

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 Mufiullah 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 especially 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 Bangladeshi 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.

Relying 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 com-

modities 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.

Bangladesh exported com-



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

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House keeping the opposition outside the parliament. Barrister Rafiq said the statement of the Awami League Parliamentary Party was far from truth.

"Reality is that it was the opposition which had illogically and whimsically kept them away from the proceedings of the House," he said.

The Parliament which had been established after nine years of anti-autocracy struggle for restoration of democracy cannot be left at the whims of anybody."

"We, as a nation must be mature enough through our decisions and actions for nourishing the democratic values and practices."

LGDR Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar and Deputy Minister for LGDR 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 Abdurrahman Al-Noman, Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, State Minister for Land Kabin Hossain, State Minister for Youth and Sports Mdak Hossain, Deputy Minister for LGDR Abdul Hye and immediate past mayor of Dhaka Mirza Abbas MP, Rashed Mosharrif MP, Azizur Rahman MP, Kamrul Islam MP, Salauddin Ahmed MP, Amanullah Aman MP, Amir Khasru MP, Mohammad Mohsin MP, Rosy Kabin 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.

The Works Minister pointed out that the records of parliamentary procedures would show as to who had violated the parliamentary norms and etiquettes. "However, I am not prepared to make any comment at this moment, which might unnecessarily hurt the feelings of the members of opposition, but honestly expect and desire that they will come back to the Parliament to take part in various national and international issues and help resolve all these problems inside the parliament."

Barrister Rafiq said had the government decided to frustrate the parliament, the treasury bench would not have made all-out efforts for five days to bring the opposition back to the House and the Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda also would not have withdrawn his comments and expressed his regrets twice.

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Describing the ALPP statement regarding the prorogation of Parliament as untrue and motivated, Barrister Rafiq said one should be fair before one alleges the conduct of others.

Reality is that, Barrister Rafiq said, before the opposition had walked out of Parliament, the Deputy Leader of the House, Prof. A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, drew the attention of the chair that the objectionable part of the statement of the Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda should be expunged.

Moreover, Barrister Huda stood up himself to withdraw his statement.

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.

The inquiry team walked under armed protection in Goldstein's footsteps on

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.

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Soldiers posted outside the tomb and other witnesses said the killer got out of a white car. There were no details about the driver, nor whether he or she knew of the crime that Goldstein was to commit at the mosque.

Meanwhile, the head of Hebron's Islamic council, Sheikh Salah Nachech complained to the commission that the Israelis had cleaned up the mosque and removed bloodstained carpets, eliminating important evidence.

The Sheikh said he would be willing to appear before the commission after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which ends this week.

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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 Teng 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 Gaan 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.

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 non-payment of arrear 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 increased 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

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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."

Postal Dept faces a mailbag shortage

By Shamsad Mortuza

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.

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DC-10: Reprieve for 3

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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.

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.

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"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.

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.

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