

Malaysia

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South Asia Datuk Seri Samy Vellu said Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) and Bangladesh Power Development Board had declared interest to jointly develop the project and a decision on the matter was imminent.

"There will be investments from both the sides," Bernama said quoting Samy.

According to a source close to the deal, the Bangladeshi government has already engaged TNB and proceeded with a letter of intent indicating its interest to establish a joint venture for the purpose.

"Currently both the sides are deliberating to reach an understanding on the equity sharing and electricity production cost for the import-based coal-fired mega power plant," said the source, who wished to be anonymous.

Samy said, "The TNB is a company which possesses years of experience in power generation and Bangladesh needs a lot of power. This is why they (Bangladeshi government) want to work together with us."

"The TNB had gone and seen the place and now they are in the midst of performing their own due diligence," he told Bernama in an interview.

Samy said given Malaysia's expertise in the power and energy sector, Dhaka had expressed their intention to sign a power cooperation pact with Malaysia.

He said the Bangladesh prime minister had expressed her seriousness on the power cooperation deal. "From what I saw from my recent visit there (Bangladesh), discussions are going on," he said.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka pertaining to the power cooperation pact is expected to be signed when the Bangladeshi State Minister of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources, Muhammad Enamul Huq visits Malaysia in the near future.

BCL expels

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It also issued notices to its two central leaders--organising secretary Ahsan Uddin Rasel and international affairs secretary Shahidul Islam--to explain as to why they should not be expelled for being involved in the clash.

At least 10 leaders and activists of the organisation were injured on Thursday night in the clash over occupying illegal stalls of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, the month-long book fair, being held on the Bangla Academy premises in Dhaka University, sources said.

They said former and current leaders of the pro-Awami League student body were involved in grabbing of as many as 45 illegal stalls at the fair and were renting them out to businesses. They claimed that each stall was being rented out for Tk30,000 to 50,000.

They claimed that the leaders are doing this with the help of police. Police evicted all illegal stalls near the venue but left alone the ones controlled by the Chhatra League leaders.

Sources said Chhatra League leader Shahidul Islam with the help of one Tokai Mamun set up several stalls on the side of the street near Bangla Academy.

They said Chhatra League activists of Shaheedullah and Ekushey dormitories went to occupy those stalls but they failed and were beaten up by Shahidul and his men.

Later, Chhatra League activists of the two dorms attacked which led to the clash.

Asked about the illegal stalls and Chhatra League, Bangla Academy Deputy Director Murshid Anwar told The Daily Star the Chhatra League leaders have been warned. "The authority will take legal actions against the illegal stalls unless they quit soon," he said.

Officer-in-Charge of Shahbagh Police Station Sirajul Islam said they have no formal complaint from Bangla Academy authorities. "If the academy files a complaint, the police will take necessary steps against illegal stalls."

Talking to The Daily Star the central Chhatra League president HM Badiuzzaman Sohag claimed that he was not involved in this.

EC seeks to curb

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The filing such complaint. They may submit it during the election or even during the tenure of parliament constituted through the election.

The EC will investigate the complaint. If the allegations are proven, the candidate's election results will be cancelled. His or her seat in parliament will be declared vacant and fresh polls will be held to the vacant seat, say the EC proposals.

The EC favours this stringent provision as it has failed to take action against two lawmakers in the current parliament for either concealing facts or giving false information in their affidavits during the last parliamentary polls.

In the run-up to the last parliamentary polls, a provision was introduced asking candidates to provide eight-point information in affidavits that include their educational and police records. The EC publicises the information to help voters know about the candidates.

The proposals leave scope for political parties to prevent dissidents from "revolting" against party nominated candidates in the polls. They suggest allowing a party to initially nominate more than one candidate in each constituency and pick one on or before the day of withdrawal of candidacy.

If a nomination aspirant finally fails to get party ticket, he or she will not have

any scope for contesting the election. The person will be deemed to have withdrawn candidacy.

However, a dissident leader of a party can contest the polls only if he files an application as an independent candidate in line with the prescribed conditions.

The EC backtracked from its draft proposal for restoring sweeping authority to the armed forces to perform election duties. The draft proposal in May last year suggested reinstating the authority that the defence forces were given in 2001.

The commission did not propose introducing a provision of state funding for political parties' election campaigns, as it did not get a favourable response from political parties during talks last year.

The EC, however, proposed enacting a law on formation of the EC.

It also suggested having a law on redrawing boundaries of parliamentary constituencies. In the draft law, the EC proposed setting the number of constituencies in the capital to a maximum of 10. Their number was raised to 15 from eight in the last demarcation of constituencies in 2008.

The EC also proposed bringing changes to the law for introducing electronic voting machines in parliamentary polls. The EC will decide whether EVM will be used on a limited or a large scale.

AL to take to streets

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in Dhaka city and no programme of BNP would be successful that day.

In response to Quamrul's announcement, BNP yesterday alleged that the ruling party is trying to go for confrontation through counter political programmes to bring back the state of emergency and remain in power.

Terming the situation alarming, former adviser to a caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan yesterday told The Daily Star that if the two major political parties fail to reach a consensus, the political atmosphere of the country will grossly deteriorate.

On January 9, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a rally in Chittagong declared the March 12 Dhaka rally to mount pressure on the government for the reinstatement of caretaker government system.

On the other hand, in November last year, AL had announced a programme till May this year to press home their demand for immediate trial of war criminals and "resist the opposition from creating chaos in the country".

"We will observe our programmes peacefully and hence are urging the opposition to refrain from the politics of violence," said Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, general secretary of AL Dhaka city unit, yesterday. He said they would continue with the programmes until their demand is met.

Meanwhile, BNP

Over 100 missing feared trapped in PNG ferry

AFP, Port Moresby

More than 100 missing passengers were feared trapped inside an overloaded ferry when it sank off Papua New Guinea, a maritime official said yesterday as rescuers scoured the ocean for more survivors.

So far, 246 people have been plucked to safety in a joint rescue operation conducted by PNG and neighbouring Australia after the MV Rabaul Queen sank on Thursday morning.

Australia's Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) said the ship went down about nine nautical miles off the coast and the survivors reached the eastern town of Lae in the early hours of yesterday morning.

"Updated reports from the five rescue vessels indicate there were approximately 246 survivors recovered on Thursday," AMSA said.

Standing Committee Member MK Anwar yesterday said, "Foiling opposition's programmes is AL culture, as did its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani's Paltan rally in the 50's."

He said the ruling party, "sensing no stable ground underneath, has gone insane and hence making such statements of taking hold of all Dhaka streets". "They want to bring the state of emergency through chaos and remain in power by all means," he alleged.

The BNP leader said people will face the ruling party's move to hinder the March 12 rally as it has already turned into a programme of the people and the restoration of caretaker government system a national demand.

The ruling party will have to bear the responsibility of the consequences if they try to foil the grand rally, said MK Anwar, adding that Prime Minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina is responsible for the recent deaths of five BNP activists in clashes with police in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Rajshahi.

He warned that AL men responsible for the killings will be brought to book.

On Thursday, Hasina blamed the opposition leader for the deaths of the five.

Israeli air-strikes in Gaza leave two wounded

AFP, Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were injured by Israeli air-strikes yesterday morning, Palestinians said, only hours a visit of the UN chief to the Hamas-controlled territory.

According to a spokesman for Gaza emergency services, a three-and-a-half-year-old girl was seriously wounded by an air strike at a home in the northern Gaza Strip town Beit Lahiy, which also left a man moderately wounded.

Five other attacks in the central and southern Gaza Strip targeted tunnels and fields, as well as another house in Jablains in the northern Strip.

The Israeli military confirmed the attacks, which "targeted two weapon storing facilities in the northern Gaza Strip, three terror tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip and a weapon manufacturing facility in the central Gaza Strip," a statement read. "Direct hits were confirmed as well as secondary explosions at several targets."

Children join

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Last year, elections were held in 743 schools when some 5,201 representatives were elected.

Students' Council in the form of a shadow parliamentary system of governance was first launched in 100 schools of the country in 2010 as a pilot project. It aims at creating quality leadership, practicing democratic norms and values and exhibiting tolerance to others' opinions in the minds from their very childhood.

"All necessary preparations to hold the elections have been completed," Mohammad Fashiullah, deputy director of the DPE, told The Daily Star.

Here, all the players are students, he said, who will perform the tasks of election commissioners, polling agents, presiding officers, voters and candidates as well.

The elected representatives of a school will nominate the chief representative in its first meeting of their council and distribute portfolios, the official said.

The councils would take part in the schools' activities including preservation of surrounding environment; health, sports and cultural activities; water management; and reception of guests on different occasions.

Mysterious

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said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Reaching the hotel around 12:45pm, the law enforcers knocked repeatedly at the door of Shahed's room on the second floor of the building.

As there was no response from inside, they broke the ventilator of the room to enter into. They recovered Shahed's body lying on the floor beside his bed.

An autopsy was carried out on the body at Dhaka Medical College morgue in the afternoon.

Contacted, Shahed's elder brother Shahab-ud-Dawla said he saw bruises on the body and suspected it to be an unnatural death.

Morgue sources, however, said they found no injury marks on the body.

Shahed, a bachelor, liked to live alone, Shahed's friend Mahbubul Karim Kamal told The Daily Star. He checked in the hotel in July 2010 and since then he had been staying there.

After completing a Masters in 1994, he opened his business, added Mahbubul.

Shahed's brother Arif-ud-Dawla last night filed a murder case with Ramna Police Station without accusing anyone.

Punish cops

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Thursday night. They met Khaleda at her Gulshan office after getting bail in the cases filed against them by police following the clashes.

Four opposition supporters died on January 29 in Chandpur and Laxmipur while another in Rajshahi the next day when police allegedly opened fire on the opposition's programme.

Terming the investigation committee, formed by the government to probe the killings, a farce, Khaleda demanded immediate suspension from jobs of those responsible for the killings.

Referring to the killing in Chandpur, Khaleda questioned whether the police, who dragged the body of the slain opposition activists, belonged to Bangladesh or other areas.

On election, Khaleda said as the ruling party is not yet sure about its victory in election under the party in power so it wants to introduce the electronic voting machines (EVM) in polls for manipulating results in favour of it.

She reiterated that not by bloodshed, the government will be ousted through peaceful and democratic movement.

On the Election Commission, she said the government is playing game over constituting the commission.

Meanwhile, party sources said Khaleda will visit Laxmipur on February 18 to see the families of the opposition activists killed during the mass procession.

She will also address a public meeting in the district town during the visit.

Mega plan for coal-fired

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"In addition, the company will develop local coal fields and import coal," he said. The Power Division is now holding shares of this company. It (company) will hire a consultant to determine which would be the most suitable coal-field for fast development, and other procedures will follow.

According to the draft coal policy, the measured and probable coal reserves of the country total 3.3 billion tonnes in five fields. The measured coal reserve that can be mined for the time being is estimated to be 1,168 million tonnes, except in Jamalganj where coal seams are located in deep underground.

Meanwhile, the PDB has taken initiatives to set up the 10 coal-fired plants in Khulna, Chittagong, Dhaka, Barisal and Barapukuria in Dinajpur. Except a 225 MW public sector plant in Barapukuria, all other projects are based on

imported coal.

The projects include three 1,300 MW ones, all intended to be implemented with government-to-government cooperation with India, China and Malaysia.

Of these, the PDB has signed a joint venture deal with India to set up a plant in Khulna.

The government has begun primary talks with China and Malaysia for two more plants in Chittagong. It is keeping its fingers crossed about the success of negotiations with the two countries as there are many issues including financing to be resolved first, a power ministry official said.

The PDB has floated tenders for five private sector coal-based plants in Dhaka, Chittagong and Barisal -- some having up to 800 MW capacity and some up to 300 MW.

The government has already awarded contract to

local Orion Power to set up three coal-based power plants with a capacity of around 1,200 MW. Coal for these plants expected to start production in 2015 will be imported from Indonesia, costing \$350 million.

The PDB believes that transporting coal through the country's river system would be possible. "One must assess how much cement and steel are now transported through the rivers. If that is possible, transporting coal would also be possible," says the PDB chairman.

The government forecasts the demand for power in 2020 will go up to 17,600 MW. It will jump to 24,956 MW in 2025 and 33,000 MW in 2030.

The demand is estimated to be around 6,000 MW in the coming summer.

The country now generates around 5,200 MW of power.

UK minister quits

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about Huhne's future.

"We have concluded that there is sufficient evidence to bring criminal charges against Mr Huhne and Ms Pryce for perverting the course of justice," the prosecutor said, adding that both would now be served with summonses.

"The essence of the charges is that between March and May 2003, Mr Huhne, having allegedly committed a speeding offence, falsely informed the investigating authorities that Ms Pryce had been the driver of the vehicle in question, and she falsely accepted that she was the driver."

Less than an hour later the Liberal Democrat lawmaker, who played a key role in UN climate change talks in South Africa in December, said he was resigning as secretary of state for energy and climate change to fight the case.

"I'm innocent of these charges and I intend to fight this in the courts, and I'm confident a jury will agree."

"So as to avoid any dis-

traction to either my official duties or my trial defence, I am standing down," Huhne told reporters outside his London flat.

He will remain a member of parliament.

Huhne is a senior member of the Liberal Democrat party, which shares power in Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative-led coalition, and becomes the third minister to quit since the government took power in May 2010.

Cameron said he was sorry to see Huhne go but it was the "right decision", while Lib Dem leader and deputy prime minister Nick Clegg expressed hope that he would soon return to frontline politics.

The claims first emerged in 2010 after Huhne announced he was having an affair and would be leaving his wife. He and Pryce, who have three children and two stepchildren together, divorced last year.

Huhne, a former journalist at the Economist, the Guardian and the Independent, was elected to parliament in 2005 to repre-

sent Eastleigh in southeast England, after six years as a member of the European Parliament.

Ed Davey, the Lib Dem minister for employment relations, consumer and postal affairs, is the favourite to replace Huhne.

17 Shibir men

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are members of the pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student organisation.

Syed Faruk, a sub-inspector of Pahartali Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, they raided a house of Mahabubul Alam around 6:00pm and found the activists holding a "secret meeting".

Law enforcers suspect the meeting was called to plan subversive activities against the state, he said.

Police seized a large number of books on Islamic revolution, some of which are written by Ghulam Azam, training modules for self-protection and battle, and also anti-government leaflets and banners.

The detainees were being quizzed, the SI said.

Early detection

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because of a lack of medical equipment and oncologists in the country, experts say.

On an average, three lakh people, mostly from rural areas, are diagnosed with cancer every year. But thanks to the shortage of early detection centre, many of them seek treatment when it is too late, said Prof Baki.

According to him, over two lakh people die from cancer every year while over 10 lakh have cancer at present, which is about 0.07 percent of the total population.

However, oncologists say, these figures may not reflect the ground reality, as there is no community-based registry of cancer patients, which is an internationally recognised method of collecting patients' data.

They emphasized the need for the creation of a registry. They argue that such a database is crucial because if the actual number of the patients and their whereabouts are not known, the government cannot take proper steps to set up adequate hospitals and prepare oncologists to treat patients.

Among women, cervical cancer tops the list while among men it is lung cancer, said Baki, who is also president of Bangladesh Cancer Society.

Around 60 percent of the country's cancer patients suffer from cervical, breast, oral cavity, lung, and larynx cancer which can be prevented by changing lifestyles through creating awareness.

In developed countries cobalt machines of the old model have been replaced by the latest Linac Machines for providing radio therapy to treat cancer with greater precision.

In Bangladesh, though, there are only five Linac Machines -- three at NICRH and one each at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Bogra Medical College Hospital.

Prof Baki told The Daily Star on Wednesday that two more Linac Machines would be installed at NICRH soon. Additionally, the number of beds would be increased to nearly double from its present 150.

The situation is grave for cervical cancer patients as the government has only one Brachytherapy Machine required for their therapy.

For every 10 lakh people there should be one cancer institute equipped with modern technology, including a Brachytherapy machine, and with a sufficient number of oncologists, NICRH officials said quoting the WHO ratio.

Many patients requiring immediate therapy have to wait for one to three months for their turns due to lack of therapy machines. As a result, the condition of these patients worsens and often turns incurable, they add.

For example, it took Farhad Mridha, 67, of a remote village of Shariatpur, nearly one year to know that he has cancer.

Poor Farhad from Bahirkoshia village of the district reached NICRH on December 26 last after his lung cancer spread to his brain.

He told this correspondent that he had visited many doctors in his district seeking treatment for "his constant fever", a sign of cancer, in vain. It was only a few months ago that a doctor advised him to come to Dhaka.

Accordingly he visited a doctor in the Old Town. The

doctor referred him to NICRH where he was diagnosed with cancer.

Prof Baki says just by creating awareness among the people, 40 to 50 percent cancer can be checked.

To create public awareness, he stressed the need for a campaign by the government and the media similar to the one that created awareness in favour of the use of oral saline to prevent diarrhoea.

Food rich in fiber can prevent certain types of cancer and avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, junk food, red meat, early marriage of girls and frequent pregnancies can also prevent cancer, he added.

Prof Syed Akram Hussain, former national consultant, WHO and senior consultant, oncology department of LabAid Hospital, said the taskforce formed by the government had prepared a guideline and a road map to deal with the ever-increasing threat of cancer. But if the government does not take steps accordingly, the threat will take a turn for the worse.

Education tour

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at 9:00am.

During the tour, the BSF delegation would visit important and historical places of Bangladesh including National Memorial, Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, National Museum and Bangabandhu Bridge Authority Museum.

Besides the excursion, they will also meet Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Director General of BGB Maj Gen Anwar Hossain.

Earlier, a 23-member student delegation of the BGB visited Kolkata during December 21-23 last year.

Book lovers

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The annual book fair witnessed huge crowds yesterday as thousands flocked to the premises on the first day of the weekend. By evening, the premises were totally jam-packed with book enthusiasts.

Raton arrived at the fair premises at around 1:30pm and by 5:30pm, he bought 12 books.

"I have collected novels, poems and science fictions by my favourite authors," he told this reporter.

A master's degree holder in applied chemistry from Islamic University in Kushtia, Raton has been unable to walk since his birth. He came to Dhaka last Wednesday to attend a job interview.

"I was suppose to leave after the interview but stayed on with a relative in Shyamoli just to visit the fair today," the excited book lovers said.

Raton said it was tough breaking through the thick crowds on the first day of the weekend. He pointed out that the narrow lanes between the stalls were a challenge for him to manoeuvre on his wheelchair.

He also complained about the dust at the premises.

However, these small things did little to hamper Raton's spirits. "One can understand from the crowds how much the Bengali people are interested in books," he said.

"I mean to stay till late evening but the dust has become too painful to bear," said Monir Hossain, who came from Basabo with his wife and two children.

Deputy Director of Bangladesh Academy Murshiduddin Anwar said, "We sprayed water on the grounds in the morning but the soil dried up by the afternoon."

The fair opened at 11:00am yesterday. Sales were high with novels and poems by popular authors topping the list. A total of 169 new titles hit the fair yesterday.

Stampede

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of Bagha Police Station.

At one stage of the mad rush, Moslem fell unconscious. He died on the way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The MP, however, said Moslem was not injured in the stampede.

"The elderly man was suffering from heart ailments and fell sick in the huge crowd," he said.

Pak PM

FROM PAGE 20
He assured that the Senate elections would be held on time and conspiracies would be revealed soon.

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered Gilani to appear before it on February 13, to be indicted with contempt for failing to pursue corruption cases against president Asif Ali Zardari.

Judge Nasir-ul-Mulk told the court there were grounds to proceed against Gilani over the government's refusal to follow a court order and ask Swiss authorities to re-open corruption cases against President Asif Ali Zardari.

The government argued that Zardari has immunity from prosecution while head of state and accused judges of plotting with the military to wage a witch-hunt against him.

Switzerland shelved the cases in 2008, when Zardari took office.

The shock announcement threatens to plunge his weak government deeper into crisis and force early elections within months.

He said that talks with political parties on general elections could take place after elections of the upper house next month.

Gilani was previously summoned to appear in court on January 19, when he refused to back down on Zardari's immunity. Experts say that if convicted, he could be jailed for up to six months and disqualified from public office.