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Young girls dance before British Prime Minister John Major and his wife during a visit to the Kasbah slum in southern Calcutta yesterday. Major began a six-day trade mission to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh along with representatives of 50 British companies.

— AFP/UNB photo

Major's visit

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explored and to be developed for commercial production by a British company.

The British premier will visit a BRAC project in Manikganj, partly funded by the British Overseas Development Administration. Major will address a gathering of local business and trade leaders organised by the FBCCI tomorrow.

Official talks between Prime Ministers Sheikh Hasina and her British counterpart will be held tomorrow. It was learnt that the talks will focus on boosting further British investment in Bangladesh, particularly in the industrial and energy sectors.

Talks will also focus on further boosting exports of Bangladeshi goods to Britain. Bangladeshi exports primarily ready-made garments, jute and fish products to Britain and imports mainly machinery and chemicals from that country.

Dhaka, it was learnt, would seek further British investments and would offer incentives for relocation of its 'sunset' industries.

In recent years, Britain has emphasised on increasing bilateral trade cooperation between the two countries and the balance of trade now is in favour of Bangladesh.

Dhaka exported goods valued at nearly 418 million US dollars to Britain and imported items worth around 130 million dollars in 1995-96.

Britain has one of the largest foreign investor presence in Bangladesh, with more than 45 companies active in the market. Britain is Bangladesh's third largest export market, mainly as a result of Bangladesh's vibrant ready-made garments industry.

Bangladesh is also the largest recipient of British Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and receives nearly 50 million US dollars annually for various development projects. London has also set up an assistance monitoring office in Dhaka recently.

British assistance has been forthcoming in road construction, building of bridges and assistance for the social service sectors.

The Bangladesh and British Prime Ministers are also likely to discuss all bilateral matters for further strengthening political and economic ties. Talks will also cover mutual issues of regional and international concern.

During the official talks, Dhaka will also stress on further simplifying immigration procedures for family members of the large number of Bangladeshis residing in Britain and also raise the problems faced by Bangladeshi immigrants there.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will host a banquet for John Major on January 11 at the state Guest House Jamuna. He will visit the National Memorial at Savar to pay homage to the Liberation War martyrs.

Major will call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed. He is also likely to meet BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Begum Khaleda Zia.

The British Prime Minister is scheduled to leave Dhaka on Sunday at 10 am. He will address a press conference prior to his departure.

The British public and media played an active role in supporting the country's liberation war. The founder president of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, after his release from prison in Pakistan after liberation, first went to London where the British government accorded him special honour and provided him a special plane of the Royal Air Force to fly him to Dhaka on January 10. Pakistan later quit the Commonwealth when Britain extended recognition to Bangladesh.

John Major will be the second British Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh. In 1978, former British Prime Minister James Callaghan visited Dhaka.

John Major: A profile

John Major, Conservative Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, was appointed Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service on 28 November 1990, following his election as leader of the Conservative Party the previous day, reports BSS.

He retained the post when the Conservative Party won the general election of April 1992.

John Major was born in 1943 and educated at Rutlish Grammar School. He was an executive with Standard Chartered Bank from 1965 to 1979 and is an Associate of the Institute of Bankers. He served on Lambeth Borough Council from 1968 to 1971.

Before his election to Parliament as member for Huntingdonshire in 1979, Major contested Camden (St Pancras) in February and October 1974. Since the general election of 1983 and following constituency boundary changes, he has sat for Huntingdon.

From 1981 to 1983 Major was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State at the Home Office. He became an Assistant Government Whip in 1983, being appointed a Lord Commissioner of the Exchequer. He remained in this post until his appointment as Prime Minister in November 1990.

Major was a member of the board of Warden Housing Association from 1975 to 1983. He was a Joint Secretary of the Conservative Back-Bench Environment Committee from 1979 to 1981, parliamentary consultant to the Guild of Glass Engravers from 1979 to 1988; and President of the Eastern Area Young Conservatives from 1983 to 1985.

His recreations include opera, cricket and football.

Major married Norma Johnson in 1970. They have a son (James) and a daughter (Elizabeth).

Writ: Indemnity repeal

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submissions of the Attorney General adjourned the hearing on the petitions till Monday and invited Barrister Syed Iftaq Ahmed as the senior most *amicus curiae* to present his opinions on that day.

Under Article 93 no ordinance can be promulgated inconsistent with any provision of the constitution but the Indemnity Ordinance is inconsistent with Article 61 and 62," argued the Attorney General.

He said, "According to Article 102 (5) of the Constitution the killers would not get any remedy under writ jurisdiction, they would go to court martial."

Justifying the Indemnity (Repeal) Act, 1996, K S Nabi said, "The Jatiya Sangsad under Article 80 legislates law and under Article 149 can amend or repeal any law or bylaw made under the Constitution by simple majority in Parliament and hence Parliament most legally repealed the ordinance."

He further submitted that according to the saving Clause 39 (A) (10) law includes ordinances and as such the ordinance is a law and can be repealed like other ordinances as the same does not fall within

200 houses gutted

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incident. They took treatment from different clinics and hospitals.

The fire rendered more than 200 families, mostly belonging to low-income groups, homeless and caused an estimated loss of property worth Tk 50 lakh.

Fire Brigade and officials concerned will investigate the reason for the fire incident and also assess the extent of damage.

Yasmin murder

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case.

The trial of the three main accused is being held in the Special Court under Section 6 (4) of the Women and Children Repression Act. The trial of six other accused will begin in the District and Sessions Judge Court of Rangpur from January 13 under Section 201 (34) of BPC.

The Special Court, which resumed its hearing on Wednesday, recorded the depositions of eleven witnesses until this afternoon when it adjourned till next Saturday.

Earlier, on November 25 and 26, the court recorded the depositions of eight witnesses. There are a total of 549 witnesses.

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The Daily Star

Illegal licences for rickshaws

DCC files cases against two trade unions

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of rickshaws are plying on the city streets with illegal authorisation plates issued by some trade unions, violating the Rickshaw By-laws 1973, sources in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) said.

The DCC has filed cases against two such trade unions with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and served notice to another, the Sultanjan Union Parishad for violating the laws. The DCC, the DCC official said requesting anonymity.

He, however, did not disclose the names of the two trade unions.

The DCC recently issued forgery-proof blue books and tokens to the 79,700 authorised rickshaws in the city at a cost of nearly 30 lakh taka, another DCC official said. But the number of authorised is about two lakh. Apart from mobile courts, no other action is taken either by the police or any other authority, the official said.

We are soon introducing Premium Bus Services in the city and we need to restrict the haphazard growth of rickshaws and autorickshaws to keep the city roads clear but the problem is being aggravated day by day," the official said.

On the city streets, this correspondent saw several rickshaws with illegal authorisation plates issued by Jahangirnagar Rickshaw Milk Samity, Mahanagar Rickshaw Chalok Samity, Dakkhinkhan Rickshaw Milk Samity, Rickshaw Chalok Oikya Parishad and Sultanjan Union Parishad.

Rafiqul Islam Mia sued for corruption

Former Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia was yesterday sued for corruption in allotment of a 10-katha plot, official sources said, reports UNB.

The former Chairman of RAJUK, Humayun Khadem, and five others have also been charged with misappropriation about Tk 74 lakh while giving allotment of the plot at Baridhara in the city.

An official of the Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the case with Motijheel police after investigation.

Hasina

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The Prime Minister flew to the Padma area to see the flow of the water and met a cross-section of the people. She first dropped at a char named Talbaria in Kushtia district and inaugurated a Gorai dredging project.

The river Gorai has lost its depth and flow due to lack of water flow in its mother river the Padma, which caused increased salinity and initiated desertification process to its nearby areas.

Addressing the gathering at Talbaria, the Prime Minister said the rivers of Bangladesh were drying due to lack of water.

She said there was no water in the rivers in last few years, the land lost its fertility being dry for want of irrigation, the fish production was dropped in the area and the people suffered a lot.

In Rajshahi, Prime Minister inaugurated a special literacy campaign, saying that the only objective of her government is overall development of people's lifestyle which is not possible without removing illiteracy from the country.

"Our target is the people, their welfare and development of their living condition," she told a huge public rally at Rajshahi Madrasa Maidan in the afternoon where she announced the programme styled "Sandipan".

"Sandipan project is a unique programme for removing illiteracy," she said urging all educated people of the district to involve themselves in the project to make it a success.

Home-coming day

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with their unbound love and affection.

In a message on the eve of Bangabandhu's home-coming day, President Shahabuddin Ahmed called for participation of all irrespective of party affiliation in the efforts for building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is now independent and sovereign. We all want an exploitation-free and prosperous Bangladesh," said the President, adding that the people whose sufferings knew no bound during the nine-month war were overwhelmed with joy, emotion, hopes and aspiration getting Bangabandhu back amidst them.

The day is, therefore, a memorable day in our national history, he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message said the nation after a long period today got the scope to complete the unfinished task of the Bangabandhu back amidst them.

She, however, mentioned that the Indemnity (Repeal) Bill had been passed in the Jatiya Sangsad, paving the way for trial of the killers of Father of the Nation.

She said countrymen, after long 21 years, gave her party a chance to materialise the dreams of Bangabandhu.

In observance of the Day, Awami League will hold a discussion meeting at the Engineers' Institute auditorium at 10 am today. Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina is expected to chair the discussion.

AL programmes include hoisting of the National Flag and party flag at Bangabandhu Bhaban, AL central office and party unit offices throughout the country at 6 am and placing of wreaths at the portrait of Sheikh Mujib at Bangabandhu Bhaban.

Muktijoddha Sanghatan will bring out a procession from the park adjacent to SAARC Fountain in the city at 8 am. Led by its Chairman Col (Retd) Shawkat Ali, MP, the processionists would march to Bangabandhu Bhaban and place wreaths at the portrait of Sheikh Mujib.

On this occasion, a two-day solo painting exhibition of Muraduzzaman Murad would begin at Bangabandhu Museum premises in the city at 10 am today, says a press release.



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Ershad freed on bail

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His wife Begum Raushan Ershad, MP, acting Jatiya Party Chairman Mizanur Rahman Choudhury and Kazi Zafar Ahmed, both his former prime ministers, accompanied him to his Gulshan residence, escorted by a caravan of vehicles and motorcycles with his supporters.

Most of them including JP Secretary General and Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju had been waiting for more than three hours for the arrival of his lawyer Yusuf Hossain Humayun and his brother Golam Kader, MP.

They had been trudging down different offices from the Supreme Court building to the Deputy Commissioner's office, where they had to furnish a bail bond to secure Ershad's release.

The barricade programme will continue tomorrow, the action committee leaders said.

The agitators also brought out a big procession. A rally was also held.

The speakers at the rally demanded withdrawal of the corrupt officials of the Kailashtila Gas Field.

Jail officials carried the file and executed the order for opening the high iron gate of the villa to allow the former army chief who seized power in a coup on March 24, 1982, to taste his freedom.

The prison officials included DIG (Retd) Abdus Zahir and Jailor Giasuddin Mollah.

As soon as they formalised the unlocking their

prisoner, whose upkeep cost Tk one lakh per month at the converted sub-jail, formerly the residence of the Deputy Speaker, Ershad strode out.

The leaders of the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association said they would refrain from all kinds of academic activities until the Vice-Chancellor, Prof M Eusuff Ali, is released.

Witnesses said the fire originated from an electrical short circuit. A number of shops were gutted in the fire at about 1 am.

Alamgir Hossain, 22, a student of Patuakhali University college was roasted alive, the witnesses added.

Rao granted bail

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Jan 9: No classes and examinations were held at Rajshahi University today as the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and the All-Party Students' Unity (APSU), enforced a strike on the campus while the university teachers and officers abstained from work protesting violence at the university.

Witnesses said the fire originated from an electrical short circuit. A number of shops were gutted in the fire at about 1 am.

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Rao granted bail

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team said, "There is no basic difference between us as we follow almost the same style. Moreover, we don't have any pressure here as far as crowd support is concerned. I think my boys will play a better game today."

Abdus Zahir and his team will follow the 1-2-5-3 formation but if the situation demands it will be changed as per the requirement. When asked whether there would be any change in their first eleven, the middle-aged Indonesian informed that they would field the same team which played the semi-final against Mohammedans.

On the other hand, the Malaysian coach Irfan Bakti (42) said his team will not make any major change in their tactics and will maintain their defensive formation (1-3-5-2).