

HASINA-NAOTO SUMMIT

Funding for Padma Bridge, trade to top agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Financing for Padma Bridge, strengthening economic cooperation and expansion of bilateral trade and investment will figure prominently at the summit level talks between the prime ministers of Bangladesh and Japan during Sheikh Hasina's visit to Japan beginning November 28.

"This is going to be a very important, timely and significant visit by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her summit meeting with Prime Minister Naoto Kan will further strengthen bilateral relations," said Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Tamotsu Shinotsuka yesterday.

He said a positive discussion would be taking place on financing the Padma Bridge and assured that Japan will continue its financial assistance to Bangladesh for infrastructure development programmes.

Sheikh Hasina, who is now visiting Russia, will pay a four-day official working visit to Japan from November 28 and the summit level meeting will take place in Tokyo on November 29. As the prime minister, it will be her second visit to Japan after 13 years since she visited Japan in 1997.

The ambassador, while speaking at meet the reporters programme at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), said Japan wants to make their presence in expansion of trade and investment in a big way and remove the huge trade gap with Bangladesh.

He said many Japanese businessmen

are paying attention to Bangladesh as the country has high prospect as a production base and a destination for foreign direct investment.

Although Japan is the largest bilateral donor to Bangladesh and cumulative assistance amounted more than \$ 8 billion, bigger than combined assistance from US and the UK, but he said that bilateral trade and investment is not that big.

The total investment of Japan in Bangladesh registered with Board of Investment is \$ 1,207 million on a cumulative basis, which is the sixth largest foreign investing country while Japan's investment in Bepza is \$ 171 million.

The Japanese envoy listed out several obstacles like shortage of electricity, gas, transportation, road infrastructure, traffic jam, deep seaport and complexity of rules for setting up industries.

He said Bangladesh has the immense possibility to attract huge investment from Japan if the government can remove those obstacles. In this context, he said Japanese companies are diversifying their businesses and Bangladesh could be one of the possible destinations for them after China.

About current crisis of gas and electricity in Bangladesh, the ambassador said coal could be considered as an alternative energy and hydropower could be another possible option. For hydropower, he said cooperation with India, Bhutan and Nepal is important.

He said regional cooperation becomes

more and more important for the future prosperity. "Bangladesh is located in the midst of India, China and Asean. Bangladesh could open up a new horizon if it uses its location to its advantage," he added.

Lauding Bangladesh's steady growth of 6 percent over past several years, Ambassador Tamotsu Shinotsuka said Bangladesh has great potentials to achieve 8 percent economic growth following China and India if the investment friendly atmosphere could be created.

The ambassador said the urgent task of Bangladesh government is to nurture next core industry after RMG. Bangladesh government should decide its priority industries and concentrate resources there, he added.

He identified changes of policy with the change of government in Bangladesh as a major problem and said once the policy is set, it should be pursued consistently as did by Japan after the war.

The Japanese ambassador, who has been in Bangladesh for around 15 months, made a 5-point suggestions for development of Bangladesh.

These include: development of social infrastructure and more skilled workers for industrialisation, decision on priority industries and basic infrastructures like transportation, telecommunication and industrial equipments to be in place.

DRU President Shamim Ahmed chaired the press interactions while Joint Secretary Galman Shafi made remarks about DRU.



The building 'Chand Nibash', left, has tilted towards the adjoining six-storied 'Reliance Plaza' in Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) residential area of Agrabad in the port city yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Sand export to Maldives on cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is seriously assessing the potentials of exporting sand to the Maldives as an inter-minister meeting yesterday decided to invite sand importers of Maldives to Bangladesh.

An inter-ministerial meeting held at the land ministry decided to send the invitation through the foreign ministry. The government will step further on this regard after getting specifications of sand quality from them.

At this moment, a bilateral agreement will be required to export sand or earth to a certain country, the meeting discussed. There is no prohibition of

exporting sand according to the current Export Policy Order of the commerce ministry.

The government is considering sand as a new potential for export, says a release of the ministry of land yesterday.

Earlier this year, Maldives President Mohammed Nasheed expressed keenness to import sand and earth from Bangladesh as his country would be inundated if the sea level rises by only a metre.

A huge amount of sediment is naturally deposited in Bangladesh from the Himalayas by the river network spread over the country. The quantity of sediment is around one billion cubic metres,

which is one of the main reasons the country's rivers are losing their navigability.

Bangladesh is pushing a huge river project worth over Tk one thousand crore to dredge all major rivers which will bring up huge quantities of sand in the near future.

State Minister for Land Mustafizur Rahman, it's Secretary Md Moklesur Rahman and representatives from energy, power and mineral resources ministry, law ministry, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry and environment and forest ministry were present at the meeting. Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira presided over the meeting.

Project to cut emissions from vehicles, brick kilns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an aim to improve air quality in the capital, the government is working to address two main sources of air pollution -- emissions from vehicles and brick kilns.

The government is running a project "Clean Air and Sustainable Environment Project" funded by the World Bank (WB), says a press release.

Currently, brick kilns use firewood and low quality coal causing severe air pollution.

The project aims at reducing emissions from the kilns by adopting cleaner and energy-efficient technologies.

The Department of Environment (DoE) will be purchasing six air quality monitoring stations to

increase the current capacity of the air quality cell.

For the first time in Bangladesh, the 'Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln' has been successfully piloted at Savar and a technology and information centre will soon be established to promote it.

The DoE will also start piloting two environment-friendly technologies, Zig-Zag Kiln and alternative building material in the brick industry by the end of this year. Twenty brick fields will be brought under this project.

The project also aims at reducing conflict between motorised and non-motorised transport, reducing congestion and providing safer and cleaner mobility for pedestrians in areas intervened by the project.

WB is providing \$62.20 million for the 5-year project that started in October 2009.

Five-storey building tilts in Ctg

A CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A five-storey building partially tilted towards another building at Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) residential area of Agrabad in the port city yesterday.

The building 'Chand Nibash' tilted towards the adjoining six-storied building that house different offices of Income Tax Department.

Md Dabir Uddin, additional commissioner of Taxes, said they found the building (Chand Nibash) tilted towards the adjoining Reliance Plaza, which contains 23 income tax offices.

Chand Sultana, owner of the tilted building, termed the allegation a rumor.

"We have been living in the building for 14 years," said Sultana to The Daily Star adding that, "the two buildings have been standing in this condition for three years."

On information, members of Fire Service and Civil Defence and police rushed to the spot.

Assistant Commissioner SM Tanveer Arafat of Double Mooring Police Station said they informed the situation to the CDA.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Homeopathic doctor Ali Ahmed passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his Khilgaon residence in the city yesterday at the age of 85, says a press release.

He left behind his four sons and two daughters to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Khilgaon Chowdhurypara Matir Masjid at 10:00am today.

He will be buried at Azimpur Graveyard.

Zaheda Khatun

METRO DESK

Zaheda Khatun (Rina), wife of late Prof SM Najmul Haque of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and daughter of late Kazi Motahar Hossain, passed away yesterday.

She was laid to rest at Azimpur Graveyard.

Her Quakha will be held at her Indira Road residence after Asr prayers on November 26.

Asia Gani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asia Gani, wife of late Major Abdul Gani, passed away at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) due to old age complications on Monday at the age of 85, says a press release.

Asia left behind her two sons and two daughters.

Her namaz-e-janaza was held at Mohakhali DOHS mosque in the city.



A child takes part in the Primary Education Terminal Examination 2010 at Rayer Bazar High School and College in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

PRIMARY EDUCATION TERMINAL EXAM BEGINS

2,63,026 students absent on first day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 22,25,739 students of class V from general primary and madrasas took part in the Primary Education Terminal Examination 2010 across the country yesterday amid great enthusiasm.

A total of 24,88,765 students -- 21,57,317 of general primary and 3,31,448 from madrasa -- registered this year for the exams.

But, some 2,63,026 students of both the groups were absent on the first day of the largest public examination, according to the control room of the Directorate of Primary Education at 8:00pm yesterday.

Of the total absent, some 1,98,167 are from general primary while 64,859 from ebtadai madrasas, said the stats. A total of 30 students taking the examination from the seven overseas centres were absent yesterday.

Besides, a total of 186 students were reportedly expelled in five divisions across the country, as they were not students of class V. Of them, 80 were from

Rajshahi division and 48 from Rangpur division.

The examination centres wore a festive look as the students, for the first time in their life, attended the public examination.

The examination started at 11:00am at 5,993 centres across the country as well as seven overseas on Bangla on the first day. The students will sit for English today.

The guardians were anxious about the exam of their children as usual but were happy with the new system of holding one exam in one day. Last year, two exams were held in one day, which the guardians claimed puts huge pressure on the little kids.

A number of students said the questions were apparently easy and they performed well.

"Yes, I did well," said a girl after emerging from a centre at Tejgaon.

The examination centres in the city saw a huge rush of students and guardians. Many guardians complained of poor management of the school authorities as the students came out haphaz-

ardly after the end of the exams and there might be a chance of children getting lost.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin visited two exam centres in the city and talked to the examiners, centre officials and students. He said the competitive examination would upgrade the overall standard of education.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid also visited two city centres and talked to the reporters. He urged all to cooperate in holding the exam peacefully.

Yesterday, the highest number of students of both the groups remained absent from Dhaka division. Some 73,958 students from general primary schools and 16,139 of ebtadai madrasas remained absent from this division only, the official data showed.

The government last year introduced the public exam instead of primary scholarship examination.

The exams will end on November 29 and results will be published sometime between December 22 and December 27.

Navy man allegedly stabs wife to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was killed allegedly by her husband in Purgaoon area of Patheralia union in city's Ashulia panchayat.

Ashulia police said Asma Begum, 21, a third year student of Debendranath College in Manikganj, and her husband Mohammad Ali, a member of Bangladesh Navy, came to visit Asma's uncle Mizanur Rahman's house in Ashulia.

When Asma and Ali went to the roof, Asma's aunt Farida Yasmin heard yelling and rushed there to find Asma dead with several stab wounds.

Locals caught Ali while he was trying to climb down a palm tree adjacent to the building. Ali then started stabbing himself indiscriminately.

He was later taken to Savar Combined Military Hospital.

US to invest \$63b in health in Bangladesh, seven other states

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US government will invest \$63 billion in Bangladesh and 7 other countries to strengthen the health and family planning system and to develop the nutritional status of the people till 2015.

Under its Global Health Initiative (GHI) programme, the US government has already provided \$54 million to Bangladesh as one of the "GHI Plus" countries this year.

Though the GHI began in May 2009, the programme was formally launched by Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque at a city hotel yesterday.

The GHI programme will work to reduce maternal and child mortality, control infectious diseases, strengthen

family planning methods and increase nutritional status of the country.

It will also help Bangladesh in achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, said Denise Rollins, mission director of USAID.

The GHI partnership will help Bangladesh to be a global health leader in this region, said US Ambassador to Bangladesh James F Moriarty.

He also applauded Bangladesh's status in achieving the MDGs in health, which are central to GHI.

The health minister AFM Ruhul Haque however said that despite progress in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates, Bangladesh needs to work to reduce the mortality caused by infectious diseases.