

STANDING TALL



PHOTO: STAR

Workers give the Central Shaheed Minar a facelift yesterday ahead of the International Mother Language Day.

Male visitor registration US extends deadline for Bangladesh, 6 other countries

REUTERS, Washington

The US Justice Department said on Friday temporary visitors from seven nations will get four more weeks to register under an anti-terrorism programme that has been criticised for unfairly targeting Middle Eastern men.

It said the extension covered males who are 16 or older and nationals of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Most individuals required to register are students, present on extended business travel or visiting family members for a prolonged period, the department said.

Arab and immigration groups and some foreign nations have complained that Middle Eastern men have been unfairly singled out.

The Justice Department said the Immigration and Naturalisation Service believed the extension would be "appropriate" to assist some of the visitors in completing the registration requirements.

US officials said the countries selected for the programme are places where Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network or other terror groups have been active or where the United States has other "national security concerns."

The programme required the visitors to be fingerprinted and photographed when they enter the United States. A total of 25 nations have been covered by the programme that began in September, and more countries will be added in the future.

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Feb 16 | | 5-54 pm |
| Feb 17 | 6-31 am | |

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| Feb 16 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-10 |
| Zohr | 12-15 | 1-20 |
| Asr | 4-15 | 4-30 |
| Maghrib | 6-00 | 6-06 |
| Esha | 7-15 | 7-45 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

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City still in holiday hangover

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A holiday hangover continued in the city though offices reopened yesterday after a four-day Eid holiday including a weekend.

The capital looked deserted as most of the city dwellers who went home to celebrate the Eid-ul-Azha with their near and dear ones are yet to return.

The chaotic traffic jam was absent as transports were far less than normal. Usually crammed city service buses had seats for passengers.

Most of the shopping malls and markers remained closed.

Attendance at government and private offices was thin.

A lesser number of staff turned up at the Prime Minister's Office. Khaleda Zia came to office at about 11:45pm as she had no important schedule, sources there said.

Attendance was very thin at the Secretariat and at other government and semi-government offices. Many of the government employees took leave in addition to the Eid holiday.

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Morshed wants border irritants talked out

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh believes its differences with India can be resolved through sustained talks, said Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan in New Delhi yesterday.

"We should not allow border incidents to act as a stumbling block," he said at a press conference after Friday's talks with Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha.

Khan said he was not aware of the "15 million Bangladeshi immigrants" in India. When such a problem arises, it should be sorted out through a laid-down procedure, he said.

After talks between Sinha and Khan, the two countries decided to address the illegal immigration issue on the basis of the 1992 communiqué signed during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to New Delhi.

The two foreign ministers agreed

that modalities to tackle the immigration problem would be worked out at the foreign secretary-level talks in Dhaka in April and at a joint commission meeting in July.

Everything will be discussed because hiding reality is pointless, Khan said.

When India and Bangladesh can work together in international, regional and sub-regional forums for peace, they can secure calm at borders as well, Khan hoped.

Dhaka found nothing after investigation based on an Indian list of terrorists and insurgent-training camps in Bangladesh, Khan said.

Bangladesh also gave India at Friday's meeting a list of 200 people wanted in criminal charges.

However, no discussion was held on Bangladesh's assurance that there would be no more illegal immigrant, he said.

"We did not discuss assurance. We must follow the procedure and have to have better immigration laws and efficient border manage-

ment."

Khan underscored sustained contacts between India and Bangladesh to strengthen bilateral relations. Bilateral relations cannot grow on mistrust, he added.

He pointed to a perception in Bangladesh that India is not doing enough to improve bilateral ties and a similar feeling in India about Bangladesh. "I think the truth lies somewhere in between."

Khan said gas export and transit to India are commercial issues and any decision on them should be taken on purely commercial considerations.

Dhaka wants not equal but equitable trade with New Delhi, he said.

Even if India withdrew all tariff barriers, Bangladeshi exports would hardly reach US\$200 million against over two billion dollars Indian exports, said Khan.

He thinks the trade parity

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Double murder in Hathazari AL calls hartal in Ctg Feb 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Awami League (AL) has announced a five-day agitation programme from today in demand for immediate arrest and punishment of the killers of an AL leader and a businessman in Hathazari thana on Wednesday.

The programme includes an eight-hour hartal in Chittagong on February 20, processions and rallies at the Dost Building AL office premises and at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city today and on the next three days.

Chittagong city and district units (north and south) of the AL announced the programme at a press conference at the press club here yesterday.

Faruq Mahmud Siddiqui, assistant office secretary of the district AL (north), and businessman Mohammad Solaiman Khan were gunned down allegedly by cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir. The killings took place at a governing body meeting of Kuais Burishchar Ziaul Ulum Madrassah at Nazu Miar Hat in Hathazari.

The two were chairman and

general secretary of the governing body.

Addressing the press conference, AL leaders blamed cadres of Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-Islami, for the double murder. They alleged that the killings were intended to turn Hathazari into a safe haven for criminals belonging to Jamaat-Shibir and to establish a reign of terror there.

District AL (north) General Secretary MA Salam read out a statement at the press conference. Leaders present included former minister and district AL (north) President Mosharraf Hossain, former minister and City AL President MA Mannan, district AL (south) General Secretary Moslem Uddin Ahmed and AL presidium member Aatur Rahman Khan Kaiser.

Meanwhile, a tense situation is prevailing in Nazu Mia Hat area. Security was stepped up with additional police force deployed yesterday.

None could be arrested till yesterday in connection with the killings.

Childhood cancer Only 15 beds in public hospitals!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are only 19 beds in public hospitals for treatment of under-15 cancer patients though five to six thousand of them are diagnosed every year.

Only the Dhaka Shishu Hospital and the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSSMU) provide treatment for childhood cancer.

The facility is too inadequate as only five per cent of such children get treatment, officials of Ashic, a foundation for childhood cancer,

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A file photo of Dolly the cloned sheep that was put to death Friday.

Dolly's death highlights cloning risks

AFP, Paris

The death of Dolly the sheep, the first animal to be successfully cloned from an adult cell, is as much a reminder of the dangers of cloning as was her controversial birth six years ago.

The heated debate over the ethics of cloning a human being -- a challenge towards which maverick scientists around the world continue to race -- has only become more intense since then.

Dolly's creator, Dr Ian Wilmut of the Roslin Institute in Scotland, is himself one of the fiercest critics of human cloning.

He and other scientists say that in all likelihood the life of a cloned human baby would be brutally short or burdened with grim handicaps.

This is reflected in the extremely high number of miscarriages -- as many as five out of six implanted cloned animal foetuses end in spontaneous abortion.

In the case of the world's first cat, a creature called Cc who was born in February 2002, researchers made 188 cloning attempts, which created 82 embryos but led to only one successful pregnancy.

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Software to help farmers find cure for rice diseases

REAZ AHMAD, back from the Philippines

Rice farmers facing problems from having stunted plants to diseased leaves and pest infestations can now have all the solutions in one package in the form of software called 'Rice Doctor'.

Developed recently by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Rice Doctor diagnoses factors limiting growth of rice crop.

Before consulting the Rice Doctor, farmers need to know their problems and pests and their usual symptoms. They can determine these symptoms by exploring various links in the software.

Once the symptoms are fed into the software, it looks for the problems similar to the ones facing a farmer. He can explore further links to find out the possible causes and once he confirms the causes, s/he will get a summary of the diagnosis.

For instance, farmers may face

problems like discoloured, unhealthy and physically damaged roots, necrotic and damaged sheaths, lodged plants, alkalinity, aluminium and boron toxicity or zinc deficiency.

Farmers may also face bacterial leaf blight, bacterial leaf streak, brown spot, rice blast, sheath blight, tungro or attacks from pests like armyworm, black bug, cricket, cutworm, green leafhopper, rice bug, rice gall midge, rice leafhopper, stem borer and zigzag leafhopper.

Once a farmer makes choices that describe the condition of his rice plant, he can go for further details of the symptoms in the menu bars until a diagnosis is reached.

"This (Rice Doctor) is an excellent tool to diagnose rice. We're now trying to further develop the software casting light on other areas of rice which might have been left out in the initial stage," said Albert Dean Atkinson, who heads the Rice Knowledge Bank division of the IRRI.

Atkinson along with his IRRI

colleague Mark Bell developed the Rice Doctor last year.

Rice Doctor is accessible on the Internet at www.knowledgebank.irri.org. It also has a CD version.

Asked how resource-poor farmers can access the software, Atkinson said, "In a country like Bangladesh where, I understand, information technology has not spread out, we can't expect all rice farmers to access the Internet."

"So to start with, the agriculture extension workers can be provided with the compact disks of the Rice Doctor so that they can help out rice farmers in solving their problems."

Atkinson suggested Bangladesh or any other rice growing nations could develop more country-specific software in future taking cue from Rice Doctor as it has been developed to resolve common rice-related problems.

He informed that apart from Rice Doctor, the web site also contains a

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Criminal Abbas put on 12-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abbas alias Killer Abbas, one of the 23 most wanted criminals, was yesterday placed on a 12-day remand for two separate cases.

Also yesterday, acting on his confessional statement, the Detective Branch (DB) of police recovered a double-barrelled gun from the Gulshan area.

Killer Abbas now possesses a huge cache of illegal arms that once

belonged to Kala Jahangir, another most wanted criminal, one DB official said. "We are trying to find the arms and arrest the associates of Abbas."

The DB produced Abbas before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate' court in the afternoon, praying for a ten-day remand. The close associate of Kala Jahangir was shown arrested in an arms case. The court granted a seven-day remand.

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PHOTO: STAR

Only three persons work in an office of the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday. Eid holiday mood still persists among officials.