

Hasina holds
talks with
Hashimoto
today

TOKYO, July 1: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived here this morning to begin a six-day official visit to Japan with the objective of fostering closer economic cooperation between the two Asian countries, reports BSS.

Sheikh Hasina is paying the visit at the invitation of the Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto.

The two prime ministers will hold discussion here tomorrow at the residence of Ryutaro Hashimoto to review relations between the two countries.

They are also expected to discuss regional and international issues to common interest.

The Prime Minister will have an audience with the emperor of Japan tomorrow.

Sheikh Hasina will also deliver a key-note address at the opening session of the Invest-

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**Train service to
Sylhet restored, BR
to claim Tk 3 cr
compensation**

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Railway may claim Tk 3 crore as compensation from Occidental for damages and losses caused by fire at the Magurjhara drilling site, according to high officials of the Railway.

An amount of Tk 1.5 crore may be claimed as the cost for restoring the damaged rail line and another Tk 1.5 crore as operational loss. Sylhet rail communication with Dhaka and Chittagong was stopped on June 14 following the incident.

Meanwhile, BR restored train communication between Sylhet and other parts of the country yesterday after a two-day trial run on the rebuilt rail track at Magurjhara.

Sylhet-bound passenger train (336 up) left Akhaura yesterday and crossed Magurjhara at 10:30 am. Two other local trains were also operated, the officials added.

Inter-city train Jayantika is expected to leave Sylhet today and cross Magurjhara at 8 in the morning.

Our staff correspondent from Sylhet reported that two

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**Eid-e-Miladunnabi
July 18 likely**

The government has taken up a month-long programme to observe the holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, reports UNB.

The day will be observed on July 18 on the basis of sighting moon.

The decision was taken at a high-level inter-ministerial meeting in the city yesterday with State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam in the chair.

The programmes include issuance of messages by President and Prime Minister and hoisting of national flag atop government and private buildings.

Seerat mahfil and discussion on the life and work of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) will be held at the thana and district headquarters and at all educational institutions.

BTV and Bangladesh Betar will air special programmes, and newspapers will bring out supplements on the occasion.

**HSC practical
exams on July 12**

By Staff Correspondent

The HSC practical examinations scheduled for July 3, will now be held on July 12, according to sources at the Ministry of Education.

Talking to The Daily Star the controller of examination of the Dhaka Board confirmed the change in the examination programme.

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by Syed A Mahmood

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Investment protection, loan agreements with Tokyo signed

ments.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Masahiko Komura, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Japan were present at the signing ceremony.

Later they held bilateral talks for about an hour on matters of mutual interest including the promotion of trade and business between Bangladesh and Japan.

External Relations Division Secretary, Dr AKM Mashur Rahman and President of OECF, Akira Nishigaki, signed the loan agreements on behalf of their respective sides.

Sarwar Kamal, economic minister, Bangladesh Embassy

in Japan and Kubota, Vice President of OECF, were also present on the occasion.

The Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund of Japan (OECF) will provide 6.21 billion yen for the construction of the Jamuna Bridge access road project, under which Joydevpur-Tangail portion of the road will be constructed.

This is for the first time in two years that the Japanese government has given loan in yen.

The objective of the loan agreement is to optimise the utilisation of the Jamuna Bridge by strengthening the eastern main access road section.

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Under three other agreements signed today, Bangladesh will receive loans amounting to 15.25 billion yen (about Taka 525 crore).

The agreement on investment protection was signed by Rashed Ahmed, Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan and Yoshikazu Kaneko, Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka on behalf of their respective govern-

ments.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Meiji Jingu shrine in Tokyo yesterday. — PID photo

Tk 882 cr USAID project for mother, child care

By Govinda Shil

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will finance a Tk 882 crore health project providing 'one stop' service to improve the health of mothers and children in Bangladesh.

According to a USAID report, the eight-year project focuses on proper immunisation, reduction of high maternal and infant mortality rate and family planning. It will also address the HIV/AIDS problem.

The government along with NGOs will implement the project, starting this month.

Bangladesh has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world — approximately 4.5 per thousand live births. A vast majority of deliveries take place at home without the assistance of medically trained personnel.

The USAID report titled 'National Integrated Population and Health Programme' says Bangladesh has achieved substantial success in lowering fertility rate from over seven births per woman in 1974 to approximately 3.3 in 1996-97. But it is yet to combat child mortality effectively, caused by

dehydration, pneumonia and other acute respiratory infections.

The report says only about 25 per cent of children with acute respiratory infections are taken to a healthcare provider. About 75 per cent of pregnant women still do not receive ante natal care. This strongly indicates mothers need access to 'customer service centres' which provide all health needs.

The maintenance of separate, parallel family planning and health system is extremely expensive," it noted.

USAID Mission Director in Bangladesh Richard M Brown, when contacted, said 'customer oriented services prove to be most effective and sustainable.'

Decline in birth rate is due to increased contraceptive use, from 3 per cent in 1971 to 49 per cent in 1996-97, revealed the report.

In the late 1980s, infant mortality began to drop from over 100 per thousand to under 82 by 1996-97. Mortality under five decreased by almost 30 per cent during this period to 116 deaths per 1,000 live births.

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Removal of Yusuf Ali as RU VC upheld

By SC Correspondent

The High Court justified the removal of Dr Md Yusuf Ali from the office of the Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University by discharging the rule issued upon his writ petition.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Moazzam Haque and Justice Md Hassan Ameen yesterday gave the verdict on the writ petition filed by Dr Md Yusuf Ali challenging his removal.

The President of the Republic as the Chancellor of Rajshahi University by an order dated February 16, 1997 issued as per the provisions of section 16 of the General Classes Act gave relief to Dr Md Yusuf Ali from his office of the Vice-Chancellor, Rajshahi University and gave charge of the VC to the Pro VC.

The same bench of the HC upon the writ petition on February 19 issued a rule nisi on the Chancellor of Rajshahi University, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof Dr Abdul Khalek, Pro-VC, Registrar of the

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Women's tennis treated as soft porn!

LONDON, July 1: The British government Sunday attacked coverage of women's tennis at this year's Wimbledon championships as sexist and like soft porn, reports Reuter.

Sports Minister Tony Banks called on journalists and photographers to 'concentrate more on women's tennis abilities rather than their underwear and figures.'

"It is appalling the way so much of women's tennis is treated like soft porn," he said.

His comments came halfway through a Wimbledon fortnight which has seen an even sharper focus than usual in the British press on women tennis players' underwear and bodies.

There have been stories about cellulite afflicting the top women's seeds Monica Seles and Martina Hingis, with close up photography highlighting the alleged problem.

It prompted Hingis to wear longer knickers in her second round match.

One paper, the Daily Mail, has run a two-page spread entirely filled with photographs of women players' underwear.

"We have read nothing so far

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Post-polls violence in Manikganj: 25 hurt, shops looted

MANIKGANJ, July 1: Some 25 people were injured in post-election violence in Manikganj-3 constituency where opposition BNP retained its hold in Monday's by-election, reports UNB.

Local people said sporadic clashes, attacks, ransacking and looting of shops occurred in different areas of the district town.

At least four clashes took place between the activists of Awami League and BNP when jubilant BNP supporters brought out processions following their by-election victory.

Outraged rivals were reported to have damaged and looted shops at Mitra, Nabogram, Saturia and district town.

Some traders whose shops were ransacked have filed cases.

Condemning the post-poll violence BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said it was unleashed by "terrorist" of the ruling Awami

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Manikganj by-election We respect people's verdict: PM

From M Anwarul Haq

TOKYO, July 1: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government believes in the conduct of free and fair polls for strengthening the democratic process and for economic growth and stability.

Talking to The Daily Star at the New Otani Hotel after a reception accorded to her by the local Bangladesh community, she expressed satisfaction at the conduct of the just concluded Manikganj by-polls.

"Our government is eager to strengthen democracy. We are eager to see that fair and free elections are held which I sincerely believe is required to preserve an institutionalised democracy."

Asked to comment on the result of the by-polls in which the ruling party candidate lost to the opposition BNP candidate,

the Prime Minister said: "We will respect the verdict of the people. We will not say that the polls have been rigged just because our party candidate lost. Of course our party would have its own observations."

She said, "We believe in the independent functioning of the Election Commission. It is an independent body. There is no government interference whatsoever. The polls results definitely shows that."

Sheikh Hasina said, "We are determined not to repeat a Magura type situation which happened during BNP's time."

The Prime Minister said: "I do not see why, after the conduct of free and fair elections and accepting many of the suggestions made by the opposition BNP during the passage of the

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Border tightened to stop influx of Rohingyas

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, July 1: Security has been beefed up with special patrolling along the border with Myanmar and the adjoining areas in Teknaf and Ukhia thanas of Cox's Bazar district to prevent fresh influx of Rohingyas, sources concerned said.

BDR teams started the special patrolling at the hills and bordering villages in Teknaf and nearby areas to find out any infiltrators from Myanmar.

BDR sources said their special patrol teams aided by police recently dismantled 45 huts of infiltrator Rohingyas in Kutupalong and Noapara hilly areas in Ukhia and pushed back 316 Rohingyas.

The strength of BDR at every border outposts was also increased to 40 from 10 to keep more vigil on any infiltration from Myanmar.

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SLR recovered from city house

Police recovered a Self-Loaded Rifle (SLR) from a house at Dhania Paterbagh in the city on Monday night, reports UNB.

On the basis of statement of Sanullah and Jahangir Sikder, who were arrested earlier and now on remand, a team of detective branch raided the house and found the sophisticated weapon with three bullets.

DB officials said this automatic rifle can kill at a range of 500 yards.

Sanullah and seven of his accomplices were arrested during an operation on Sunday. The DB team also recovered five firearms and 21 round bullets.

The arrested persons except one were brought on police remand on Monday for four days. They are now being interrogated under DB custody.

Meanwhile, DB personnel also arrested Dilu, a notorious terrorist of Sutrapur, from Pagla in Narayanganj on Monday night. He was wanted in 16 cases, including murder charges.

Arms, explosives recovered in Bhola

From Staff Correspondent