

'Check poaching of migratory birds, raise awareness about bird flu'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should take effective steps to check poaching of migratory birds and to prevent smuggling of poultry birds and eggs into the country from India where low pathogenic avian influenza was detected, speakers at a press conference said yesterday.

NON-BALLOTEE HAJJ

PILGRIMS

Govt urged not to raise airfare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tahfij-Haramine Parishad Bangladesh, a non-political organisation, yesterday urged the government not to raise airfare of intending non-ballotees Hajj pilgrims for next year.

At a press conference at the National Press Club in the city, president

President Moulana Sadek Ahmed Siddiqui said the government has fixed airfare of non-ballotees hajis at \$ 950, but a vested quarter of Biman Bangladesh Airlines is trying to increase the fare by \$ 410 more showing an excuse of plane shortage and price hike of jet fuel for their personal interest.

He said an airfare of \$ 950 for ballotees hajis and \$ 1360 for non-ballotees is discriminatory and illegal.

Moulana Sadek said if a non-ballotee pilgrim has to pay more than \$ 410 then the government will have to bear the extra cost.

The parishad threatened tougher agitation if the government fails to resolve the issue within seven days.

The parishad also demanded creation of hajj advisory committee, formulation of permanent Hajj policy and separate hajj and wakf ministry to give proper service to intending hajis.

"Last year Bangladesh Biman carried 23,820 pilgrims including ballotees and non-ballotees, but this year why will not the Biman be able to carry more than four thousand pilgrims," asked Moulana Sadek.

According to religious affairs ministry, the government has decided to allow 60,000 intending persons to perform Hajj next year. Of them, 4000 would go under government management (ballotees) and the rest through non-government agencies (non-ballotees).

Parishad Vice-presidents Abul Hussain and Mujibur Rahman, General Secretary Shahidul Islam Ansari, Organising Secretary Habibullah Sarker, and Publicity Secretary Saifulullah were present at the press conference.

They also urged the government to ban import of poultry birds from the European countries hit by a deadly bird flu outbreak.

They also called for launching a massive campaign to raise awareness among the common people about the avian influenza.

The Nagorik Committee to Prevent Bird Flu in Bangladesh organised the press conference in the city.

Dr Quazi Kamruzzaman, convener of the committee, read out a written statement. Prof Ahmad Kamal, Engineer M Inamul Haq, director general of Haor Development Board, Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of the committee, and Abul Hasan Rubel were also present.

M Inamul Haq said bar-headed geese are the main carrier of the avian virus.

"The migratory birds do not appear to be a great threat. But we have to be very careful and take all measures to prevent the spread of bird flu," he said.

The speakers called on the government to strengthen the monitoring activities on migratory birds, which land on huge wetlands such as Hakaluki haor, Tangua haor, Ghughura haor and Beel Dakatia. These birds may spread the flu in the country, they warned.

The speakers urged the owners of the poultry farms to provide gloves and dresses to the workers to prevent spread of the avian flu.

"If the owners find any case of suspected bird flu, they should inform the livestock officials immediately," said Dr Kamruzzaman. "They also have to be very careful in this regard in order to check the outbreak of the flu."

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'Maintain communal harmony'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable at the Press Information Department in the city stressed the need for maintaining communal harmony and solidarity among the people for peace and development of the country.

They observed that there was a conspiracy to brand Islam as a militant religion through bomb attack and creating disorder. Islam has never supported terrorism and destructive activities, they pointed out.

Speakers observed that religious harmony is a pre-requisite for a democratic and modern country.

Prof Paresh Mondal of Dhaka University said despite some allegations of communal persecutions, Bangladesh is a country of religious harmony.

Justice and rule of law are two major components for maintaining harmony in the society, said Prof A K M Mohiuddin of Darul Ihsan University. Besides, alleviation of poverty and elimination of discrimination from the society are also required to maintain peace and bring prosperity in the society, he added.

A country cannot prosper without solidarity among the citizens and harmony among the people belonging to different religions, they said.

Major General (Retd) Syed Ibrahim said the government, the media and Islamic scholars should play their respective roles for maintaining religious harmony in the society. The government should provide objective information through its media so that people can trust them.

Habibullah Belali, an Islamic scholar, said Islam is a liberal religion and free from all sorts of communalism. Islam does not support militancy. Rather it demands harmony in the society and solidarity among people.

Abdul Latif Masum, a university teacher, said religious terrorism was imported from outside the country to brand the pious Muslims as communal.

Dewan Sultan Ahmed, vice-president of FBCCI, observed that the harmony in the society was distorted through vulgar films.

Information Secretary Dr Mahbubur Rahman, Dr Mahbub Ullah, a member of University Grant Commission, Sukomol Barua, Abdul Mannan Khan, Buddhaananda Thero, Hasan Mohammad Moyeen Uddin also participated in the discussion.



PHOTO: STAR

Consumers' Rights Movement forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding a ban on use of cyclamate in ice cream and chocolate.

Two bombs found in bus in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered two bombs from a passenger bus parked in front of a filling station adjacent to a bus terminal in Rupsha upazila on Wednesday night.

The bombs were kept hidden in the bus with a motive to carry out destructive activities, said a press release issued by Rab-6.

The bombs were handed over to Rupsha Police Station. A manhunt is going on to track down the culprits.

Meanwhile, police have started searching all the buses and the luggage of passengers with metal detectors fearing attacks by the Islamist extremists and outlaws.

Security measures have also been stepped up at the IWTA terminal at the Skid Ghat area.



PHOTO: STAR

A human chain was formed at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding foods and relief for Monga-affected people in northern region of the country.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US embassy yesterday cautioned the potential applicants for Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery-2007 against relying on professional agents to fill up their forms as they might cheat the applicants.

It also warned that the applicants should not pay a single penny to anybody who assures them of winning the visa.

There are many illegal agencies worldwide who claim to be authorised in order to cheat the applicants out of a huge money, said Elizabeth Gourlay, chief of Consular Section of the US Embassy, at a press conference in the city.

"Anyone who promises a diversity visa in exchange of money is simply trying to cheat you," she said.

Online applications for DV Lottery 2007 opened on October 4 and will continue till December 3. The embassy official urged the applicants not to wait till the last minute and apply well ahead to avoid website jamming at the eleventh hour.

The department concerned will send mails, not e-mails, to the lottery winners and then the US embassies in the respective countries will arrange interviews in local languages and check the information given in the documents and the DV lottery forms, she said.

"The application fee for each immigrant visa of lottery winners under the DV programme is US\$ 755, which is only to be submitted on the day of interview," the official said, adding that none should sell his or her properties unless their visas are confirmed.

At the press conference at The American Centre, Consular Section officials Adham Louafi and Jasmine Ara presented a mock interview of DV winners. Information Officer of the Centre Danna Brennan was also present.

During the interview, emphasis would be given on educational qualifications and general knowledge of the winners, they said.

They also said that every information in the application forms must be as it is in the documents the winners present at the interview. "Even a single mismatch between the documents and the information in the application can deprive a winner of visa."

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