

Khaleda's Japan visit to bolster Dhaka-Tokyo ties

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will pay a four-day official visit to Japan beginning March 28. It was officially announced in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

The visit will take place at the invitation of Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa. Foreign Secretary Mufleh Rahman Osmany said at the fortnightly regular press briefing yesterday.

The government attaches much importance to this visit as it is expected to further bolster the close ties between Bangladesh and Japan specially in the fields of trade, investment and economic cooperation, Osmany said.

During her stay in Tokyo, the Prime Minister will have audience with the Emperor and Empress of Japan. They will also host luncheon in honour of the Bangladesh leader.

Begum Zia will hold official talks with her Japanese counterpart covering the entire gamut of bilateral matters, regional and international issues of common concern.

Replying to a question, the Foreign Secretary said that planned talks between the leaders would mainly focus on bilateral matters in the context of the present liberal investment policy and macro economy of Bangladesh.

He told a questioner that the measures for improving the trade between the two countries will figure prominently in the meeting.

The Foreign Secretary pointed out that Bangladesh had an adverse balance of trade of 1,321.70 million US dollar with Japan.

Bangladesh exported commodities worth 353.90 million US dollar to Japan against the import of 1675.60 million US dollar during 1992-93.

Bangladesh's exportable goods to Japan are confined to frozen fish, raw jute, jute products, readymade garments, leather, hides and skins, raw cotton and tea etc.

Major items of import into Bangladesh from Japan include textile article, chemicals, rubber manufactures, paper and paper board, machinery, scientific equipment and transport equipment.

Begum Zia will also exchange views on economic cooperation with the Prime Minister of Japan, which is the largest donor for Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister will meet groups of Japanese businessmen and investors interested in Bangladesh. Dhaka seeks to further develop bilateral relations with Tokyo as a partner in progress, said Osmany.

Japanese investors have shown significant interest in the area of joint investments in Bangladesh in recent times.

Begum Zia will address a seminar on 'Investment in Bangladesh' in Tokyo.

The seventh meeting of Japan-Bangladesh joint committee of commercial and economic cooperation will be held in the Japanese capital during the visit.

Begum Zia is expected to visit industrial cities including Osaka. She is expected to address a press conference there at the end of the trip.

She is scheduled to leave Dhaka for Tokyo on March 28 and is expected to return home on April 1.

ALPP statement far from truth: Rafiq

Housing and Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah yesterday expressed his firm belief that democratic norms and values could be upheld inside and outside Parliament through discussion, negotiation and mutual respect.

Talking to BSS, Barrister Rafiq, who is also the Joint Secretary General of the BNP said, all should uphold the national interest against personal whims of any individual or groups.

Refuting the allegations against the treasury bench by the Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting that the government had prorogued the

Clemency

From Page 1 Col 8

Companiganj thana of Noakhali district.

The two Bangladeshis, along with 17 other crew members of the ship 'Riv Star', were arrested in July 1988 by drug enforcement officials at Port Suez for carrying 17 tons of hashish worth some 60 million US dollars aboard the Egyptian vessel. Nine of the accused were later released by the court.

The Suez Criminal Court originally sentenced the 10 accused to death on June 1989, but following an appeal a higher court asked for a retrial by the same court. The Bangladesh Embassy in Cairo helped the two accused Bangladeshis to file for an appeal.

There is no scope for any further appeal against the second verdict. The two condemned Bangladeshis are currently being held at the Zigazig prison in Egypt and only a clemency by the Egyptian President can commute their sentences.

The Foreign Ministry has 'strongly' recommended seeking clemency on behalf of the two Bangladeshis and forwarded the recommendations to the Home Ministry to take up the issue, a Foreign Office source told The Daily Star last Tuesday.

A Home Ministry source said yesterday that the necessary papers were being processed for making an appeal to the Egyptian President for clemency for the two Bangladeshis.

The Home Ministry, he said, would then forward the file to the President's Secretariat for final approval.

Meanwhile, an uncle of Taulhidul Alam also made a prayer to the Prime Minister recently seeking her intervention in the matter.

M Z I Chowdhury, the uncle of Alam, informed The Daily Star that his nephew was recruited as a deck-hand in the Egyptian ship in the mid-80's and that he was 32 years old, has a 7-year-old son, wife, three younger brothers and aged parents, all dependent on his income.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrai, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No. 11, Road No. 2, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.



British police inspecting a burned-out vehicle in the car park of the Excelsior Hotel in Heathrow, after Wednesday's mortar attack on the airport. The Irish Republican Army fired five homemade mortars, necessitating the closure of a runway of the busy airport. — AFP photo

Rank, status of mayors still undecided

By Staff Correspondent

The government has not yet decided the rank and status of the new mayors of four cities of the country even though they took their oaths of office yesterday.

The Cabinet is expected to take a decision in this regard soon, a high official in the Local Government Ministry told The Daily Star last night.

Previously, the mayor of Dhaka enjoyed the rank and status of a cabinet minister while the mayors of Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi were conferred with the status of a deputy minister.

As per the City Corporation Ordinance, the government decides the status and privileges of the mayors.

Four mayors

From Page 1 Col 7

emphasised the need for close coordination among organisations concerned in implementing development programmes in the cities.

About development of capital Dhaka which the Prime Minister described as a growing city of the rich and the poor, she said its uplift plans should take into account the problems of all.

The Mayors in return thanked the Prime Minister for her assurance of her government's cooperation in carrying out development activities of the cities.

LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar and Deputy Minister for LGRD Abdul Hye were present during the Mayors' meeting with the Prime Minister.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Abdus Salam Talukdar, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Livestock and Fisheries Minister Abdullah Al-Noman, Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain, Deputy Minister for LGRD Abdul Hye and immediate past mayor of Dhaka Mirza Abbas MP, Rashed Mosharrar MP, Azizur Rahman MP, Kamrul Islam MP, Salahuddin Ahmed MP, Amanullah Aman MP, Amir Khasru MP, Mohammad Mohsin MP, Rosy Kabir MP and Begum Khwaja Ahsanullah MP.

BSS adds: All but three ward commissioners out of 102 of Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi city corporations took oath of office in Dhaka yesterday.

Deputy Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Abdul Hye conducted the oath held at the auditorium of Local Government Institution at Agargaon at a simple function.

Two ward commissioners, one from Chittagong and another from Khulna, could not take oath as they are in jail in connection with separate cases.

The ward commissioners-elect from the Dhaka City Corporation will take oath after Eid-ul-Fitr, official sources said.

Israeli troops tell probe

Hebron massacre was planned

JERUSALEM, Mar 10: The massacre of Arab worshippers in Hebron by settler Baruch Goldstein was carefully planned, Israeli soldiers told the official inquiry team Wednesday, reports AFP.

Two soldiers saw Goldstein enter the tomb of the patriarchs with ear muffs used for shooting exercises, Lieutenant Rotem Ravivi told the commission of inquiry.

Ravivi, who was on guard duty the day of the massacre, said Goldstein told soldiers he was on exercises and they let him pass. The settler was wearing his army reserve officers uniform at the time.

A confession was found in a bag Goldstein was carrying, but no details were given of the contents.

Postal Deptt faces a mailbag shortage

By Shamsad Mortuza

The country's postal department is going through a difficult period because of the shortage of mailbags.

The jute and canvas bags required to carry domestic and international letters are procured from the Adamjee Jute Mills. But, according to sources, the AJM has stopped the supply of mailbags due to non payment of arrears bills.

An official at the bag control office of the Postal Department, however, told The Daily Star yesterday that they had paid up the pending bills in order to ensure the normal supply of mailbags.

Many post offices, it was learnt, are yet to receive mailbags in sufficient quantity to meet the extra Eid-mail rush.

The volume of mail increase by 50 per cent during the Eid. According to an unofficial estimate, the number of local letters handled daily stands at 1 lakh. The number of international letters handled each day is another 1 lakh. Eid greeting cards put an extra load on the mail transaction.

The recent break-down in supply has worsened the crisis because there is always a 10 per cent system loss in the reuse of the mailbags.

The jute bags, which wear out very fast, are also sometimes frozen by the authorities in case of missing mail.

"If there is any complaint of missing letters from any mailbag the investigating team seizes the bags till completion of their probe," one source said.

Admitting the shortage of bags, a source, on condition of anonymity, said the Sorting and Air Department at Kamalapur is presently receiving 100 bags every day instead of their actual requirement of 250 bags.

Due to shortage of bags, a large consignment of Bangladesh Gazettes and some magazines has been lying at the country's main sorting centre at Kamalapur for the last seven days.

Even the foreign mail section was facing problems in closing their mail due to the shortage of bags.

A high official at the Foreign Post Department in the GPO, however, denied any breakdown in mail transaction due to the shortage of bags.

"We have alternatives," he said. "The mail must go on."

DC-10: Reprieve for 3

From Page 1 Col 8

man has the authority to do so, sources said.

Captain Azizullah, captain Kaiser and flight engineer Sharif Alamgir would now undergo a two-week refresher course because of their long suspension from flying big aircraft. They would also require simulator training, route training, route check and 200 to 300 hours of flying DC-10 aircraft under the supervision of a senior captain.

The punishment of traffic controller at ZIA Abdur Rahman, who was on duty on that day, would, however, continue.

CAAB chairman Air Commodore Shamsur Ali was not available for comments.

One of the four DC-10s of Biman, on a flight from Jeddah, overshot the runway with 135 passengers and crew on board while landing at ZIA in stormy weather. All passengers and crew luckily survived the accident.

A probe body was formed with CAAB Member (Operation) Nazmul Haq Chowdhury as chairman. The committee prepared a more than 100-page report with 25 recommendations.

The damaged DC-10 aircraft — the Nabajug — joined Biman's fleet last January after massive repair work at home and abroad.

According to sources the captains and the flight engineer are likely to start their two-week re-orientation course from March 19.

Under the present conditions, they would be able to fly big aircraft within two months which, otherwise, would have taken more than a year had they been not shown the leniency.

A CAAB source said, the chairman sent the proposals sparing the three cockpit crew to the Biman and the Civil Aviation Ministry about two months ago.

New EC envoy calls on Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday sought increased assistance and cooperation from the European Community for the country's development efforts, reports UNB.

Lauding the EC support towards different uplift programmes, Begum Zia said the European nations can intensify their cooperation in new development projects like "Food for Education" and schemes relating to women development and poverty alleviation.

The Prime Minister was talking to the newly-appointed Ambassador of the European Commission, Michael Drury, who called on her at her office here in the afternoon.

Welcoming the new envoy, Begum Zia assured him of all cooperation of her government to help him during his mission here.

The ambassador hoped that the existing relations between EC and Bangladesh will be strengthened in the days ahead.

The European Commission provides development grants worth about US 50 million dollars each year to Bangladesh.

Workers' Party blames BNP for economic crisis

By Staff Correspondent

The Workers' Party of Bangladesh yesterday accused the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of "deepening the economic crisis" in the country.

A meeting of the Party's Politburo observed that the government had failed to take any pro-people programme over the past three years, economic crisis has deepened further, and the law and order situation of the country has deteriorated.

The Politburo approved a report on the country's present political situation prepared after a four-day meeting of the central committee.

Programmes of the government were for the elite of the society, the report said. The government also depended on the bureaucracy to resolve the political crises, it added.

The Workers' Party of Bangladesh yesterday accused the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of "deepening the economic crisis" in the country.

About 200 police and soldiers guarded the five members led by Supreme Court President Meir Shamgar up the steps into the tomb of the patriarchs in Hebron.

AP adds: Israeli troops are under strict orders not to open fire on Jewish settlers, even when the civilians use their guns against Palestinians, a police commander told a commission of inquiry Thursday.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council last Wednesday postponed a vote on a resolution condemning the massacre by an Israeli settler of some 40 Palestinians in a mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron.

'Relations with India improving remarkably'

A two-day seminar on "Society, Polity and Economy of Bangladesh" ended at New Delhi on Tuesday recommending close relationship between Bangladesh and India, reports UNB.

Sponsored by Jawaharlal Nehru University, the seminar was inaugurated by its Vice-Chancellor Prof M K Alagh.

Taking part in the discussion, Bangladesh High Commissioner to New Delhi Farooq Sobhan said relation between two countries is remarkably improving with the start of solving various problems.

In this context the High Commissioner mentioned the Tin Bigha and Chakma repatriation and said the solution of water-sharing problem is the most important issue for Bangladesh and it constituted the "litmus test" in the relations between the two countries.

A total of 25 papers were presented in the four working sessions of the seminar highlighting various socio-economic aspects of Bangladesh.

Dr Narottam Gan of Cuttack University in his paper depicted the adverse effect of Farakka barrage on the environment in Bangladesh.

A week-long exhibition of books and posters of Bangladesh was also arranged on the occasion, according to message received from New Delhi here yesterday.

Hanif

From Page 1 Col 5

nage at Azimpur and his father's at Bangshal.

The mayor later placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar.

The DCC mayor in a statement issued last night once again expressed his gratitude to the city dwellers for their cooperation in the January 30 DCC elections.

Mohammad Hanif told UNB shortly after he was sworn-in by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia that he would soon call a meeting of the Ward Commissioners to fix priorities in addressing the problems faced by the city dwellers.

An Awami League leader, Hanif won the January 30 mayoral election with a thumping majority defeating the ruling party candidate Mirza Abbas.

He listed mosquito menace, growing terrorism and ever-increasing traffic jam as the burning problems faced by the people of Dhaka city.

"It's an auspicious occasion, an auspicious day for me," said a soft-spoken Hanif, who became the first Mayor elected directly by the voters, with a smile.

Chittagong city Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also elected on AL ticket, said the port city had remained neglected for long and hoped the government would give due importance to its rapid development.

"The role of Chittagong in overall national development cannot be overemphasised as major trade of the country is carried out through its sea port," said Chowdhury.

He said he would work with sincerity and dedication to ensure progress of the port city.

"I had carried out the responsibility of the city Mayor for two and half years. Now I will be more active in solving people's problems," said Khulna city Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman.

Rahman, elected as a ruling party candidate, pledged to ensure overall development of the country's second port city.

Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu, who was an appointed Mayor before the election and elected as a BNP nominee, said "The people have increased my responsibility by voting me to the mayorship."

Minu said he would exert all efforts to turn Rajshahi into a modern city with all possible civic amenities.

Two burnt alive, 150 shacks gutted in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Mar 10: Two persons including a woman were burnt alive and about 150 thatched dwelling houses gutted in a fire which broke out at a railway colony at Jaotala under Doublemooring police here today, fire brigade and police sources said, reports BSS.

The fire, reportedly originated from one of the kitchen rooms of the colony, engulfed the entire slum. One railway bungalow, one madrasah and one mosque were partially damaged. Two firemen were also injured in the fire.

These two victims who were inside the room during the fire burnt alive, the sources said.

The dead could not be identified immediately. Then fire fighting units fought for more than one and a half hours to bring the fire under control.

More than three hundred slum people were rendered homeless.

The extent of the damage on account of fire could not be ascertained immediately, the sources said.

The bodies were taken for post mortem. Besides, there were eight stray incidents of fire recorded in the city today.

Saifur in US

From Page 1 Col 5

He also had discussions with US officials, including J. Brain Atwood, administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Robin Raphel.

In his appearance at the National Press Club, Rahman concentrated on his role as Bangladesh Finance Minister and offered a progress report on the economic policies instituted by the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The Midnight File

One held on espionage charge in Russia

MOSCOW, Mar 10: Russia today arrested an agent who was working for the German intelligence services, Interfax news agency said. Interfax, which quoted "well informed sources" for its report, said the unnamed agent was arrested by members of Russia's Federal Counter-Intelligence Service, reports Reuters.

Blasts kill 2 in Georgia

TBILISI, Mar 10: Explosions rocked central Tbilisi today, killing at least two people and wrecking a military headquarters and a tax office, the Interior Ministry said. Two other people were hurt and more could be buried under the ruins of the headquarters of the Mkhedrioni (knights), a former militia now part of the regular armed forces, where the strongest blast occurred, the ministry said, reports AFP.

Kashmir open to foreign diplomats, not AI: Delhi

NEW DELHI, Mar 10: India said Thursday Kashmir is open to diplomats to look into reports of human rights abuses, but it would not allow Amnesty International to conduct an investigation, reports AP.

The invitation to foreign diplomats by Foreign Secretary K. Srinivasan came one day after Pakistan lost a bid at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva to send a UN fact-finding team to Kashmir.

In Islamabad, Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan told a news conference that Pakistan achieved its aim of highlighting human rights in Kashmir.

According to Khan, India promised that ambassadors from Muslim countries could make a fact-finding trip to Kashmir. He did not provide details, but said the ambassadors should not come from the ranks of those based in New Delhi.

Srinivasan denied India had struck a deal to give diplomats access to Kashmir, which he said they have always had.

"No diplomat has to have prior permission to go to Jammu and Kashmir, except Pakistan and Libya," he said. Libyan diplomats are under UN sanctions.

A delegation of a 10 New Delhi-based ambassadors were visiting Kashmir this week. Among them were four from Muslim countries.

Srinivasan said India would soon resume an exchange of written proposals with Pakistan on easing tensions along the border.

AFP adds: India did not make any concessions in Geneva before Pakistan withdrew a United Nations resolution on the human rights situation in the disputed state of Kashmir, Foreign Secretary K. Srinivasan said here today.

Pakistan had voluntarily dropped the resolution and New Delhi had not accepted any offer of mediation from Tehran, Srinivasan said.

Meanwhile Muslim rebel groups in the disputed state of Kashmir today criticised Iran for pressuring Pakistan into withdrawing a United Nations resolution condemning the human rights situation here.

AL plans

From Page 1 Col 8

mes, including central rally and work stoppage, to press their demands. Government College Teachers' Association is also planning agitation after Eid.

The Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Coordination Council will stage a grand rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on March 26 to press its demands which include trial of Jamaat leader Prof Golam Azam as a "war criminal."

Observers believe political scenario is likely to be heated after Eid-ul-Fitr, specially against the backdrop of the recent parliamentary crisis due to the opposition boycott.

Bitter way

From Page 1 Col 4

Jhalakathi, Khepupara and other places," secretary of the association A Z M Anwar Hossain said.

"Now we have mobilised 125 to 130 launches on these routes. During the next three or four days, these launches will carry some forty to sixty thousand passengers everyday," he added.

The passengers were seen travelling by the jam-packed launches yesterday.

Meanwhile, acute traffic jams in the Gulistan area is making it harder for the passengers to reach the Sadarghat terminal in time.

"I had to get off the scooter I hired from Malibagh at the Gulistan crossing because there was a mile-long jam," a distressed passenger who arrived at the terminal at the very last moment said. "I walked a while with my baggage and then took a rickshaw. Then again I had to get off the rickshaw near the Mitford Hospital because of another traffic jam."

Dhaka's concern

From Page 1 Col 4

commission which has made a list. The compensation would be paid only after it was received from Iraq. But the question of payment by Iraq was contingent on its ability to sell oil, which has been embargoed by the same UN commission, he said.

Osmany refuted a report in a section of the Indian press that the Indian Government had allowed Nepal and Bangladesh to have a road-link through West Bengal.

The Foreign Secretary expressed the hope that the Chakma refugees would keep on returning and the process of repatriation of the Rohingyas would be accelerated further.

Ctg : 2 shot dead

From Page 1 Col 7

with Kotwali thana in connection with the killing of the Juba Dal leader while no case was recorded till writing of this report against the killing of the Shibir activist.

The namaz-e-janaza of both the victims were held separately under police escort at Mohsin College maidan and Chittagong College maidan.

Juba Dal in a statement later announced protest rally and mourning procession tomorrow demanding punishment to the killers of its leader.