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Remaining 21000 Rohingyas Repatriation talks to resume this month

By Reaz Ahmad

UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh W Van Hovell has expressed the hope that talks would resume later this month on resumption of repatriation of the remaining 21,000 Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

Talking to The Daily Star Monday, Hovell said, "we hope resumption of repatriation completely on voluntary basis following an expected talks between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar during the visit of the latter's Foreign Minister at the end of March."

The repatriation process stalled in July last year following violent protests by a section of refugees unwilling to go back home and later a deadline set by Myanmar for taking her nationals back expired in mid-August 1997.

Sensing an immediate resumption of the process, some militant Rohingyas living in Kutupalong camp, one of the two refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, began anti-repatriation demonstrations since Thursday last.

Hovell, however, made it a point that as far as UNHCR is concerned, no matter when it resumes, must be carried out on voluntary basis and none could be sent back from host country to his

PM's question-hour

The steps include building Shwadinata Stambha, Mujibnagar Cultural Complex, Ekushey Bhaban, Bangabandhu Smriti Angan, projection of the true history of the liberation war through academic curricula, distribution of certificates among freedom fighters and quota in jobs for wards of freedom fighters.

UNB adds: The prime minister said tax holiday for 5-7 years has been introduced for foreign investors outside export processing zones and up to 10 years for those in the EPZs.

The investors in the power plant will enjoy tax holiday for 15 years, she said responding to a question from Nurul Islam Nahid of Awami League. No import duty is needed for importing machinery for export-based industries, she added.

Foreigners investing minimum 75 thousand US dollars will be given permission to stay permanently in Bangladesh while those investing minimum five lakh US dollars will be given citizenship, she said.

Hasibur visits Shahzadpur amid hartal

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 3: Escorted by a heavy contingent of police, Deputy Minister for Commerce and Industries Hasibur Rahman Swapan came to his Shahzadpur constituency today where BNP observed a dawn-to-dusk hartal, reports UNB.

BNP called the hartal to protest the presence of Hasibur Rahman who has joined the Awami League government last month. Hasib was elected to parliament on BNP ticket.

The hartal in Shahzadpur thana town was observed peacefully. Shops remained closed and vehicles were off the roads. Some rickshaws, however, were seen on the roads.

The deputy minister drove to Baghabari Ghat at about noon from where he was escorted to Shahzadpur by a heavy contingent of police and his supporters, said witnesses.

Briefly addressing a meeting at 5 pm at Shahzadpur govt college ground, Hasib said he joined the government to ensure development of the area. He assured his supporters that the terrorists, irrespective of their party affiliation, will be punished.

City AL extended meet today

An emergency extended meeting of the Dhaka city Awami League will be held at its office at 6 pm today, reports BSS.

Khaleda

She called upon people to join the movement for realising their demands and to free the nation from the grave situation.

Begum Zia also addressed a number of roadside meetings at Kashinatpur, Ataikhola, Pottia, Baneshwar and Bireldar Mazar before she reached Rajshahi in the evening.

While passing through the bank of the Ganges, Begum Zia enquired from the people if they are getting water after signing the treaty by this government. They replied in the negative.

She will stay overnight in Rajshahi after addressing the 42nd anniversary of the local Institute of Engineers.

She will address a public meeting at 3 pm at Gaibandha Islamiya High School ground on the second day of her four-day tour. She will also exchange views with the party's district leaders and workers and its front organisations.

BNP to join JS

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2 for selection of any of the two city streets — Manik Mia Avenue and Panthapath — for holding public rallies.

Ruling party sources said that the government was considering Manik Mia Avenue for rallies.

Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif will be consulted for this, they said.

The BNP Parliamentary Party is likely to meet before March 8 to discuss issues to be raised in the House.

The JS session is expected to be a stormy one as the main opposition party is likely to castigate the government on various socio-economic and political issues. "We'll raise pressing issues like price-hike of essentials, power crisis, economic stagnation and law and order situation", Mannan Bhuiyan said.

Asked if the party lawmakers would meet before going back to the House, he said party chief Begum Khaleda Zia will decide on the matter on her return to the capital from the northern districts on March 6.

Dhaka, Tehran

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The signing ceremony was held at the JEC concluding session in the afternoon.

As per the MOU, Iran will provide Bangladesh the transit facilities for exporting goods through Iran to the third country, particularly the CIS ones.

Other areas of economic co-operation include setting up of a tea industry in Bangladesh, avoidance of double taxation and investment protection.

Bangladesh and Iran agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and livestock, technical and cultural sectors.

The two countries also agreed to sign the bilateral shipping agreement, which has already been finalised, on a mutually agreed date and venue.

The signing ceremony was followed by a joint press conference.

Addressing the conference, Kibria said the third JEC session was completed successfully. "The session was very intensive and both the sides have done a very good job."

Kibria said the outcome of the session will further bolster the trade relations between the two countries and strengthen the future cooperation.

The Iranian Minister invited a Bangladesh delegation to visit Iran after six months to review the progress of the decisions taken in the third JEC session.

The next session of the Bangladesh-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) will be held in Tehran.

Indian polls

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and Maharashtra where Congress swept an overwhelming majority of the seats. In Bihar, the initial surge of BJP and its ally Samata Party led by George Fernandes was stopped by Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo Prasad Yadav and the two sides went neck and neck with 23 and 26 seats respectively.

In West Bengal, Congress took a severe beating managing only one seat through veteran leader A B A Ghani Khan Choudhury in Malda. The Congress debacle in the state prompted its state unit president Somen Mitra to resign.

The ruling Left Front predictably was way ahead with 32 seats while Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress captured seven seats.

In Assam, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's party was routed having failed to win a single of the 14 seats in the state. The Congress gained lion's share of the seats while BJP opened its account in the state.

DU hall

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front of Opposition BNP. Meanwhile, JCD brought out a procession on the campus and held a rally in front of the Registrar's Building yesterday.

Speakers at the rally demanded withdrawal of the case filed by the Registrar of the university against some JCD leaders for alleged desecration of the Shaheed Minar.

Shantibahini

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alias Shantu Larma, Chairman of the PCJSS, is expected to leave his hideout at Dudukchahara and move to Khagrachhari town, where a government villa has been readied as his residence.

The government will provide tight security for the PCJSS chairman.

He is also expected to announce shortly his future plans and role of PCJSS, likely to emerge as a regional political party, the sources said.

6 pick-pockets held at DITF

By Staff Correspondent

Detective police arrested six persons including three women on charges of pick-pocketing at the International Trade Fair grounds in the city Monday.

Police said last night that the arrested were Maloti Begum, 30, Jamila Khatun 28, Akhlima Begum, 18, Milon 22, Alam 20, and Arun 20.

Ershad

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Manju, however, did not make any comment as to whether he was making his own group in the JP parliamentary party.

When asked if he had any regrets of being removed from the party post, Manju said, "Let's see who regrets."

It is learnt that Nazim Rahman held an exclusive meeting with Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury last evening. The outcome of the meeting, however, was not immediately known.

UNB adds: Jatiya Party has called two meetings, one of its secretaries and another of the district organisers, in the second week of the current month.

The meeting of the party secretaries will be held on March 13 at the premises of Asiatic Printers while that of the district organisers will be held at the same venue the following day.

Party Chairman H M Ershad will attend the meetings, said a press release yesterday.

Envoy to Canada

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Hossain, who voluntarily opted out. Later, A M Anisuzzaman, a retired CSP officer, was nominated but resistance from other retired civil servants who also vied for the position forced the government to reconsider the decision, the sources said.

The government is likely to appoint A M Anisuzzaman as an adviser on Food and Agriculture to the Prime Minister. The position will hold the rank and status of a Cabinet minister.

Anisuzzaman served as an Adviser on Agriculture and Land Reforms in the caretaker government headed by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Aminul Islam previously served as ambassador to Libya and Bhutan.

Meanwhile, the Superior Selection Board (SSB) has recommended the promotion of Kazi Anwar Masud, ambassador to Germany, to the rank of Secretary. It has also recommended Dr Toufiq Ali, former ambassador to Netherlands, and Mahbubul Alam, ambassador to Turkey, for promotion to the rank of Additional Foreign Secretary, the sources said.

Body to make preparations for D-8 summit

A committee has been formed with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad as its head to make preparations for holding D-8 Summit scheduled to be held in Dhaka by the end of this year, reports BSS.

The committee was formed at a meeting with the foreign minister in the chair at the Foreign Ministry yesterday.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman and senior officers of the ministry were present in the meeting.

Allowances for disabled FFs enhanced

The 59th meeting of the board of trustees of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust was held at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday with Trustee Chairman Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, reports BSS.

Religious conversion

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which their religious activities could be controlled legally."

The Home Ministry letter also put five recommendations for consideration in the formulation of a law to control religious conversion.

The recommendations are: NGOs must give an undertaking that religious conversion is not on their agenda.

They should not do anything to hurt the sentiments of other religious communities.

Christian missionaries should abide by the national policy of propagating the concept of two children and adoption of family planning.

They should not use their premises or involve in any political activities during election campaign.

They should also not harass other religious communities in the regions where they are a majority.

Meanwhile, a senior official of the NGO Affairs Bureau said they were preparing a set of suggestions on the basis of the Home Ministry letter and it would be sent to the Prime Minister's Office soon.

Bangabandhu

From Page 1

Scheduled night parade on that day which was favourable for them to organise the troops and move them. 2) It was rainy season, a tough time for possible counter action by the Indian Army.

See Page 2

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