

All set for sending

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not been fixed yet, but it would be three to four weeks later than October 23, the scheduled date," French Ambassador Jacques-André Costillies told the Daily Star.

The 187 pieces of artefacts, including 128 life-size statues, terracotta and copper plaques, Prajna Parmita scriptures and coins from the Pal, Sen, Gupta and Maurya dynasties, have been chosen from Bangladesh National Museum, archaeological museums at Mahasthangarh, Paharpur and Mainamati, and Barendra Research Museum.

Earlier, several art connoisseurs filed a writ petition with the High Court against sending of the artefacts to the Paris exhibition, saying the deal was not transparent.

The court issued a two-month stay order on sending of the 187 artefacts to Paris.

The French ambassador later told at a press conference that the exhibition might not be held.

A few intellectuals then urged the government to take necessary steps to send the antiquities to Paris as the exhibition would brighten the image of the country and bring them back.

Following a government application, the Supreme Court stayed the High Court order.

"All the artefacts have already been packed and they will be sent on October 13 morning by a special cargo flight," said a high official at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The ministry has sought security measure for taking them to the airport today.

Three officials from the Archaeology Department, National Museum and Barendra Research Museum will also fly to Paris by the same flight, the ministry source said, adding, "All of them will not stay in Paris for four months. But at least one of them will be present there during the whole exhibition."

Asked about the insurance money of the artefacts, the joint

secretary for the ministry said representatives of the two governments signed the deal and there is nothing to fear about losing the invaluable artefacts.

Sufi Mustafizur Rahman, chairman of archaeology department of Jahanagar University termed the manner of sending the artefacts "casual" without considering the hazards of the long journey.

"All the artefacts are being sent by a single flight. What will happen if the flight meets any accident? We will lose our heritage forever," Sufi said, adding that those should be sent in phases.

He informed that a few artefacts, including terracotta plaques "Man Fin from behind" and "Peacock", do not have accession numbers, the identity of artefacts.

"Without the accession number it is not possible to identify the whereabouts of the artefacts," Sufi said.

However, an official of the Archaeology Department said all artefacts have their accession numbers.

Sufi also said 50 punch-mark coins, which are 2,500 years old, have only one accession number 95.727, and were insured for only 5,000 euros. A few other coins tagged as "gold and silver coins" were insured for 10,000 euros, but the number of those coins is not mentioned on the list.

The joint secretary for the cultural affairs ministry said they have taken photographs of all the items, which have been counted properly and well known to them. "It will not be a problem," she said.

Barrister Tania Amir, attorney of the petitioner to the High Court, who won the stay order, said they did not want to cancel the exhibition. What they wanted is a fair and transparent deal so that the artefacts get proper treatment and come back safely.

3 killed in bomb attack at Ajmer

AFP, Jodhpur, India

The death toll from a blast at one of India's most revered Muslim shrines in the northern state of Rajasthan rose to three yesterday as a worshipper succumbed to his injuries, police said.

Eighteen others have been hospitalised with injuries after the blast outside the Dargah Sharif, or holy Dargah, in the state's pilgrimage town of Ajmer. Police Inspector-General Nand Kishore told AFP.

"Six of them are in critical condition," he said, adding three of the 18 victims rushed to hospitals were children who were accompanying their parents to the ancient shrine.

Kishore said the complex was packed with 500 worshippers when the blast happened, with two Muslim men had died instantly in the blast.

High-level

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government is carrying out reforms for revamping various sectors.

Yesterday's meeting discussed constituting working committees in different sectors, setting up of the proposed forum's secretariat and formulating recommendations for the forum.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, Law Adviser Mainul Hosein, Communications Adviser Maj Gen (rtd) MA Matin, Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed, leaders of top business chambers and high civil and military officials were present at the meeting.

8 jute mills

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Secretary: "Some companies or persons will operate the mills paying rent to the government," he added.

The number of jute mills under the state ownership was 77 until the privatisation started in 1983.

During a deliberation to map out a survival strategy for the jute sector, a meeting in July with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in chair decided to shut down the non-profitable mills.

The mills had been closed as part of a three-year reform programme to revive the jute sector. Adviser to the Jute and Textiles Ministry Geetara Sufiya Choudhury had said at the time of closure adding that the BJMC would resume operation at the rest 18 mills from July.

Geetara then also said that 6,000 workers of the closed mills and another 8,000 from the rest 18 mills would be retrenched and required workforce will be recruited on a daily basis to cut back on labour cost.

During the meeting, yesterday, the finance adviser said that leasing out mills would ensure jobs for the skilled workers who had lost their jobs after shutting down of the four mills.

"Those interested to take out lease of the mills now in operation will have to keep those working there at present. And the workers of the closed mills who were acceptable to all will also have priority during recruitment," he said.

Last-minute

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in the capital so that they could do with their last-minute shopping ahead of Eid.

Although a huge number of city dwellers have already left Dhaka, the concrete jungle, to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones at home, shopping malls are still crowded with shoppers, sellers and hawkers.

As usual, the roadside makeshift shops on the footpath marked the huge crowd compared to the posh shopping centres in the city.

Garment worker Selina was seen bargaining with a seller for a georgette sari on a footpath near Gawsia Market. On her delay in Eid shopping, she said she could not afford it for lack of money.

She received her salary on the 27th of Ramadan and went out yesterday to do the shopping. "A lot of things to buy, but the prices are so high. Heaven knows what I'll be able to buy!" she sighed.

On the same footpath housewife Rehana Parvin was looking for a readymade salwar-kameez-dupatta for her domestic help.

"Actually, I did not get out of home all these days just to avoid extreme hot weather," she said.

Teenagers and youths were seen busy with buying jewellery matching or contrasting with their outfit in the open space of New Market.

A jeweller said stone-set huge earnings worth Tk 250 to Tk 600 are selling well this season.

Shoe stores were also seen flocked with shoppers. Customers seemed to prefer brand shoes to others for quality.

The salesmen of a brand shoe house at Bashundhara City Shopping Mall expressed high hope that sales would be much better today as many people, especially men, get leave from their job.

Owner of 'That's it', a readymade garment shop at the same market, Kazi Badru Islam said the sale is much better than the previous year.

Children and teenagers preferred the dress 'Gypsy' at his shop and spent Tk 2,000-2,500 for each piece. Italian silk embroidery work for young ladies worth Tk 5,000 also sold well.

Beside the garment shops, crowds were also seen at cellphone shops at Eastern Plaza as many were eager to change the model during the Eid festival.

Eid tomorrow

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Committee would sit at 6:30pm to scour the sky for the Shawal moon and also to receive information about moon sighting from across the country.

If the moon is not sighted today, the festival will be celebrated on Sunday.

The district-level moon-sighting committee, to be headed by deputy commissioners, will wire the national committee about the spotting of the moon anywhere in the country.

The committee will also collect information on moon sighting from the meteorological department.

Special diets will be served at hospitals, jails, government-owned children and shelter homes, socially handicapped and vagabond welfare centres and shelter homes for the destitute people.

The Shishu Park will remain open to the underprivileged children on the Eid day.

Cultural functions, friendly football matches and Eid gatherings of children will also be held across the country.

TRAINS, LANCHES AND BUSES

were crammed yesterday with homebound passengers as was the case the day before.

In Dhaka, shopping centres and malls saw heady crowds of Eid shoppers yesterday, a common scene for the last few days.

The main Eid congregation will be held at the Jatiya Eidgah at the National Mosque at the same time.

Five congregations will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 7:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am, 10:30am and 11:30am. Congregations will also be held at all city mosques.

The country's biggest congregation will be held at Sholakia in Kishoreganj, which Channel i, a private television channel, will broadcast live from 9:40am to 10:30am.

Dhakabasi, a capital-based socio-cultural organisation, will bring out traditional procession at 4:00pm on the second day of Eid from Bangladesh Shishu Academy to celebrate the Eid.

Different political and socio-cultural organisations have greeted the countrymen on the occasion.

AL, BNP trash idea

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brushed off the proposition yesterday during the AL presidium's technically tattered down as "premature".

Through her lawyer Khaleda said there is no constitutional crisis and such proposition is embarrassing.

The BNP chairperson, who was arrested on September 3 in a graft case and kept at a special jail set up on the Jatiya Sangsad premises, said the roadmap for the election next year is there and the task for the voter list with photographs is progressing.

"So, under the circumstances, the proposal for formation of a national consensus government is not acceptable," Khaleda said, adding, "The issue of forming this kind of government may come at a time of national crisis. But there is no constitutional crisis now."

AL Acting President Zillur Rahman said the proposal has been made too early. "It is meaningless to discuss the issue now," he said.

"His [Badruddoza] call sounds like putting the cart before the horse...Let the elections be held first and MPs be elected, then it may be given a thought," Zillur told reporters.

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To discourage smuggling, it would be appropriate to raise the price of urea to keep it even with that of Indian urea, recommended

the report.

Dr Uttam Deb, senior research fellow of CPD, was also present at the press conference.

Khaleda

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graft in giving Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco) the contract for container management at the Dhaka Inland Container Depot (ICD) and the Chittagong Port ICD yards.

The following day the joint forces arrested the BNP chief and her son at their cantonment residence.

"I was not swayed by anyone and neither did I exert any influence on the purchase committee to award the contract to Gatco," Khaleda said in reply to a query.

The three-member team of the Anti-graft body questioned her for about an hour from different angles to know if she had pulled strings in favour of Gatco, sources said. Earlier, another team had questioned her about the wealth statement to the ACC.

Comprised of investigation officer and ACC Deputy Director Jahirul Huda, taskforce-23 officers Major Mostafa Kamal and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector Nurul Islam, it went to the special prison in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex at around noon for interrogation.

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