistance for the voter list project, as well as procurement of transparent ballot boxes.

Hagstrom hailed the role of the prime minister for her leadership in the climate change issue.

In this connection she mentioned how Bangladesh and Sweden have jointly created a bilateral fund worth \$11 million.

She said she is very much impressed at the hospitality of the people of the country.

Ambassador-at-large M Ziauddin was present during the meeting.



A motorcycle is set on fire near MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong during a clash between supporters of two mayoral candidates ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and Mohammad Manjur Alam at around midnight last night when the vote counting was going on. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Bitopi Das Chowdhury, head of Corporate Affairs, Standard Chartered Bank, speaks at a seminar on 'Confronting AIDS challenges of the 21st Century: The student community' at the People's University of Bangladesh recently.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Call to raise awareness to combat AIDS

METRO DESK

Speakers at a seminar called for raising awareness among the youths and vulnerable groups about HIV/AIDS risk factors to prevent epidemic of the deadly disease in the country.

The Trust for Social Development (TSD) organised the seminar on 'Confronting AIDS challenges of the 21st Century: The student community' at the People's University of Bangladesh recently. Standard Chartered Bank supported the event as part of their global initiative titled 'Let's Fight HIV Together'.

More than 150 students and faculty members took part in the participatory seminar. They expressed their concern that available information was rather inadequate to understand the HIV/AIDS in a meaningful way.

They also stressed the need for youth-friendly atmosphere for accessing counseling and treatment of infections. They also pledged voluntary blood donation so that safe blood are available for blood transfusion.

Vice Chancellor of People's University Dr Aslam Bhuiyan, TSD Chief Executive Lutfur R Choudhury and Head of Corporate Affairs of Standard Chartered Bank Bitopi Das Chowdhury spoke at the seminar.

The technical sessions were conducted by Dr Hashrat Ara Begum, medical adviser, Asia Marie Stops Clinic, and Ahmed Farooq, executive director of Chesta.

## Middlemen eat up lion's share of profit from raw jute

UNB, Sangsad Bhaban

Jute and Textile Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui said in Parliament yesterday that the middlemen eat up the lion's share of profit from jute produced with toil by the farmers.

Replying to a written question of Nazim Uddin Ahmed (BNP-Laxmipur), he said the government never fixed the price for jute.

"The butter and cake always go to the middlemen whatever the price in domestic and international market, and the last season was no different," Latif Siddiqui said.

The farmers get an average of Tk 900-Tk 1500 per maund for their jute according to quality, he added.

The jute minister said due to the high demand in the international market and raw jute already in the hands of middle-

men, there was turbulence in the jute market last season. "Raw jute traded at a rate of Tk 2800."

He also said this kind of price is never expected at any cost, as the farmers never benefit from such high price.

Responding to another written question from the same lawmaker, Latif Siddiqui said Bangladesh exported 17.5 lakh bales and 15.02 lakh bales of jute respectively in fiscal 2008-09 and 2009-10 (till May).

He said China, India and Pakistan were the main importers of Bangladeshi raw jute. Bangladesh also exported jute to Vietnam, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, Spain, Germany, the USA, Ivory Coast, Belgium, Indonesia, Djibouti, Malaysia, El Salvador, Italy, Taiwan, the UK, Thailand, Iran, Brazil, the Philippines, Tunisia and Nepal.

## US keen to work with Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Congressman Peter King has said that the United States is keen to work with the government of Bangladesh and praised various development activities undertaken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

King made the remarks during a meeting with PM's Health Adviser Dr Syed Modasser Ali at Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday, a release from Bangladesh mission in the US capital said.

The adviser lauded the role of the US Congress for the cause of democracy in Bangladesh and mentioned the resolutions passed by the US Congress.

Modasser expressed the hope that the US Congress will continue its support for Bangladesh. He said the government is committed to graduate Bangladesh to a middle income country by 2021 and sought US assistance in achieving the goal.

The adviser in particular sought the US Congress' support for duty-free access of Bangladesh products to the American market.

He briefed the Congressman on various activities in the health sector including establishment of community health clinics and highlighted the importance of the activities on socio-economic development of the country.

Modasser mentioned the social impact in the area of fighting the menace of terrorism.

Earlier, he had a meeting with Atul Keshap, acting Deputy Assistant Secretary at the State Department. Issues pertaining to the interests of the two countries including cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism featured in the discussions.

## 7 killed in road crashes

METRO DESK

At least seven people were killed and 23 others injured in separate road accidents in Narsingdi, Bagerhat and Kishoreganj yesterday.

Our Narsingdi correspondent says: Four people were killed and 10 others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and truck in Sristygar area under Shibpur upazila of the district.

The deceased were identified as Dr Milia Rahman, 25, Sankar Bhoomik, 45, Latif Babu, 18, and an unidentified man aged about 32.

Officer-in-Charge of Shibpur model Police station Badrul Alam said the accident took place when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus collided head-on with a Bhairab-bound truck on Dhaka-Sylhet highway, leaving four dead on the spot.

The injured were rushed to the Narsingdi Sadar hospital.

Our Bagerhat correspondent adds: at least two people were killed and six others injured when a passenger bus hit a pick-up van on Bagerhat-Pirojpur highway under Morelganj upazila in the district.

The victims were identified as Mobarak Ali Khan, 45, and Rubel Sheikh, 22.

Sub-Inspector Sadhan Kumar Das of Mohishpura police camp said the accident

occurred when the Bagerhat-bound pick-up van carrying the BTCL officers and staffs collided head-on with a passenger bus coming from the opposite direction.

Of the injured, two succumbed to their injuries at the hospital.

Of the injured two were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital and others to the Barisal Medical College Hospital.

A correspondent from Kishoreganj reports: One was killed and seven others were injured in a road accident in Agarpur area in Kuliarchar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as truck driver Lutfur Rahman, 28, of Tangail and the injured bus passengers are Mizan, 28, Shamim, 22, Abdul Kuddus, 45, Saiful Islam, 30, Momtaj Begum, 25, Shafiqul Islam, 30, and Abdul Qaim, 28.

Of them, Mizan was admitted to Jahurul Islam Medical college Hospital in critical condition while others were admitted to Kuliarchar health complex.

Sources said the accident took place at 7:00am when a Kishoreganj-bound bus from Dhaka collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound jackfruits-laden truck from Madhupur. Lutfur succumbed to his injuries while he was being taken to Dhaka in critical condition.

## New salary structure, service age for researchers on cards

BSS, Dhaka

Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury yesterday said the government will consider a new salary structure and service age for the researchers aiming at encouraging them to pursue research work.

She said this at a press conference at the conference room of the ministry on the occasion of innovation of draft genome sequence of jute here in the morning.

The government would also revise the retirement age of the scientists and research personnel compared to other public service holders and initiatives in this regard has already been taken, she added.

Besides, the research outcome would also usher in a great benefit for the farmers within a couple of years as the research will bring high yield, saline

tolerant and pathogen resistant jute within the reach of the farmers, Matia said.

Briefing the journalists, Matia said the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would not hesitate to provide necessary fund to complete the research. She said the government is encouraging research but discourages the economy of wastage.

Criticising the role of the previous government in research, she said the previous government did not take any initiative to encourage agricultural research, rather they demoralised the scientists as a whole.

Termining the successes of research in jute sector,

Matia said, "I hope that the completion of the genome sequence research in jute sector is a major breakthrough and the farmers would get the full benefit of it."

Besides, the minister highlighted that the new research would turn the country's jute-yarn based textile industry into profit making industries in future.

Researchers from Dhaka University (DU), Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) and software company dataSoft in collaboration with Centre for Chemical Biology, University of Science, Malaysia and University of Hawaii, decoded the genome.

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