

Bangladesh increasingly attractive destination

UNCTAD secy gen speaks on FDI scope

UNB, Dhaka

Secretary General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Mukhisa Kituyi has said Bangladesh is an increasingly attractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI).

UNCTAD's Investment Policy Review (IPR) reflects the desire of Bangladesh to build a successful investment framework and policy environment that attract not only foreign investors, but also promote domestic private sector development, he said.

"This will contribute to positioning the country as an important manufacturing centre in Asia," Kituyi said in the sixth session of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission of UNCTAD held in Geneva recently, according to a message received here yesterday.

IPR is a strategic analysis that provides an objective evaluation of a country's legal, regulatory and institutional framework for FDI to attract increased foreign and direct investment.

The IPR findings were discussed at the session in presence of a high-level delegation from Bangladesh, including Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu.

The final draft of IPR was earlier presented at a workshop in Dhaka in March 2013.

The UNCTAD's recommendations, if effectively implemented, could help improve the investment environment, boost the levels of investment,

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Thousands join the namaz-e-janaza on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday for Nazrul Islam and his driver Jahangir who were abducted, murdered and dumped into the Shitalakkhya. *Bottom left*, torn out by agitated locals, a billboard bearing the photos of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Nur Hossain, an accused in the case filed for the abduction. *Bottom right*, angry locals vandalise an office of Nur Hossain.



PHOTO: STAR

N'ganj enraged

FROM PAGE 1

The abduction and release of Saiful came at a time when Narayanganj is reeling from last week's abduction and brutal killing of seven people.

The latest incident happened barely a day after the bodies of Nazrul Islam, Chandan Sarker and five others were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river. The seven were kidnapped in broad daylight in Narayanganj on Sunday.

Nazrul and his four associates and Chandan and his driver were kidnapped separately along with their cars, but around the same time soon after they came out of the court area. Police suspect the same group was behind their abduction and killing.

Narayanganj district lawyers association yesterday called a daylong hartal in the district for tomorrow, protesting the killing of Chandan Sarker. The BNP, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal extended their support to the strike.

Earlier in the day, Saiful's wife Afrin Sultana said the kidnappers demanded Tk 20 lakh in ransom over the mobile phone of Hannan, manager of her husband's office.

"My husband is a simple businessman and is not involved in politics," she said.

Afrin said Hannan might be involved in the abduction. "Why the kidnappers phoned him [Hannan] for money, and not me?"

Police arrested Hannan for interrogation.

But law enforcers have yet to arrest anyone in the case for the abduction of Nazrul and his four aides.

Two prime accused in the case are Nur Hossain, councillor of ward-4 of Narayanganj City Corporation, and Hazi Mohammad Yasin, general secretary of Siddhirganj AL.

Police said the two are on the run.

On Thursday, angry locals set fire to two offices of Nur at Shimrail on Dhaka-Chittagong highway after a namaz-e-janaza for Nazrul. They also vandalised Nur's sand trading office near Kanchpur bridge.

Khandaker Golam Faruk, additional deputy inspector general (Dhaka range) of police, said they are trying to arrest the accused. "Measures have been taken so that they cannot flee the country."

Earlier on April 16, armed men

kidnapped Abu Bakar Siddique, husband of prominent environment lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan, from Narayanganj.

He, however, was freed by his captors about 33 hours after the abduction. Law enforcers are yet to identify the culprits and ascertain their motive.

FURY, DEMONSTRATION

Yesterday, several hundred people took to the streets in Shanarpar area, demanding immediate rescue of Saiful, halting traffic movement on Dhaka-Chittagong highway for an hour till 1:00pm.

The agitators left the highway on an assurance from the law enforcers to this end.

Locals gave law enforcers an ultimatum to rescue Saiful by yesterday evening.

But the law enforcers failed, and the locals took to the streets again, trying to block Dhaka-Chittagong highway



Nur Hossain

around 6:30pm. Police thwarted the attempt by charging batons, firing tear shells and blank shots.

Iqbal Hossain, a resident of Shanarpar, said incidents of abduction and mugging are taking place frequently in the district lately, but the law enforcers are failing to check these.

"We get frightened to see unknown faces and new vehicles in our area," he said, demanding the arrest of the real culprits. "Otherwise, there will be an outburst of public anger."

Narayanganj has become a terrorised city, said Tajul Islam, a resident of Signboard area.

"This is an unliveable situation. How can seven people be abducted in broad daylight? We are feeling unsafe."

"We urge the prime minister and the home minister to take proper steps so that we can live here. We want security of our lives," he said.

LOST FAITH

A group of Supreme Court lawyers yesterday visited Chandan's house at Jalkuri in Narayanganj and conveyed their sympathy to the family.

After the visit, noted jurist Shahdeen Malik demanded withdrawal of all Rab officials from Narayanganj as people have lost their faith in the force.

He demanded that a new Rab office be set up there with new officers. The eminent lawyer also wanted an immediate end to arrests by plainclothes men.

NUR HOSSAIN

Vice-president of Siddhirganj AL, Nur Hossain made news headlines in the past for his sand trading by filling up the Shitalakkhya and extortion in and around the area. There are allegations that he and his associates control the drug trade there.

He faces 22 cases in Fatullah and Siddhirganj police stations, including six for murder, according to media reports.

Nazrul's family alleged the Nur Hossain was behind the abduction and the killing of Nazrul and his four aides. They say Nur has done this over past rivalries with Nazrul, a claim Nur

Don't go out alone

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The directives came a day after BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced an "organisational red alert" for the alliance men.

The 10-point directive asked the alliance leaders and activists to look after each other's safety and also the security of people. The opposition men were also urged to stand by the family members of abduction and killing victims.

At the press meet, Fakhru said nobody in the country is guaranteed a natural death now. He blasted the government for blaming the BNP over the recent killings, abductions and forced disappearances.

KHALEDA ISSUES RED ALERT

Addressing a May Day rally at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan on Thursday, Khaleda issued an "organisational red alert" to the alliance leaders and activists across the country over the "killing, abduction and forced disappearance."

The former PM said she would take to the streets along with the people to save the country, its people and democracy from the clutches of the "killer government."

She called upon the opposition men to get ready for waging an anti-government movement when she would make a call at a "proper time."

Khaleda also urged her party men to encircle anybody, be they Rab or police, if they try to pick up any person illegally.

Condemning the abduction and killing of seven people, including a panel mayor of Narayanganj, she said Sheikh Hasina must be held accountable for the murders as the PM has been in charge of the home ministry.

"This government is a bloodthirsty Dracula.... It's an illegal and repressive government. It can't stay in office any more," she added.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal organised the rally.

Party sources said some mid-level central and district leaders of BNP went into hiding after Khaleda announced the organisational red alert for the alliance men.

rejected before going into hiding.

A truck helper-turned driver, he joined the BNP in 1992. With the help of Shamim Osman, now an AL MP, Nur joined the AL after the party came to power in 1996, sources said.

He was not in the area from 2001-2008, as he was on the police blacklist, media reports say.

During the 2007-2008 caretaker government rule, a red notice was sent to the Interpol for his arrest.

He returned to the area after the AL came to power again following the 2008 elections. Subsequently, he got elected as a councillor in the first Narayanganj city polls in 2011.

MORE ABDUCTION?

A buying house employee in Narayanganj has been missing for the last two days, family members said.

The victim is Taiyabur Rahman from Siddhirganj in Kadamtali area.

His father Eklhasur Rahman said Taiyabur did not return home after he went to his office in the capital's Mirpur on Wednesday.

The family filed a general diary with Siddhirganj Police Station yesterday.

(Our Narayanganj correspondent contributed to this report.)

Ershad wanted to grab power after Zia killing

FROM PAGE 1

"There is no rationale for imposing martial law. The vice-president is there," some of the generals told Ershad, reminding him of the constitutional provision that allowed the vice-president to act as president.

Even as he was planning to impose martial law, Ershad did not inform Vice-President Abdus Sattar about the assassination of Zia until some generals reminded him about the constitutional provision.

In the face of strong opposition to his plan, Ershad along with some other generals went to the Combined Military Hospital to meet the acting president, who was undergoing treatment there.

Sattar was taken to the Bangabhaban from the hospital. A cabinet meeting was held there. And the assumed charge as acting president.

Ershad's desire was thus not brought to fruition at the time. But a new story started unfolding later.

The presidential vacancy caused by death of Zia was to be filled within the following six months through holding an election.

At his first press conference, Sattar had declared that he was holding the post of acting president for a transitional period and that he would not contest the presidential election because of his ill health.

But an ailing Sattar surprisingly reversed his announcement in less than three days. He indicated that he wanted to contest the election to become the elected chief executive of the government.

Around a dozen ministers, including then Prime Minister Shah Aziz Rahman and those whom Zia had planned to dismiss, became the most active promoters of a Sattar presidency. Knowing the army's preference for Sattar, they only intensified their plan.

The choice of Sattar for the presidency suited both the army leaders and ministers. The reasons were clear.

The army, led by Ershad, had been successful in establishing control over the Sattar-led government. It had compelled Sattar to order the police to hand over Major General Abul Manzur, a veteran freedom fighter, to army custody. Manzur's murder, according to many, buried the possibility of unearthing the masterminds behind the Zia killing.

The way Ershad influenced the acting president over the Manzur issue convinced him and his aides that Sattar was old and infirm and so they would be able to influence him as and when the occasion demanded.

Besides, like Ershad and some other generals dominant at the army headquarters, Sattar had also been repatriated from Pakistan, where he served as Pakistan's chief election commissioner, after the emergence of Bangladesh. Sattar, appointed CEC by the eventually disgraced President Yahya Khan, presided over the general elections which gave the Awami League an overall majority in the Pakistan national assembly in December 1970.

Within a week of Sattar's being chosen as the BNP's presidential candidate, it was discovered that the constitution did not allow him to

contest the presidential election as he was holding an office of profit. It was then that the issue of amending the constitution to enable Sattar to contest the election came up.

On July 6, 1981, the leader of the House, Shah Aziz, placed the constitution amendment bill in parliament. But this time around, a large number of BNP MPs refused to cast their votes for the bill.

The BNP had 251 MPs. And for passage of the bill, support of 221 MPs was required. But only 145 BNP MPs were present in the House on the day it was scheduled to pass the constitution amendment bill.

As many as 106 BNP MPs remained absent from parliament on the day. They staged an unprecedented protest, ignoring the party whip about their presence in the House. They were not even worried about losing their membership in parliament under Article 70 of the constitution, which did not allow MPs to ignore the party whip.

The House could not proceed with its scheduled business to pass the constitution amendment bill. The Speaker had to adjourn the sitting to avoid a showdown.

That unprecedented protest by the BNP MPs made Sattar's men nervous. That also created a crisis in the government. At that stage, the army intervened and thus, its support for Sattar was revealed.

"Although we are not yet prepared to take over, if the bill is not passed the army will have no alternative but to do so," Ershad told Moudud Ahmed, who was deputy prime minister in President Zia's cabinet, at a

meeting after parliament had failed to pass the constitution amendment bill.

The same night Ershad arranged a meeting at the Bangabhaban between Sattar and the BNP's dissenting group. Due to pressure from Ershad, the dissidents finally decided to cast their votes in favour of the constitution amendment bill.

But ensuring presence of large number of dissident MPs in the House again appeared as a challenge. This time around, the ruling coterie put severe pressure on MPs belonging to the dissenting group. Each of the 40 ministers was assigned the specific job of contacting certain MPs who were offered all sorts of temptation. When bribery in terms of cash did not work, other favours were offered; and where none worked, intimidation and threats of lodging false criminal cases were thrown in.

Through questionable means stretching over two days, they managed to get some dissident MPs on their side, but not enough to have the bill passed. Then MPs were warned continuously through newspapers, radio and television that they would lose their seats in parliament if they did not join the session and vote for the bill. Written notices were also sent to all MPs to remind them of this eventuality. Finally, the constitution amendment bill was passed, enabling acting President Sattar to contest the presidential election.

In the run-up to the presidential election, Ershad openly supported Sattar. In an interview with a local

weekly, he stated that there was no other political party which could replace the BNP. Throughout the election campaign the army stood by Sattar. It was the army that was his main source of strength.

Sattar won the polls held on November 15, 1981, by defeating Awami League candidate Dr Kamal Hossain by a huge margin of votes.

After the Sattar-led new government began its journey, Ershad began openly demanding a special role for the army in the civil administration within a constitutional framework.

On November 28, 1981 the day after Sattar had formed a 42-member council of ministers, Ershad sent a statement from the army headquarters to editors of national dailies and news agencies to make clear the armed forces' view on the civil administration.

He stated that there must be constitutional provisions to specify the military's role in society. He suggested placing this matter before a presidential committee for in-depth study.

President Sattar was reluctant to proceed with the army chief's proposal. At one stage he even decided to send Ershad into forced retirement. But the decision was leaked to Ershad, who sent troops to the radio and television stations to stop broadcasting the president's decision.

After that incident, Ershad waited only for a few days. On the evening of March 23, military commanding officers met and worked out their plan and strategy for a coup. The Bangabhaban was cordoned off by

troops on Ershad's directives that night. And in the early hours of March 24, then BDR chief Major General Atiqur Rahman, air force chief Air-Vice Marshal Sultan Mahmud and naval chief Rear Admiral M A Khan entered the Bangabhaban. They placed a written statement before President Sattar and mounted pressure on him to sign on it and hand over power to the army. But the president was unwilling to sign the statement.

"Make your old haggard understand," Major General Sadikur Rahman, military secretary to the president, had asked Erfan Ali Khan, special security officer of Sattar.

Erfan, a police officer, then went to President Sattar's room and talked to him.

"I agree to sign the statement if some parts of it are deleted," Sattar told Erfan, who then passed on the message to top military officials.

Then they brought about some amendments to the statement which was turned into Sattar's address to the nation. The address was recorded and sent to the radio and television for broadcast. Accompanied by Erfan, Sattar immediately left Bangabhaban for his own residence.

Thus Ershad finally seized power 128 days after the presidential election and 270 days after Zia's death.

[The report has been prepared on the basis of depositions of witnesses in the Gen Manzur murder case and the books, "Silent witness of a General" by Major General Moinul Hossain Chowdhury and "Democracy and the Challenge of Development" by Moudud Ahmed.]