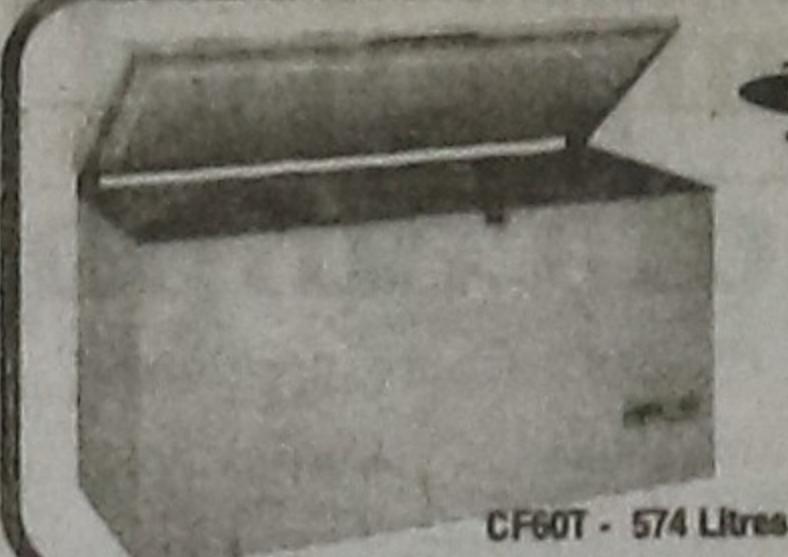


DEPZ

Dhaka Export Processing Zone
Service Building
Ganakbari, Savar
Tel # 9338931



Whirlpool
HOME APPLIANCES

Transcom Electronics Limited
Authorized distributor in Bangladesh for Whirlpool Appliances, USA
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UK to provide better access to visas in Bangladesh

By Staff Correspondent

Britain will provide better access to visas in Bangladesh as part of its commitment to extend its services here. Britain's Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced yesterday.

MP Keith Vaz made the announcement at a press conference at the Bangladesh Overseas Centre in Sylhet before heading to India.

The minister arrived in Dhaka on Sunday for a two day visit. Although Vaz visited Bangladesh when he was an opposition MP, this was his first visit as a minister.

Vaz said the British government wanted to improve visa services in Bangladesh, since the number of applicants rose by about 10 per cent last year.

About 19,700 Bangladeshis applied for visa to enter the United Kingdom last year. About 14,700 applicants were successful.

"Of course people were refused visa but they were given clear reasons in terms of their application," said Vaz.

In addition to the speech, Vaz handed over passports to successful visa applicants, including Nasima Begum, the first Bangladeshi woman to receive a visa stamp from a British Minister.

BSS adds: Vaz dismissed newspaper reports stating Asians who wanted to visit the United Kingdom would have to post a 10,000 pound bond as "rubbish" and "nonsense".

"Britain's immigration policy under the Labour government is non-discriminatory worldwide," said Vaz.

However, Vaz admitted there was a possibility of introducing a "pilot scheme" for bonds to facilitate visa applications, as suggested by some relatives of people intending to visit Britain.

The scheme would not discriminate between regions and would only be implemented if the people who wanted visas supported it, said Vaz.

Vaz said Bangladesh and Britain are bound by historical ties that could benefit from more trade and economic interaction.

Bangladesh should renew its efforts to enter European Union markets, said Vaz. There are 275 million people in the EU and that number will likely grow to 500 million by the middle of the decade.

"Britain will argue for Bangladesh's greater entry into EU markets," said Vaz.

Vaz said there are "wonderful" opportunities that should be exploited by business communities in the two countries, since Bangladesh exports 275 million pounds worth of goods to the United Kingdom but only imports 80 million pounds.

Britain will continue to invest in Bangladesh, and there should be more joint ventures here and in the United Kingdom, said Vaz.

Before flying to New Delhi, the British minister also called on BNP Chairman Khaleda Zia at her Minto Road residence.

"About 80 per cent of the plant's 233 machines are out-of-date or redundant," said a source. "It can't be used to manufacture other products."

The board switched from rotary phones to analogue and digital models in 1989. How-

ever, Siemens AG, a German telecommunications firm with an 8 per cent stake in Sangsta, made those models obsolete in 1991. This made it difficult to find spare parts and other components.

Sangsta's switching system is 100 per cent dependent on imports, experts said. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunication is considering a joint venture with a Chinese company to switch the factory over to a modern industry. The name was changed in 1973. Sangsta employs 720 workers, including 108 officers. Most cannot be retrained or are unwilling to accept other factory jobs. Over 150 workers have already retired voluntarily.



Khaleda Zia, Leader of the opposition in parliament and BNP chief, addresses striking non-government primary school teachers at Osmany Udyan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

TSS in trouble

By Mustik Hossain

at Khaleda's behest

By Staff Correspondent

The non-government primary school teachers broke their hunger strike and called off their sit-in programme in the city yesterday following an assurance by BNP Chairman Khaleda Zia that their demand would be met if her party is voted to power.

The hunger strikers took a sit-in offered by the BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and ended their strike at 2:40 pm at Osmany Udyan in the city yesterday.

Before the hunger strike was called off, President of Non-government Primary School Teachers Association Shamsul Islam gave a February 26 deadline to the government to meet their demand.

Several thousand non-government primary school teachers began a sit-in at the Osmany Udyan in the city on January 26.

If the demand is not met by

February 26, all non-government primary schools in the country will be "put under lock and key" from February 27 to March 10, he announced while addressing the teachers in presence of Khaleda Zia.

A grand conference of the teachers will be held at the Palan Maidan in the city in the third week of April, while the next course of action will be announced, he said.

He requested chiefs of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) to attend the conference and to include the teachers' demand in the opposition's election manifesto.

Several thousand non-government primary school teachers began a sit-in at the Osmany Udyan in the city on January 26.

The former prime minister

See page 11 col 6

Hasina leaves for Brussels

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka at midnight last night for Brussels at the invitation of her Belgian counterpart Guy Verhofstadt, reports UNB.

During the four-day tour, the Prime Minister will hold discussion with the European Union and Belgian leaders aiming at strengthening relationship with EU and also between the two countries.

The official talks will provide an opportunity for the Prime Minister to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary C M Shafi, Sama, ERD Secretary Dr A K M Masihur Rahman and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim are accompanying the Prime Minister.

When contacted, Housing and Works Secretary Suhel

A deadlock situation is now prevailing in implementation of the Dhanmondi lake development project as the authorities are yet to take any step to remove encroachments, prepare a management policy and release necessary funds.

Despite ECNEC approval of a revised budget of Tk 16.62 crore more than two months ago and a directive from the Prime Minister, the LGRD Ministry, Works Ministry or the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) have not taken any step to solve the persisting problems in implementation of the project.

Sources concerned said, the LGRD Ministry has done nothing except writing some letters to the Works Ministry requesting recovery of 98 kathas of encroached lakeside land from 42 individuals. The Public Works Department under the Works Ministry is also silent over the issue of land recovery. Influential encroachers are lobbying with works ministry officials to slow down any move for recovery of the land, the sources alleged.

When contacted, Housing and Works Secretary Suhel

Ahmed told The Daily Star that

Secretary of Local Government

Division who is chairman of

the committee for implementation of the project was looking after the matter.

"As far as I know, a letter

has been sent to the Home Ministry seeking its cooperation in recovery of the encroached public land," Ahmed said.

The PWD is cooperating with the committee to chalk out a plan to recover the lakeside land," the works secretary said.

Planning Commission officials said they have released the relevant file following ECNEC approval, but the file is learnt to be gathering dust at the Finance Ministry.

Meanwhile, the contractor

has stopped work on the lake

development project as the DCC

is now unable to pay.

Project sources said some of the components of the project could not be given final touches as they do not know who would look after the structures after they are completed. If finished structures are left unattended, rampant theft might take place, they said emphasising immediate formulation of a manage-

ment policy for use of the completed infrastructures.

But DCC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rashidul Alam denied that work on the project has been stopped.

"We have an agreement with the contractor that he would not stop work. Payment is being done in phases and it is natural that there will be some arrears," Alam said.

About two months ago, DCC

was asked to prepare a management policy and finalise it through discussion with relevant ministries.

The CEO said the DCC has prepared a draft of the management policy and it will be finalised at an inter-ministerial meeting. "We hope the meeting will be held soon," he said.

But sources said several officials of the DCC, LGRD Ministry, Works Ministry and the Planning Ministry, in addition to a number of politicilly backed individuals, are trying to obtain lease of the 17 commercial structures in the lake.

The DCC 'lost interest' in the management policy when its officials 'sensed' that commercially important structures of

the Dhanmondi lake project might slip out of their hands, the sources said.

DCC is also reluctant to remove the structures built defying the original concept of the project. It is completing some more structures defying the

DCC officials built an additional fence with money from the project fund, blocking a passage into the lake's walkway when an influential peer (religious preacher) near Satmasjid Road felt that the fence needed change.

The peer is also an encroacher of lakeside land, according to the DCC, 1st of encroachers.

"It is a deadlock situation. Every one is loudly shouting but nobody is caring to solve the problems regarding implementation of the project," said a source.

While there is a deadlock in implementation of the Dhanmondi lake development project, work on the two bridges are continuing under the supervision of the LGD ministry. Officials said the bridges would be completed within a fortnight.

The case was filed with Gulshan Thana. It went to the CID in October last year following the failure of the Gulshan police to arrest any of the half a dozen accused in the case.

CID official said they are investigating the case adding they would be able to arrest rest of the accused.

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Gangrape at Howrah station

Indian SC orders compensation to Bangladeshi woman

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: The Indian Supreme Court today asked the central government to pay Rs 10 lakh as damage to a Bangladeshi woman, who was gangraped at the Yatri Niwas (retiring room) at the Howrah Railway Station in Calcutta on February 2, 1998, reports BSS.

The court comprising Justice Saghir Ahmed and Justice RP Sethi directed the central government to hand over the money within three months to the Bangladesh High Commissioner for payment to the victim. The Bangladeshi woman is a member of a union parshad.

The court delivered the judgement dismissing an appeal by the chairman, Railway Board and others against a judgement of the Calcutta High Court.

The High Court verdict came on a petition filed by a lawyer of Calcutta Mrs Chandrima Das. It was alleged in the petition that the victim had come to Howrah from Bangladesh on her way to Ajmeer Sharif and stayed at the railway Yatri Niwas to arrange for her reservation in the train.

She was gangraped by many, including employees of the Indian railways. A case was registered the next day with the General Railway Police Station (GRPS) there. While awarding the damages to the victim, the High Court observed that the rape was committed at the Yatri Niwas, belonging to the railways and was perpetrated by the railway employees.

In the instant case, it is not a mere matter of violation of an ordinary right of a person but the violation of fundamental rights which is involved. This court has already held rape as an offence which is violative of the fundamental right of a person guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," observed Justice Saghir Ahmed, and thus

The victim's father filed a case with Kotwali thana against a person. Kotwali police arrested Asif for his alleged involvement with the killing yesterday. Local people rescued Asif lying in a pool of blood and sent him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died at about 11:30 pm. The body was sent for autopsy.

The victim's father filed a case with Kotwali thana against a person. Kotwali police arrested Asif for his alleged involvement with the killing yesterday.

Opposition's rallies, torch processions today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance has called a 36-hour hartal across the country beginning 6 am tomorrow to protest passage of what they said, "anti-people, repressive and black law" in the name of public safety.

In support of the hartal the Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote will bring out separate torch processions in all cities, district and thana headquarters today.

In capital Dhaka, the BNP will simultaneously bring out a torch procession from 11 places of the city. Main torch procession of the party will be brought out from BNP central office at Naya Paltan while others from New Market, Khilgaon, Mohakhali, Badda, Farmgate, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Shampur, Utara and Rampura.

JP will organise a rally at Muktangan and bring out a torch procession.

Jamaat and IOJ will hold separate rallies and bring out processions in support of the hartal from the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram and Purana Paltan respectively.

Meanwhile, a joint meeting of BNP and its front organisations yesterday called upon the countrymen to observe the 36-hour hartal spontaneously.

Chaired by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at 29 Minto Road, the meeting urged all to launch an all-out movement against the 'black law'.

The meeting also called upon all political parties, professional bodies, students and conscious section of the society to join the movement to resist the 'repressive law'.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to unavoidable proposed visit of Jose Marti, President and CEO of PATA from 19-21 February, the PATA Bangladesh Chapter is postponed.

All functions and events are called off.

We sincerely regret the inconvenience this may cause.

Secretary General PATA Bangladesh Chapter