

PM seeks more investment from Malaysia

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought increased investment from Malaysia for the mutual benefits of the two friendly countries.

The prime minister made the request when visiting Malaysian International Trade and Industries Affairs Minister Mustapa Mohammed met her at her official residence Ganabhaban.

After the meeting, PM's press secretary AKM Shameem Chowdhuri briefed reporters.

He said Sheikh Hasina and the Malaysian minister at their meeting discussed various issues relating to mutual interest, including trade, business and investment.

Currently, the investment volume of Malaysia in Bangladesh is about US\$ 3 billion.

The prime minister said her government has created an investment-friendly congenial atmosphere in the country which may help cut the trade gap between Bangladesh and Malaysia.

"The people of Bangladesh will be

benefited more if the trade gap between Bangladesh and Malaysia is reduced," she told the Malaysian minister.

Hasina also said her government wants to facilitate the private sector of the country so that the relations between the entrepreneurs of the two countries get strengthened further.

Malaysian Minister Mustapa highly appreciated Bangladeshis working in Malaysia saying they are very much hard working, sincere and law abiding ones.

Mustapa said there is a scope for further boosting the relations in the fields of trade, business and industries between the two countries.

About the existing huge trade gap, he said the trade gap will reduce to a great extent if the proposed business forum between the two countries comes into operation.

PM's Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi, Principal Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Norlin Othman and Deputy CEO of Matrade Dzulkiifi Mahmud were, among others, present during the meeting.



Bangalee settlers and indigenous people yesterday march in a peace procession to defuse the prevailing tension in Rangamati town. Inset, law enforcers on the watch for trouble.

Third Border haat opens in Tripura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The first border 'haat' (market) along Tripura-Bangladesh frontier was inaugurated yesterday at Srinagar village in the Indian state of Tripura.

This will be the third such market on Bangladesh-India border. The two others are situated at Baliyari of Kurigram and Kalaichar in Meghalaya.

Commerce ministers of Bangladesh and India jointly inaugurated the haat.

Bangladesh Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said on the occasion that his country wanted full implementation of the Indira-Mujib pact signed in 1974 and a solution of all pending issues.

Tofail's Indian counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman said enhancing trade and commerce with Bangladesh will improve the relations between the two countries.

Pitching strongly for transit between India and Bangladesh, she said Tripura is likely to become the gateway in tandem with implemen-

tation of the 'Act East' policy adopted by the government of India.

Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar said issues like enclave, boundary problem and water sharing with Bangladesh should be resolved through negotiations and both the countries should emerge as true friends.

Sarkar also asked for access to Chittagong port and Ashuganj river port on Meghna, which are within 75km radius of the Indian border.

Business at the haat would take place once a week among the people living within 5 km radius of the border who would sell and buy locally produced goods.

No local taxes would be imposed on the items to be sold in the haats and currencies of both the countries would be accepted.

Sitharaman said trade at the haat should not be confined to the perishable goods only and some products of local industries like handicrafts should also be sold in the haats.

5 JCD men held

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Nazmul's elder brother KM Kamrul Islam told The Daily Star that the former was a final year student of English department in Kabi Nazrul Government College.

He claimed that at first some people in plain clothes detained Jashim on Saturday night and took him to the Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka.

The four others went to the park after Jashim was "forced" to call them there over the phone.

Later, witnesses told the relatives of the five that the students were taken to the DB headquarters at Minto Road, said Kamrul.

"We went to the DB office, the local police station and Rab office but none of them admitted to pick the five up."

"But we stood outside the DB office for around three days with the hope that we will get them back. Later, the five were taken to the court by none other than some DB men," he said.

Kamrul claimed that even though his brother was a JCD activist he was not involved with violence.

Rasheduzzaman, sub-inspector of Mirpur Police Station, told this correspondent that the five were arrested in connection with a recent violence at Mirpur Ansar Camp area.

"DB police is now investigating the case," he added.

Saiful Islam, additional deputy commissioner (west) of DB, said the five also face charges of vandalism and arson carried out during the ongoing blockade by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman said, "It will be very regretting if the allegation by the families that no one had admitted to pick up the five students is true."

3 killed

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master and driver succeeded to anchor the launch at the Chandpur river port," she added.

After anchoring the launch, all the injured were rushed to Chandpur General Hospital. Later, they were transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Shahana died on the spot while Shakil and Rupa died on the way to the DMCH.

Hours after the collision, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) cancelled route permits of both the launches, Shafiqul Haque, director (river safety and traffic) of the BIWTA, told The Daily Star.

Department of Shipping (DoS) has formed a four-member probe body headed by its Ship Surveyor Shahriar Hossain to investigate the accident. The probe body was asked to submit its report by 16 working days, said DoS Chief Engineer Fakhru Islam.

The DoS has also suspended fitness certificate and registrations of both the vessels as well as driving license of four masters of the two vessels, he told The Daily Star.

Two accident cases have been filed with the marine court against the master and other staff of the launches. Police seized Parabat-9 at Barisal.

Mujibur Rahman, an official of Sundarban Navigation Company, submitted a written statement to the Chandpur Model Police Station, demanding compensation from the officials of Parabat-9.

Blockade violence

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buses has increased, people are still suffering for lack of vehicles at district levels.

Amid this chaotic situation, the BNP-led alliance has called hartal in Pabna and Rangpur today and in Sylhet, Joypurhat and ten districts of Khulna tomorrow. The Khulna districts are Jessore, Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Narail, Jhenidah, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia and Magura.

Both of yesterday's deaths were caused allegedly by pro-blockade pickets.

In Chittagong, a man was killed when a truck on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway under Mirsarai upazila skidded off into a roadside ditch after pickets threw petrol bombs at it on Monday night. The deceased was identified as Enam Hossain, 33, who hailed from Satkania upazila in Chittagong.

Two other persons -- Hafez Hannan, 35, and Suman Shil, 32 -- were also injured in the incident, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Najmul Hasan, sub-inspector (SI) of Joraganj police station said victims were rushed to a local hospital where on-duty doctors declared Enam dead at around 11:00pm yesterday.

In Noakhali Sadar upazila, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver was killed after being hit by brickbats hurled allegedly by pickets early yesterday.

The victim Jamir Uddin, 32, was from

Char Jabber village under Subarnachar upazila of the district.

Although newspaper-carrying vehicles were out of the blockade's ambit, pickets vandalised a microbus carrying copies of the daily Prothom Alo of the district's Senbag yesterday morning. Injured driver Afzal Hossain, 29, and the helper Choton, 20, were admitted to the Senbag Upazila Health Complex. Police arrested one person in this connection.

Meanwhile, in the capital four crude bombs went off near a stage where Health Minister Mohammad Nasim was seated during a programme on the Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital premises. None however was injured in the blast.

Porikkhit Chowdhury, public relations officer of the ministry, said two bombs exploded behind the dais while two more in front around 1:30pm. Yet the programme, organised by voluntary organisation Sandhani, continued amid tight security.

Five crude bombs were recovered from the Dhaka University's Arts Faculty building and Mokarram Bhaban yesterday morning as the 49th convocation of the country's premier public university was about to begin.

Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh police station, said students found four explosives inside a toilet on the ground floor of the Arts

Faculty building. A team of bomb disposal unit of Detective Branch (DB) recovered the bombs around 11:00am.

The detectives recovered the other bomb from near the entrance of Mokarram Bhaban, which is adjacent to the convocation place. No one was arrested yet in this connection.

Police picked up three youths from Motijheel with five crude bombs after they exploded several ones there.

In Chittagong police arrested Satkania upazila unit ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Nurul Haque, 55. He was accused in several cases in connection with arson and vandalism.

The arrestee was Nurul Haque, 55, ameer of Satkania upazila unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, said police.

In Pabna, police detained three top-ranking Jamaat leaders including the Ameer of Pabna Jamaat yesterday morning.

Acting on a tip off, police picked up Pabna district unit Jamaat Ameer Abdul Rahim, Ameer of Pura Jamaat Abdul Latif and district unit Jamaat leader Iqbal Hossain, sources said.

Iqbal Hossain is also chairman of Pabna unit's Olama Mashayakh Parishad, a Jamaat's establishment in the district headquarters.

They were accused in several criminal cases in connection with arson and vandalism, police sources said.

Khaleda's adviser

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8:40pm, witnesses said, adding that the attack lasted no more than three minutes.

They said the assailants came on three bikes and all the six were wearing hooded jackets.

The motive behind the attack remains unclear, but several highly placed sources told this correspondent that it was meant to intimidate the opposition party.

Gulshan police said they launched a drive to catch the attackers, but they were yet to file a case as of filing this report at 3:00am today.

A former foreign secretary, Reaz was passing through lane no-46 of Gulshan-2, just behind the Hotel Westin.

The lane is just about 50 yards long and police members were present on both ends of the lane when the shooting happened, witnesses said.

Party sources said Reaz was on way to this Bashundhara residence after meeting Khaleda at her Gulshan office, where the BNP chief remains confined for the past 11 days.

When he entered the narrow lane after coming out of Khaleda's office around 8:30pm, the attackers followed him and then waylaid him with their bikes.

They first asked him to come out of the car. When he demanded their identities, they smashed the windshields with hammers and started shooting him. The BNP leader then got down from the car and crawled to a nearby building for safety. The attackers then firebombed the car and fled, said Titu Das, an electrician of a nearby building.

In no time, police arrived at the scene and took him to the hospital.

Some security guards tried to catch the attackers, but they backed away as they fired blank shots and threw bricks at them.

Reaz Rahman's driver, who escaped the attack unhurt, called the family to inform them of the shooting.

Only three days ago, assailants set ablaze the car of Sabih Uddin Ahmed, also an adviser of Khaleda Zia, at Gulshan-2. Sabih Uddin was not in the car at the time of the attack, which too was carried out by six people on three

bikes, said his driver.

KHALEDA'S STATEMENTS

The BNP chief warned the government that consequences of the planned criminal act would not be good.

"I have no words to condemn and protest the attempt to murder Reaz Rahman," she said in the statement last night.

Khaleda also warned the government would not be able to cling to power by carrying out such "naked attacks" on the opposition.

She demanded the immediate arrests and punishment of the attackers.

In another statement earlier in the day, the former prime minister said those sacrificing their lives for restoring democracy would be declared as "national heroes" and that the party would compensate their families once it returned to power.

Undersigned by BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed, the statement also said the family members of the victims would be given jobs fitting to their qualifications.

'Italian president to step down within hours'

AFP, Strasbourg

Italian President Giorgio Napolitano is to step down "within hours," well before the 2020 expiry of his term, Italy's Premier Matteo Renzi said yesterday, setting the stage for an uncertain search for a successor.

Napolitano, 89, announced last month he would leave office early, citing his age and health, after he reluctantly agreed in 2013 to serve a second term to resolve deadlocked parliamentary elections that year.

Renzi, speaking in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, hailed Napolitano as a long-serving public servant who dedicated his life to Europe and his country.

Napolitano "will stand down within the next few hours with a long list of achievements to his credit," Renzi said as he marked the end of Italy's six-month rotating presidency of the European Union.

20-party to toughen blockade

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unlock BNP's central office to allow party men in, added the party leader.

On the other hand, the AL-led 14-party grand alliance yesterday instructed its grassroots leaders and activists to form immediately "action committees" across the country, and help police thwart "the opposition's anti-people movement," said sources in the combine.

The committees would "identify terrorists" in their areas and hand them over to police. It will also assist law enforcers in maintaining law and order.

Commenting on the issue, eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal, also former adviser to a caretaker government, told BBC Bangla that the formation of such committees would further aggravate the ongoing political conflict.

AL insiders said the party already asked its lawmakers and grassroots leaders to be on the streets and help the local administration foil the opposition's movement.

AL President Sheikh Hasina on Monday asked all to identify bomb attackers, conspirators and those

involved in violence, and hand them over to police.

She also directed party's grassroots leaders to resist the violent activities of the BNP-Jamaat men in their areas.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to at least 10 district and thana AL leaders, who said they were asked to take to the streets and remain alert.

Jaglal Haider, lawmaker of Satkhira-4 and president of Shyamnagar thana AL unit, said they would form a committee in a day or two to resist "subversive activities by the BNP-led alliance".

Meanwhile, AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah ruled out any possibility of the ruling party making compromise with the BNP. Several other AL leaders also echoed his words.

Khaleda announced the blockade for an indefinite period after she failed to come out of her Gulshan office to hold a rally in front of BNP's Nayapalton office to mark the first anniversary of the January 5 polls as "Democracy Killing Day".

Law enforcers have kept Khaleda confined to the office since January 3.

Drone for reporting

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CNN has partnered with the Georgia Tech Research Institute to collect data for the programme. The FAA said it will analyse that information to develop rules about using drones for news gathering.

"Our aim is to get beyond hobby-grade equipment and to establish what options are available and workable to produce high quality video journalism," said David Vigilante, CNN's senior vice president of legal.

Vigilante said he hopes that the test programme leads to the safe and more widespread use of drones in US airspace.

The FAA has restricted drone use in the United States out of fear that they could come in contact with airplanes. Drones could also cause damage or

injury by falling out of the sky.

There are no drone pilot licenses, and several drones have come close to making contact with planes -- in October, 41 pilots reported seeing a drone, or unmanned aircraft, during flight, according to the FAA.

As a result, the FAA has set up a handful of largely uninhabited regions across the country where people can test out drones for commercial use. Currently, the agency only allows certain lightweight drones for commercial flights of up to 400 feet.

But the FAA is expected to soften some of the rules this year, as drone technology become more commonplace. Drones can be used in search and rescue operations, and they can be flown into dangerous areas to broad-

cast news to the public.

"Unmanned aircraft offer news organisations significant opportunities," said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. "We hope this agreement with CNN and the work we are doing with other news organisations and associations will help safely integrate unmanned news gathering technology and operating procedures into the National Airspace System."

Several other companies are making big investments in drones as well. Facebook (FB, Tech30) is hiring people for its drone team. Amazon (AMZN, Tech30) has said it wants to use drones to deliver small packages over short distances. And Google (GOOGL, Tech30) acquired Titan Aerospace, which makes high-altitude, solar-powered drones.