

India looks forward to Khaleda's visit
Says Veena Sikri

BSS, Dhaka
India is looking forward to three-day official visit by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia beginning from March 20, said Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri here yesterday.

"It is an important meeting and India is happily preparing for it," she said while exchanging views with senior journalists of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha at its office. Veena Sikri said the visit is taking place after seven years. India extended the invitation to Khaleda Zia when she came to power in 2001 and renewed it on several occasions. She said a number of agreements are likely to be signed between the two countries during Khaleda's visit. The Indian envoy said leaders of the two countries would discuss bilateral issues during the official talks. She described Bangladesh as the biggest neighbour and said her government attaches high importance to the friendly relations between the two countries.

"We share common history and there are lots of common things that bind us together," she added. Veena Sikri touched upon various issues of bilateral relations including the trade deficit, regional cooperation, India's river-linking project, border incidents and cross border smuggling, illicit drug and women and child trafficking.

She emphatically said India firmly believes in peace, stability and prosperity of its neighbours including Bangladesh with whom there is a long 4000-km common border.

When asked about building dam at the Tipaimukh on Barak river in Manipur state of India which is likely to reduce water flow at the Bangladesh rivers of Surma and Kushiara, the envoy said it was essentially a hydro-electric project. It would not affect the water flow of the two rivers.

Responding to a question on river-linking project, Veena Sikri said India was considering the linking of rivers in the southern Peninsula that would not affect the Himalayan rivers.

"The Himalayan rivers are not considered for river linking," she added.

Regarding trade gap, the envoy said with constant talks and discussions at various levels including the Joint Economic Commission, Joint Working Group and other relevant bodies, the gap could be reduced.

Japan to double aid for Bangladesh
Sakurai tells Khaleda

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UNB, Dhaka

Japan, the single-largest development partner of Bangladesh, will double its assistance for development and economic uplift of Bangladesh.

Shin Sakurai, member of the House of Councillors of Japan and president of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians League, said this when he called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

Sakurai said PM's visit to Japan last July further increased interest of Japan in Bangladesh as well as deepened existing excellent relationship and enhanced cooperation in different areas between the two countries.

Terming the visit "fruitful" he said the matters, which were discussed during the bilateral meeting between Bangladesh and Japan during Khaleda Zia's visit, began to be taken up for action.

Sakurai, who visited some parts

of Bangladesh, particularly Bhola, said he was impressed to see the riverine country as well as observed problem with river erosion.

As the Prime Minister said many people become shelterless due to river erosion, Sakurai took note of it to see how to help Bangladesh in tackling river-erosion problem.

He said he will discuss the matter at appropriate level in his country.

Khaleda thanked Japan for its leading role in constructing Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge and hoped that it would take initiative to set up Padma bridge as well as carry out feasibility study about introducing underground monorail in Dhaka city to resolve traffic congestion.

The Japanese Member of the House of Councillors assured that he would discuss those back at home.

Khaleda said Japan can import jute from Bangladesh as it is used for car-body manufacture.

As Sakurai said the biggest resource of Bangladesh is its peo-

ple, Khaleda said her government is carrying out its efforts to transform the huge population into human resource through education and training.

She hoped that Japan would cooperate in this regard.

Sakurai said Japan has taken a long time to reach the present position and Bangladesh can share experiences of development in Japan.

He appreciated the progress in various socio-economic sectors, particularly success in maintaining law and order, under the leadership of Khaleda.

Khaleda conveyed greetings to her Japanese counterpart through Sakurai and invited the Japanese Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh at his convenience.

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Matsuhiro Horiguchi was present.

SSC EXAMS
157 expelled on second day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 157 examinees were expelled from cheating on the second day of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination across the country yesterday, which was three times more compared to the first day.

Besides, five teachers were expelled one each in Dhaka, Jessore, Barisal, Rajshahi and Chittagong Boards for their alleged involvement in helping the examinees in cheating.

A total of 58 students were expelled from different examination centres under Rajshahi Board.

As many as 43 and 42 examinees were expelled under Dhaka and Barisal Boards respectively.

Five examinees were expelled under Comilla Board while three examinees each expelled under Chittagong, Sylhet and Jessore Boards.

The SSC examinees sat for English Second Paper on the second day of the examination.

Meanwhile, a total of 64 examinees were expelled across the country under Madrasa Board while 30 expelled under Technical Board.

State Minister for education Ehsanul Haque Milon yesterday made surprise visits to some examination centres in Barisal and Patuakhali districts. He however did not find any untoward incidents.



Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists obstruct agitating students of Eden College who stage a sit-in on the campus yesterday in protest against illegal eviction of students from their seats at Khodeza Khatun Hall.

Eden girls announce fresh programmes

DU CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Eden College yesterday announced fresh programmes to realise their demands by March 18.

As part of the programmes, they will observe hunger strike in front of the administrative building on March 15 and conduct mass campaign from class to class in favour of their agitation on March 16.

The students announced the programmes from a sit-in demonstration in front of the administrative building as their demands were not met as per their 24-hour ultimatum.

They also threatened to paralyse the college administration by calling an indefinite strike if their demands are not met within the stipulated period.

The students said they would disrupt administrative works of the college from March 18 as academic activities will remain suspended in

most of the working days till March 31 due to Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) and Degree examinations.

The 24-hour ultimatum was issued to the authorities concerned by the students on Saturday to return the seats at Khodeza Khatun Hall (old hostel) to those who have been driven out allegedly by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres.

Their demands also included punishment to JCD leaders involved in illegal allocation of seats among the newcomers in exchange of money.

On Saturday, the college authorities sought 15 days' time to meet their demands.

College Principal Prof Feroza Begum told newsmen that the agitation is a result of feud between the college units of JCD and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF).

"General students are not involved in it," she claimed.

"The prevailing seat problem has

been intensified as three-year honours courses have turned into four-year courses. The college authorities, however, want a peaceful solution to the problem," she added.

Meanwhile, tension ran high on the campus yesterday as the JCD girls took position on the other side of the administrative building and chanted slogans in favour of the principal.

Zohura Akter, a student, alleged that the JCD girls beat her in the morning as she was going to join the agitation.

The students further alleged that JCD girls went from room to room of the hall on Saturday night and threatened the inmates not to join the demonstration.

JCD college unit convener Selina Sultana Nishitha denied the allegations terming them false and baseless.

She said there were no illegal seat dealings by the JCD leaders at the hall



Dhaka City Corporation demolishes several illegal structures of hotels and restaurants at Gulistan in the city yesterday.

Trader stabbed to death in N'ganj

UNB, Narayanganj

A trader was stabbed to death over sharing of money at Fatulla on Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Delwar Bepari, a cloth trader.

Police said one Shah Alam called Delwar out of his shop on the night and locked in an altercation over sharing of money. At one stage, Shah Alam stabbed Delwar indiscriminately, leaving him seriously injured.

Hearing Delwar's screams, locals rushed in and caught Shah Alam red handed. He was handed over to police.

Delwar was first admitted to Sadar Hospital. Later, Delwar died on way to Dhaka Orthopedic Hospital in the midnight.

REFORMS IN EC, CA
Hasina seeks donors' support

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her hope that Bangladesh's development partners would support the opposition's proposal to reform the system of caretaker government and the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections in the country.

She sought the support when Bangladesh-Japan Parliamentary League President and member of the Japanese House of Councillors Shin Sakurai called on her at her Sudha Sadan residence.

Briefing journalists after one-hour meeting, Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said, "We expect that those who are friends of Bangladesh will not take any posi-

tion in favour of a party but for Bangladesh".

He said opposition's reform proposals, next elections, militancy and law and order situation came up for the discussion at the meeting.

Saber said, "We put up our logic in favour of the reform proposals."

Describing Shin Sakurai as a great friend of Bangladesh, he said Sakurai wanted to know what would be Awami League's priority if returned to power.

Sakurai was told that poverty and corruption are the major priority issues to be addressed if Awami League returns to power.

Japanese Ambassador M Horiguchi, Syed Abul Hossain MP and Saber Hossain Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

'Uphold women's rights to ensure empowerment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Implementation of existing laws through united efforts by all concerned is a must to uphold women's rights and resist violence against them, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the civil society, media, government and non-governmental organisations should work unitedly in this regard.

The roundtable titled 'Duties of civil society and media to resist violence against women' was organised jointly by the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB) and the daily Shamokal at Cirdap auditorium.

Representatives from 18 rights organisations took part in the roundtable.

The speakers said media should not use gender sensitive words and more writings on reproductive health

of women and their rights should be published in newspapers.

They also laid emphasis on raising awareness about women's rights and inclusion of reproductive health in textbook curriculum to help stop repression on them.

"In most cases the fundamental rights of the constitution are not explained from the perspective of women's personal freedom," said Barrister Sara Hossain.

She said enactment of law to resist domestic violence is important and fundamental and human rights should be considered properly while enacting the law.

Problems facing non-Bengalis and non-Muslims of the country which often remain in dark, should be highlighted in media, she added.

While presiding over the discussion, FPAB President Abul Kashem said entire development of the coun-

try is being hampered owing to repression on women and discriminatory action against them.

"Women's rights should be upheld for their empowerment and it needs concerted efforts," he added.

Editor of fortnightly Anannya Tasmina Hossain said non-government organisations have been working under different projects to protect the rights of women, and their work needs proper monitoring for better output.

Former parliament member Meher Afroz Chumki, Ayesha Khanam of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Prof Ishrat Shamim of Dhaka University, Ila Chanda of Ain O Salish Kendra, Litterateur Selina Hossain, Ruhul Amin of Brac, Farzana of ICDDR, and Dr Nazmul of Naripokkho also took part in the roundtable.



Fifty shanties were gutted in a devastating fire at the Kushumbagh slum under Shyampur Police Station in the city yesterday.

C'wealth Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The Commonwealth Day will be observed today focusing on the 53-member organisation's role in promoting health and vitality.

The Commonwealth Day is celebrated on the second Monday in March every year and this year's theme is: Health and Vitality-The Commonwealth Challenge.

The Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh will hold a symposium to mark the day at 3:45 pm on the day at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS).

Adviser for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister Reaz Rahman will be the chief guest with Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh President Mokammel Haque in the chair.

Maj Gen (retd) Dr ASM Matiuur Rahman, chief HIV Advisor and Chairman, Technical Committee of National Aids Committee, Bangladesh will speak on the HIV/AIDS situation in Bangladesh.

Commonwealth Journalists Association, Bangladesh will also hold a discussion to celebrate the day.