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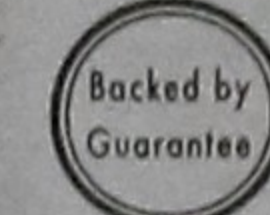
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'Sonic boom' sparks panic in city

Thousands of people in and around the capital were frightened after a big bang at about 11:45 am yesterday, reports BSS.

Police said the big bang occurred at around 11:45 am and was heard in every thana of the capital. They said the big sonic boom occurred during exercises by air force jets.

Airforce sources said the sonic boom occurred while the country's new Mig-29 jets were maneuvering across the city's sky. Usually the sonic boom occurs whenever the jet enters the Super Sonic level from the Sub-Sonic state, sources said.

UNB quoting a DMP press release said the jets arrived here from the United States to ensure security of US President Bill Clinton during his visit to Dhaka.

AFP adds: Information Minister Abu Sayeed later confirmed at an official briefing on Clinton's visit that it was a "sonic boom" from test flights of new Mig-29 aircraft.

Dhaka is already on high security alert for Clinton's historic one-day visit today the first by a US President since Bangladesh's 1971 independence war with Pakistan.

Foolproof security

By Staff Correspondent

Security guarding the streets, hotels, key installations and high rises along the routes US President Bill Clinton is expected to take during his 13-hour visit to Dhaka were placed on red alert yesterday.

Domestic and international flights from Zia International Airport were suspended from 11 pm last night until 11:45 am this morning. Flights will also be suspended between 10:15 pm and 11:15 pm tonight.

Clinton's flight is scheduled to arrive around 10:15 am. He is expected to leave for Delhi between 10:30 pm and 11 pm.

Transportation along the city's main routes will be disrupted for about 16 hours.

Only vehicles carrying VIPs and those with special stickers will be allowed on certain roads from 8 am until 12 pm.

Shops and markets along the routes will also remain closed. About 15,000 security backed by police, BDR and army personnel have been deployed along the streets and the sites Clinton will visit.

About 250 US Marines and members of the Secret Service will serve as the core of Clinton's security arrangement.

The Special Security Force will co-ordinate security arrangements for the visit.

No buses from 2 terminals today

By Staff Correspondent

Inter-district buses and trucks scheduled for different destinations of northern, northwestern and southwestern regions would not leave Gabtali and Mohakhali bus terminals this morning, according to terminal sources.

The Bus Transport Owners Association decided this following a government order for ensuring smooth traffic in the capital and the surrounding areas which US President Bill Clinton would visit today.

The buses and trucks would leave the terminals for Tangail, Mymensingh and Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions in the evening, terminal sources said.

Meanwhile, buses and other vehicles have been barred from playing roads leading to Zia International Airport and VIP road. Passenger buses and

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Billboards such as this one outside Hotel Sheraton welcome US President Bill Clinton to Bangladesh. — Star photo

Traffic restriction during Clinton's visit

By Staff Correspondent

Traffic restriction will be in place along the PG Crossing to Bijoy Sarani; Shahid Jahangir Gate to Mohakhali Railway Crossing; Sugandha Crossing to Sheraton through Phulbaria and Sonargaon Fountain Crossing to FDC.

Vehicles that usually use these routes should take Tongi Diversion Road, Mogh Bazar Crossing, Kakrail Church, Shaheed Capt. Mansur Ali Shoroni, Moulana Bhashani Road, Kataban Crossing, Science Lab Crossing and Mirpur Road.

Commuters of Mirpur and its adjacent areas, however, can go to Zia taking Dargah Salam, Mirpur, Pallabi, Mirpur 10 roundabout, 14 Kachu Khet and Rajani Gandha.

Commuters from Moham-madpur and its adjacent areas can go to Zia taking Mirpur Road, Shishu Mela, Agargaon, Rokeya Sharan, Mirpur 10 roundabout, 14 Kachu Khet and Rajani Gandha.

Commuters of Dhanmandi Rd No 27 (Old) Crossing and adjacent areas can reach Zia taking Mirpur Road, Manik Mia Avenue, Manikpur Para Rokeya Sharan, Mirpur 10 roundabout, 14 Kachu Khet and Rajani Gandha.

Commuters of Lalbagh, Azimpur, New Market, Hajari Bagh and adjacent areas can reach Motijheel taking Science Laboratory, Elephant Road, Bata Crossing, Kataban Crossing, PG Crossing, Motshya Bhaban, Press

Clinton to be served with patishapta

By Staff Correspondent

President Bill Clinton will be served with *patishapta pitha*, a traditional delicious Bangladeshi cake, during the nine-course dinner at the banquet to be hosted by President Shahabuddin at Bangabhaban today.

The main dishes will include noisette of lamb rosemary, medallion of beef with mushroom sauce, chicken malai Bangladeshi, strings of vegetable bunch and Maccare potato.

The *patishapta pitha* will be served before tea or coffee and petite fours (chocolate) at the end of the dinner, sources said.

All the catering for the Bangabhaban and for the guests starting from Zia International Airport are being done by experienced chefs of Sheraton Hotel.

President pays tribute to Bangabandhu

President Shahabuddin Ahmed paid tribute to father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by laying wreath at his portrait yesterday, reports UNB.

The president also attended a function on the occasion of the 80th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the afternoon.

Shahabuddin placed floral wreath at Bangabandhu's portrait there as the army bugle played the last post.

Chiefs of the three services also saluted to the portrait to pay respect to the memory of Bangabandhu.

Earlier, on his arrival at the museum, president Shahabuddin was received by foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad as prime minister Sheikh Hasina was out of the country.

Ministers, state and deputy ministers, advisors to the Prime Minister, diplomats, senior advocates, educationists and senior journalists were present at the function.

TV to telecast Clinton's arrival live

The arrival of President Clinton and the reception to be accorded to him at the Zia International Airport will be telecast and broadcast live by Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar, reports BSS.

Clinton is scheduled to arrive at 10:15 this morning. A source in the External Publicity Wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which is coordinating the arrival of foreign media, told BSS yesterday that nearly 300 journalists and press officers will be here on the occasion of Clinton's visit.

These journalists represent world's most respected and famous TV and radio stations and newspapers and journals.

World's major television networks like ABC, BBC, CBS, CNN and NBC and all the important wire services like AP, AFP, Jiji Press, Kyodo News, and Reuters will have large presence in the city.

Besides, some other regional TV networks, like ARD German Radio and TV, Doordorshan (DD), FOX, Fuji TV, NDTV, Nippon TV, NHK, Reuters TV, RAI (Italian TV network), Star TV, TV Asia, TV Asahi, TV Tokyo, and ZEE TV are either already in the city or on way for the coverage of the visit.

JCD activists clash in Ctg jail: 7 injured

CHITTAGONG, Mar 19: Seven people including two policemen were injured when detained JCD activists clashed in Chittagong Central Jail on Saturday, reports UNB.

The trouble began at about 5:15 pm when about 35 inmates of 'S' and 'J' wards attacked 5 inmates of another ward just before they were being locked up.

Jail sources said the attackers also exploded crackers inside the jail when a platoon of police used clubs to bring the situation under control.

The five inmates who came under attack belonged to JCD and were brought to the jail on Friday morning. They were initially lodged in S and J Wards but shifted to another ward the same night near the jail hospital as the existing inmates of those wards belonging also to JCD were angry on them creating the situation tense.

Jailor Bimol Shah said he shifted the five prisoners to the ward next to the Jail Hospital to avoid further trouble but the inmates attacked them just before.

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Khaleda, Ershad meet President

Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, MP, paid courtesy call separately on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the evening of March 17, reports BSS.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed exchanged Eid greetings and pleasantries with the two leaders. Ershad was first to arrive at Bangabhaban for the courtesy call. He was accompanied by his party Secretary General Nazim Rahman.

Later, Khaleda Zia along with BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP, went to Bangabhaban to pay a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

US funds for regenerating forests likely

By Shehab Ahmed

President Bill Clinton is likely to announce setting up of a fund under the Tropical Forest Act, 1998 of the United States to help regenerate lost forests in Bangladesh, sources said.

Bangladesh is seeking debt relief accumulated under the PL-480 for food aid. The money generated by the relief would be utilised for different humanitarian projects.

But the fund that the US president may announce today during his day long visit, here would go for regenerating the tropical forests in the country which were lost due to human activities.

The US Congress enacted the Tropical Forests Act to enable the president to help regenerate the lost forests in 1998 as part of Clinton's commitment to a better environment in the earth.

This year besides Bangladesh another developing country Peru in South America is also likely to receive such help to regenerate lost forests, the sources added.

Bangladesh's forests are fast declining and the country's total forest coverage now stands at barely three per cent instead of the 25 per cent of its total land area.

Accidents, incidents of violence kill 29 during Eid holidays

Twenty-nine people were killed and 120 others were injured in accidents and incidents of violence across the country during the Eid holidays, reports UNB.

Of them, eight were killed in Noakhali, seven in Munshiganj, one in Dhaka, two in Chittagong, three each in Gazipur and Mymensingh, two in Narsingdi one in Manikganj and two in Jhenaidah.

Eight people drowned and over 50 feared missing when an overloaded Bholabound trawler, MV Maksudur Rahman, sank in river Meghna on March 16 in the Eid rush of traffic.

In the capital, a truck driver was run over by a train while crossing the rail to show papers to a police sergeant who stopped his vehicle near Biswa Road in the city on March 16.

Witnesses said the death of the unidentified driver sparked off violent protests by other drivers and locals who clashed with police and set ablaze the jeep of the OC of Gulshan thana.

In another incident, at least seven people were killed and 30 injured at Bhaterchar under Gazaria thana of Munshiganj at 12:30 pm on March 18.

Identity of the victims, all passengers of three buses, was not immediately available.

Witnesses said one of the buses from Dhaka was going to Chittagong and two others were coming to Dhaka from Chittagong. The accident occurred as one of them tried to overtake the other when the third one came from the opposite direction.

One person was killed while 20 sustained injuries in separate road mishaps on Dhaka-Aricha highway and adjacent areas on March 17.

Sadar Hospital sources said an unidentified man was killed on the spot when a speedy truck turned turtle and plunged into a ditch at Garpara village. Sixteen other people on board the truck were also injured in the accident.

In another incident, a Sathkira-bound private car collided with a microbus coming from opposite at Gola on the highway at 4 am injuring four

people including the driver of the car Sheikh Mohammad Ramjan Ali, 30.

Two former BCL activists, Nazrul Islam, 23, and Yunus, 24, were gunned down at Pandur Khalifa Pukur Par in Fatikchhari thana of Chittagong district at about 8 pm when they were returning home from the local bazar on the night of March 16.

Police suspected that the killers belonged to the rival faction in BCL, known as Tipu group.

Their bodies were sent to

Hartal called in Chittagong Thursday

CHITTAGONG, Mar 19: All Party Action Committee has called for daylong hartal in Greater Chittagong on March 23 (Thursday) demanding release of Jamaat leader Shahjahan Chowdhury, reports UNB.

It was decided at a meeting of the APAC with BNP city convenor Meer Mohammad Nasiruddin in the chair.

APAC also decided to hold rally at Lalidighi Maidan tomorrow while mass demonstration on Tuesday and mass procession on Wednesday demanding release of the Jamaat leader.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: A tense situation prevailed at Sankaria following an exchange of fire between police and Jamaat activists leaving two police constables and an Ansar injured, after arrest of Shahjahan, police said.

Shahjahan was arrested at 7 pm on Friday in connection with two murder cases at Sankaria.

Jamaat activists damaged vehicles on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road at Sankaria point and torched a truck carrying policemen on Friday night, police said. They also fired at police injuring two constables and an Ansar. Police fired over 100 shots to disperse the Jamaat activists at Sankaria.

Chittagong Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Police were posted at Pandong as a tense situation was prevailing in the area following the killing.

In Gazipur, three people including two siblings were killed and another was injured when a Dhaka-bound jeep hit them at Chandina Chowrasta in Joydevpur and rammed into a roadside shop on Saturday.

The dead were identified as Parul, 11, her brother Rakmat Ali Khan, 7, and shopkeeper Abdul Majid, 60. The condition of the father of the siblings Taher Ali Khan was said to be critical at Sadar hospital.

In separate accidents in Mymensingh district on March 16 Irfan Ali, 25, an unidentified rickshawpuller and rickshaw passenger Ayub Ali, 25, were killed.

Police said Irfan was injured critically when a Mymensingh-bound bus hit him from behind on Mymensingh-Sherpur road at Fulpur thana. He died on the way to hospital.

Rickshawpuller and the passenger Ayub Ali were killed when a truck hit the rickshaw from behind at Maskanda in the town on March 16.

Three separate road accidents in Narsingdi left 2 persons killed and 15 injured.

A Bhairab-bound bus from Dhaka skidded off the road and fell into the roadside ditch leaving an unidentified man aged about 40 killed and 12 injured near Bhagratpur on Dhaka-Sylhet highway on March 16.

In another accident a tempo turned turtle at Gashirdia on the same highway at 9 am that left Baten Moral, 40, dead and some others injured.

A car turned upside down at Patpatty in Narsingdi town in the afternoon, injuring five persons.

Our Jhenaidah correspondent reports: Two people were killed and at least five others injured when a truck bumped into a roadside tree near Bishoykhali Bazar under Jhenaidah sadar thana in the early hours of Friday.

The dead were identified as Abdur Rahman, 40, of Rajbari and Jamal, 22, of Madhukhali.

A Humanitarian Appeal to President William Jefferson Clinton

From

The Bangladesh Society Inc., New York, USA

to

Provide General Amnesty to undocumented Bangladeshis living in the USA

Honorable President Clinton;

On behalf of the American Bangladeshis, please accept our heartfelt felicitations on this glorious occasion of your official visit to our ancestor's land. Your footstep in this alluvial soil of Bangladesh has enriched our mutual bond and instilled in us a fresh vigor to work together toward building a better world for mankind in the 21st century.

Mr President;

The arrival of the Bangladeshis to the USA, and their endeavor to settle down in that country glittered with spirit of liberty and freedom, have completed a historical process. The mosaic of the United States' demography would have been incomplete without adding our color. The pride of building a nation-state with immigrants from all shores of all the oceans of earth would have remained a mirage without our presence. Despite variance shown by statistical figures, the Bangladeshi population in the USA now stands at about 500,000 in number. Of these, only about 50,000 have outlived their status and failed to adjust their status to Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) due partly to lack of sound legal advice, and partly to the stringency that the changes in the immigration laws and regulations had brought in from time to time.

Honorable Guest;

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 provided amnesty to undocumented aliens who entered the USA before January 1, 1982, and to those who were Special Agricultural Workers (SAW). The SAW aliens were considered as having contributed substantially to the economic development of the USA and would continue to do so. Many of the Bangladeshi undocumented aliens are currently engaged in professions that others with legal status would perhaps refuse to do due to the prevalent lower wage and the downgraded social status that such employment renders one onto. On the other hand, the law abiding Bangladeshis have not indulged into any kind of criminal activities. Politically too, the Cubans, Haitians, Russian Jews, and post-communist liberation seekers from various East European countries have received congressional support to live peacefully in the USA in the near past. The USA has also looked upon with magnanimity the case of undocumented aliens arriving from some Central American countries, which are victims of chronic natural calamities. Bangladesh's tale of natural calamity needs no mention while the country grapples with human rights abuse not only due to political repression, but also, in most cases, due to economic stagnation caused by the recurrence of flood, cyclone, and host of other natural afflictions.

Mr President;

Many of the undocumented Bangladeshis have lived in the USA for over a decade now. They have children born in the USA and Americanized through attendance to school and integration to socio-cultural habits of the country. Being undocumented, they have never availed of any public privilege, food coupon, or free medicare. Like the living beings that acclimatize themselves with mother nature, these undocumented Bangladeshis now find the USA as their natural abode. Throwing them out of that country will be an act that could not be described as the American way of doing things. We strongly feel that until we brought the matter to your attention about a year ago, the US Congress and the media would not have got an appropriate briefing about the cries of those undocumented aliens. It is time that you make a bold attempt before completing your second term of the Presidency to sign a document that would empower undocumented aliens to legalize their status to that of Lawful Permanent Residents.

Dear leader of the free world;

Your visit to Bangladesh has been yearned for too long by the undocumented Bangladeshis residing in the USA. They believe, you will convince the US Congress that Bangladesh indeed is a nation that faces tremendous difficulties. Hence, its people deserve the kind of legal protection that may serve their need to become legal in a country where freedom from fear and uncertainty is ensured.

Thank you Mr. President. We wish you and your team an enjoyable stay in this struggling and hospitable country that our people are ardently trying to build.

Mohammad H. Zaman, MD

President

Bangladesh Society Inc., New York, USA

Fakhrul Alam

General Secretary

Bangladesh Society Inc., New York, USA

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