

FDI rises

FROM PAGE 1

Based on the Unctad report, M Ismail Hossain, an economics professor at Jahangirnagar University, made a presentation at the BoI office on Thursday about the investment outlook of Bangladesh and the world.

According to the presentation, the highest chunk of FDI in 2011 was \$272.04 million that came to textile and apparel sector. The second biggest was \$249.37 million to the banking sector while the third, \$238.21 million, went to power, gas and petroleum sectors. Besides, telecommunications sector attracted \$180.99 million.

The highest investment \$152.30 million came from Egypt against its investment of \$3.01 million in 2010. The US invested \$117.74m which was \$56.95m a year back. The Netherlands' investment was \$116.75m, up from \$64.92m of the previous year.

The countries that made big investments in 2011 include the UK (\$116.32m), South Korea (\$113.06m) and Hong Kong (\$104.84m).

The presentation also showed equity capital of the total FDI last year decreased by 16.94 percent to \$431.85 million. Equity capital means a fresh investment which the investor brings from his home country.

However, reinvestment increased by 34.28 percent and became \$489.63 million and inter-company loan shot up by 648.25 percent and stood at \$214.90 million in 2011.

A BoI report presented on the occasion said reinvested earning and inter-company loans had apparently increased to a large extent, signifying investor confidence despite apprehension about the economy by various quarters.

Projecting the total FDI situation in 2011, SA Samad said Bangladesh could attract more investment if policy was not changed frequently.

He added the BoI has taken various steps to increase inflow of FDI and built a new website to post updates on the industry and economy.

Inflation

FROM PAGE 1

digit since March last year and remained so till November, marking a gradual fall since.

Last month, food inflation fell by 0.38 percentage points and non-food inflation by 1 percentage point, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data released on Thursday.

Food inflation in June came down to 7.08 percent from 7.46 percent a month ago. It was 13.75 percent in last September. Non-food inflation hit a record 13.96 percent in March, but stood at 11.72 percent last month.

Releasing the data, BBS Director General Golam Mostafa Kamal told reporters on Thursday that the inflation rate came down as prices of rice, spices and other food items fell.

"There is room for further reduction in inflation rate without it adversely affecting the economic growth. Bangladesh Bank's monetary policy will support this objective as we would like to see non-food inflation also coming down to single digit," Hassan Zaman, Bangladesh Bank governor's senior economic adviser, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In the first six months of the last fiscal year, non-food inflation rose at an alarming rate due to high bank borrowing by the government, a finance ministry official said.

Later, the government reined in the bank borrowing while the central bank adopted a tight monetary policy. These two combined helped reduce the inflation rate, the official added.

A Bangladesh Bank statement last week said the inflation went up due to the rise in prices of essentials and fuel on the international and local markets.

PM responds

FROM PAGE 1

gratitude to the premier saying that she received her textbooks in time.

"Dear Prime Minister, I am a girl from a poor family. I would like to express my gratitude to you for receiving the textbooks in time," said the premier's special assistant quoting the girl.

In response to a supplementary query during the question-answer session in parliament on Wednesday, Hasina gave her email address (sheikhhasina@hotmail.com) and the phone numbers (01711-520000 and 01819-260371) so that people could inform her about the persons who try to seek undue advantage using her name or that of her family members.

"My family includes myself, my younger sister, and our five children. Apart from me, I have no one else as my family members," Hasina said in parliament.

Ever since the announcement, the prime minister has talked to many people from 5:00pm to 11:00pm on Thursday and after the Zuma prayers on Friday at the premier's official residence Gono Bhaban, said Shakil.

A curious man made a phone call to the premier and wanted to know whether it was the prime minister herself talking to him. On hearing, "Yes, I'm," from Hasina, the man disconnected the call.

When the prime minister

called back to the number and asked his identity and purpose of the call, the man said he disconnected the call in haste as he could not believe that he was actually talking to the head of the government, said the premier's special assistant.

Shakil also said most callers wanted to know about the Padma Bridge issue. They thanked the premier for her rigid stance on the issue while some of them also told her to raise funds for the public for financing the bridge project.

"Honourable Prime Minister, the construction of the Padma Bridge must be started no matter whatever conspiracies go on. You should inaugurate and end its construction," said Shakil quoting a caller from the southern region of the country.

The premier also received several e-mails on different issues including allegations of corruption in various sectors, he added.

The government officials, however, feel worried about the disclosure of the premier's phone numbers and e-mail address because anyone now can communicate with her directly about anyone's corruption or misdeed, sources said.

A woman from Banaripara in Natore informed the premier of tortures on them during the four-party alliance, and also demanded a trial of the culprits, added Shakil.

It's part of int'l

FROM PAGE 1

independent commission to investigate the custodial deaths and torture of BDR (now BGB) soldiers and take action against human rights violations by the members of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and other intelligence agencies.

Two days after, the home ministry in its official reaction said, "The government hopes the Human Rights Watch will withdraw its report and remarks so that those responsible for the heinous murder of 74 people, including 57 army officers, can be punished through a fair trial."

The mutiny trial is being held in a "fair and transparent manner" under the existing law of the country and the accused are enjoying all types of legal support, including rights to appoint lawyers to defend themselves, the ministry said.

It also termed "totally baseless" the HRW allegations that the accused mutineers were abused and tortured by the Rab, saying that the elite force was not involved in any process of the trial, including investigation.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed on Thursday said "We reject this report right away...it's false and baseless.... This is meddling in the internal affairs of a country."

After a meeting with a three-member HRW delegation led by its Asia Executive Director Brad Adams at the ministry, Shafique said no non-government organisation can make any remark on the internal matter of any country, reports UNB.

"We believe in the rule of law and urged them [the delegation] not to release such reports in future," the minister was quoted by the UNB.

On the HRW's suggestion to disband Rab, Shafique said, "It's completely our own affairs whether we'll continue Rab or disband it."

There is no miscarriage of law in holding the war crimes and the BDR mutiny trials, he added.

Asked about his discussion with the delegation, Shafique said he had been able to explain the real situation to the HRW members who they had no clear idea about many things. "They made this report

because of their lack of knowledge about many things in Bangladesh."

Also on Thursday, Home Minister Shahara Khatun termed the HRW report an "intervention" and said, "Such interference by the Human Rights Watch was not fair."

The government and the people of the country hail Rab for its role in checking militancy and criminal activities, said Shahara at a police programme in the capital.

Yesterday, Suranjit Sengupta, minister without portfolio, said the HRW report was "mischievous and an intervention in the internal matter of a country".

Addressing a discussion organised by Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote in the capital's Public Library, Suranjit said the BNP-led government had formed the Rab and the US had trained the elite force.

"The Human Rights Watch has all of a sudden called upon the government to disband Rab. Who has given them [HRW] the right to raise such a demand," said the veteran leader of the ruling Awami League.

It was for the government to decide whether or not to disband Rab, he noted and hoped the rights body would maintain internationally recognised norms in making comments in future.

Rab and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) also criticised the HRW report.

It may be mentioned that a Dhaka court is holding trial of over 800 border force jawans and 23 civilians on charges of killing, arson, theft, looting, disposing bodies by dumping or burying in mass graves during the February 25-26, 2009 mayhem at Pilkhana in the capital.

On mutiny charges, about 4,000 BDR members have so far been sentenced to different terms in jail ranging from three months to seven years by special courts. Trial of some 2,000 jawans on similar charges is going on in four special courts set up at the BGB headquarters.

According to the HRW report, at least 47 detained border force members died in custody. Some of them might have died of natural causes but others succumbed to custodial torture, said Brad Adams, executive director of HRW in Asia.

KILLINGS ON BORDER

Indian SC to hear petition against BSF

PTI, New Delhi

The Indian Supreme Court on Monday will hear a plea for probe into the alleged extra-judicial killings by the Border Security Force (BSF) in the West Bengal border area.

A bench of Justice BS Chauhan and Justice Swatanter Kumar on Wednesday agreed to hear the plea and deferred it for Monday, when the matter would be taken up along with a similar petition raising the issue of extra-judicial killings.

Petitioner Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha or Masum, a Kolkata-based NGO, alleged that there were more than 200 cases where the BSF personnel indulged in extra-judicial killings, torture in the border area and those cases were never probed by the state police.

"The present case will show, the procedure followed by the West Bengal Police makes a mockery of the rule of law. This petition pertains to the cases of torture or torture followed by extra-judicial executions of more than 200 Indian nationals by the Border Security Force between 2005 and 2011," said petitioner's counsel Colin Gonsalves.

"In over 100 cases, there are eye witnesses to the BSF taking into custody the person concerned and there are eye witnesses to the torture in custody of the person concerned leading to his death," he further said.

The petition alleged that instead of registering an FIR against the BSF personnel, it was registered against the deceased and hence, the case was closed on that basis.

"As a result, not a single one of the more than 200 cases, set out in this petition, of torture and killing, has been investigated by the police. Thus the BSF operate above the law, their mechanical explanations as to how death came about is accepted as true in all cases, the statements of the eye witnesses are not recorded since no investigation is done and the case is closed," the petition alleged.

Seven kids

FROM PAGE 20

Chittagong around yesterday noon.

Borhan fell into the pond adjoining their home at Dakshin Hashimpur village while playing with his brother Raihan and a boy next-door around 2:00pm.

Raihan jumped into the water to save his brother, said family members. Being informed by their playmate, their parents and locals rushed them to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the doctor declared them dead, said Regun Barua, constable of CMCH police outpost.

In Jessore, Anki, 4, daughter of Akbar Hossain, and Apon, 5, son of Shariful Islam, drowned in a pond yesterday around 10:30am.

The two cousins were seen playing around a pond near their home at Ashingari village of Monirampur upazila around 10:00am.

Half an hour later, family members and locals found their bodies floating in the pond, said family sources.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reports Anki Khatun, 3, the only daughter of Alam Sheikh, drowned in Saluavita village in Sirajganj on Thursday morning.

Family sources said she went outside her home in the morning and was found floating in a nearby ditch around 12:30pm.

When family members took the body to a private hospital in Sirajganj, doctors declared her death.

Two kids in Islampur upazila of Jamalpur drowned in flood water on Thursday morning.

Shukur Ali alias Rubel, 3, son of Intaz Ali and two and a half years old Rina, daughter of Kitab Ali, of Charputimai union were cousins.

While playing, they drowned around 10:00am in the flood water surrounding their house.

After searching the missing children for hours, family members recovered the bodies from the flood water, said UP member Yusuf Ali quoting victims' family.

Connectivity is the key

FROM PAGE 20

keeping the basic structure of the villages intact.

The PURA strategy has currently been operational in several states of India for the last few years.

"The villages must be connected within themselves and with the main towns and metros through good roads and wherever needed, by railway communications. There must be other infrastructure like schools, colleges, hospitals and amenities for the local population and the visitors. This is physical connectivity," he explained.

Elaborating electronic connectivity, the 81-year-old scientist said the villages have to have access to good education from the best teachers, medical treatment and the latest necessary information, mainly about agriculture, fishery, horticulture and food processing.

"In the emerging knowledge era, the native knowledge has to be preserved and enhanced with the latest tools of technology, training and research," Abdul Kalam told the gathering of economists and development practitioners from the Asia-

Pacific region.

Once physical and electronic connectivity were in place, the knowledge connectivity would be enabled to help increase productivity, utilise spare time, make people aware of health welfare and ensure markets of products, he said.

"Knowledge connectivity progresses core competence of rural environment with addition to technology. Hence, these three connectivity tools integrate the way leading to economic connectivity," Abdul Kalam said.

"When we provide urban amenities to rural areas, we can lead to uplift of rural areas, attract investors, and introduce effectively useful systems like micro-finance and small-scale industries," he added.

In translating the idea, the noted scientist said, local resources and competencies had to be given the highest priority. Giving an example, he said, Khulna region of Bangladesh was rich in jute, bamboo and biodiversity. Therefore, industries based on jute and bamboo, and eco-tourism surrounding the Sundarbans could be the best options there, he illustrated.

Further delay

FROM PAGE 1

complaints to many," he said.

Prof Jamilur is doubtful of the bridge's construction in the near future. He, however, sees China as the silver lining.

"If the government can make a successful negotiation with China there could be a chance," he opined.

Asked how much the local agents were responsible for the WB's loan cancellation for Padma bridge, he mentioned Ventura International, local agent of disqualified China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC).

"The documents and photos submitted in the official pad of CRCC were proven false. I later came to know that the owner of CRCC's local agent company had threatened the Bridges Division officials of jeopardising the project," said Prof Jamilur.

He said the agent had set up an office in China and used the official pad of CRCC, but the Chinese firm later disowned the agent when the forgery was exposed.

Prof Jamilur said he had heard that the local agents tried to influence members of various committees of the bridge project, but failed.

The members of the committees and the design consultant of the project AECOM-Maunsell had followed the WB guidelines and done everything accurately but the bank at some points directed and compelled them to change their decision which delayed the project, he added.

He said five firms had qualified in the pre-qualification of the main bridge construction through bidding, which had both concrete bore piling and steel recking piling options. Later on WB's suggestion, the design was changed and only the steel piling option was kept leaving the option open for the qualified firms to hire a company with steel piling experience.

"But the WB did not agree to that and pressed to float a fresh pre-qualification tender although for two months we had tried to make them understand that a fresh effort would not yield any positive result," said Prof Jamilur, adding that the same five firms also qualified in the second pre-qualification tender.

The qualified companies are: Samsung C & T Corporation of Korea, China Major Bridge Engineering Co Ltd, Daelim-Bam-VCI (a joint venture entity of Korea), Vinci-HCC (a joint venture of France and India) and China Communication Construction Company Ltd.

At one stage, the WB started pressing for CRCC, which had been disqualified earlier.

"Although we told the bank that the firm had failed to meet the criteria of steel piling, the WB repeatedly told us to collect more information from the Chinese firm," he said, adding that the CRCC had sent some photos of steel

piling of a bridge in China which, in fact, were of Auckland Bay Bridge in California.

"As the fraudulence was exposed, the CRCC claimed that it had not submitted the photos although its local agent used the CRCC's official pads. Ventura International then wrote a letter to the Bridges Division withdrawing itself from the Padma bridge race," said Prof Jamilur.

About the construction supervision consultancy, he said five firms -- SNC-Lavalin, Oriental, AECOM-Maunsell, Helcrow and High Point Randal -- had been selected in two-envelope system and following the quality and cost-based process prescribed by the WB. Marking of the technical quality was 90 percent while of cost 10 percent.

At this the government formed a committee headed by the then Bridges Division secretary. When the task of the committee was almost done and it was about to submit its report, the committee was mysteriously dissolved. There were allegations that the local agents of the pre-qualified firms were making desperate efforts to influence the committee members, he said.

"A new committee headed by me was then formed and we started evaluating the tender documents of the firms. SNC-Lavalin became the number one qualified firm in our extensive technical and financial evaluation," said Prof Jamilur.

He said the evaluation report was sent to the WB but the Canadian police raided the office of SNC-Lavalin just before the approval of the report. It eventually stalled everything.

The WB, however, had no objection about the evaluation report, he added.

On the alleged corruption in appointing the construction consultant, he said, "We know about a diary recovered by the Canadian police in which reportedly is a list of some people, including a [Bangladeshi] minister and other government officials, to whom SNC-Lavalin had pledged a certain percentage. But I think it's not the diary only as the WB would not do that [cancel the loan] based on a diary. There must be something else."

Asked whether the WB made a harsh decision, he said Bangladesh's economic strength is very poor and hence it cannot fight with a strong institution like the WB. "But China can. WB's policy for China is more flexible than that for Bangladesh."

Robert Zoellick, the immediate past WB president, had changed the bank's policy against corruption following China's warning that it would not borrow money from the bank, if there is any excess in the name of checking corruption, he pointed out.

He referred to a provision of the WB policy where it is said, "Our policy will not be applied uniformly to all

Land holdings in the region were of small sizes, said Abdul Kalam suggesting that creation of farmers' cooperative movements, facilitating mechanised farming, silo storage, value addition and marketing of agro-products were necessary to utilise the limited scope.

"When farmers' production increases, these cooperatives on behalf of the individual farmers will forecast and establish networks with markets to facilitate rapid movement from farm-gate to optimal shelves across the nation and the world."

He said the agricultural education system for the scientists, extension workers and farmers should highlight this thinking in their syllabus.

Responding to a query on the region's water-sharing issue, Abdul Kalam said water was not scarce in this region, but its management. "Regional cooperation is a must to this end," he pointed out.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Secretary Mihir Kanti Majumder and Cirdap Director General Durga P Paudyal also spoke.

Shab-e-Barat

FROM PAGE 1

In their prayers, devotees sought divine blessings for long life, peace, progress and happiness for themselves, their families, relatives and friends as well as the nation and the Muslim Ummah.

They also visited graves of their relatives and offered fateha seeking blessings for the departed souls.

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh and other socio-religious organisations held Quran khwani and mila mahfils to observe the night.

Bangladesh Television Bangladesh Betar, private television channels and radio stations aired special programmes, while newspapers published special articles highlighting the significance of the night.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police conducted eight mobile courts to prevent people from exploding crackers in the capital.

IMF chief

FROM PAGE 20

The IMF's new assessment due later this month, but said conditions since the last forecast had "regrettably" become "more worrisome", although she hailed recent steps to tackle Europe's woes.

The IMF chief cited measures adopted after a European leaders' meeting in Brussels last week and the European Central Bank's move on Thursday to cut interest rates to historic lows as proof of progress.

But "from the IMF perspective, we believe that more needs to be done in order to really complete the architectural job of the eurozone: A monetary union, a banking union followed by a fiscal union".

"It's also a question of implementation -- diligent, rigorous, steady implementation," Lagarde added.

Lagarde's comments came a day after Beijing's second interest rate cut in less than a month surprised markets and stoked worries about the world's second-biggest economy.

Then, the European Central Bank cut its main interest rate to a record low 0.75 percent, while the Bank of England kept its rate even but announced 50 billion pounds (\$78 billion) in additional stimulus.

Lagarde applauded Asian nations, particularly China, for turning their focus away from depending on exports to measures that boost demand at home, adding that the "rebalancing that came with the crisis shouldn't go with the crisis".

The IMF chief will be in Jakarta on July 8-10, and in Bangkok on July 11-12, where she will participate in a seminar organised by the IMF, the Bank of Thailand and the Asian Development Bank.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

testimony of another success of the South Asian country.

He made the remarks on Thursday while addressing a reception accorded to Ameerah Haq at the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN in New York, according to a message received here yesterday.

Hailing the marked success of Bangladeshis soldiers in UN Peacekeeping Missions across the world, the UN Secretary-General said the training programme of Rajendrapur Peace Building Institute impressed him during his visit to Bangladesh.

AK Abdul Momen, the permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN, praised Ban for his important role in different fields including climate change, food security, education, women development and disarmament.

He also urged the UN to take steps for infrastructure development in the developing countries, including Bangladesh.

Ameerah Haq also praised achievements of Bangladesh in various fields.

She mentioned the social safety network programme and national guarantee service scheme for employment taken by the Bangladesh government as well as its rapid response to any international activity.