



Australian minister due Mar 7

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Australian Federal Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Senator Amanda Vanstone will arrive in Dhaka on March 7 on a two-day official visit.

During the visit, she will discuss the bilateral issues, including trade and commerce, development assistance and immigration, with top government leaders.

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Home help beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 12-year-old domestic help was brutally beaten to death allegedly by the family of her employer at the old DOHS in the city on Sunday night.

Being informed, Cantonment police broke into the house of Mir Moshtaq, an engineer, and recovered the body of Nasima Akhtar at

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First Test starts today

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Bangladesh will be up against champion off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan when they take on Sri Lanka in the first Test of the two-match series at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium today.

When Muralitharan, who has been a nightmare for Bangladesh in the last five meetings between the two sides in the five-day contest, comes out to play his 100th Test, he will be the second Lankan

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Prayer Timing

February 28

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

FERTILISER, POWER CRISES Farmers continue to agitate in vain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitated farmers yesterday continued with their protest programmes across the country as the power and fertiliser crises persist, greatly affecting cultivation of boro in its peak season.

Agitators in Netrakona, Satkhira, Pabna, Gaibandha, Tangail, Thakurgaon and Pabna, among other districts, staged demonstrations demanding uninterrupted supply of power and fertiliser.

Netrakona police clubbed farmers and Krishak League activists as they were on way to lay a siege to local Pally Bidyut office demanding adequate power and fertiliser. At least 10 demonstrators were injured in the police beating.

The Krishak League held a rally in front of district Awami League (AL) office at Chutabazar in the

town to protest against the police action.

In Gaibandha, hundreds of farmers under the banner of Krishak League besieged local Pally Bidyut Samity office for one hour.

In demand for fertiliser and power, farmers in Satkhira put up barricades on different roads and besieged different local government offices.

Thousands of farmers staged a demonstration in front of Patkelghata Pally Bidyut Samity office at Tala upazila and barricaded Satkhira-Khulna Highway. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded for three hours on both sides of the road.

Fertiliser-hungry farmers in Kaliganj upazila laid a siege to the Upazila Parishad Bhaban

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FERTILISER Minister faces JS body wrath, denies crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Denying any fertiliser crisis, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar yesterday locked horns with the opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers at a parliamentary body meeting while the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture Ministry held the ministries of agriculture and industries responsible for the crisis.

The minister also blamed the media for 'creating' the crisis, meeting sources said.

Meanwhile, fertiliser-hungry farmers kept on agitating in different parts of the country.

Expressing concern over the lack of coordination in distributing

fertiliser among the farmers, the parliamentary body said the ministries concerned have not initiated any step for improving the fertiliser management system.

The parliamentary body will sit again on March 14, when the industries secretary and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation officials will be invited to give suggestions for resolving the crisis through improvement in the distribution system.

"It is true that there is adequate stock of fertiliser. But farmers are not getting fertiliser due to mismanagement in distribution," Abdul Mannan, chairman of the committee, told reporters emerging

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Piles of empty Phensedyl bottles are dumped next to the Swadhinata Stambha at Suhrawardi Udyan in the city. A local gang runs drug business under the very nose of the law enforcement agencies.

PHOTO: STAR



Thirteen women workers' associations stage a rally at Mukhtangan in the capital yesterday demanding safe workplaces.

PHOTO: STAR

PM hopes AL to stay in JS till its tenure

UNB, Gazipur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has reaffirmed that her government will transfer power to the caretaker government in October on completion of its tenure and elections will be held next January.

She hoped that the main opposition would continue its participation in parliament until the end of its tenure to speak for people's welfare.

"They (indicating Awami League) have taken the right

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Robber leader killed in 'encounter'

UNB, Sylhet

A ringleader of an inter-district gang of robbers was killed in an encounter between his cohorts and police at Bholaganj in Companiganj upazila of Sylhet district early yesterday.

The robber, Kadir, was arrested in Bholaganj area on Sunday. On his confessional statement, the law enforcers took him to a place in the same area at about 3:00am yesterday to arrest his accomplices and recover the looted goods.

Sensing presence of the policemen, the cohorts of the ringleader opened fire, forcing the police to retaliate.

Police said Kadir, wanted in 12

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Bird flu hits Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan has detected H5-type bird flu in chickens on two poultry farms and tests are underway to determine if the virus is the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain, officials said.

Workers used poison gas to start slaughtering around 25,000 birds on the farms in North West Frontier Province, which borders Afghanistan, government and industry officials told AFP.

"We have found H5-infected birds at two farms at Charsadda and Abbottabad districts in North

West Frontier Province and requested the owners to cull all the birds," Agriculture Ministry spokesman Mohammad Afzal said.

"We have not ruled out that it is H5N1 but it appears to be a low pathogenic strain," he said.

Pakistan had sent samples from infected birds for testing at the EU Reference Laboratory for avian influenza in Weybridge, England, and results were expected "within a week or so", he said.

The affected farms have also been quarantined, said Rana Mohammed Akhlaq, livestock

commissioner at the same ministry. There was no ban yet on the movement of poultry, he added.

He said the poultry industry would decide whether to kill chickens in the infected area, although slaughter would be mandatory if the virus turns out to be H5N1.

"It will benefit the industry if they cull the infected birds and we hope they will do it voluntarily to contain the virus," Akhlaq said.

Pakistan Poultry Association chairman Raza Mahmood

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Indians' bid to occupy border lands foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday foiled an attempt by Indian villagers to occupy a vast tract of land in the Bangladesh territory on Thotarpara border in Kushtia.

BDR proposed to hold a flag meeting with the Indian Border Security force (BSF) to discuss the issue but the BSF was yet to respond to the proposal.

BDR sources said about one

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Trawler sinks in Kirtonkhola

One dead, 11 missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A trawler carrying about 80 passengers capsized in the Kirtonkhola River yesterday killing at least one. Eleven of the passengers were reported missing while the rest were able to swim to the shore.

The dead is identified as Nur Muhammad Sardar, 55, of Domsri

village under the Nulia Police Station in Shariatpur.

The passengers were followers of Charmaoir Pir who were returning home after a religious gathering at Charmonai Huzur Bari Ghat.

Nurul Islam, 50, an ex-army man also brother of Nur Muhammad, said after the concluding ceremony

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Charges framed against 27 Rajshahi militants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday framed charges against 27 militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (Ahab) in connection with the August 17, 2005 serial blasts in Joypurhat.

The charges were framed under the Explosives Act for carrying out blasts at seven spots in Joypurhat. Judge AFM Aminul Islam scheduled

March 8 for the hearing on the charges.

Twenty-nine were accused in the case but Hafizar Rahman, finance secretary of Asadullah Al Gaiib's Ahab, and Sultan were exempted from the case as they are both dead.

Arrested militants, Hobibor Rahman Hobi and Afaz Uddin Poheli, had earlier confessed to the police about their involvement in testing bombs before blasts.

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