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Dhaka summit to focus on trade, terrorism

Saarc nations finalise programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Declaration at the 13th Saarc Summit is likely to include ways to increase regional trade through Sifta and a greater focus on implementing regional projects and finding out potential areas of economic co-operation.

Advisor to the Foreign ministry

Reaz Rahman said this while briefing newsmen about the programme for the summit which was finalised yesterday.

The Dhaka Declaration may also include ways to stop financing of terrorist activities within the region under the additional protocol on terrorism and the social charter on the rights of individuals, both signed

at the 12th summit in Islamabad.

The programme for the seven-nation 13th South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (Saarc) Summit, to be held on February 6 and 7, was finalised after all member states okayed the draft programme proposed by Dhaka last Saturday.

Rahman said the Saarc cultural festival, planned on the summit

sidelines, has been cancelled as the summit would carry a sombre tone following the Asian Tsunami that devastated three Saarc countries and forced the hosts to postpone it.

The summit was originally scheduled for January 9-11 but postponed after the December 26 tsunami. Later, the member

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Prof Miah threatened over phone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An unidentified caller on Tuesday threatened Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Member Prof Maniruzzaman Miah and asked him to cease activities which the caller claimed "are hampering the commission's functioning."

"The caller identified himself as a student who stays in Sweden and said in Bangla that I am obstructing the commission's activities," Prof Miah told The Daily Star yesterday.

"It (the allegation) is not true," said Prof Miah, who was locked in disagreement with the ACC chair

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Business climate better, economic recovery on

MCCI half-yearly review says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business environment has improved in the last five months because of the government law and order improvement measures, a survey by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) confirms.

It also said increased manufacturing activities during the first half of the current fiscal year have helped the economy offset losses caused by last year's massive flooding, a top

trade body said yesterday.

"The recovery process and economic expansionary trend are expected to continue during the rest of the current fiscal year," the MCCI said in its review of the economy during July-December, 2004.

However, the country's oldest chamber cautioned that only a 10 percent implementation of the annual development programme in first six months of the current fiscal year will be a matter of threat to national competitiveness.

Despite the setback caused by flooding and unfavourable weather conditions, economic activities steadily picked up during July-December.

Except the agriculture sector, growth in demand for credit, disbursement of term loans, increased production of the manufacturing sector, increased imports of capital machinery, higher collection of VAT and increased credit flow to the manufacturing indicate that

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Mad rush to home starts

Travellers pay double prices for tickets

SURANJIT DEBNATH

With the beginning of the four-day Eid vacation today, tens of thousands of homebound passengers started leaving the capital city by buses, trains and launches, paying more than double the regular prices to celebrate the festival with their near and dear ones.

Passengers said they are facing troubles in buying tickets and also have problems reaching the terminals as the traffic systems both inside and outside the terminals have broken down due to negligence of the law enforcement agencies.

SADARGHAT

Passengers had to reach the Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday through heavy traffic congestion from Gulistan to the terminal,

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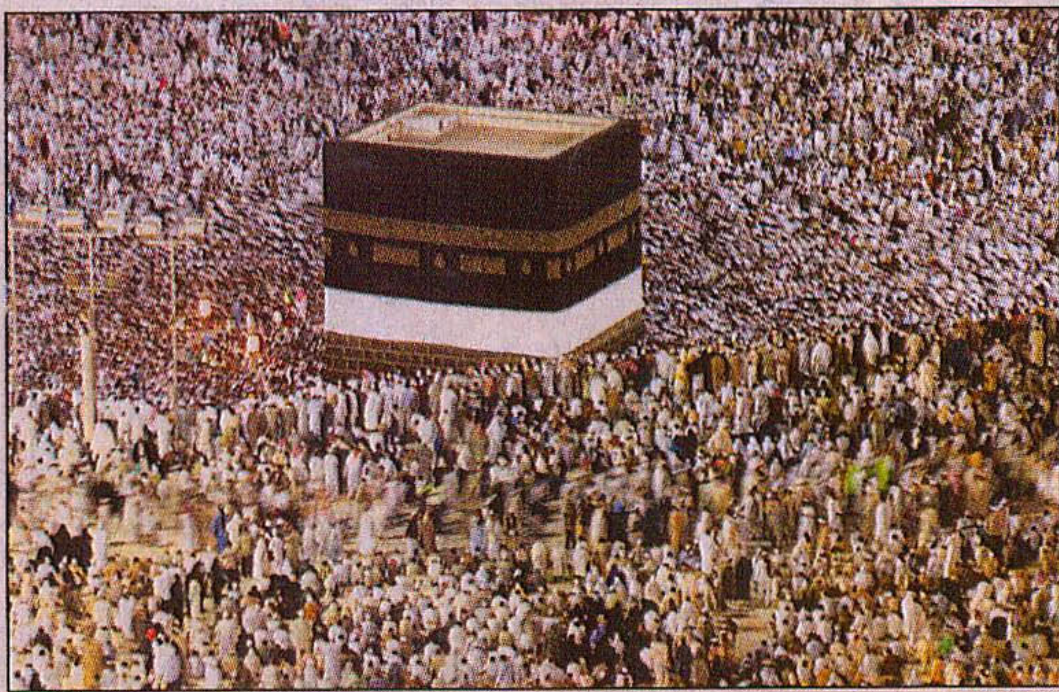


PHOTO: AFP

Hajj pilgrims pray around the holy Kaaba in Makkah yesterday.

Clarification

A K M Mosharraf Hossain, the state minister for energy, explained in a clarification his position regarding a news item published in The Daily Star under the headline 'free wheeling bigwigs' on January 17.

He disagreed with the view in the report that he uses several cars belonging to Petrobangla.

The minister, however, admitted using a Nissan patrol jeep belonging to one of the subsidiaries of Petrobangla, as the government transport pool did not provide him with a car. He further said that he occasionally uses an extra vehicle while traveling outside Dhaka, as per the government rule.

Anti-Islam hostility slated as Hajj ends

AGENCIES, Arafat

Saudi Arabia's grand mufti yesterday denounced during a Hajj sermon what he said were hostile campaigns against Islam, and rejected any link between religion and terrorism.

"O nation of Islam, the military, ideological, economic and media-related campaigns are led against

Islam and our nation qualified as terrorist," Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh told some two million faithful gathered for the culmination of the annual Hajj pilgrimage on Mount Arafat, near Makkah.

The sermon in the Namera mosque on Arafat, a small plain some 250 metres (800 feet) above sea level and surrounded by high mountains, was broadcast over loud-

speakers to the camps of pilgrims in the area.

"Muslims are also qualified as backward, violators of human rights and freedom, yet Islam is a religion of justice, equity and rights," he said.

The mufti also denounced the "false slogans of defence of the rights of men used as a pretext to exploit the (Islamic) nation and

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Rab seizes arms from Shibir cadre's house

Hands him over to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Notorious Islami Chhatra Shibir cadre Akhtar Hamid, who was arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Dhaka on Monday, has been handed over to Maheshkhali police after the Rab seized firearms from his village home.

The elite force arrested Hamid, 38, accused in as many as 29 criminal cases, at Kakrail in the capital and brought him to Chittagong for interrogation.

Following his confessional statement, the Rab men raided his village home at Keruntali in Maheshkhali and seized five guns, 10 rifle bullets, six cartridges and two daggers.

A Rab-7 press release yesterday said he was handed over to

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3 cops caught for extortion in Rab's guise

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Three police constables and four others were arrested by Abhoynagar police on allegations of falsely identifying themselves as members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in order to collect tolls on Monday night from Noulibazar in Abhoynagar upazila.

Police and witnesses said nine persons wearing black clothing

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Cattle prices go bullish

ABDUL KADER

With only a day left for the Eid-ul-Azha, sales and purchases of sacrificial animals at the 16 makeshift cattle markets in the capital started yesterday but the prices seemed to be higher this year compared to last year's.

Traders hope the rush of buyers will increase today.

Sacrificial animals were already being bought and sold in full gear at the city's permanent cattle market at Gabtoli for the last few days.

Cattle traders attributed the higher prices to increased cattle feed prices and transport costs.

Most traders expressed satisfaction that they could bring their cattle to Dhaka without facing the hassles of extortion on their way due to the security measures taken by the government. Some of them said however they had to pay money to police and extortionists both on the

highways and river routes.

Many traders from Kushtia, Jhenaidah and Faridpur mainly lauded the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) for their safe journey to the capital. But several traders said they had to pay Tk 300-800 at different points on their way.

At Golapbagh makeshift cattle market, Harun-ur-Rashid from Bhanga in Faridpur said, "We had to pay additional Tk 800 at two ferry ghats and to patrol police at different points on the road."

M Moazzem Mrida, who is from Shibchar of Faridpur, said, "I had to pay Tk 400 to Tk 500 to law enforcers and others on the river route."

But another cattle trader, elderly Moniruddin Matbor, said, "This year we have come to Dhaka without facing any trouble from extortionists on the way." He lauded the Rab for this.

Traders also said that no incident

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DAULATKHAN POLLS EC worried as Bhola admin flouts order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is worried as the district administration of Bhola has ignored an EC judgement that had asked the administration to ensure security for the opposition candidates in the ensuing election of Daulatkhana Municipality.

The opposition party candidates in the January 31 polls are still feeling insecure due to threat and intimidation allegedly by the ruling party men. The district administration has not taken necessary measures to ensure their security.

The EC on Monday asked the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police at Bhola to send report on the prevailing situation, sources said.

"We are worried over the prevailing situation at Daulatkhana as reports of intimidation on the

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First one-day today

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh after their maiden Test series triumph Bangladesh will turn their focus on the abridged version of the game when the first of five-match one-day internationals against Zimbabwe begins at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

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On winning the toss you could choose to...



Bat

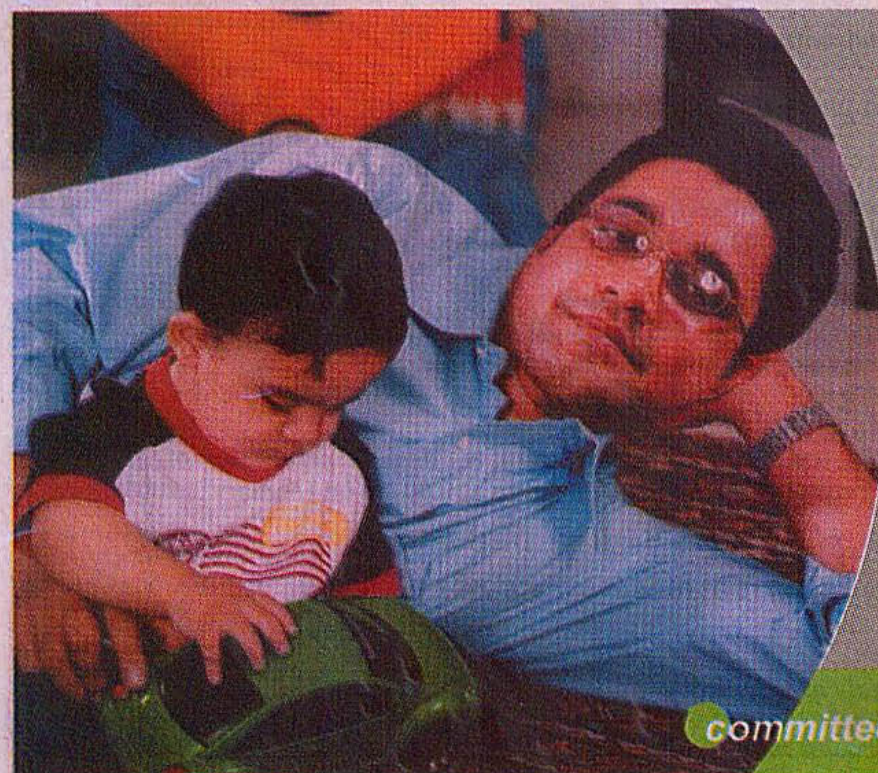
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