

Bangladesh to work closely with UN

Foreign adviser tells UNGA president

UNB, New York

Bangladesh assured of working closely with the UN to uphold the "legitimacy, centrality, universality and neutrality of the United Nations."

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury gave the assurance to president of the UN General Assembly Serjani Kerim during a meeting in the UNGA President's Office at the UN Headquarters on Monday.

Iftekhar told Kerim that the UN mandate on peace and development was important for Bangladesh and many other developing countries.

Bangladesh espoused human

values like poverty alleviation, human rights, tolerance and gender justice, he said, adding that it is because of this that every year Bangladesh sponsors a resolution on 'Culture of Peace', which it will also do this year.

The foreign adviser further informed the General Assembly president that "peacekeeping is central to Bangladesh's foreign policy objectives."

To that end, he said, Bangladesh will offer to participate in a major way in all future peacekeeping missions including in Sudan.

Bangladesh would, therefore, like appropriate representation in senior command positions in the field and in the headquarters,

he added.

Kerim thanked Iftekhar for Bangladesh's support to the UN particularly the Foreign Adviser's personal contribution to the UN Reforms efforts, which he recalled with gratitude. He was also very appreciative of the contribution that Bangladesh has been continuing to make in peacekeeping.

On Security Council reforms, the foreign adviser said like many other countries, Bangladesh too wants change. "But change should come after serious deliberations and bearing in mind the interests of all countries, so that the reforms can be sustainable," Iftekhar told the Kerim.

Iran keen to expand ties with Bangladesh

UNB, New York

Iran is keen to expand its relations with Bangladesh particularly in investment, trade, energy and manpower export sectors.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki expressed his country's interest during a bilateral meeting with Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury on the sidelines of the current General Assembly Session in New York on Monday.

They discussed a wide range of subjects including cooperation in investment, trade, energy and manpower export sectors.

Mottaki hoped that Iran could hire skilled manpower from Bangladesh.

Speaking to the journalist afterwards, the foreign adviser said: "Bangladesh and Iran have links that date way back into history. The connections must find manifestation in our economic cooperation. We discussed our energy needs and Iran was keen to help. Also I told him we have manpower expertise that Iran could profit from."

Iranian foreign minister also extended a warm invitation to Iftekhar to attend the Asian Parliament Association Meeting to be held in Tehran in November.

Inquilab journo arrested in Pirojpur

UNB, Pirojpur

Joint forces yesterday arrested Zahurul Islam Titu, a district correspondent of the daily Inquilab, on charge of extortion.

Titu was picked up from the LGED office here at about 3:00pm. After interrogation he was handed over to the police.

Police said Titu, also publisher and editor of the weekly Pirojpur Khabar, will be prosecuted today under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Act.

Ashraful, Bashar, Linu extend contract as Unicef Goodwill Ambassadors

Three of the country's sporting idols national cricket captain Mohammad Ashraful, former skipper Habibul Bashar and table tennis legend Zohra Rahman Linu recently renewed their contracts as Unicef National Goodwill Ambassadors for another year, says a press release.

In the next year, Ashraful, Bashar and Linu will work to help Unicef step up its advocacy and mass awareness campaigns in the areas of birth registration, violence against children, child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS, and child immunisation.

"We are extremely happy that these eminent sports personalities have renewed their contracts, which speak of their continued concern for the children and women of the country," said Louis-Georges Arsenault, representative of Unicef in Bangladesh.

He said in Bangladesh cricket has become a sub-culture of sorts, where people worship their cricket stars, while 16-time national table-tennis champion Linu also has a popular following. "When they speak the country listens. We feel flattered that they are willing to use their voice for the betterment of children and women," he added.

Renewing the contract, Ashraful said, "We would like to render our services more in order to create a positive impact on the lives of the country's children because they need all the support that they can possibly get."

Meanwhile, former skipper of the Bangladesh cricket team Habibul Bashar said, "We will be happy if we could make a positive change in the society."

Citing an example, he said many people of Bangladesh still do not know the importance of birth registration and how it impacts the lives of all. "We should make people realise that all children should be registered at birth as it is the primary identity of all," he added.

Linu, on the other hand, said that it would be great if the involvement of sports personalities could help ensure the rights of women and children, especially girl children, by sensitising the general public.

"Every woman deserves to live with honour and dignity and every child deserves a good start in life," she said hoping that greater empowerment of women in society will ultimately lead to the increased well-being of children.



Recipients of Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award-2007 pose for photograph with the guests at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

20 personalities receive Gandhi Peace Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty eminent personalities were awarded Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award-2007 yesterday in recognition of their contribution to establishing peace in society.

The awardees are Secretary Serajul Islam, Khateeb of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Obaidul Haque, President of Buddha Kristi Prochar Sangha Shuddhananda Mahathero, Archbishop Paulinus Costa, Ramakrishna Mission chief Swami Gyan Prakash, Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker, Justice Ghulam Rabbani, Dr Shamsur Rahman, Director General of Passport Directorate Abdur Rob Hawlader, Editor of the weekly Robbar Syed Tashar Ali, Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta, "President of Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Monowara Hakim Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maj Gen (ret'd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, Prof Dr M Asaduzzaman, textile engineer Shyamal Chandra Saha, Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Poet Mostafa Allama and Dr Alamgir Mati.

Mahatma Gandhi Research Council gave away the awards at a ceremony marking the first International Day of Non-Violence at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

The United Nations has declared October 2, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Speaking as the chief guest, Justice Habibur Rahman Khan said, "We all should follow the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi who taught us how to establish peace in society through non-violent means."

Climate change set to influence travel habits: UN report

AFP, Davao

Climate change may trigger "very large" changes in tourism habits within 50 years, as European travellers desert drought hotspots and stay closer to home, an international conference heard yesterday.

A summary report by the UN's tourism, environmental, and weather agencies said that travel by north Europeans to some popular Mediterranean, Caribbean and North American areas could suffer, as well as to a lesser degree

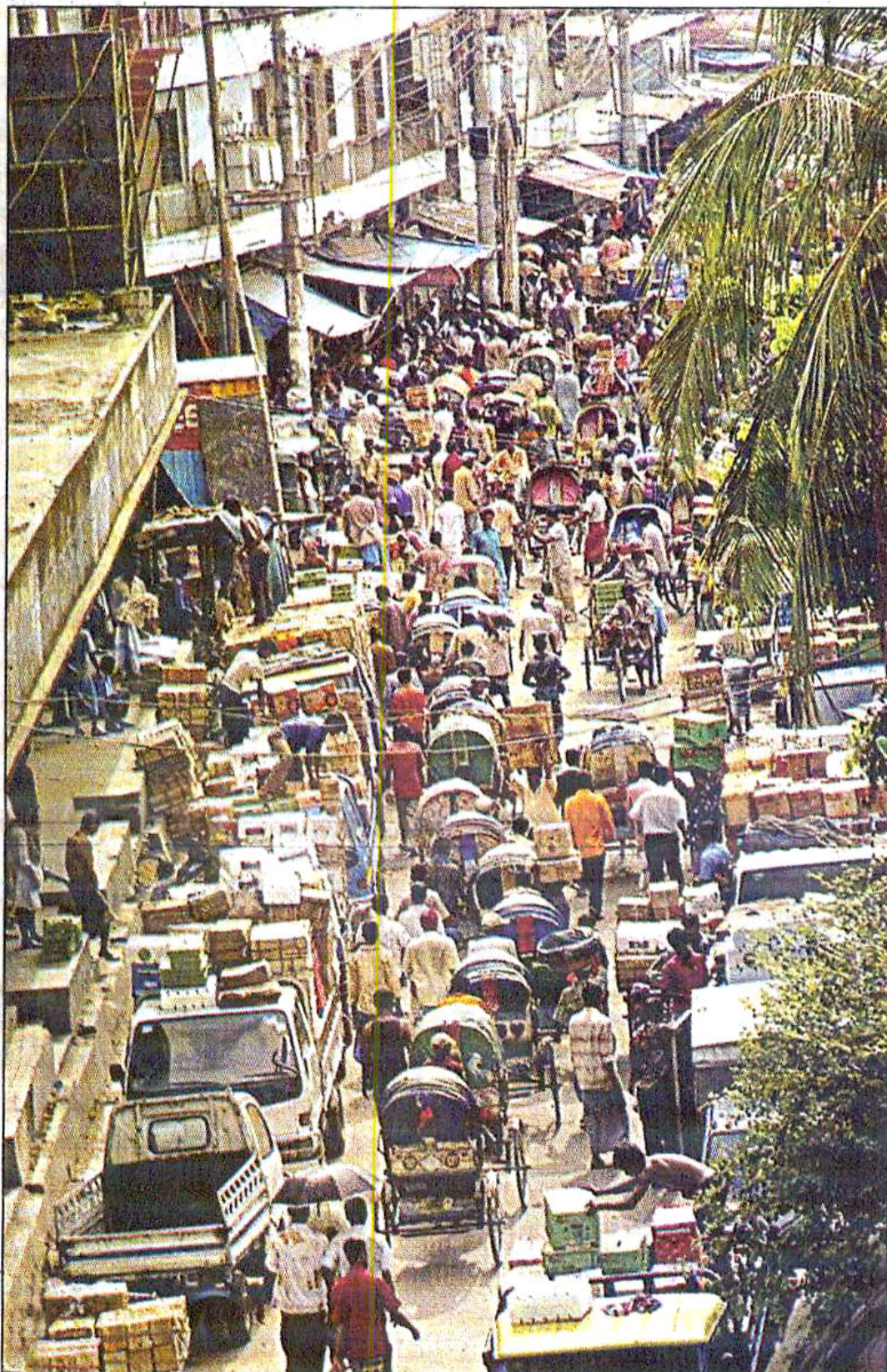
parts of Asia.

Tourists from temperate nations that currently dominate international travel would adapt and take advantage of "new climatic opportunities closer to home," according to an advance summary of the report due to be released next month.

Although the overall worldwide growth in tourism was unlikely to suffer much, it could lead to more tourism spending in temperate nations and less in warmer or tropical destinations that are currently popular, it added.

The summary -- which was released in advance of the full report due out next month at a ministerial meeting on tourism in London -- did not give details of the predicted shifts.

Officials at the conference on climate change and tourism here underlined that some of the changes could be influenced by indirect impacts of global warming, such as water shortages in popular warm weather resorts that would strain resources shared with the local population or agriculture.



Such scenes of gridlock are commonplace in Badamtal-Islampur-Shyambazar area in the city, caused by haphazard parking of trucks and pickups. The picture was taken yesterday.

Task force to stop vulgar films, video piracy

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday constituted a six-member task force headed by a deputy director of the intelligence wing of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to stop production and screening of vulgar films and its video piracy.

The task force has been empowered to seize all vulgar films and posters by conducting operations at all film and poster producing and preserving places and films being screened in various cinemas adding off-scene cut pieces. It can also arrest the persons involved in the business and bring them to book, an official handout said.

It will conduct operations at various places to seize illegal CDs and DVDs and arrest the persons involved in making those without copyright.

The task force has been empowered to co-opt anyone as a member of it to run its activities smoothly across the country. It can seek cooperation from members of various law-enforcing agencies and government and private organisations.

Other members of the committee are assistant director of the operation wing of Rab headquarters, assistant director (security) of the Bangladesh Film and Development Corporation, secretary of the Bangladesh Film Censor Board, senior assistant secretary (film) of the Ministry of Information and a representative of the Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association.

15 injured in Lebanon forest fires

AFP, Beirut

Fifteen people were injured in fires that raged across forests and damaged houses to the north and east of the Lebanese capital yesterday, a local official said.

"Fifteen people suffered injuries and burns, while 20 others were treated for respiratory problems" in the Shouf mountains east of Beirut, Deir al-Qamar municipality official Edy Renno told AFP.

"About 10 houses were partly burnt in the same region. Most of them were damaged on the roof-tops because fires reached nearby trees," he said.

He said several hectares of woods and valleys had caught fire in the ancient town of Deir al-Qamar and nearby villages where people wore surgical masks because of the smoke.

In valleys in and around Deir al-Qamar, acres of pine trees were burnt, an AFP correspondent at the scene said. Several electricity and telephone poles had collapsed on the side of the town's main road.

Renno said two square kilometers (almost one square mile) of forest had been damaged in Deir al-Qamar where army helicopter and fire engines were struggling to extinguish the fires.



Cricketer Habibul Bashar, table tennis legend Zohra Rahman Linu and Captain of the national cricket team Mohammad Ashraful renew their contracts as Unicef National Goodwill Ambassadors for another year recently.

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