

Diplomats in Iraq on way back home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diplomats and staff of the Bangladesh mission in Baghdad, now in Jordan, are expected to arrive in Dhaka soon.

Dhaka temporarily closed down its Baghdad mission on March 16 and Ambassador Sarwar Hossain Mollah reached Amman with other members of his staff.

"The date has not been finalised, but they (the diplomats of Baghdad mission) will return to Dhaka soon," a source at the foreign office said.

He said some of the 14 staff of the Baghdad mission and all the family members of the diplomats and the staff have already arrived in Dhaka.

Dhaka is also prepared to evacuate the Bangladeshis living in Iraq if they want to be shifted away.

Around 50 Bangladeshis are living in Iraq including six students. However, sources said the Bangladeshis, excepting the students, are not that much willing to

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Rally, sit-in at SUST

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The liaison committee at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), which is agitating to force the vice-chancellor (VC) of the university to resign, formed a human chain on the campus from 9:30am to 12:30pm.

A rally was also held later with Dr Ilyas Uddin Biswas in the chair. Students of seventh batch staged a two-hour sit-in in front of the Gol Chattar on the campus to press for immediate resolution of the crisis and resumption of classes at the earliest.

A delegation of the liaison committee comprising teachers, officers and employees met the education minister and education secretary at the education ministry in Dhaka yesterday.

The liaison committee has been agitating since March 9 to press for immediate resignation of the VC on charge of various irregularities. The minister and secretary also held a separate meeting with the rival group, the SUST Rakha Committee.

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VIP road ban on three-wheelers withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has withdrawn the ban on three-wheelers on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

The decision has been in effect since yesterday afternoon.

To help reduce traffic jam, the DMP on March 11 had banned three-wheelers to ply from Bijoy Sarani to Sheraton hotel during the peak hours of 8:00am to 9:00pm.

The traffic department claimed that about 1,200 three-wheelers ply the VIP road per hour and considered it a major cause of traffic jams.

But the DMP finally decided to withdraw the decision considering the plight of the commuters.

The UNB added, the DMP lifted the ban following Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's directive who took serious note of the public concern.

Campaign in Barisal, Sylhet ends tonight

BSS, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday prohibited meetings and processions in Barisal and Sylhet city corporations from midnight tonight to midnight of March 20.

An EC press release said, violation of the rule election is a punishable offence and the highest punishment for the offence is seven years' rigorous imprisonment with fine.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the EC held yesterday with Chief Election Commissioner MA Sayed in the chair discussed election preparation in the two city corporations.

Election Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman, MM Munsef Ali, AK Mohammad Ali and concerned officials of EC were present in the meeting.

On fast track to Rajshahi by June

JULHAS RIPON

The government will launch a direct high-speed rail service between Rajshahi and Joydevpur by the middle of this year, said official sources yesterday.

Initially, trains will run up to Joydevpur from Ishwardi in Rajshahi through the Jamuna Bridge, said sources in the Bangladesh Railway (BR).

The service will be extended to the Kamalapur Railway Station after completion of the 34km Dhaka-Joydevpur railroad conversion from metre gauge to dual gauge next year, said the sources.

"Before that we will be running shuttle trains for passengers from Joydevpur to Dhaka," said a top rail official preferring anonymity.

With launch of the service, metre-gauge trains will run at a speed of 100km and broad-gauge trains at 120km an hour.

At present, the metre-gauge trains can run only 35km and the broad-gauge trains up to 70km an hour.

The communications ministry implements the Tk 1,744 crore project with financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

The project includes several components to facilitate the new rail communication.

Work on improving traffic signals at 14 stations is going on, said the sources.

Another project concept paper to develop 14 more stations with modern traffic signalling in the

western zone of the BR was submitted to the planning commission for approval.

"We need to improve traffic signalling and use of modern telecommunication facilities to avoid accidents," said another top official.

Construction of a 99km new dual gauge railroad from Joydevpur to Jamtoil in Sirajganj, with seven stations on the way, has been completed as part of the plan.

Also, the project includes construction of 91km embankment, 154 bridges and culverts on the eastern side of the Jamuna River.

Under the same project, conversion of 245km broad gauge tracks to dual gauge from Jamtoil to

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina say her prayers with children after placing wreaths at the grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tungipara, Gopalganj, yesterday.

Two more arrested in Tapan murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two more persons including the wife of a BCP (Purbo Banglar Communist Party) cadre were arrested Sunday in connection with the murder and rape incident at Bagerhat's Komorpur village, police said.

Shahina Begum, 27, wife of BCP cadre Faruk Hossain, and Abdullah Al Mamun, 28, wanted by police in two robbery cases, were arrested at Mamun's house in Khulna City's Labonchora area.

They were shown arrested in the murder and rape case filed by Niranjan Bhattacharya, brother of murdered farmer Tapan

Bhattacharya of Komorpur village, said officer-in-charge of Bagerhat sadar thana.

Police suspect Shahina's husband Faruk was involved in the killing of Tapan, whose wife along with two other female inmates of the house was also raped during the attack.

In a joint raid, Bagerhat and Khulna Police recovered the clothes of the slain farmer and his elder brother Niranjan, sarees of the raped women, torchlight and some gold ornaments from Mamun's house.

Police also recovered the murder weapon, a bloodstained machete, from a bush near the

Komorpur house of Niranjan.

Police said the interrogation of Idris Sheikh, who was earlier arrested at Labonchora, has revealed that Tapan's killers were hired by one Shajahan alias Haider of Bagerhat Sat Gambuj area, adding that there is more important information which is being held back for the sake of investigation.

Bagerhat Awami League leaders believe that the Komorpur tragedy is a sequel to Jatrapur Union Parishad polls-related hostilities between two rival factions of BNP, one loyal to

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PHOTO: STAR

Huge water leakage from WASA pipes submerged a stretch of the Malibagh Road yesterday. People heading for the Mouchak Market, yards away, faced trouble.

'Why do they look so weak?'

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the Dhaka Zoo and asked officials to ensure proper maintenance of the zoo.

She went to the zoo after inaugurating an international conference at the nearby National Herbarium.

Khaleda watched some of the animals and birds.

She went in front of the lions' cage and inquired about the quality and quantity of food given to the animals.

"Why do they look so weak," she asked, looking at the Royal Bengal Tiger.

She asked the officials to serve adequate food to the animals and birds. She also suggested training for the caretakers of the Dhaka Zoo.

The prime minister also watched the bear that had recently killed its caretaker. She showed interest about the Australian bird 'Keshwari' and the 'Ostrich'.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia paid a surprise visit to the Dhaka Zoo yesterday after inaugurating an international conference at the adjacent National Herbarium.

Public prosecution system to be recast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will recast the public prosecution system for neutral trial shortly, said law minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday.

Under the new system, all Public Prosecutors (PP), Assistant Public Prosecutors (APP), Government Pleaders (GP) and Assistant Government Pleaders will be recruited on a permanent basis like other government officials, he said while addressing the second session of the fourth Women Lawyers' Congress in the city.

"I am ashamed that all APPs and AGPs are political appointees. The BNP is now in the government, that's why we have appointed

persons who are loyal to the BNP as APPs and AGPs. Previous governments also did the same," said Moudud adding that the government wants to bring neutrality in the process shortly.

Moudud said magistrates have no legal background. "Their accountability is towards the administration not the judiciary," he added. He emphasised the need for an independent judiciary.

He said police do whatever they like because they have been given 'too much power'. "They release a criminal if they want to and make charge sheets according to their own convenience" he said.

An independent investigation unit would be formed to reduce the power of police, the minister said adding that major changes

would also be made in the police recruitment process.

"More educated youths would be recruited in the police. It is obvious that the police personnel who did not even complete school education cannot serve people" he noted.

He said at present two thirds of the people in jail are detainees and the rest are convicts. "Many people have been languishing in prison for years without any trial. In some jails you will find persons who have been there for five years without trial, though they would not have been awarded such a long jail sentence

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Deadly Hong Kong virus raises world alert

REUTERS, Hong Kong

The number of Hong Kong people infected with a severe and contagious strain of pneumonia had nearly doubled, officials said on Monday as airports and hospitals around the world went on high alert for carriers.

"We are not hiding anything. The numbers are very alarming," Health Minister Yeoh Eng-kiang told reporters at a news conference where he announced nearly 100 people, most of them medical staff, had fallen ill.

"We are too early in the epidemic. It will be foolhardy for me to say what the trends are," Yeoh said when asked if patients were recovering or getting worse.

Airports and airlines from Italy to New Zealand put their staff on alert and ordered them not to check in passengers showing symptoms of the respiratory disease, which is believed to have killed nine people in Asia and Canada and infected more than 170 others.

Philippine airport officials said they were spraying anti-viral agents inside aircraft coming from infected countries.

South Korea became the latest country to warn its citizens against unnecessary travel to China, Hong Kong and Vietnam, where most of the infections have occurred.

Singapore and Taiwan issued travel warnings last week.

The illness is an atypical pneumonia that begins with high fever, chills, cough and breathing difficulty and can deteriorate rapidly into pneumonia.

Some experts believe it is caused by a new virus.

In Hong Kong, where one person has died, government officials said the number of people infected had

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Pakistan to help upgrade sugar mill at Darshana

UNB, Dhaka

Pakistan will provide Bangladesh a state credit worth US\$ 5 million for balancing, modernisation, rehabilitation and expansion (BMRE) of a 66-year-old sugar mill.

A technical team will visit the Carew and Company Limited at Darshana to chalk out the BMRE plan for the state-run sugar mill to prop up its waning production capacity, the visiting Industries Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Jatoi said yesterday.

Earlier, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia requested for the state credit during a meeting with the Pakistan minister.

The soft credit is repayable in five years

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TODAY'S MATCH

Semifinal
Australia vs Sri Lanka
Venue: Port Elizabeth

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 18		6-09 pm
Mar 19	6-04 am	

Prayer Timings

Mar 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-15	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-32	5-00
Maghrib	6-13	6-20
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Muhuri Murder Case

Convict on the loose caught

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives have arrested one of the two absconding convicts sentenced to death in the sensational principal Gopal Krishna Muhuri murder case.

Convict Md. Azam and two of his accomplices were nabbed from different parts of the city in the early hours of yesterday.

A team of Detective Branch (DB) of Police also recovered four firearms, about 315 bullets including 170 of AK-47 rifle and Tk one lakh from their possession.

The two others arrested are cadres of the Islamic Chhatra Shibir Salauddin and Md. Jane Alam both from East Nasirabad in the city, sources said.

Azam is also a chargesheeted

accused in the murder of eight persons at Bahaddarhat in July last year.

Two of the four persons awarded death penalty in the Muhuri murder case - Taslimuddin Montu and Baitya Alamgir - are in jail. Another convict, Gittu Nasir, is still absconding.

The DB team arrested Azam from a house in Bandartilla area under Bandar thana and recovered 82 bullets of Chinese rifle and Tk one lakh.

Later, they arrested the other two and recovered one cut rifle, one revolver, two foreign-made Light Guns (LG), 170 bullets of AK-47 rifle and 64 bullets of other firearms from their possession.

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