

DOWN TO EARTH

Promotion of Tourism in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Tourism was once a prerogative of the elite, those who had time and money to enjoy travelling. Times have since changed. In the west, the concept of tourism has already acquired a wide-ranging significance in the context of its socio-economic impact and people-oriented image. In many countries of the world, tourism has been accorded the status of an industry on account of its potentiality for earning foreign exchange. In the neighbouring countries India and Nepal, tourism has attained a stage far more developed than that in our country. One reason for this may be that we have had a much later start in this field.

Our country is a land of unspoiled beauty and rich heritage. Even in the city itself, there are many attractions in the glory of its oriental past and the grand panorama of mother nature. The tingling bells of innumerable oriental rickshaws playing all over with their sea of colours, the exotic beauty of the oriental structures superbly created by our skilled craftsmen, colourful shops full of traditional handicrafts of wood, bamboo, straw, clay brass and copper are the characteristic features of tourist attractions. The Tourist Handbook distributed by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation gives full details of the places of tourist attractions in the city.

In the eyes of observers, tourism in our country is yet to achieve a people-oriented character. The objective should be not to accord less importance to internal tourists in preference to foreign tourists. Lately, however, it is noted that the Tourist Corporation has introduced some programmes for the youths of schools, colleges and universities. Under these programmes, the youths of the city have been provided with opportunities

for city sights seeing under guided tours at reasonable rates. These tours cover almost all the places of tourist attraction. Moreover, there are provisions for river cruises with four to five hours duration. The river cruises may be considered a little expensive by common people. They seem to be more tailored to attract foreign tourists.

It is felt by some tourist operators that if the city dwellers can be motivated to take more interest in visiting places of tourist attraction around them in greater numbers, scope may be created thereby to introduce economy rates for tour tariffs. Such a thing has reportedly happened in India where positive incentives are allowed to internal tourists resulting in substantial growth of such tourists.

More sight-seeing is not considered enough for a tourist. To make every guided tour meaningful, the role of expert guides can hardly be exaggerated. In fact, they form an indispensable part of the tourist industry. If we just go to visit a place of historical interest, say the Lalbagh Fort, without the help of an expert guide, who can throw light on the historical and other interesting aspects of the site, such a visit may be reduced to just a glimpse of old structures. The question of providing adequate security to the tourists during their visits is also very important.

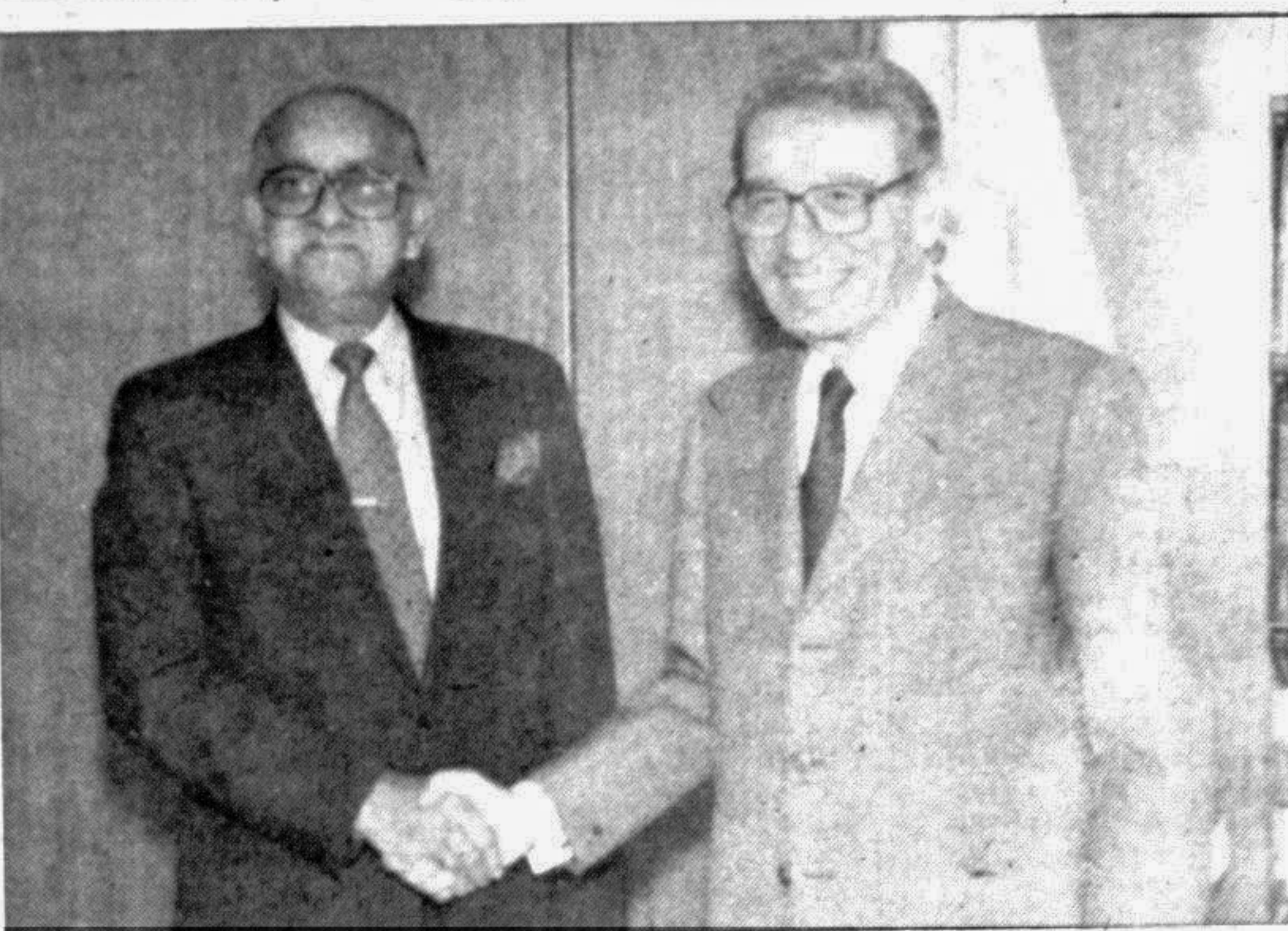
Tourism in general is greatly influenced by seasonal changes. Even local tourists who come out on their own initiatives to visit places of interest, choose winter as more suitable for their outings. At that time, we find a large increase in the number of visitors to various picnic spots in outlying areas such as Chandra, Shalinia, Sonargaon, etc. Because of the compara-

tively high expenses involved, sections of general run of local people interested in tourism are not able to avail the various facilities provided by the Tourist Corporation such as the Joy Restaurant at Savar, Waterfront Restaurant at Zia International Airport, Mary Anderson Floating Restaurant at Pagla VIP Jetty. These facilities are mostly used by people of higher income groups, and foreign tourists.

Other facilities provided by the Tourist Corporation near the city and its suburbs are mainly directed at foreign tourists and the richer sections of our people. To provide high standard at these facilities to suit foreign tourists is understandable in the interest of earning foreign exchange. It is, however, felt by observers that there are certain disincentives in this field.

Any instability or disorderly state in our political life adversely affects foreign tourism. Moreover, the proliferation of beggars in the streets acts as a strong discouraging factor. There is hardly any traffic signal point in the city which is not free from a crowd of beggars. The same is true at shopping centres and other areas frequented by foreign tourists. Their omnipresence projects a poor image of our country as bereft of self-respect and orderly civic life.

In view of the important role played by tourism in helping a country's economy, it behoves the authorities concerned to take all possible measures to attract tourist. In this respect, large scope exists for the private sector to play a helpful role. Faced as we are with the problems of population explosion, resource constraints, unemployment, etc. there is a paramount need to take advantage of the fast growing opportunities for tourism in this golden age of travel.



UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros (Ghali) (R) greets Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman at the United Nations Thursday. — AFP photo

Tk 50cr Sonali Bank pond fisheries scheme

My Masud Hassan Khan

Sonali Bank has initiated a scheme to reach its credit services to the doorstep of the commonman.

The scheme, titled Pond Fisheries Scheme, envisages lending to the owners of about 9,000 private ponds across the country for fish cultivation.

When fully implemented, an additional quantity of 36,000 tonnes of fish worth an estimated Taka 160 crore, will be produced a year, according to officials of the Sonali Bank.

Under the scheme, Taka 50 crore will be disbursed as loans through all the 1305 branches of the bank, they said.

The bank will lend a maximum of Taka 19,000 per bigha of water surface of the ponds at a rate of 12.5 per cent simple interest.

"Any private owner of any 'flood-free' pond, alone or in groups, can apply for the loans," a bank source said. The new scheme will not,

however, cover large water bodies like beels, haors or baors.

The fisheries scheme emphasises bringing under it thousands of small and medium-size backyard ponds in the homestead which remain utilised round the year, the source said.

The scheme will be operated under a "participatory management" system in which local Sonali Bank officials and the entrepreneurs will work jointly for fish production.

Bank officials said that repayment of loans given under the Pond Fisheries Scheme will start one year after disbursement of the money and will be made in three instalments.

The new scheme banks on good reputation of the small borrowers in paying back the money in time, according to some officials of the Sonali Bank.

Mostafiz

From Page 1 Col 7 rights, economic progress and social cohesion.

Together, they call for a concerted response, nationally and internationally, that is new and imaginative, Mostafiz said.

Mostafiz now in New York, is leading the Bangladesh delegation at the UNGA session.

Today, issues of territorial security are being overshadowed by concerns over human security, he said, adding, there is increasing recognition of non-military threats of security.

Bangladesh, he said, has a strong commitment for multilateralism and for building a better regional consensus in South Asia as elsewhere.

Quoting Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, he said, Bangladesh is keen on developing partnership within South Asia to combat the common problem of poverty in the region and free South Asia from hunger, disease, ignorance and prejudice that together pose the most important challenges to security.

Bilaterally, he said, Bangladesh has taken important steps to constructive relations with all its immediate neighbours in pursuit of Bangladesh's policy of friendship, cooperation and peaceful coexistence with all countries of the world.

Bangladesh's relations with its largest neighbour, India, he said, has seen some improvement on the issue of return of Chakma refugees and economic interactions.

Turning to the prevailing global problems the foreign minister lent his support to the proposals of the UN Secretary General for an agenda for peace and an agenda for development across the world.

The foreign minister called for effective measures to end the continuing tragedy in Bosnia and reiterated Bangladesh's position to establish comprehensive peace in Middle East based on justice and fair play.

"We are glad that the problems of Haiti has been pursued through exhaustive attempts for a peaceful resolution of the problem," he said.

Akashi unlikely to apologise

ZAGREB, Oct 7: UN special envoy Yasushi Akashi is unlikely to apologise for a mistaken allegation that Muslim troops executed Bosnian Serb soldiers and mutilated their corpses, a UN spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic demanded an apology but UN spokesman Paul Riskey told Reuters in Zagreb that the facts of Thursday's attack by Bosnian government forces "don't warrant any sort of apology."

Paris backtracks over visa to Taslima

PARIS, Oct 7: Backtracking in the face of fierce criticism, the government Friday offered to let self-exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen visit France for more than just 24 hours, reports AP.

But Nasreen, remained indignant at the initial rejection of her request for a one-week visa and postponed her visit indefinitely.

In a communique released by her supporters in France, she said the government still wished to restrict her activities and limit her visit to three or four days.

"Why does France want to limit my freedom of movement and expression?" she asked. "France is the land of freedom. I love this country and I want to have access to its culture."

The Foreign Ministry outraged human rights groups, cultural figures and numerous politicians Thursday when it confirmed that Nasreen's request for a one-week visa had been rejected. The ministry offered her a 24-hour visa, saying security forces couldn't assure her safety for a longer visit.

On Friday, as the criticism intensified, Foreign Ministry spokesman Richard Duque said Nasreen was welcome for a visit of "several days." He said her plans should be "closely coordinated" with security officials.

The Foreign Ministry said the one-week visa request was rejected only because of the insistence of the Interior Ministry, which oversees the police. A dispute between the two ministries was resolved Friday by Premier Edouard Balladur, and a longer visa was offered, officials said.

Interior Minister Charles Pasqua said he was concerned not so much about Nasreen's safety but about the possibility that French citizens abroad might be targeted by anti-Nasreen fundamentalists.

Reporters Without Borders, one of the groups organising Nasreen's planned visit, said the writer still might come at a later date, if she was allowed to follow her full initial itinerary.

Women reign

STOCKHOLM, Oct 7: The new prime minister presented a Social Democratic minority government Friday with women for the first time comprising half the cabinet, reports AP.

In a speech to parliament, Ingvar Carlsson said the government's main task will be to shrink the huge budget deficit and reduce unemployment, now at about 13 per cent.

"Under no circumstances will we accept higher inflation to bring the budget deficit and national debt down," Carlsson said in an apparent attempt to defer such fears in financial markets. Inflation is now running at about 2.7 per cent.

Haitian parliament nearing amnesty for coup leaders

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 7: Haiti's Parliament is drawing closer to a sweeping amnesty agreement for the nation's military leaders, reports AP.

The lower chamber of Parliament overwhelmingly passed a measure authorising a broad amnesty for the coup leaders Thursday, and the Senate was expected to take up the issue today.

US helicopters circled overhead this morning as American soldiers searched for arms in the Delmas area of Port-au-Prince. There was no immediate word of any weapons seizures or arrests.

In St Marc, north of the capital, US troops arrested 23 Haitian soldiers and several civilians Thursday after discovering an arms cache in the local army barracks.

There is a rising sense of anticipation here as Oct 15 approaches. That is the deadline for Haiti's two remaining military leaders — Raoul Cedras and Philippe Biamby — to step down and return the

Haitian government to Aristide.

Under an agreement negotiated by former President Carter, the generals are to step down by Oct 15 or whenever Parliament grants them a general amnesty, whichever comes first.

Earlier this week, some members of Parliament were balking at the notion of a blanket amnesty, arguing that the military leaders should only be pardoned for leading the coup that toppled Aristide in September 1991, not for other crimes.

The measure passed by the Chamber of Deputies would allow Aristide to pardon the generals not only for political misdeeds but for other "crimes and misdemeanors."

There has been much speculation in the capital about whether Cedras might leave the country, as US officials have urged him to do. One line of thought is that he is awaiting an amnesty vote, and might be more willing to leave once he has been pardoned.

The Midnight File

NATO asks UN to endorse tough stance against Serbs

BRUSSELS, Oct 7: NATO formally asked the United Nations on Friday to let its war planes retaliate faster, more forcefully and against more targets in Bosnia. In a letter to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, it asked that more intense air power be used against Bosnian Serbs violating arms exclusion zones around Sarajevo and Gorazde or harassing Muslims or peacekeepers elsewhere in Bosnia, said a NATO official, reports AP.

China's N-test angers Russia, US

LONDON, Oct 7: China angered its Asian neighbours, Russia and the United States with its latest nuclear test blast today but the underground explosion seemed unlikely to damage efforts to wrap up a worldwide test ban treaty next year. China is the only one of the world's five declared nuclear powers which has refused to observe a moratorium on testing and many countries urged Beijing on Friday to stop tests now. Today's blast, the second in four months, drew sharp protests from Russia, Japan, Australia and Kazakhstan, reports Reuters.

Some Swiss cult members were murdered!

GRANGES-SUR-SALVAN, Oct 7: Mounting evidence points to murder in some of the 53 deaths of cult members in Switzerland and Canada, investigators said Friday, reports AP.

Two leaders of the cult had visited their chalet hours before elaborately rigged bombs set off fires in it and other buildings associated with the cult, authorities also said Friday.

Investigators are weighing new evidence, such as bullet wounds and weapons, suggesting at least some of the cult members found dead this week were murdered, and not willing participants in a mass suicide.

"We have elements now that clearly indicated there may have been an execution," said investigating judge Andre Piller.

Canadian authorities said they were sure that a baby and two adults found in a burned house north of Montreal were murdered. The latest finds brought to five the number killed in Canada. The Swiss toll is 48.

Geneva police, meanwhile, have seized bank documents and lists in several houses and apartments of people associated with the cult, said spokesman Gerard Maury. He said police had also given pro-

tection for two days after the fires to a cult member who feared reprisals.

The Belgian doctor Luc Joutet, leader of the mysterious Order of the Solar Tradition, and another cult leader, Joseph di Mambro, had a locksmith let them into the chalet about 4 pm Tuesday, investigating judge Jean-Pascal Jaquenot told Swiss radio.

Bangalore

From Page 1 Col 4

Many people in Bangalore believe the governing Congress party recently began the Urdu broadcasts on Doordarshan TV to win votes from Karnataka's Muslim minority in next month's state election.

Doordarshan officials have denied that, but the activists plan to seize its building in Bangalore this Sunday.

The Congress party is making a surreptitious attempt to make Urdu the second official language of the state just to win the votes of Muslims. Chidananda Murthy, the leader of the Kannada Power Centre activist group, said in an interview Thursday.

Anees-ul-Haq, a local Doordarshan official, said each day's 10-minute Urdu news-cast is only replacing advertisements and public announcements. He said the Urdu newscasts also began in seven other cities across India, including New Delhi.

BGMEA allays fear

From Page 1 Col 4

Association and Chairman of the Bangladesh Textiles Mills Association criticising the recent empowerment of the BGMEA to control imports by the garments sector.

The BGMEA president said the two associations' criticism of the government decision was intended to "tarnish the image of the garments factory owners," who employ a million people and earn more than 60 per cent of the country's total foreign exchange.

He said the entire textiles sector cannot meet even three per cent of the total fabric demand of the export-oriented garments industry. This 3 per cent fabric also comes from the recently commissioned textile/dyeing mills of the country.

The so-called specialised textiles sector cannot produce even a single yard of quality fabric which is acceptable to the overseas garments buyers, he added.

Clarifying the government empowerment of the BGMEA, Redwan Ahmed said the decision related to the issuing of the Utilisation Declaration and not control of fabric imports as such.

He said the customs authority used to issue Utilisation Permission on the basis of recommendation of the Utilisation Expert Committee set up by the Ministry of Commerce with the BGMEA members in 1985.

Since then, Redwan Ahmed said, this committee has been examining the consumption of fabric and recommending to the customs authority for different types of garments beyond the SRO limit and there was not a single case of Expert Committee recommendation that was turned down by the customs authority.

This proves the integrity of the BGMEA members in 1985.

Plague

From Page 1 Col 7

from plague in the Indian capital for more than 10 days. Delhi's confirmed plague death toll remains three.

Government health officials say they are convinced the outbreak is under control, and some foreign governments are cautiously lifting stringent controls imposed to keep the plague in India.

PTI adds: Normally is gradually being restored in plague hit areas across the country with no casualties reported as more than 3,600 people left various quarantine wards of different hospitals.

Meanwhile, the visiting Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr H Nakazima, called on the Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, and commended the efforts taken by the government in containing and localising the plague within a short span.

and necessary expertise of the Utilisation Expert Committee of the BGMEA. The issue of Utilisation Permission by the customs authority at the later stage became merely a formality, he said.

All these prompted the government to delegate the authority of issuing Utilisation Permission to the BGMEA in the form of Utilisation Declaration, the BGMEA president said.

"This transfer of authority to issue Utilisation Declaration by the BGMEA is completely in conformity with the government's policy of gradual deregulation."

Redwan said in order to uphold the government's trust on the BGMEA to ensure scientific determination of consumption of fabrics all marking beyond or within the SRO limit will be checked by a computerised garments marking system followed in the advanced countries of the world.

The BGMEA has already requested the government to constitute a Utilisation Monitoring Committee comprising representatives from the National Board of Revenue, Export Promotion Bureau, Department of Textiles and the BGMEA to oversee the Utilisation Declaration, he said.

Iraqi divisions

From Page 1 Col 4

message of warning to Baghdad during a question-and-answer session with reporters, one administration source said.

Britain said today that it was closely watching the situation on the Iraq-Kuwait border following large-scale Iraqi troop movements.

"We are monitoring the situation very carefully. It is not unknown for the Iraqis to move large numbers of troops," a foreign office spokesman said.

AL leaders

From Page 1 Col 7

meeting, unanimously expressed their determination to realise the main Opposition demand — caretaker government — either through political negotiations or agitation against the ruling party, meeting sources said. Ten leaders of the party's local level units addressed the meeting, the sources added.

Most of the central leaders of the party were present at the meeting but did not address it.

Party General Secretary Zillur Rahman presented a report on organisational activities across the country and Ataur Rahman Kaiser read out the party's economic programme.

The central working committee of the party is scheduled to meet this morning to take some decisions in the light of the discussions at yesterday's meeting.

Madhyapara Project

From Page 1 Col 8

Workers' Party (WPK) on October 10, this year, and said the rule of the party represents the interest of Korean nation and people. He listed the achievements under this party in his country and said many welfare-oriented programmes were taken up by the party like free education system, free medical care system, housing to working people free of charge without any condition, and solution of food and clothing problem of the people.

"Popular policies of WPK were adopted so that the people can lead a happy life without worries," the ambassador said.

About the nuclear problem in the Korean Peninsula, Sik said the DPRK and the United States are holding talks in Geneva to solve the problem. However, he said that the talks are facing some difficulties due to "sinister intention of the US hardline conservatives."

On the possibility of the summit between the two Koreas, he said it depends on the policy and attitude of the Republic of Korea. Two countries had agreed for a summit but it could not take place as DPRK President Kim-II-Sung died suddenly before the meeting could be held.

7 banks

From Page 1 Col 3


the Trust Bank sponsored by the Sena Kalyan Sangstha; the Dhaka Bank, sponsored by Abdul Hai Sarker and Altah Hossain; the South East Bank, sponsored by M A Quasem and Ragib Ali and the Dutch Bangladesh Bank, sponsored by Md Shahabuddin Ahmed, Amena Ahmed, Mohsin Uddin Ahmed and Netherlands Finance Company.

According to sources, some of the seven do not fulfil all the criteria for being eligible to get permission for banking. But those were also recommended both by an inter-ministerial body and the cabinet committee, the sources added.

According to the set criteria, members of a single family will not be allowed to hold more than five per cent of shares, bank loans cannot be sources of sponsor capital and defaulters cannot be sponsors.

When asked, an official of the Finance Ministry told The Daily Star the central bank is supposed to look into the matter before giving licences to the sponsors after approval of their applications by the cabinet.

The Finance Ministry and the two committees made their recommendations regarding the proposed banks on the basis of the papers submitted by the sponsors, the official said. "They are not supposed to investigate whether the capital of the sponsors are white or not."



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