

BOUCHER ARRIVES FEBRUARY 8

Trade, terrorism to top agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Trade and terrorism will top the agenda during US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A Boucher's three-day visit to Bangladesh from February 8.

This will be the first high-level visit by an American dignitary since the installation of the two new governments in Dhaka and Washington in January.

Besides Boucher, two US military generals will also be arriving in Dhaka to strengthen bilateral and regional security cooperation as well as to provide security force assistance to partner nations to help combat terrorism.

However, the US embassy in Dhaka did not disclose the exact date of arrival of the military mission.

According to the officials of foreign ministry, the issues of cooperation between

Bangladesh and the United States in counter-terrorism as well as pursuing a deal on the proposed Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) would feature prominently during talks between Boucher and Bangladesh government officials, including the Prime Minister.

Officials said Boucher would hold important meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and some other influential ministers, including foreign, finance, commerce and home.

Diplomatic sources here said Boucher's visit may set the tone for US-Bangladesh relations in the days to come, specially after assumption of office by the two governments.

They said that the US has been pursuing a regional anti-terrorism mechanism comprising by the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, a press release from the US embassy in Dhaka said United States military

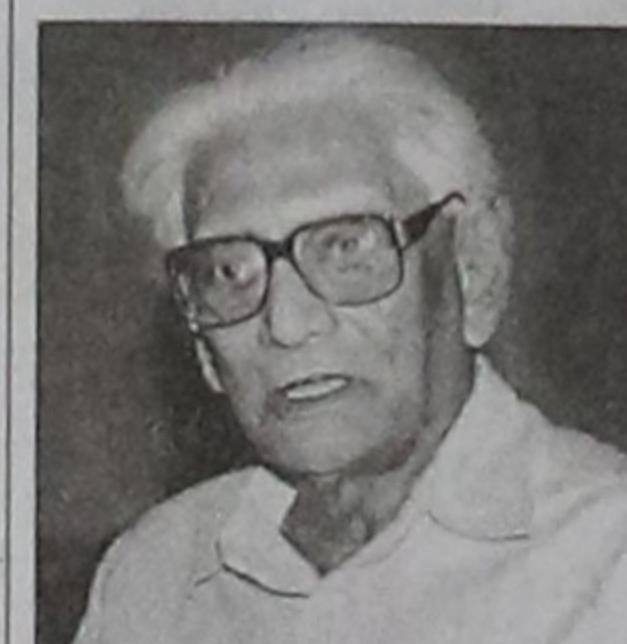
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also expressed her government's determination to combat terrorism and proposed for a 'South Asian Anti-Terrorism Taskforce' to deal with the menace in line with the Awami League's election manifesto.

US SOCOM and US PACOM provide security force assistance to partner nations to help combat terrorism.

General Fridovich and Brigadier Boera during their visit will meet with the home Minister, chiefs of army and navy and senior government officials on issues related to US-funded humanitarian assistance programmes as well as security and US-Bangladesh cooperation against terrorism.

Their discussions will focus on partnership, presence and readiness in the region, security force assistance, and bilateral approaches to maintaining regional security stability.

This visit underscores the importance of the cooperation on security, humanitarian assistance and terrorism between the two countries, the US embassy press release added.



Karl F Inderfurth, former assistant secretary of state for South Asian Affairs of the United States, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Secretariat office in the city yesterday.

AUG 21 ATTACK

Hearing adjourned until Feb 8

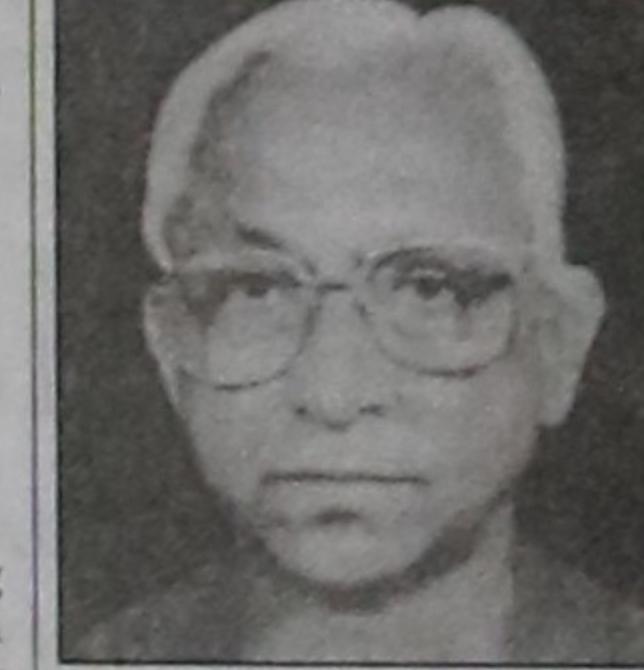
COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the hearing of the August 21, 2004 attack cases until February 8 following time petitions by the prosecution lawyers.

Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Mohammad Masud Hossain passed the order after the prosecution lawyers submitted petitions saying, witnesses who were earlier summoned, could not appear before the court yesterday.

Earlier, the complainant Sub-Inspector (SI) Sharif Faruque Ahmed of Motijheel Police Station had given his statements and later he was cross-examined by the defence lawyers.

The 22 accused of launching grenade attacks on an Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue include detained former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, Harkatul Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, Huji members Abu Sayeed, Shahdatullah Jewel, Rafiqul Islam alias Rafiq, Abu Taher and Maulana Tajuddin.



Manik's death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Salifuddin Ahmed Manik, a Liberation War veteran and former president and general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh.

On the occasion, different organisations -- Gono Forum, Moni Singh Farhad Memorial Trust and Brothers Union -- have chalked out programmes including discussion and milad mahfil to mark the day.



Zakir Hossain Raju Ahmed Daily Star Press Sramik Union executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zakir Hossain Mollah and Raju Ahmed were elected president and general secretary of the five-committed of the Daily Star Press Sramik-Karmachari Union for 2009-2010 at a meeting yesterday.

The meeting was held at the daily's office with outgoing president M A Mannan in the chair.

Other office-bearers are Vice President Md. Asimuzzaman Joy, Assistant General Secretary Md Youssuf Ali and Treasurer Md Humayun Kabir.

JU admission tests begin today

A JU CORRESPONDENT

The first year admission test for 2008-09 academic session at Jahangirnagar University will begin today.

The examination of 'Ka' unit will be held today. Around 62,000 students are competing for 1,300 seats this year.

This year numbers of the applicants were decreased as university authorities upped their admission requirements.

Free treatment for acid victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent plastic surgeon in England Dr Ronald William, who came to Bangladesh, will provide treatment to the acid victims free of cost from February 2 to March 30, says a press release.

Interested acid victims are requested to contact to Acid Survivors Foundation, Road 22, House 12/13, Block K, Banani, in the city.

They can also dial 02-9891314, 9862774, 9880142, and 9886383 for details.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY OBSERVED

Manage wetlands properly to strengthen economy

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wetlands are the treasure of resources of a country and planned use of wetlands can strengthen its economy along with protecting the country from the impacts of global warming and future environmental calamities, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They said lack of awareness, mismanagement, illegal encroachment, excessive drainage, siltation, pollution and lack of coordination among the authorities concerned are the main factors responsible the degradation of wetlands and rivers.

It is essential to have a proper management of the wetlands and rivers as a sound management can contribute to a healthy and sustainable economic environment, they added.

The seminar titled 'Wetland and river basin management in Bangladesh' was organised by Nature and

Biodiversity Conservation Society (NBCS) at the National Press Club in the city marking the World Wetlands Day 2009.

Speaking as chief guest, Dr Hasan Mahmud, state minister for foreign affairs, said despite being a riverine country Bangladesh is losing its rivers due to environmental degradation along with lack of awareness about conservation among the country people.

"We have lost 35-40 percent cultivable lands in the last 35 years because of infrastructural and industrial development. Besides, global warming and increase of salinity also caused a loss of 20 percent lands," he said, adding that, if the trend continues human survival would be at stake.

Suggesting dredging of rivers around the city, he said the traffic congestion would be reduced significantly if these rivers are made navigable.

Besides, if the dredging is carried out regularly, the damage caused by floods every year would also be reduced significantly, he added.

WAR CRIMINALS

Don't interfere in trial process

CPB urges US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday dismissed as 'fraudulent' and 'laughable' the statement of the US ambassador that his government is willing to cooperate in the trial of war criminals.

In a statement, CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim also warned the US not to interfere in the trial process.

They said the then US administration helped the Pakistani occupation forces carry out all kinds of war crimes during the liberation war in 1971.

Still the US maintains good relationship with the Jamaat-

e-Islami who opposed the liberation war, they said. So, the willingness on the part of the US to cooperate in the trial is like 'the killers would bring themselves to book', which is unreasonable and ludicrous as well as mysterious, they added.

Meanwhile, CPB and Ganotantri Party leaders in a meeting yesterday demanded restoration of the constitution of 1972 to establish a secular Bangladesh.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan presided over the meeting attended by Ganotantri Party acting President Afzal Hossain, Azizul Islam Khan, Nurur Rahman Selim, Mahmudur Rahman Babu and Sharafat Ali Hira.

Still the US maintains good relationship with the Jamaat-

Birth anniversary of Ahmadul Kabir today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 87th birth anniversary of Ahmadul Kabir, former chief editor of the Sangbad and a leading personality in progressive politics, says a press release.

On the occasion, various programmes will be held at his birthplace at Ghorashal in Narasingdi.

The programme include placing wreaths at his grave, Qurankhawni, milad mahfil in different mosques and a discussion at Manu Mia Smriti Sangsad office at Ghorashal.

Ahmadul was the first vice president of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu). He was also elected a member of the provincial assembly of the then East Pakistan.

Beside politics, he involved himself in journalism and was made the president of Commonwealth Press Union, Bangladesh chapter.

Ahmadul was also elected a member of parliament as an independent candidate from Narasingdi-2 constituency in 1986. Ganotantri Party was formed under his leadership and he was its president until his death in 2003.

DHAKA TODAY
Lecture

Lt Gen (retd) Ed Smith, director of Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, will deliver a lecture on 'Some thoughts on civil-military relations'. Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organises the event. Venue: BISS auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Civic Bangladesh organises a roundtable on 'Rights and justice: The dignity perspective of development in Bangladesh'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:00am.

Seminar

Centre for Advanced Research in Social Science organises a seminar on 'Reviewing the strategies for environmental justice in the context of Bangladesh'. Venue: 401 Lecture Theater, DU. Time: 3:00pm.

Photo exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of the photography exhibition 'Blood splinter of Jute' by Munem Wasif will be held. Venue: Kalpana Boarding Shakhan Bazar. Time: 3:00pm. This is part of International Festival of Photography 2009.

Seminar

Susthota organises a seminar on balanced food for students. Venue: Daffodil International University auditorium. Time: 11:30am.

Rotary Dhaka

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.

Book fair draws huge crowd

FROM PAGE 16

seen moving from one stall to another in search of new titles.

Many visitors said that they have only here yesterday to have a look and that they would decide on what to buy on subsequent visits.

A large number of fans gathered to seek the new titles by popular writers Humayun Ahmed and Zafar Iqbal. Iqbal's "Muktijuddher Ithish" (History of the Liberation War) was published from Pratiti publications while Afsar Brothers published "Humayun Ahmed's Priyopadreka".

Some stalls were seen still under preparation while a few has not been set up as yet. Publishers and writers however said that the large crowd was very encouraging.

The dust on the fair ground was an impediment to the enjoyment of the afternoon and many visitors to the fair also complained about the lack of space to move around as stalls have been erected on both sides of the road this year, unlike last year.

Many visitors also complained that they had to go around in search of stalls as the information centre set up on the fair premises by Bangla Academy was not able to

provide them with accurate information about the stalls.

Bangla Academy Director General Syed Muhammad Shahid yesterday sought assistance from all concerned so that the fair runs smoothly this year. He also expressed hope that the few existing problems would be solved by the end of the day as all preparations would be completed by then.

Other books published at the fair yesterday include "Okalati and Jajiyoti Jiboner Jalorekha" by Mohammad Golam Robbani, "Jago Sobai" by Gano Bektito, "Nagorno Bektito o Morzadar Rajniti" by Dr Robert W Fuller, "Puro Banglar Upornesh of Mansur Musa, Tagore Ibsen and Other Essays" by Muhammad Habibur Rahman and "The laughter of a Slave" by Shoukat Osman.

Publishers expressed hope that participation of readers would increase day by day while readers said that they hoped that the authorities would take strict steps to avoid the irregularities and incidents that occurred last year.

Islam, 55, and Dilip, 38.

Police said the bus carrying devotees of Biswa Ijtema collided with a truck early yesterday, leaving about 18 devotees injured.

The injured were rushed to Bogra Shaheen Zia Medical College Hospital where Quddus, Shariful and Dilip succumbed to their injuries in the evening.

The dead were identified as Abdul Quddus, 50, Shariful

Road crash kills 3 devotees in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A head-on collision between a passenger bus and a truck killed three home-bound devotees of Biswa Ijtema and injured 15 others on Dhaka-Bogra highway at Jatpur at Raiganj in the district early yesterday.

The injured were rushed to Bogra Shaheen Zia Medical College Hospital where Quddus, Shariful and Dilip succumbed to their injuries in the evening.

The dead were identified as Abdul Quddus, 50, Shariful

mission has already held talks with the government about the responsibilities of upazila chairmen and vice chairmen if they become self-reliant in financing their budget," Muzaffar said.

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The renowned economist also suggested that the government provide computer training to upazila chairmen and vice chairmen to enable them to help establish digital Bangladesh.

Local Government Commission Member Hedayat Islam said the com-

mission has already held talks with the government about the responsibilities of upazila chairmen and vice chairmen if they become self-reliant in financing their budget," Muzaffar said.

In addition to the Philanthropic Roundtable, Prof Yunus was a lead speaker at an especially organised panel entitled 'Restoring Growth through Social Business'.

"Those who had billions and have lost half of it, still have the other half. Their lifestyles will not change. But the real impact will be on the people at the bottom," said Yunus, who was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his efforts to lift people out of extreme poverty.

Bill Clinton also echoed his views during the roundtable saying, "The economic stimulus packages should be aimed at the poorest in society."

He also urged the world's rich nations to spend more on supporting projects in the developing world even though

they own wealth has been hit.

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During this session, moderated by Kishore Mah