

Bangladeshis face

FROM PAGE 1
taken initiatives for negotiations and everything would be done in this regard.

"The state minister for foreign affairs recently visited Malaysia and requested them to extend the job tenure of Bangladeshi workers there," Quamrul said.

The Malaysian government is formulating a policy in this regard. "We are yet to get any response from them but we hope that job contracts of Bangladeshi workers would be extended, he said.

The authorities there were also invited to visit Bangladesh and see the condition here, Quamrul added.

Secretary General of BAIRA Ghulam Mustafa said, "A delegation from Bangladesh led by a minister immediately after the four-party alliance came to power hardly produced any result. This time initiatives should be from the highest level of government."

He told this correspondent that a team of BAIRA leaders plans to meet Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia soon and urge her to visit Malaysia to take up the issue at the highest level there as it involves several lakh people --the workers and their families.

According to him, the country is going to lose huge employment opportunities in Malaysia due to 'lack of appropriate approach and consistent negotiations' with the government of that country.

At least three lakh workers can be sent to Malaysia within a very short time if proper initiative is taken, he claimed.

The Malaysian government became unhappy as many investment proposals by Malaysian companies were rejected during the tenure of the immediate past government, sources pointed out.

Some BAIRA sources said many Bangladeshi workers went to Malaysia illegally, creating a bad image of the country. "Besides,

7 murder cases

FROM PAGE 12
Jessoro Saiful Alam Mukul and the carnage at a Udichi cultural function in Jessore.

Charge sheets in five out of the seven murder cases have already been submitted to courts.

Top priority will be given to start trial of the cases within one month, the sources said.

Besides, directive has also been given to submit re-investigation report on the Udichi bomb explosion case and charge sheet in Abdul Awal murder case by 30th of this month.

PM: Tight security

FROM PAGE 1
Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadek Hossain, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk, Home Minister Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfulzaman Babar attended the meeting chaired by the prime minister.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Secretary for Home Affairs Dr Sa'dat Hossain, Secretary for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Afzal H Ahmed, Information Secretary in-charge, Inspector General of Police Mudabbir Hossain and senior officials concerned were also present.

Khaleda Zia said there was no doubt among the people regarding the sincerity of the present government to improve law-and-order, but the progress, so far, was not up to their expectation.

The prime minister told the high-profile watchdog body on law and order that she expected to see significant progress in its next meeting, now that they are armed with a new law to deal with the crime situation.

Yesterday's was the 22nd meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, and the sixth chaired by the prime minister herself, who had announced during the last polls a war against crime.

Khaleda Zia asked the bosses of the law-enforcing agencies present in the meeting -- and through them to their forces -- to be more active with necessary measures geared

AL rally in city Apr 20

FROM PAGE 1
It also debated the proposed agitation against the 'farical election' to the country's three city corporations on April 25. But no specific programme was taken on the day of the polls being boycotted by the AL, as it believes 'no fair voting could take place under the present set-up of the Election Commission'.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman said to the press, "We're least bothered about the already decided election. We're actually indifferent to the issue."

The meeting expressed concern at the government's apathy to investigating the series of bomb explosions that marked the last days of the AL rule.

It regretted that the judicial commission formed by the government to investigate the bomb attacks had virtually made no progress.

The AL meeting formed a four-party body headed by former home minister Mohammad Nasim to monitor progress in the bombing cases.

some Bangladeshis created social problems there as they married Malaysian girls and came back home leaving them behind with children."

BAIRA leaders said a person should not spend more than Tk 60,000 for going to Malaysia for a job of Tk 14,000 per month.

A 12 -point proposal by them stressed introducing a comprehensive package system for sending people abroad and protecting them from cheating or spending higher amounts for low paid jobs.

They proposed setting up a data bank and a service centre at the BAIRA office where all sorts of information and service for going abroad would be available.

If any recruiting agency fails to send a person or cheat a person after taking money, BAIRA would take punitive action against it and ensure return of the money within 14 days, they said.

US consultant

FROM PAGE 1
and in the process, slowed down Shell's recovery of investment.

The Petrobangla chairman defended his organisation's position. "Under the Gas Purchase Sales Agreement, Petrobangla was supposed to purchase 160 mmcfd of gas from five gas wells. However, one of the five wells of Sangu failed and Shell can produce gas from four wells. The agreement said that the gas purchase would depend upon the number of producing wells. So, we purchased 128 mmcfd."

He noted that while he was hopeful of an amicable solution to the dispute, Petrobangla or Shell might disagree with the Burns' opinion. "There is no legal binding over it. If we disagree, we may further discuss the issues with Shell. Or if it turns out to be unfavourable, we may seek arbitration in the international court."

Bahauddin Nasim

FROM PAGE 12
Immigration officials and officials of the Zia International Airport (ZIA).

The IO in the charge sheet mentioned that the authorities seized a passport from Bahauddin Nasim in which no dollar was endorsed. However, he was illegally carrying 6,600 US dollars and Bangladeshi currency worth Taka 7,490.

Police arrested Nasim from ZIA on February 28 along with the seized local and foreign currencies and some video cassettes.

towards checking any troubles during the forthcoming city corporation elections.

Referring to Friday's incidents of violence at Adamjee Jute Mills and abduction of a housewife at Narayanganj, she ordered the police administration to handle the situation impartially with a strong hand.

In her comprehensive directives for the law-enforcers to get to grips with the situation effectively, the prime minister asked them to intensify vigilance by plainclothes police at various points.

She expressed her satisfaction at the improvement of law-and-order in many districts and asked the concerned to maintain the situation. She told them to be active in curbing crimes in other districts.

The home secretary informed the meeting that decisions taken in the committee's meetings were being implemented and the overall situation in the last six months had improved compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Hasina cancels tour plan

UNB, Dhaka

The two-day planned visit of Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina to Rajbari, Kushtia and Meherpur districts on April 16-17 has been cancelled.

Party sources said the Awami League chief has cancelled the trip as she fell sick suddenly.

Passport forgery

FROM PAGE 12
Both the application and the inquiry report were sent to the Immigration and Passport Office and Prence got his passport.

The forgery was revealed when Abdul Hye went to the Canadian High Commission for visa of his 'son'. During interview, Prence told the High Commission officials that he wanted to go to Canada with his 'father' Abdul Hye. On suspicion, the officials interrogated Prence and the truth came out.

Prence later confessed to them that he was not the son of Abdul Hye and his father's name was Anser Ali. He also said that he is an Awami League activist in Jhenaidah.

Abdul Hye was supposed to go to Britain. After the incident, the British High Commission also cancelled his visa.

Sources claimed that Abdul Hye earlier sent three other party workers to Italy, Japan and Britain, identifying them as his sons.

The SB has written letters to the embassies of Japan and Italy and the High Commission of Britain to provide information regarding issuance of visas to three other 'sons' of the AL legislator.

Inspector Abdur Rab of SB filed a case with Gulshan thana against Abdul Hye and Prence on Monday.

Shah Alam, Sub-Inspector at Gulshan thana, is investigating the case.

US envoy

FROM PAGE 12
attended, among others by Congressmen Joseph Crowley, James McDermott and Rush Holt.

The US Ambassador emphasised that Bangladesh is different from other Islamic countries and it is truly a moderate Islamic democracy. She hoped that new investigations by other reporters currently underway would exonerate the wrongly portrayed image of Bangladesh.

Ambassador Peters discussed relations between the US and the new government of four-party alliance focusing particularly on identifying avenues through which the US government can assist the administration in further investment and development of Bangladesh.

She highlighted a number of programmes designed to increase availability of education of men and women as well as the programme to educate Imams of mosques in Bangladesh on gender issues.

Development of Chittagong Port, export of natural gas, political stability and absence of the main opposition party from parliament also came up at the meeting.

Ambassador Peters also addressed issues relating to immigration and visas following the September 11 incident.

Peace deal

FROM PAGE 12
Last week, the LTTE reiterated an apology to the minority Muslim community for driving out some 100,000 of them from the Tamil-dominated Jaffna peninsula in 1990 under a policy of ethnic cleansing.

Hakeem, who was accompanied by six other senior SLMC members, said Prabhakaran gave an assurance that the LTTE will immediately stop "taxing" Muslims.

Both sides agreed to set up committees to arrange for the resettlement of Muslims in their original homes and to establish a mechanism to address day-to-day issues affecting the two communities.

"It is the very first time that a delegation from the SLMC was meeting the LTTE. It was a very historic meeting and we found the atmosphere very friendly," Hakeem said. "It far exceeded our expectations."

Hakeem said the two sides did not take up contentious issues such as the role of the Muslims in a proposed interim administration for the embattled northern and eastern regions, leaving them for the talks in Thailand due to take place in May or June.

The latest LTTE-Muslim talks began three days after Prabhakaran held his first press conference in 12 years and called for peace with the Muslims.

A statement from the US embassy here Friday praised Prabhakaran's "commitment to peace and a negotiated political settlement".

IMF mission

FROM PAGE 1
development programme (ADP) and discuss details of financial sector reforms and exchange rate management.

The team is also reviewing plans for establishing a secondary market for treasury instruments. Meantime, according to the February Current Economic Trend of the BB, the government's net borrowing from the banking system has marked significant rise till December of this fiscal year.

It stood at Tk 2,886 crore, up from Tk 1,644 crore for the same period last fiscal.

Net borrowing from savings instruments also rose sharply this fiscal till December.

According to the report, the government collected Tk 2,308 crore from savings instruments during the first six months of this fiscal year. The figure was Tk 1,856 crore for the same period last fiscal.

Denmark slaps graft charges

FROM PAGE 1

Hansen, who is also the head of Bilateral Programme in Danida, Copenhagen, came here for Annual Consultation with the government that was held on April 8. Hansen left Dhaka yesterday ending a six-day tour here.

Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Niels Severin Munk and other Danish officials were present at the briefing.

According to sources, the problem emerged some two months ago over rehabilitation of four ferries provided by Denmark. The repair was also to be done with Danish assistance.

The Danish authorities wrote letters to different ministries about the matter through letters about one and a half months back. Later, the shipping ministry wrote back to the Danish authorities, explaining its position.

However, the minister came up with a totally different story. He said as he demanded open tender and 'transparent procedure' for awarding the repair job, the Danish authorities brought allegations.

Akbar added that about one and a half years back the Danes negotiated with the previous Awami League government for repair of 10 ferries.

"The repair cost of each ferry was fixed at Tk 24 crore, while we can purchase a new ferry at Tk 25 crore," he said.

Later, he said, it was decided that four ferries would be repaired. According to the Danish proposal, the engines of the four ferries were to be taken to Denmark for repair at a cost of around Tk 25 crore, while the hulls were to be repaired in the country at a cost of Tk 70 crore, the minister said.

"The engines can be repaired in the country since we have all the parts available here which were brought from Denmark five years ago. Anyway, we have agreed to the Danish proposal but asked them to detail the cost break-down," the minister said.

However, he said the hitch developed over the cost of repairing the hulls in the country.

"We wanted the job done through an open tender to ensure a competitive price. They (Danish) asked the ministry not to interfere with the tender process and we agreed," he

added.

"However, they later differed with us on the open tender option and wanted to have it done through a secret negotiation and at a much higher price. They also wanted to have the job awarded to a Danish joint venture."

The minister alleged that the Danish authorities earmarked Tk 70 crore for the repair of the ferries. "But our dockyards of Bangladesh Navy at Narayanganj and Chittagong have quoted Tk 14 crore for repairing the hulls," he added.

The Danes selected the navy

Authorickshaw

FROM PAGE 12
Meanwhile, there has been an increase in theft of BRTA tokens over the last two months, autorickshaw drivers complained.

The BRTA refuses to replace the stolen tokens even if a police report is produced, they said.

"Strict measures taken against the three-wheelers have definitely curtailed their number, the fare hike is a good indicator," said a BRTA official.

Drivers and owners claim that many autorickshaws are now lying idle in the garages because they do not have proper documents. Many others have shifted to the city peripheries, they said.

"Autorickshaw fares have gone up because there are less vehicles and also the price of fuel has gone up," said Abul Kalam, owner of an autorickshaw garage at Agargaon.

A recent HC order asks the government to phase out all two-stroke autorickshaws from the city within December this year.

However, there has not been any clear directive from the administration in this regard, sources in the BRTA said.

The BRTA has been strict in issuing documents all right; however, it cannot chase the two-stroke vehicles out of the city by December, they said.

"We do not have any clear directive from the ministry or anywhere else about the phase-out drive within this time," said a BRTA source.

dockyards for the job, the minister mentioned. "Including all other cost, it could cost a maximum of Tk 20 crore to repair the hulls of the four ferries," he claimed.

"Now tell me who is corrupt, the one who wants the job done through open tender or the one who opts for a secret deal?" Akbar retorted.

Earlier, Hansen said they have informed the matter to the government while meeting Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda and the Economic Relations Division secretary.

When asked what the ministers had told them, Hansen said, "They said there must be some sort of misunderstanding."

When asked whether they had discussed the matter with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Hansen said, "Unfortunately, we couldn't meet him as he was out of the country."

Referring to the Transparency International's (TI) dubbing Bangladesh as number one corrupt country in the world, Hensen said, "Whatever the level, there is no doubt that corruption is very high in Bangladesh."

The ruling BNP had rightly placed the corruption and law and order issue on the top of its election manifesto, but there are hardly any signs that these issues are being addressed.

"There was no signs of improvement in last six months," he added.

Talking on the annual consultation with the government, Hansen said corruption, bad governance and law and order topped the meeting agenda.

"The law and order has a serious negative impact on economic growth and poverty reduction drive. So, we asked the government to immediately look into the issues and establish an independent anti-corruption commission and the office of Ombudsman," Hansen commented.

He also the repression on the minorities also came up in the meeting. "The government said it is investigating those cases," the Danish under-secretary said.

Arafat-Powell talks today

FROM PAGE 12
Immediately create an international commission of inquiry on the Israeli massacres at Jenin because it is a UN-administered refugee camp," Erakat said.

Reports of brutality and wanton destruction during the arm

onslaught which have filtered through the Israeli army blackout, including a blockade of ambulances that left wounded Palestinians dying in the streets, have upset world leaders.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for international troops to be sent in: "It is urgent, it is imperative," he said. Israel has repeatedly rejected calls for outside forces.

Announcing 30 million dollars in additional aid for the UN agency that administers the Palestinian refugee camps, Powell said: "We are particularly concerned at the humanitarian situation in Jenin."

"Israeli forces must exercise their utmost restraint and discipline and refrain from the excessive use of force," he said.

Relief workers said the army has denied them access to Jenin to evacuate the wounded and the dead, even after the Israeli government issued assurances that the camp had been opened to humanitarian operations.

"The situation in Jenin remains critical, with no electricity, water or food," the Palestinian Red Crescent said in a statement.

Powell came up empty-handed

Bangabandhu murder case

FROM PAGE 1
On January 27, 2004, Justice KM Hasan would retire and a new judge will be appointed, allowing the appellate division to have three judges who can hear the case.

At present, the division consists of seven judges and five of them cannot hear the Bangabandhu Murder Case. For, two of them -- Md Ruhul Amin and Mohammed Fazlul Karim -- have already heard it at the High Court and the others - Syed JR Muddassir Husain, Abu Sayeed Ahammed and KM Hasan -- expressed their embarrassment at the appellate division.

Justice Amin will retire on June 1, 2006; Justice Karim on September 30, 2008; Justice Hasan on January 27, 2004; Justice Husain on March 1, 2005 and Justice Ahammed will retire on August 23, 2003.

Among the seven justices of the appellate division, Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Choudhury will retire on June 18 this year. According to seniority, Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury is supposed to replace him. Justice Kazi AT Manowar Uddin now at the High Court would then be appointed at the appellate division to fill up the vacancy.

But the appointment of Justice Manowar would not solve the problem since the appellate division would still have five judges who are already embarrassed or have already heard the case.

Again, Justice Manowar Uddin would retire on July 15 within less than a month of his appointment at the appellate division.

He would then be replaced by Justice Fazlul Haq as per seniority, who is due to retire on June 30,

2003. At the same time, Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, billed to be the next chief justice, would retire on June 23, 2003. He would be replaced by Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin of the appellate division. And then justice Md Hamidul Haque, who is due to retire on December 20, 2003, would be brought to the division to maintain the number of judges at seven.

But then Justice Abu Sayeed Ahammed now in the appellate division would retire on August 23, 2003. His retirement would not immediately solve the judge crisis as another judge, Fazlul Haq, who would also be nudged to the division, would retire on June 30 the same year. He would be replaced by Justice Syed Amirul Islam, who is now at the High Court. On August 23, 2003, upon the retirement of Sayeed Ahammed, Justice MM Ruhul Amin would be appointed at the division. But since he has already expressed embarrassment on the case at the High Court in April 2000, the appellate division bench would still remain short of three judges to hear the case.

In other words, after August 23, 2003, the appellate division will consist of the following judges: Chief Justice Md Ruhul Amin, justices Mohammed Fazlul Karim, KM Hasan, JR Muddassir Hosain, Hamidul Haque, Amirul Islam and MM Ruhul Amin.

Of these seven, the first four are not technically fit to hear the case. Among the rest three, Justice MM Ruhul Amin was embarrassed to hear the case at the High Court in April 2000, and as such would not

City Corpn polls

Delimitation of wards for women's reserved seats

UNB, Dhaka

Delimitation of wards for the women's reserved seats in Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi City Corporations has been completed ahead of the April 25 election in the three city corporations.

Each of those wards has been constituted with three general wards, except one in Khulna which has been formed with four general wards.

The number of wards reserved for women is 30 in Dhaka and 10 each in Khulna and Rajshahi, said an Election Commission press release yesterday.

Seats for women ward commissioners have been kept aside in the city corporations for the first time and they will be elected through direct voting.

Corporationwise lists of the wards for women's reserved seats:

Dhaka City Corporation:
reserved ward no 1 comprising general wards no 1, 17 and 18, reserved ward no 2 comprising general wards no 4, 15 and 16, reserved ward no 3 comprising general wards no 2, 3 and 5, reserved ward no 4 comprising general wards no 6, 7 and 8, reserved ward no 5 comprising general wards no 9, 10 and 11, reserved ward no 6 comprising general wards no 12, 13 and 14, reserved ward no 7 comprising general wards no 19, 20 and 21, reserved ward no 8 comprising general wards no 3, 39 and 40, reserved ward no 9 comprising general wards no 41, 42, and 43, reserved ward no 10 comprising general wards no 44, 46 and 48, reserved ward no 11 comprising general wards no 45, 47 and 49, reserved ward no 12 comprising general wards no 50, 51 and 52, reserved ward no 13 comprising general wards no 22, 24 and 26, reserved ward no 14 comprising general wards no 23, 37 and 55, reserved ward no 15 comprising general wards no 25, 27 and 28, reserved ward no 16 comprising general wards no 34, 35 and 54, reserved ward no 17 comprising general wards no 53, 56 and 57, reserved ward no 18 comprising general wards no 32, 33 and 36, reserved ward no 19 comprising general wards no 58, 59 and 62,

reserved ward no 20 comprising general wards no 60, 61 and 65, reserved ward no 21 comprising general wards no 63, 64 and 66, reserved ward no 22 comprising general wards no 67, 68 and 69, reserved ward no 23 comprising general wards no 71, 72 and 73, reserved ward no 24 comprising general wards no 70, 74 and 77, reserved ward no 25 comprising general wards no 75, 76 and 85, reserved ward no 26 comprising general wards no 29, 30 and 31, reserved ward no 27 comprising general wards no 84, 86 and 87, reserved ward no 28 comprising general wards no 78, 79 and 80, reserved ward no 29 comprising general wards no 81, 82 and 83, reserved ward no 30 comprising general wards no 88, 89 and 90.

Khulna City Corporation:
reserved ward no 1 comprising general wards no 1, 2 and 3, reserved ward no 2 comprising general wards no 4, 5 and 6, reserved ward no 3 comprising general wards no 7, 8 and 10, reserved ward no 4 comprising general wards no 11, 12 and 13, reserved ward no 5 comprising general wards no 9, 14 and 15, reserved ward no 6 comprising general wards no 16, 17 and 18, reserved ward no 7 comprising general wards no 19, 20, 25 and 26, reserved ward no 8 comprising general wards no 21, 22 and 23, reserved ward no 9 comprising general wards no 24, 27 and 28 and reserved ward no 10 comprising general wards no 29, 30 and 31.

Rajshahi city Corporation:
reserved ward no 1 comprising general wards no 1, 2 and 4, reserved ward no 2 comprising general wards no 3, 5 and 6, reserved ward no 3 comprising general wards no 7, 8 and 10, reserved ward no 4 comprising general wards no 9, 11 and 12, reserved ward no 5 comprising general wards no 13, 14 and 15, reserved ward no 6 comprising general wards no 16, 17 and 18, reserved ward no 7 comprising general wards no 19, 20 and 21, reserved ward no 8 comprising general wards no 22, 23, and 24, reserved ward no 9 comprising general wards no 25, 28 and 29 and reserved ward no 10 comprising general wards no 26, 27 and 30.

Welcome Bangla yr

FROM PAGE 1
year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations will see unprecedented security measures in the capital.

The traditional Pahela Baishakh celebrations of Chhayanaut at Ramna Batamul in the city last year met a tragic end when a powerful bomb explosion left seven people dead and at least 20 injured. The death toll climbed to ten within hours of the incident.

Chhayanaut, which has been organising the cultural functions at the Ramna Batamul since 1967, will hold its usual programmes this year at the same venue, albeit amid tight security. However, unlike previous years, Bangladesh Television this year will not air the Chhayanaut programme.

People of all ages, will throng the traditional fairs called Baishakhi Mela and participate in cultural functions to welcome the New Year. Men, women and children will sing traditional Baishakhi songs in chorus throughout the day. Across the country, cultural functions will also be held highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the country.

At the crack of dawn today, Chhayanaut artists will gather at the Ramna Batamul and sing in chorus "Esho Hey Baishakh Esho Esho", the popular Tagore song welcoming the New Year.

All through the day, men, women and children in colourful traditional dresses will throng the many traditional fairs to be held in different parts of the city, where handicrafts, artifacts and sweetmeats are sold.

The Bangla Year was introduced during the rule of Moghul Emperor Akbar to facilitate tax collection. In keeping with the tradition, traders and shopkeepers will open halkhata (fresh account book) and offer sweets to their clients and visitors.

Different sociocultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the day.

Nagar Samajik o Sangskritik Kendra, a sociocultural organisation

including Nazrul Academy, Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University, Muktiyoddha Jadughar, Bangladesh Railway, BAFA, Hindol Sangeet Academy, Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts and Anirban Academy have also chalked out programmes celebrating the Bengali New Year.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, Ekushey Television, ATN Bangla and Channel-I will broadcast special programmes to mark the day. Newspapers will publish special supplements marking the occasion.

Meanwhile, President AQM Bdarruzza Chowdhury, in a message, greeted the nation describing Pahela Baishakh as an important day in the life of the people of Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her message greeted the nation saying Pahela Baishakh has firmly established the tradition of amity and friendship in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh.

Leader of the Opposition and chief of Awami League in her message greeted the nation calling for upholding the long cultural and traditional heritage of the country by maintaining peace and harmony in all spheres of national life. She also demanded the trial of killers responsible for the Ramna Batamul carnage last year.

Briefcase

FROM PAGE 12
He collected the materials from inside the briefcase including six passports -- five Indian and one Bangladeshi, the two checks and the important documents, and handed them over to The Daily Star.

One of the seven passports was missing. Following are the passport holders and their passport number:

Rakesh Chandra, Junior Engineer (B5589980