

BRITISH MINISTER MEETS FOREIGN ADVISER 'People-to-people contact can help improve ties'

BSS, Dhaka

The visiting UK home minister Jacqui Smith made a courtesy call on Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed issues of bilateral relations and co-operation in various fields, including curbing terrorism.

"The relationship between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom are rooted in history, and those shared values have been

translated into an active 'strategic partnership' in contemporary times," the foreign adviser told newsmen after the meeting.

"We also discussed key current issues including climate change and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, two areas in which our two countries are working closely together," he added.

The adviser also appreciated British support to education and post-Sidr rehabilitation.

"The recent talks between the

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown at No. 10 Downing Street took our relations to new heights," Iftekhar added.

Smith said people-to-people contact is necessary to improve the existing bilateral relations.

She said they also discussed issues of counter-terrorism and how it could be addressed.

She was happy to note that elections would take place in Bangladesh.

Three die after eating puffer fish

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three people, including a couple, died and six others fell ill after eating puffer fish at Belabo in Narsingdi last night.

The dead are Khandaker Monir Hossain, 48, his wife Hazera Begum, 40, of village Amlabo and Keramat Ali, 70, of Bateswar.

Doctors at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) declared Hazera and Keramat dead after they were brought to the hospital while Monir died at Belabo Thana Health Complex, family members said.

Six others from two families were now undergoing treatment at the DMCH.

Wahed Ullah, son of Monir, told reporters that they bought some puffer fish from Battola Bazar in Belabo in the afternoon.

"Five members of our family fell ill within half an hour of eating the fish at night," he said.

The family members of Keramat Ali also bought the fish from the same bazaar.

DU students demand removal of Hasanuzzaman

DU CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of students of Dhaka University (DU) staged a demonstration on the campus yesterday demanding removal of Prof Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury, a teacher of political science department, accusing him of hurting the sentiment of the students of other faiths during his class lectures.

They took out a silent procession, burnt an effigy of Prof Hasanuzzaman, and held a protest rally on the campus.

The students also met Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz at his office and submitted a memorandum urging him to take immediate steps to remove Prof Hasanuzzaman.

After the meeting, the students told reporters that Prof Faiz had assured them that he would look into the matter and take steps accordingly.

Bapex starts drilling well at Shahbazpur Gas Field

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex) has started drilling a 3,500-metre deep development well at Shahbazpur Gas Field at Char Borhanuddin in Bhola recently, says a press release.

The drilling work is scheduled to be completed by June.

Earlier, Bapex had drilled another well on the gas field.

After successful completion of the drilling work, the two wells are expected to produce 30 to 35 million cubic feet of gas.

Bapex has already installed a 32 kilometre pipeline to supply gas to Bhola, the press release added.

Int'l edn fair begins in Ctg today

CU CORRESPONDENT

A three-day education fair titled "Chittagong International Education Fair (CIEF) 2008" begins in the port city today.

The fair aims at providing opportunities for Bangladeshi students to know about education systems, admission processes and tuition fees for higher education at home and abroad.

Extreme Exhibition and Event Management Ltd (E3 Solutions) is organising the fair at Institute of Engineer Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong auditorium.

Over 32 colleges, universities, IT institutes, students counselling farms, immigration and language learning institutes of the country and the world are participating in the fair.

Representatives from reputed colleges and universities of Bangladesh, the UK, the US, Malaysia, Cyprus, Thailand, India, Australia, Ireland, Poland, Singapore and other countries will also attend the fair.

Social Scientist and Vice Chancellor of Premier University Prof Anupam Sen will formally inaugurate the fair as the chief guest.

The Daily Star, Channel-i and local daily Azadi are the media partners of the fair, while Radio Today and bdjobs.com are radio and web partners.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed visits BDR-run open market sale (OMS) centres at Mirpur, Agargaon and Pallabi in the city yesterday.

Govt aims at big food stock

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and provide income support for the low-income groups," he said.

He said in all 1.20 lakh tonnes of rice have been allocated for the OMS programme in April compared to 42,000 tonnes in last month so that rice prices come down gradually.

Referring to some newspaper reports, he said prices of rice have already started to come down on the wholesale market and hoped that the expected bumper harvest of Boro would have a positive impact on the market.

Noting the important role of the media, he urged the newspeople to play a positive role in keeping the prices of commodities, especially of food, at tolerable levels.

He said the government has decided to increase agricultural production in a bid to keep food prices stable as there is no other alternative to this, adding that the next budget would provide increased allocation for agriculture and related sectors.

Besides, he said the government would expand the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme in a bid to broaden the food-safety net at places where there is seasonal unemployment problem.

On employment generation, the chief adviser said the food ministry has already taken a Tk 100-crore project to that end. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has got the nod to launch such programmes in a few weeks while the communications ministry would also take similar

programmes to provide support for the poor and low-income people.

He said the government is also mulling over growing two major crops within a short span in a year.

On his experience at the BDR-run outlets, Fakhruddin said one of the main problems people face while buying rice from OMS outlets is that they have to spend much time there.

He, however, informed that the BDR would open 25 more outlets next week to ease the problem.

The chief adviser visited BDR outlets at Taltola, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Mirpur-2 and Kalyanpur.

Most of the people at the outlets asked him to increase OMS rice sale from five kg to 10 kg at an even lower price.

Now one kg rice sells for Tk 25 at BDR shops which also sell salt, potatoes and other essential food items from 8:00am to 5:30pm. Earlier, the government increased the amount of rice under OMS from three kg to five kg.

The chief adviser asked the people to be patient, assuring them that the government would increase the amount of rice and take steps for quick supply of rice to the outlets.

2 women RMG workers killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two female garment workers were killed in separate incidents at Kafrul and Pallabi in the city yesterday.

The dead are identified as Shahnaz Begum, 25, of Mirpur-11 and Monira Begum, 28, of Ibrahimpur.

Pallabi police recovered the body of Shahnaz from a house at stranded Pakistanis' camp named Rabada Camp at Mirpur-11 in the afternoon.

Police said Shahnaz's husband Jahangir stabbed her to death over a quarrel with her mother-in-law at around 2:00pm.

Neighbours caught hold of Jahangir, who works at Benarasi Palli, and handed him over to the police. Jahangir, who hails from

Comilla, rented the house at the camp. Shahnaz also hailed from the same district.

The body of other victim was found at an empty plot with boundary walls at Ibrahimpur.

Kafrul police recovered the body of Monira at 1:30pm and sent it to Dhaka Medical College morgue.

Morgue sources said they found marks of injuries at her neck, cheek and ears.

Her cousin Marium Begum said Monira, who worked at Amin Fashion at Ibrahimpur, was returning to her home at Ananda Road after drawing her salary, but she had been missing since then.

Monira had been living with her three-year-old child as her husband deserted her a year ago, she said.

Demand for release of Hasina, Khaleda reiterated

DU CORRESPONDENT

BCL, the student wing of Awami League (AL), and JCD, the student wing of BNP, yesterday reiterated their demand for the release of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) brought out a procession on the campus that ended amid a protest rally at the foot of Aparajito Bangla while Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) took out another procession and held a separate rally in front of the arts building (Battala) at around 12:15pm to press home their demands.

In their respective processions, leaders and activists of both the organisations chanted slogans for the release of the two leaders.

At the BCL rally, student leaders demanded immediate release of Hasina and her proper treatment, and said BCL would go for tougher programme if their demands are not met immediately.

They also demanded release of detained BCL General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Koton.

BCL central unit President Mahmud Hasan Ripon, acting General Secretary Syed Abul Kalam, DU unit President Sohail Rana Tipu and General Secretary Sazzad Saqib Badsha spoke at the rally.

At the JCD rally, student leaders demanded immediate release of Khaleda and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman.

They said JCD would not accept any dialogue with the government or the Election Commission without Khaleda.

JCD acting President Sultan Salauddin Tuku, General Secretary Saiful Bari Babu, DU unit President Hasan Mamun, and General Secretary Saiful Islam Feroz spoke at the rally.

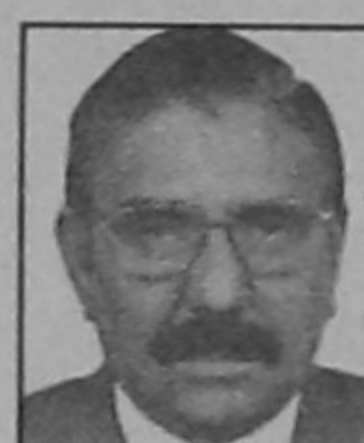
Historic photo handed over to Ducusu centre

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group photograph of historic "Nathan Commission", formed in 1912 by the Government of Bengal to prepare a complete scheme for the establishment of a University at Dhaka, was handed over to the Dhaka University Central Student Union (Ducusu) collection centre yesterday, says a press release.

DU Treasurer Prof Syed Abul Kalam Azad handed over the photographs to Gopal Chandra Das, collector of Ducusu collection centre.

Obituary



Mir Nur Uddin, former deputy secretary of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka, passed away due to brain stroke yesterday at the age of 67, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He will be buried at his family graveyard in Kishoreganj.



Betar and Television, will be held today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quamrkhani and milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayer at Z-22, Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur in the city.

Sqn Ldr Morshed laid to rest

A CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Squadron Leader Morshed Hasan, who died in a plane crash on Tuesday, was laid to rest at the family graveyard in Madaripur yesterday.

He left behind his wife, a two-year-old daughter, parents and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Morshed's body was sent to Madaripur in a Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) helicopter that landed on Kalkini Syed Abul Hossain University College playground at around 12:10pm.

From there his body was taken to Koyaria Eid Gah where a namaz-e-janaza was held after Jogh prayers.

Apart from 10,000 people, Wing Commander Mueed, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Kalkini Mezbahuddin Ahmed, Major Anwar-us-Sadat, commanding officer of Rab-8, Second Lieutenant Salauddin and nine BAF personnel attended the janaza.

Az pall of gloom descended as Morshed's body reached the village home.

His father Mokhes Jamadar and mother Monwara Begum fainted several times.

Septuagenarian missing



Moslem Ali Howlader, a 70-year-old resident of Pashchim Subidkhali in Mirzaganj, Patuakhali, has been missing for the last 15 days, says a press release.

He went out of his home but did not return.

Anyone knowing his whereabouts has been requested to contact Islamia Cloth Store at Subidkhali Bazar in Mirzaganj or 163/3 Crescent Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, or call at 0171155950 or 01711642073.

AIUB Debate Week begins

The 3rd AIUB Debate Week 2008 has kicked off at the American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) in the city recently, says a press release.

Debaters from 17 universities are taking part in this mega event comprising both Bangla and English formats of debate.

A two-day long workshop on both Bangla and English debate was also held for the students of secondary and higher secondary levels.

Renowned debaters Dr Abdun Nur Tushar, Hasan Mahmud Biplob, Shamim Reza, Chowdhury Abdullah Quasem and Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq conducted the workshop.

Prof Tofazzal Hossain, vice president, Academic Affairs, inaugurated the debate week on April 4. The final of the debate will be held on April 18.

The Daily Star, Radio Today and Channel 1 are the media partners of the event.

30 die in jail in last 3 months: ASK report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 30 people died in jail custody in the last three months, of which 21 were arrestees and nine convicts, according to a report of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK).

It also said at least 24 people were killed by law enforcement agencies and 9509 people arrested during the period.

According to ASK report based on news published in daily newspapers, 121 women were raped of

whom 23 were killed and two committed suicide.

Besides, 74 women were repressed and 54 others killed for dowry in last three months.

A total of 25 women were the victims of acid violence and 70 domestic violence. Of them, 59 were killed.

The report also said 18 journalists were repressed while 22 Bangladeshis killed by Indian Border Security Force during this period.

APPOINTMENT OF VCS

Search committee reconstituted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry yesterday reconstituted the search committee formed to help ensure greater transparency in the appointment of vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and treasurer of public universities.

Education Secretary will act as the chairman of the reconstituted committee while Prof Dr Wahid Uddin Mahmud of Dhaka University as the co-chairman and the joint secretary (University) of the education ministry as its member secretary, said an official hand-out.

Other members of the committee are Founder Vice Chancellor of East West University Dr Mohammad Farashuddin, University Grants Commission (UGC) member Dr Ehsanul Haque, former VC of Bangladesh

University of Engineering and Technology Dr Nuruddin Ahmed, former VC of Jahangirnagar University Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed, VC of North South University Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi and former dean at Bangladesh Agricultural University Prof SM Bulbul.

The search committee will recommend appointing skilled and qualified persons to the vacant posts of VC, pro-VC and treasurers in the public universities through inviting applications/nominations through advertisements in the national dailies and on the web sites.

However, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Jahangirnagar universities will remain out of the purview of the search committee as their system of appointment of VCs is different from other public universities.

The committee can co-opt members, if necessary.

DHAKA TODAY

Report launching

The launching ceremony of the report 'Rethinking disaster: Why death and destruction is not nature's fault but human failure' will be held. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Scientific workshop

Bangladesh Society for Study of Pain and South Asia Society for Study of Pain jointly organise a scientific workshop and seminar on interventional technique of pain management. Venue: Anaesthesia department, BSMMU. Time: 9:00am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Heritage Foundation organises a discussion on 'Price hike of food items and food security'. Venue: Hotel Lakeshore, Gulshan 2. Time: 2:45pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) organises a seminar on importance of

local and regional planning to attain PRSP goals. Venue: BIP auditorium. Time: 3:30pm.

Scientific seminar

Homeopathic Foundation Bangladesh organises a scientific seminar and discussion on homeopathic treatment in health services of Bangladesh. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 organises a discussion to mark the 37th anniversary of proclamation of the independence and formation of government. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable

National Democratic Party (NDP) organises a roundtable on responsibilities of politicians and government to make successful the national dialogue. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 36.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 17.0 degrees Celsius at Srirangal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:18pm today and rises at 5:41am 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
Dhaka	33.5	20.7
Chittagong	32.0	21.6
Rajshahi	36.2	19.2
Khulna	34.0	21.3
Barisal	33.6	20.3
Sylhet	33.8	20.5
Cox's Bazar	34.7	23.0

Trial to start at makeshift court in JS complex

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saying that their client has been suffering from various diseases.

Earlier, the Supreme Court (SC) upheld the High Court (HC) judgment that ordered for holding the trial and also cleared the way for resuming the stalled trial proceedings.

The SC on March 18 dismissed the leave to appeal petition submitted by Hasina against the HC order that asked for revival of the case.

Hasina was not produced before the court during yesterday's hearing. But the six other accused were present.

They are former army chief Mustafizur Rahman, former air force chief Jamaluddin Ahmed, air commodore (ret'd) Mirza Akhter Maruf, former joint secretary Hossain Serinabab and businessman Nur Ali were indicted in the case after investigators found their involvement in the alleged scam.

Inspector Abdullah Al Zahid of now-defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on December 11, 2001, showing 40 people as prosecution witnesses.

Later, all the accused including Hasina filed petitions with the High Court on different dates for quashing the case. Following their petitions, the High Court stayed the case proceedings.

Hasina was arrested on July 16 last year after businessman Azam J Chowdhury filed an extortion case against her.

Four other cases were also filed against her on different dates.

CASE AGAINST FARUK

The trial of the case against Faruk, Huda and 14 others will be held at the special court adjacent to Dhaka

deputy secretary Hasan Mahmood Delwar were dropped from the list of accused due to lack of evidence while former army chief Mustafizur Rahman, air commodore (ret'd) Mirza Akhter Maruf, former joint secretary Hossain Serinabab and businessman Nur Ali were indicted in the case after investigators found their involvement in the alleged scam.

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CASE AGAINST FARUK

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Central Jail, court sources said.

The law ministry on Tuesday sent a gazette notification asking Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 Judge Mohammad Israil Hossain for holding its trial at the new courtroom from the next date.

According to the prosecution, a group of Freedom Party activists blasted bombs and fired shots aiming at the house of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in an attempt to kill Sheikh Hasina who was staying in the house on August 11 night, 1989.

Later, they left the scene by two vehicles chanting slogans 'Faruk-Rashid Zindabad'.

Havildar Jahirul Haque filed a general diary with Dhanmondi Police Station. Later, an investigation was conducted in this regard.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) pressed charges against 16 people including Faruk, Huda and Rashid on February 20, 1997. But the trial of the case could not begin in the last 11 years due to legal tangles.

Earlier, Huda, Faruk and Rashid were sentenced to death in the Bangabandhu murder case and life term imprisonment in the jail killing case.