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Kuwaiti Amir assures continued support

KUWAIT, Oct 30: Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah assured continued support and financial assistance for the development of Bangladesh as Prime Minister Hasina met him today, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had an audience with the Amir of the oil-rich Gulf State at Amir Diwan of Bayan Palace on her arrival here today.

During the 30-minute meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in the economic field, as well as situation of the Muslim Ummah with reference to the recurring Middle East crisis.

The monarch of Kuwait praised various reform programmes undertaken by the Sheikh Hasina government and wished Bangladesh should make continued progress. "We are ready to extend all our help for development of Bangladesh," he told Hasina.

Hasina noted with satisfaction that Bangladesh and Kuwait enjoy excellent relationship and hoped that it would further strengthen through her visit.

The PM recalled Kuwait's initiative for inducing Bangladesh.

Kuwait to increase dev aid, investment



Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah (R) holding talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Kuwait City yesterday. Hasina is on a three-day official visit to Kuwait to discuss economic and labour affairs. — AFP photo

From Nazmul Ashraf

BAYAN PALACE (Kuwait City), Oct 30: On the first leg of her three-day visit here, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today discussed with Acting Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah about more Kuwaiti investment in an manpower export from Bangladesh.

During the 65-minute official talks at Bayan Palace, the Bangladesh prime minister sought Kuwaiti investments in areas like agro-based industries, frozen food, telecommunications, textiles, leather, jute, energy and mineral exploration. Hasina especially sought investment in Joppur lime and cement industry and construction of another oil refinery in Bangladesh.

Hasina said Bangladesh offers attractive incentives to the foreign investors. Reminding the contributions of Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait, she urged Al-Sabah, who is also the Foreign Minister of Kuwait, to recruit skilled manpower from Bangladesh.

The two countries are expected to sign a...

Smuggling in diplomatic consignments Foreign ministry's move to unearth mystery

Star Report

The foreign ministry has initiated an investigation to find out whether its own personnel was involved in bringing huge quantity of contraband items in containers addressed to different foreign missions in the capital.

Last week, huge containers full of liquors, cigarettes, wristwatches, shaving razors etc worth more than Tk 20 crore were seized from the inland container depot at Kamalapur. The consignments were reportedly addressed to the Iraqi, Philippine and Bhutanese missions in Dhaka.

At a press conference on Sunday, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad said, "We hope to unearth the mystery. An inquiry into the incidents is on."

The foreign ministry is responsible for issuing exemption certificates to all such diplomatic consignments. It is learnt that a senior official on Mission Services has been transferred following the confiscation. The official of the protocol department dealt with issuance of diplomatic exemption certificates.

Majeda Rafiqueessa Nessa, who served as Deputy Chief of Protocol in Mission Services before her transfer, said that she used to issue exemption certificates, which declared household and foodstuff items for different embassies.

"I cannot say whether I have issued exemption certificates to the three missions whose goods have been hauled," she told The Daily Star over telephone Sunday night. "Whether the certificates have been issued at all cannot be said without seeing the register."

"We give certificates on declared items and not on banned items. Whether there is any deviation from

declared item with the actual item following import (by a mission) we have no way of knowing," Majeda Rafiqueessa said.

Regarding her transfer, she said, she has actually been posted to Colombo and prior to her departure to Sri Lanka, she has been transferred to the territorial desk, i.e. South Asia-2.

The new Deputy Chief of Protocol Jahannara Siddiqui could not be reached for comments.

Abdus Samad Azad told newsmen that none of the missions owned the consignments. Sources at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) suspect that the smugglers may have used diplomatic channels for years. Although the law enforcing authorities had sought to regularly monitor the diplomatic consignments, it was not possible due to the foreign ministry's non-co-operation, they complained.

But now, with the foreign ministry co-operating with law enforcers, the NBR is able to confiscate four illegal consignments last week.

Sources said that the NBR had earlier sent as many as four letters to the ministry of foreign affairs, expressing their suspicion and seeking permission to check goods imported through diplomatic channel. The ministry responded in the negative on each occasion.

The NBR action came in the wake of growing suspicion that the foreign ministry issued a large number of diplomatic exemption certificates, allowing passage of huge amount of goods through the channel without any duty or tax.

Involvement of a section of foreign ministry and

BNP now to hold rally at Paltan

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has now decided to hold its November 7 'grand' public meeting at the earlier announced venue of Paltan Maidan in the city.

The National Executive Committee and the city unit of BNP at separate meetings yesterday decided to hold the programme at Paltan Maidan in observance of the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

The decision was taken as the government declined to allow the programme either at the Paltan Maidan or at the Manik Mia Avenue despite repeated persuasion, meeting sources said.

At both the meetings yesterday, the party leaders expressed the determination to hold the programme at Paltan Maidan 'at any cost', the sources said.

Shab-e-Barat now on Nov 11

The holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed in the country on November 11 instead of November 12 as announced earlier, reports UNB.

The National Moon Sighting Committee at its emergency meeting at the Islamic Foundation yesterday rescheduled the date of Shab-e-Barat on confirmation that the Shaban moon was sighted at Domar upazila in Nilphamari on October 28.

As the sky was cloudy due to depression in the Bay, no news of sighting of the moon came from anywhere to the Islamic Foundation on Saturday and the Committee decided that the month of Shaban will begin on October 30 and the Shab-e-Barat will be observed on November 12.

After receiving the news of sighting moon from Domar on

PDB begins Meghnaghat 2 talks with Marubeni today

Star Report

The government today starts 'unsolicited' negotiations with Marubeni on the second phase of the 450MW Meghnaghat Power Plant, sources said.

Although Sithe, the Japanese company's partner in this deal which held 50 per cent share, has backed out, the Power Development Board (PDB) has not made any attempt to address the issue before beginning the talks for power purchase agreement (PPA) with Marubeni.

Besides, Marubeni is seeking a lot of changes in the contract. The original understanding between Marubeni and the government was to clone the contract for the first phase of the Meghnaghat Power Plant by AES and thereby ensure a low power tariff of 2.79 cents per kilowatt-hour. But the modifications it is now seeking would push the rate up to 3.4 cents.

It has also omitted from its draft PPA the provision of 'free electricity' during the first 10 months of production, which was contractually guaranteed by AES for the first phase of the project. This electricity is worth US \$45 million dollars, sources noted.

Its PPA also lacks the form that clearly outlines the power tariff structure for the next 22 years.

During the bidding process of the Meghnaghat 1 power project, back in 1997, AES turned out to be the lowest bidder and was awarded the contract. During the award process, Marubeni-Sithe Energies JV, with the support of many highly placed lobbyists, tried to dislodge AES and get the contract, sources said.

Having failed on that occasion, the lobbyists later talked the government into awarding the second phase of the Meghnaghat project to Marubeni-Sithe although it was the second lowest bidder. Marubeni-Sithe also proposed to the government that it would follow the AES price structures and other terms and conditions of Meghnaghat 1.

In September 1999, the Cabinet Purchase Committee approved the award to Marubeni-Sithe subject to their agreement to the same terms and conditions of the AES Meghnaghat Project.

Later PDB provided Marubeni with the AES contracts including the PPA, Gas Sales Agreement (GSA), Land Lease Agreement (LLA) and Implementation Agreement (IA).

However, since being notified of the award,

BNP high-ups didn't turn up

Star Report

Some front ranking leaders of BNP who were scheduled to address a CBA election rally on the Sonali Bank premises yesterday did not turn up "to avoid negative press reports".

The Sonali Bank Employees Association arranged the rally. The CBA election of scheduled for November 2.

Former finance minister M Saifur Rahman and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan were invited to attend the meeting as chief guest and special guest respectively.

Six other influential BNP leaders were also supposed to attend the meeting. They are Dr Khandokar Mosharraf Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Mirza Abbas, Abdullah Al Noman, Sadeq Hossain Khoka and Maj (Rtd) Syed Iskandar.

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Ban on plying at city points

Rickshawpullers go on rampage: 50 hurt, 30 vehicles damaged

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people were injured and over 30 vehicles damaged as rickshaw-pullers clashed with police at several points on the Mirpur Road in the city yesterday protesting a ban on plying of manually driven three-wheelers to ease traffic congestion on the road.

Police lobbed tear-gas shells and fired rubber bullets to disperse rampaging protesters who also put up barricades at several points on the road. Two protesters were arrested, police said.

The trouble began in the morning when police, as per an earlier government decision, stopped plying of rickshaws on the road from Gabtoli to the Baby Ice Cream crossing at Azampur.

Protesting this, thousands of slogan-chanting rickshawpullers, joined by rickshaw owners and by slum dwellers, brought out several processions on the road Shymoli, Agargaon, Zigatola and Azampur areas. They also put up barricades at several points.

At about 8:30 am, police batted a procession in front of the Shishu Mela at Shymoli and tried to remove a barricade there.

Sporadic violence then spread on most parts of the road from Gabtoli to Azampur, police and witnesses said.

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FBCCI director quits demanding reform in polls process

Director of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Ms Selima Ahmad has resigned from her post demanding massive reform in the electoral process of the apex trade body, says BSS.

In a press conference at Dhaka Club yesterday, Ms Ahmad, who was elected twice in FBCCI representing Bangladesh Automobile Assemblers and Manufacturers' Association (BAAMA), said she had resigned to pave the way for revamping the structure of FBCCI for proper representation of the business community.

She said FBCCI does not represent the prominent business sector so the core issues of the trade community still remains unresolved. "I had resigned and sent my resignation letter to the FBCCI authorities as I could not make any remarkable structural change in FBCCI," she added.

The membership of short and medium enterprises must be permanent and the director post of FBCCI could be increased to 40 from the present 15 following discussions with concerned sectors, she added.

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(From left to right) Enraged by a decision to ban rickshaws on the Mirpur Road with a view to easing traffic congestion, rickshawpullers demonstrated and burned tyres at Azampur, Zigatola, Agargaon and Shymoli yesterday. As they got violent, police lobbed tear-gas shells to get things under control which they did as the barren section of the Mirpur Road suggests. — Star photo

Inside Today Article

No Let-up in Killing Spree

Column: Heart of The Matter
By Mansoor Mamoon
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Focus

Is NAM still relevant?
Page 5

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 31		5:20 pm.
Nov 1	6:05 am	

Prayer Timings

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:35
Zohr	12:45	1:25
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:25	5:30
Isha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

590 victims of acid attacks, only 31 accused convicted

Two sentenced to death in last 5 years

By Staff Correspondent

As many as 590 women belonging to different age groups have become victims of acid attacks in last five years across the country while only 31 accused have so far been convicted in the cases filed under Women and Children (Prevention) Act, 2000, according to reports prepared by different organisations.

Out of the victims, nine have died, according to the findings of Ain-O-Salish Kendro, a human rights organisation. Women aged between 13 and 24 years are particularly vulnerable to acid attacks because of family dispute, refusal to get into a relationship or marriage, dowry, attempted rape, kidnapping and trafficking etc.

Although section 4 of Women and Children (Prevention) Act, 2000 provides for death sentence or rigorous life imprisonment with Tk 50,000 to 1 lakh in fine for such offence, the ground reality in terms of conviction of acid throwers is different.

Monitoring cell of Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), an organisation involved in treatment and rehabilitation of acid survivors, found that in last five years only 31 accused have finally been convicted. Again, of these convicted, two have been handed down death sentence. The rest has been awarded life imprisonment or seven to ten years jail term along with penalty as low as Tk 1,000 to 5,000. Naripadkha, an women's rights organisation

that also provides legal aid to acid victims, informed that since 1997 they have been handling with 35 cases of acid attacks outside Dhaka, of which seven offenders have been punished: two receiving death sentences and five life imprisonment. Of the five who got life term, two have been sentenced to 50 and 45 years of imprisonment.

It has been dealing with 33 acid burn cases in Dhaka since 1999 and of them five have been disposed of by court while the rest is under trial.

According to the Act, the judge will decide whether or not an acid thrower would get bail law. So the offence of acid-throwing can not be termed as absolutely non-bailable.

Blindness is very common among acid-burn victims. "We found a number of victims with insurmountable physical and psychological traumas, even worse than death or disability. More consciousness is therefore needed among the jurists and lawyers, and trials should be more speedy at least under the newly formed special women's court," Advocate Habibunnessa of Naripadkha observed.

Legal hassles, including delay in initiating legal procedures, dishonesty among a section of lawyers and bribes are the obstacles to proper legal remedy on part of the victims, sources said and added that more government and NGO initiatives should be taken to provide legal remedy to acid-burn victims.

Japan, DPRK hold talks to normalise relations

BEIJING, Oct 30: Japan and North Korea discussed the sensitive issue of Japanese amends for its colonial past today when the often-hostile countries opened their third round of talks this year on normalising relations, reports AP.

The talks, in China's capital, come as Japan appears to be lagging behind other countries' diplomatic maneuverings in Northeast Asia's main flash-point.

Long isolated North Korea has in recent weeks held high-level parleys with the United States and moved to open ties with Britain, Germany and Spain.

Meeting at Japan's embassy, Japanese chief negotiator Kojiro Takano and his North Korean counterpart, Jong Thae Hwa, agreed that the US-North Korean talks and the historic summit with South Korea in June created a favourable trend. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said.

But in a sign of the difficulties in forging diplomatic ties, negotiators only delved into details on Monday for the first time in nine years of talks, said the official, who spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

See page 11 col 2.



তিতাস গ্যাস ট্রান্সমিসন এন্ড ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

(পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানী)

১০৫, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ

কাওরান বাজার বা/এ, ঢাকা।

ফোন-৯৫৬৩৬৭-৬৮, ৮১১২৩৫-৪২, ৮১১৯৩৭৯

গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধ সংক্রান্ত জরুরি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা মহানগরী পৌরসভা ডিআরএস-এর ক্ষমতাবাহী লজ্জা প্রতিস্থাপন ও টি-ইন এবং কমলাপুর এলাকায় সম্প্রতি নির্মিত গ্যাস লাইন স্থানান্তর ও টি-ইন কাজে পৌরসভা ডিআরএস-টি সম্পূর্ণরূপে বন্ধ রাখিবার প্রয়োজন হইবে, যাহার ফলে নিম্নলিখিত এলাকাসমূহে রপ্তানি তথ্য ও সময়ে গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধ অবস্থা বিদ্যুত হইবে:

কমলাপুর	তারিখ ও সময়	এলাকাসমূহ
পৌরসভা ডিআরএস প্রতিস্থাপন এবং টি-ইন কাজ	০৩-১১-২০০০ইং রোজ শুক্রবার সকাল ১১০০ ঘটিকা হইতে ০৪-১১-২০০০ইং তারিখ রোজ শনিবার সকাল ১১০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	ধনিয়া, ওয়াপসা কলোনি, কাজলা, পৌরসভা, ফায়ার সার্ভিস সংলগ্ন এলাকা, মীর হাজারাবাদ, খোলাইপাড়া, দয়ানগর, জুহাদিন, কুতুবখালী, যাদাবাড়ী এবং তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা
কমলাপুর কনটেনার ডিপো এলাকায় টি-ইন কাজ	০৩-১১-২০০০ইং রোজ শুক্রবার সকাল ১১০০ ঘটিকা হইতে ০৪-১১-২০০০ইং তারিখ রোজ শনিবার সকাল ১১০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	মুন্সাপাড়া, বাসাবো, ঠাকুরপাড়া, গোলাপবাগ, মদিকনদা, বলপুর্, যাদাবাড়ী এবং তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা

উল্লিখিত সময়ে সম্মানিত গ্রাহকসমূহকে সকল প্রকার গ্যাস সরঞ্জাম ব্যবহার বন্ধ রাখিতে অনুরোধ জানানো যাইতেছে। জরুরি প্রয়োজনে উল্লিখিত টেলিফোনসমূহে যোগাযোগ করা যাইতে পারে। সিস্টেম-এর উন্নয়নের স্বার্থে সম্মানিত গ্রাহকসমূহের সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য কৃতপক্ষ আন্তরিকভাবে দুঃখিত।

অকারণে গ্যাসের চুলা জ্বালিয়ে রাখবেন না
আগামী প্রজন্মের জন্য গ্যাস ব্যবহারে মিতব্যয়ী হোন

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কৃতপক্ষ