

INDIAN CUSTOMS, BSF FEUD
1,000 stranded at Benapole

UNB, Benapole

Some 1,000 India-bound Bangladeshis remained stranded here since yesterday morning as they were denied entry into the neighbouring country despite having passports.

The Indian border guards and customs authorities prevented the Bangladeshis from entering India following a feud between the BSF and the customs, according to an information received from across the border.

Outraged by the denial of entry, the India-bound Bangladeshis, came here from different parts of the country by night coaches, blocked the main road in the area, halting export-import between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh immigration police also refused to put entry seals on the passports of the Bangladeshis due to the stalemate.

Hundreds of goods-laden truck remained stranded on both sides of the border.

Under-trial prisoner dies at court
Father alleges jail authorities' negligence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seriously ill under-trial prisoner died yesterday as the Dhaka Central Jail authorities did not admit him to hospital in time, his father alleged.

Shafiqur Rahman Sumon, 20, fell sick at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court, Dhaka where he was brought yesterday morning for hearing of a case.

At around 12.15pm, he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead, Ramna police said. Sumon's father Abdul Mannan however claimed that he had seen his son dead at the court.

"Sumon was very ill and he should have been sent to hospital much earlier. How could the police bring such a seriously sick patient to court instead of sending him to hospital," said Abdul Mannan talking to reporters at the DMCH.

Sumon had been ill for about a year. "He used to bleed through his nose. Whenever I went to meet him he used to say that executioner Shahjahan routinely beat him up as he [Sumon] refused to pay him a monthly toll of Tk 2,000," Mannan claimed.

Mannan also said he had requested the jail authorities to take his son to hospital but to no avail.

When contacted, a jail official said they were yet to receive detailed report on Sumon's death. They also could not say anything about the allegation against executioner Shahjahan.

The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Russia lauds steps in combating terrorism
Envoy meets FM

UNB, Dhaka

The Russian Ambassador in Dhaka yesterday congratulated the Bangladesh government for its dynamic measures in combating terrorism.

The appreciation came when Ambassador Oleg S Malginov called on Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at the latter's office.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to bilateral relations especially boosting trade and economic cooperation.

Morshed Khan said there is scope to further strengthen bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Russian Federation. He requested Russia to increase import of Bangladeshi products for mutual benefit.

He mentioned that there were some bottlenecks in banking facilities for direct import and export between the two countries. He emphasised smooth banking arrangements and visits of business delegations from both sides for further strengthening economic cooperation.

The Ambassador said private sectors of the two countries, through interaction, can work together for boosting trade and economic relations.

In this regard, he mentioned that Russian businessmen are willing to work together with Bangladeshi entrepreneurs.

Both the minister and the envoy expressed the hope that bilateral relations between the two countries would deepen in future.

Science, tech-based edn a must for progress

President tells Kuet convocation

UNB, Khulna

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday emphasised the need for science and technology-based education and research so that Bangladesh could achieve rapid progress.

"We need to understand that technical education can open up greater opportunities for us," he said while he was addressing the first-ever convocation of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet).

The President, also the Kuet chancellor, said backwardness in science and technology and slow pace in research works are among the reasons why the underdeveloped countries lag behind.

Referring to the contributions of science and technology, Iajuddin said the developed countries have

brought about unprecedented changes in their lifestyle by making the best use of science, research and modern technologies.

"We are now living in the 21st century and the policy of this century is the 'Survival of the Fittest'. So, there is no alternative to skill for survival in this competitive world," Iajuddin said.

He said "We have talents and huge human resources. We'll be able to create skilled human resources if flourishing of talents of the country's huge population could be ensured by utilising science and technology."

"We have to move ahead in this competitive world by utilising science and inventing appropriate technologies through researches," said Iajuddin.

He lauded Kuet for taking well thought-out scientific and pragmatic

education programmes since its inception.

The President expressed the hope that Kuet would be able to contribute to our national progress through creating skilled human resources.

Iajuddin also hoped that the graduates of the university would be able to play their due role for the country's development.

Education Minister Dr M Osman Faruk was also present on the occasion.

Some 820 students received degree certificates while 16 post-graduate certificates in the convocation held after Khulna BIT was upgraded to a full fledged university on September 1, 2003.

Of the recipients, 11 students received gold medals.



PHOTO: STAR

Karmojibi Nari organised a discussion on 'The existing labour law and our duties for its implementation' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

BOMA ABBAS
BCL leader threatens to sue police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Abu Abbas Bhuiyan yesterday said he would sue the police, who had arrested and branded him as "Boma Abbas" in connection with the attack on writer Humayun Azad, for tarnishing his image.

Abbas, BCL joint secretary of Dhaka University's Sir AF Rahman hall, said this at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the wake of JMB chief Abdur Rahman's confession that he ordered the attack.

The BCL leader said he passed Higher Secondary School examinations from Dhaka College in 1998 and enrolled at Dhaka University. "There is not even any general diary against me, but the police branded me as Boma Abbas," he said.

Ramna police arrested Abbas on February 28, 2004 near the Central Shaheed Minar immediately after his taking part in a demonstration against the attack on Azad. Unidentified assailants attacked Prof Azad near Bangla Academy the previous day.

"Police blindfolded me, hanged me from the ceiling and started beating up me with sticks and kicking me," said Abbas, who was

released on bail three days ago.

He alleged the police brutally tortured him to squeeze a confession that he carried out the attack on orders from Sheikh Hasina and under supervision of BCL President Liakot Shikder and General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu.

"What I can recall now is that the police kept me bloodied all over in a cell. I was desperately asking for water but they did not give me anything to drink for long."

"Still tears burn my eyes when I remember the torture," Abbas said in a choked voice.

Ershad leaves for S Arabia

BSS, Dhaka

Jatiya Party Chairman Hussein Muhammad Ershad left Dhaka yesterday for Saudi Arabia on a four-day private visit.

Vice-Chairman of the party HM Golam Reza accompanied him.

Ershad is expected to return home on March 20.

Workers deprived due to ineffective trade unions
Speakers tell seminar

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday said the country's working class is deprived of their legitimate rights as their bargaining agents, the trade unions, do not play their due role.

They said the trade unions have turned into NGOs and their activities are now limited to arranging seminar and symposiums and striking underhand deals with the government.

"Karmajibi Nari" organised the seminar titled 'The existing labour law and our duties for its implementation' at the Jatiya Press Club.

Shahjahan Khan, MP, Advocate Syed Azad Huque, Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Garments Sramik Federation President Salauddin Swapan and Sangjukta Sramik Federation President Mokhesur Rahman spoke at the seminar.

Shirin Akhter, president of Karmajibi Nari, moderated the seminar while Shailla Shahid, coordinator of Karmajibi Nari, presented the keynote speech.

"Most of the trade unions relating to labourers and their rights are formed with a view to going abroad and getting various benefits," said Shahjahan, also executive president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation.

"After independence, we could not create leadership on which the labourers could keep their trusts. Due to the lack of confidence, the labourers and activists could not join hands with the leaders," said Shahjahan, also member of the parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry.

He said "The standing committee is also not capable of playing its due role as its members are not appropriate one."

Advocate SA Huque said it is quite impossible to solve problems of the deprived labourers under the existing labour law.

He said, "If a deprived worker goes to the court, he can not continue case as he is not capable of contesting in the High Court."

Other speakers said the government did not approve the recommendations of the Commission of Labour Law Reformation, 1994.

They said even if the existing labour laws were implemented, over 80 percent of the problems of the labourers would be solved automatically.

PLAN FOR NEXT DECADE
Saarc standing body meets in Dhaka in April

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Standing Committee of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is expected to hold its first meet in Dhaka on April 10 and 11 to prepare a programme for the next decade, official sources said.

The standing committee comprising foreign secretaries of all seven member states of the association - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - will also prepare a draft of the Saarc membership and Observer status.

In the 13th Saarc Summit, the South Asian leaders approved new membership for Afghanistan and observer status for China and Japan. But the Saarc still has no criteria for granting new membership or observer status.

The standing committee will prepare the draft of the plan and programmes for next one decade as well as the draft of the membership criteria. The Saarc Council of Ministers comprising foreign ministers will finalise the Saarc programmes, membership and observer status when it will meet in Dhaka likely in June.

Ahead of the foreign secretaries' meeting, the Saarc Programming Committee comprising senior officials of the Saarc states will meet in Dhaka on April 7-9 to work out the agenda of standing committee meet.

The standing committee and the senior officials during their meeting would also explore ways how to further reorganise the Saarc and strengthen its secretariat.

Diplomatic sources said foreign secretaries of Pakistan and India would also hold one-on-one meeting to exchange views on the ongoing dialogue process and other issues relating to India and Pakistan.

Bangladesh foreign secretary will also hold exclusive talks with his Indian and Pakistani counterparts.

7 more JMB cadres held in 3 districts

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers arrested seven Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadres including an ehshar (fulltime active member) at Nilphamari, Brahmanbaria and Sirajganj during the last two days.

The arrestees of Brahmanbaria are Sohel, 25, Mohammad Alamgir, 28, Mohammad Arafat, 26, and Sheikh Mohammad Suman, 25. The arrestees of Nilphamari are Hafez Shariful Islam, 22, and Aminur Rahman, 22, while Abu Bakkar, 45, was arrested at Sirajganj.

Members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested two JMB cadres at Chilahati Bazar in Nilphamari yesterday, our Nilphamari correspondent reports.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR captured Aminur Rahman at his house and Shariful following Aminur's information. Shariful is believed to be an ehshar of JMB.

Meanwhile, a joint team of

WTO fails to contribute to LDC dev
Discussion told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said WTO conferences held so far could not contribute anything to economic development of the Least Developed Countries (LDC).

Referring to 6th ministerial conference of World Trade Organisation (WTO) held in Hong Kong last year, they said it assured of duty and quota free access for 97 percent of LDC products but the options for selecting the products by the importers favoured the latter.

The discussion titled 'Hong Kong Ministerial Conference: Achievement and Obligation of Bangladesh' was organised by Alliance of Food Sovereignty Campaign (AFSC) in cooperation with ActionAid Bangladesh, Ghasful and Jagrata Jubo Sangstha (JJS) at Chittagong Press Club.

Participants at the discussion alleged that very often the importing countries put the major exportable products of an LDC outside the list of 97 percent goods that they are supposed to import.

They called upon the media to focus this issue and help the LDCs like ours reap the benefit of WTO conference in future.

M Nasirul Hoque, chief reporter of a local daily Suprabhat Bangladesh, moderated the discussion where JJS Manager Abdullah Al Mamun presented the keynote paper.

Ghasful Executive Director Atfauur Rahman Jaffi, JJS Executive Director ATM Zakir Hossain and ActionAid Bangladesh Assistant Coordinator Mohammad Aman also spoke on the occasion.

Chehlum



Board (PDB), will be held at his residence after Juma prayers today at Banchharampur (Boro Bari) in Brahmanbaria, says a press release.

He passed away at Delta Medical Centre Hospital in the city on February 2 at the age of 68.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the chehlum and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

BSS, Dhaka

Qulkhwani of Rehana Rahman Mazumdar, wife of former joint secretary of the finance ministry Ataur Rahman Mazumdar, will be held after Asr prayers today at her Eskaton residence in the city.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the Qulkhwani.

Rehana died in a road accident in Cornilla at the age of 50.



PHOTO: STAR

Poet Shamsur Rahman speaks at a press conference on militant attacks at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium yesterday. Ekkatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee (Forum for Secular Bangladesh) organised the press conference.

RU Shibir cadres drive 3 JCD men away from hall

RU CORRESPONDENT

Tension has been running high at the Rajshahi University (RU) as the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres drove away three Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists from their dormitory rooms on Wednesday midnight.

Sources said a group of Shibir cadres led by Abdul Hamid and Shahnewaz raided the rooms 419 and 102 of the Bangabandhu Hall and forced the occupant JCD activists to vacate the rooms. The Shibir cadres also threw out their books, beddings and clothes and took control of the rooms. They also allegedly assaulted JCD workers Amrul and Rashed during the raid.

The incident triggered panic among the students, prompting several JCD men and general students to leave the hall in apprehension that clashes might erupt at anytime.

RU JCD Joint Convener Ruhul Kuddus Saran said that they had informed the university authorities and demanded an investigation into the matter.

Hall provost Prof Nurul Islam could not be contacted over phone.

On Wednesday evening, a group of ICS cadres led by general secretary Nur Muhammad assaulted the Acting Proctor Prof Harun-ur-Rashid after the proctors meeting over a show cause notice.

The show cause notice was issued against the ICS as they were holding processions and meetings on the campus daily using loud speakers violating the university rules for holding processions.

The ICS men also misbehaved with RU Vice-Chancellor (VC) Prof Altaf Hossain and said that they would defy the show cause notice and continue to hold meetings.

Acting Proctor Prof Harun-ur-Rashid confirmed the incident. The VC could not be reached over phone.

Contacted, ICS RU General Secretary Nur Muhammad Mondol said the JCD men have been occupying their seats illegally. ICS will hold processions on the campus daily protesting the "conspiracy" against ICS President Mahbub Alam Salehi, he added.

RU units of JCD, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation protested the ICS activities in the varsity and demanded immediate action against them.

Brahmanbaria police and Detective Branch (DB) of police, while hunting for JMB Majlish-e-Sura member Salauddeen, arrested four people raiding several areas of Brahmanbaria town, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports.

They also picked up Alamgir, 35, Zilani Abdul Ashique, 30, and Hossain Al Mamun, 35, for quizzing, Officer-in-charge (OC) Mohammad Ismael of Brahmanbaria Police Station said.

DB produced the four arrestees before the court with a 10-day remand prayer. The court however placed them on a five-day remand.

Sirajganj police raided the town's graveyard area late Wednesday night and held Abu Bakkar who is believed to have been involved in August 17 countrywide blasts last year, our Sirajganj correspondent reports.

Telecom minister blamed for patronising JMB
AL demands his removal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

District Awami League (AL) General Secretary Omar Faruk Chowdhury yesterday held Post and Telecommunication Minister Aminul Haque responsible for patronising the militant outfit JMB and demanded his removal from the cabinet.

"His (minister) involvement in sheltering the JMB men is clear to all. If he is not ousted from the cabinet, we will have to believe that the entire government helped militants and they were later arrested only under foreign pressure," he said.

Omar was addressing as chief guest at a farmer-people rally at Dayingpara in Gadagari, the home constituency of the minister.

At the rally, the AL leader put forward 15 questions to the minister regarding his alleged involvement with JMB men and other irregularities asking him to answer them in public within a month.

"If you cannot answer, the allegations against you will be deemed true," Omar added.

The questions include being the chairman of law and order committees of Rajshahi and Naogaon districts, how the minister could keep mum over the activities of Bangla Bhai and his group JMJB that killed 22 people and buried some 20 others secretly in five months.

Why Bangla Bhai was not arrested when he and thousand others of his group marched through Rajshahi city and met administrative officials.

How he could arrange the job of a police sub-inspector for Bitu, one of the killer-suspects of Chhatra League leader Feroz Kabir.

Omar also questioned why the minister empowered his brother who heads Barind Project to lease out government properties and how the crores of lease money are spent.

Chaired by Mominur Rahman Ashik, the rally was also addressed by Ataur Rahman Khan, Akhtar Jahan and Abdul Latif.



PHOTO: STAR

Save the Environment Movement stages a demonstration in front of the Nagar Bhaban in the city demanding steps to make the city free of dust.

WEATHER TODAY

Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore and Kushtia in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

It said that slight fall in day temperature is expected over the country.

Highest temperature 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 17.4 degree Celsius at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:08pm today and rises at 6:05am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.7	22.0	58	52
Chittagong	32.6	21.6	70	73
Rajshahi	29.4	19.6	83	67
Khulna	32.4	20.5	77	64
Barisal	33.0	21.0	65	95
Sylhet	32.9	22.0	62	58
Cox's Bazar	32.5	22.4	69	67