wheat for flood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian rice,

victims

90,000 tonnes of

Khaleda-Manmohan meet on March 21to initiate new era

Foreign ministry, BNP leaders hope

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh hope to usher a new era in Indo-Bangladesh relations when they meet on March 21 to address each other's concerns and expand trade and economic cooperation.

Dhaka is hoping a positive outcome in the summit as the officials here said her three-day visit would focus attention on a relationship that has strengthened considerably in recent months despite numerous

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday policymakers of BNP and high officials of the foreign ministry viewed Khaleda's visit to India as a confidence building measure (CBM) to improve bilateral ties between the next-door neighbours.

"The Prime Minister is going to New Delhi with a positive mindset

4th World Water

The 4th World Water Forum begins

in Mexico tomorrow where

Bangladesh is expected to focus on

the possible disastrous effects of

the Indian Inter-River Linking

Project and Tipaimukhi dam on the

country in terms of arsenic contami-

A 12-member Bangladesh

delegation led by Water Resources

Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed left for

Mexico on Monday. They will pres-

ent how the northeastern region of

the country, including Surma-

Kushiara basins, will be affected

once the Tipaimukhi dam is con-

A seven-member non-

government delegation comprising

IUCN Country Representative Dr

Ainun Nishat and Bangladesh

Water Partnership Chairman

Engineer Quamrul Islam Siddiqui

will also join the forum, which will

Mutalib Akhand

Ruling BNP lawmaker Abdul Mutalib

Akhand was buried at his family

graveyard at Jagaish in

end on March 22.

UNB, Dhaka

laid to rest

nation, drought and desertification.

Forum begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

tomorrow

terpart on bilateral issues freely," said a high official of the foreign ministry.

He said Bangladesh hopes Khaleda-Manmohan meet would give positive directives in resolving long running issues of huge trade imbalance, quick accord on sharing of waters of common rivers and maintaining a peaceful border.

Policymakers and officials hoped the Indian leaders would give precise assurance that they would not implement any projects like riverlinking or Tipaimukh barrage which would be detrimental to Bangladesh's interests.

They also hoped India would quickly ratify the Mujib-Indira Land Boundary Agreement and stressed the need for demarcating 6.5km of

Regarding Indian concern over anti-Indian insurgent camps within

Rajuk dismantles shanties and evicts slum dwellers from a slum at Gulshan-1 in the city yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inquiry committee formed by

the government to examine the

cracks in the Jamuna Multipurpose

problem and will start physical

inspection very soon," said a mem-

ber of the committee. "All aspects

traffic movement on the bridge

during the investigation, he said,

The result of admission test for the

1st year honours courses (session

2005-06) of National University has

been published with a pass percent-

nart in the admission test held on

February 24 and 156,114 of them

the authorised representatives of

156 honours colleges across the

country. The students have been

requested to collect their result from

A total of 184,787 students took

The result will be handed over to

NU admission

test result

published

UNB, Dhaka

age of 84.48.

came out successful.

concerned colleges.

would be investigated thoroughly.'

"We are now looking into the

There will be no disruption of

Bridge started its work vesterday.

CRACKS IN JAMUNA BRIDGE

home ministry said these repeated allegations were never proved as no such camp could be located.

Bangladesh is committed not to allow any insurgents whatsoever to use Bangladeshi soil against any country, he added.

The official said the concerns over security remains with Bangladesh too in the wake of anti-Bangladesh campaign by Banga Sena and Swadhin Bangabhumi Andolan. He said Bangladesh wants a peaceful border and situation has improved much following coordinated border patrolling.

On \$1.5 billion trade gap, a high official of the foreign ministry said India, having a large economy, could take steps to remove nontariff and para-tariff barriers allowng more Bangladeshi goods dutyfree access to Indian markets.

About greater connectivity of

adding that only certain portions

might be cordoned off for examina-

Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-

chancellor of BRAC university, has

been asked to submit its report

mittee are Prof Ali Murtuza, vice-

chancellor of Bangladesh University

of Engineering and Technology

(Buet), Prof Bashir Ahmed of Buet

civil engineering faculty, Additional Chief Engineer Adam Ali Gazi,

Additional Director General of

Bangladesh Railway Mohammd

Abdullah, former chief engineer of

Roads and Highways Department

Sheikh Rabiul Islam and the chief

engineer of Jamuna Multipurpose

assigned to find out the causes of

the cracks and their impacts on the

bridge. It was also given full author-

ity to co-opt any expert, if necessary.

for maintenance of the bridge

reported the cracks to the govern-

ment, Communications Minister

Nazmul Huda visited the bridge on

Sunday and announced the forma-

tion of a high-powered investigation

committee to find out the causes of

After the company responsible

The committee has been

The other members of the com-

The committee, headed by Prof

tion of the cracks

within seven days.

Bridge Authority.

roads and railway, the official said these are the maters that might come up during talks between the two prime ministers

METROPOLITAN/NEWS

However, Dhaka might remain non-committal on extradition-treaty or tri-nation pipeline

Official sources indicated Dhaka and New Delhi might sign three agreements during the PM's visit on trade, avoidance of double taxations and investment

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin is likely to fly to New Delhi on March 16 to meet his Indian counterpart Shyam Saran for final consultations over the agenda of Khaleda-Manmohan meet, sources

JS SECRETARIAT HC order

staved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on Sunday stayed the operation of a High Court verdict that declared illegal the policy on seniority of parliament secretariat officials. Judge Mohammad Tafazzul Islam passed the order after the hearing on a writ petition filed by Kibria Majumdar. Barrister Amir-Ú slam moved for the petitioner.

Earlier, a High Court bench of Justice Mohammad Abdul Matin and Justice Mohammad Mamunur Rashid cancelled the rule as Ruhul Amin, president of Parliamentary Employee Welfare Association, filed a petition challenging the policy on

Property worth Tk 2 cr gutted in Narayanganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Property worth about Tk two crore was gutted in a devastating fire at Probe body starts work the Quality Knitting Mill store at the Jamtala residential area in here

The fire fighters of Shyampur Narayanganj, Hajiganj Fire Brigade units brought the fire under control after half an hour effort.

Kaiser Hamid, a fire fighter was injured while trying to bring the blaze under control

The mill authorities said the fire originated suddenly in the tin-roofed store at about 2:45am damaging 14 machines and huge amount of

British HC to produce biometric passports

British High Commission (BHC) in Dhaka is going to start production of biometric passports from April 16 in a bid to continue processing straightforward applications in ten working days provided correct documentation and fee are received, said a press release

The automated process used in the biometric passports will be able to verify individuals' identity based on their physical characteristics. New format passports will have a

new design with additional security features, including a chip with the holder's facial biometric. The cut-off date for receiving

applications for current format passports is March 30. The high commission has advised

applicants to apply well in advance of any planned date of travel, as the production process will be slightly longer and delays may occur at busier Current passports will remain

valid until the expiry date. Full information about Biometric passports is available at bangladesh

Uttara Club celebration begins today

UNB, Dhaka

Uttara Club has taken up a six-day programme to celebrate its 15th founding anniversary to be held on

The programme, including assembly of the club members and

their families, music, magic, swimming, lawn tennis, billiard and distribution of prizes, will start

Founder members of the club will be honoured at a function on the



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, third from left, talks with foreign diplomats at a dinner hosted by her party at a city hotel yesterday.

Malaysia to go tough with Bangladeshi students

ANN/SIN CHEW DAILY

Malaysian Home Affairs Ministry will review the procedure and regulations in issuing student visa especially for Bangladeshi students in order to prevent them from being illegal workers in Malaysia.

Minister Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said local employers were prohibited from recruiting Bangladeshi workers two years ago, so the ministry would pay close attention on Bangladeshi students when they issued the student visa.

"We will review all countries (student visa issuant), especially Bangladesh, because our country doesn't allow Bangladesh citizens to work here, other countries have no problems." he added.

According to the news report, there were four colleges was being

1,700 Bangladeshi students were suspected in misusing student visas and they worked illegally in different "I have discussed this matter

monitored by the ministry. A total of

with Higher Education Ministry and they promised to revoke the college licence if they violate any rule, Radzi told a press conference after attending the monthly assembly. "We look at the issue seriously We hope that we are not made fool

by others. Therefore, we have to prevent others from causing loopholes in the laws," he continued. Radzi said the Home Affairs Ministry was responsible in enforcement and handling the visa applica-

tion, therefore the ministry had

given some constructive sugges-"Malaysia encourages the foreign students came to Malaysia to will become the higher education hub in this region. However, government doubts when many foreign students are "advanced age" stu-"It's acceptable if only few of

pursue their studies as our country

them aged 25 among two or three hundred students. However, it's doubtful if there are 180 students aged 25 among 200 students."

He said Higher Education officers went overseas to promote Malaysia education and it might cause some misunderstandings which brought Bangladeshi "students" worked illegally here.

6 die in Gopalganj road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Six people were killed and 40 others injured when a passenger bus turned upside down at Kolapara intersection in the Gopalganj town yesterday.

Five of the dead were identified as Prof Khokon Karmakar of Morrelganj SM College of Bagerhat, Prof Dilip Halder of Gazipur Shaheed Zia College, fish trader Yunus Ali Sarder and his daughter Akhteriahan and Jagaddhatri Karmaker. Identity of another person could not be known immedi-

The injured were admitted to Gopalganj Medical College Hospital. Condition of five injured is The ill-fated passenger bus of

'Parjatak Paribahan Service' turned upside down when its driver lost njured said the driver was dozing when the accident occurred

The bodies were sent to morque after autopsy.

Our Correspondent from Gaibandha adds: At least 42 passengers, including seven women, were injured when a coach turned turtle and fell into a roadside ditch at Jundaha under Palashbari upazila on Rangpur-Bogra highway yester

Police said the Kurigram-bound

coach of Kanti Paribhan with over 60 passengers from Dhaka suddenly skidded off the road after the driver had lost control over the steering at Jundaha under Palashbari upazila on Bogra-Rangpur highway. The coach turned upside down and fell into the roadside ditch injuring 42 passengers,

including seven women. Of the injured, nine were rushed Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition and 15 to Palashbari Health Complex. The remaining were released after first

orphans and organise a milad mahfil at his village home

President lajuddin Ahmed recalled

the uncompromising and

commendable role of Dr Razee rule of law in the country.

Obituary

Amir Hossain, freedom fighter and vice-president of Modhupur upazila Awami League, passed away due to old age ailments at his residence

Amir Hossain left behind his

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh

Hasina in a message expressed her deep shock at his death.

She conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved family

departed soul. AL Agriculture and Cooperative

Affairs Secretary Abdur Razzak also condoled the death.

Chehlum



Chowdhury, a noted soil scientist and son of Dashmina Talukdarbari, will be held today after Maghrib

the city, says a press release. Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the

departed soul.



retired governbe held at his village home Kabilpur at Debidwar upazila in Comilla after

Aziz passed away at Chandina upazila in Comilla on March 12 at the

Sitakunda ship-breaking yard Assistants of the master welders do

ants, as at least one of them is injured a day and one dies a week. A barefooted man with a large

oxygen cylinder on his shoulder is walking to a giant chunk of steel. 'Once this piece of steel was a part of that big ship," he says, pointing at a half-dismantled vessel floating nearby in the bay. "We cut such large parts out of it and pull them one by one tying with thick steel chains to the ground," he explains the operations.

'The job is risky, that is true. But they pay us handsome money," says the man, who is actually the foreman of a 3,000-strong crew deployed in this ship-breaking unit. "I have had no education and still

am earning more than 10,000 taka a month. My workers also get good pays," he says, to the tune of Tk 5,000 to Tk 6,000 depending on one's task and responsibility. The more risk involved in a task the more money gets the man who carries it

The foreman guides me around one of some 20 ship-breaking units in operation in the vard on condition of not mentioning his and the unit's names. Journalists are not welcomed here where labour law and industrial safety code violations are rampant. So I avoid giving my identity to get a close look into the working reality.

Some 30,000 workers are engaged in ship scrapping in Sitakunda, which houses the world's second largest shipbreaking industry after China. At least 250,000 people in the country live off the industry directly and indirectly, according to experts. Last year 84 vessels were

scrapped in Sitakunda. Scrapping a ship takes between one month and one-and-a-half months depending on its size. WORKPLACE SCENARIO

The ship-breaking industry was born here in 1985, with the scrapping of a foreign ocean-liner grounded during a violent storm.

From that accidental beginning, the

number of ship-breaking outfits here

soared to 84 by 1990s. But, even today, the entire scrapping process remains manual. Most of the workers are barefooted without any coverall or gloves.

not wear protective eyeglasses while cutting the ships into pieces.

Workers carry on bare shoulders

iron sheets and chunks that can be "Do you know the weight of that piece?" I ask a man carrying a metal sheet. He grunts, "No.'

"They have to work hard to get the good pays," says my guide, the Most of the accidents here are

ones. Workers say small injuries like a cut in the leg or a crushed finger are not considered as accidents at According to an International Labour Organisation report, 551 minor and 42 major accidents took place in 20 ship-breaking outfits alone from in 1996 to 1998. Last

vear, 11 workers died and over a

hundred others were injured in this

caused by toxic gas explosions and

when heavy metal plates fall from

upper decks of the ships to lower

The recent report of a survey conducted by two internationally reputed organisations, Greenpeace and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), says on average at least one worker is injured a day and one dies a week.

The report titled 'The Human Cost of Breaking Ships' published last December simultaneously from Bangladesh, India and Switzerland says at least 1,000 workers have Bangladesh's ship-breaking yards. The figures do not include the deaths from diseases caused by toxic fumes and materials workers are exposed to all the time.

The report says most of the workers at the ship-breaking yards, particularly in Bangladesh and India, are totally unqualified, having little education, and come from the poorest sections of their countries and thus fall an easy prey to exploitation by the yard owners. According to the report, almost

all the vessels condemned for scrapping contain hazardous substances like asbestos, oil sludge, paints containing lead and other heavy metals including cadmium and arsenic, poisonous biocides and even radioactive substances. Globally some 700 ships are scrapped a year, mainly in five countries--China, Bangladesh, India. Pakistan and Vietnam--and some in Turkey too, says a Greepeace source. With the global fleet growing fast, from 15,000 ships in the 1960s to 62,000 in 2000, and with the ships built before 1970 being sorted out for decommissioning, the number of ships to be condemned for scrapping will also rise in the future, she tells The Daily Star.

OWNERS, GOVT Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association (BSBA) rejects the accident and casualty figures of 'The Human Cost of Breaking Ships'.

"The numbers mentioned in the

PERSPETIVES OF

report are not true. Greenpeace is after us for no reasons. The rate of accidents now is much less than that," BSBA President Md Jafar Alam claims. "If someone dies while working,

we pay no less than Tk 100,000 as compensation. We bear the medical expenses for the injured," he elaborates, adding, "If someone dies in accident, we also give job to his son, But the BSBA chief cannot say

the numbers of causalities and accidents, as they do not keep any record of them. Actually, no body in the country does Due to the absence of a national policy, ship-breaking unit owners

are not at all concerned about the workers' rights, working environment or using modern technology. However, with UNDP help, the government has undertaken a project, which will train the shipbreaking workers and frame a

guideline for the ship-breaking

industry," Farid Alam, director of the

project, says. To the question "Do you keep track of the accidents and labour causalities," he replies, "No, that is not a part of the project. We just train

wheat as relief from India to Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, minister for food and disaster management, at a function in the city vesterday. Out of the total amount, 15,000

Indian high commissioner in Dhaka Veena Sikri formally handed over the receipt of a consignment of 90,000 metric tonnes of rice and

metric tonnes of rice have already reached Chittagong port and were deposited in the silo. Rest of the rice and wheat will gradually reach Bangladesh by June. The relief was equivalent to rupee

100 crore committed by the government of India for the victims of a massive flood in Bandladesh in 2004.

At the function, the Indian high commissioner said India had committed 100 crore rupees as relief during the flood. But Bangladesh government sought food instead of money. Accordingly, the Indian government decided to send food instead of money. The minister thanked the govern-

ment of India and hoped that the ties between two next-door neighbours would be strengthened through this aid for the flood victims.

Dr Razee's anniversary of death today **UNB**, Dhaka

The 21st death anniversary of eminent lawyer Dr Aleem Al Razee will be observed today with due solemnity

Under the auspices of Dr Aleem Al Razee Memorial Council, different educational institutions and socio-cultural organisations have taken elaborate programmes to mark the day.

Dr Aleem Al Razee High School, Lowhati, Tangail, Nagorpur Government College, Tangail, City Law College, Dhaka founded by Dr Razee, the Sandhani National Eye Donation Society and Tangail Zila Samity will arrange discussion meetings on the life and works of Dr

Dr Aleem Al Razee Memorial Council members will place wreaths at his grave at the Banani Graveyard and offer special prayers

The Council will also feed the

In a message on the occasion,

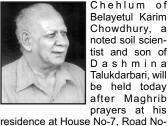
in spreading education, establishing and fostering democracy and the

UNB, Dhaka

today at the age of 85.

children, a host of friends and admirers to mourn his death.

and praved for salvation of the



20, Sector-7, Uttara Model Town in chehlum and pray for salvation of the

Md Abdul Aziz Chehlum of Md Abdul Aziz, a

Juma prayers on March 17, says a

age of 89 Relatives have been requested to

attend the chehlum

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of a book titled '21 August: Grenade biddha Bangladesh' edited by Mohammad Shahjahan will be held. Venue: Liberation War Museum. Time: 4:00pm.

Gobindaganj of Gaibandha district vesterday. Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain placed wreaths on the coffin of Akhand to show their last respect to

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Advocate Abdul Hamid also placed wreaths on behalf of Leader of the Opposition.

DHÃKA Discussion

Consumers Association of Bangladesh organises a discussion to mark the World Consumers Rights Day, Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.



No change in temperature likely

6:07am tomorrow.

major cities and towns yesterday were:

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country,

Met Office said in a forecast. Highest temperature 34.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 17.4 degree Celsius at Sayedpur. The sun sets in the capital at 6:07pm today and rises at

Temperature City/Town Humidity in in Celsius percentage Evening Dhaka 32.5 20.2 Chittagong 32.5 76 Khulna 33.6 21.1 Barisal 32.2 20.0 32.4 Sylhet 19.5 Cox's Bazar 33.5

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some