

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.

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.

However, India is pursuing a proposal for setting up a joint anti-terror mechanism. The issue of combating terrorism will be discussed during Richard Boucher's 3-day visit from February 8 and Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's day long visit on February 9.

Though there is a difference of structure of formation of the anti-terror taskforce with India, but the issue will be discussed prominently during the visits of USA and Indian dignitaries, as they will be travelling at the same.

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

Lieutenant General David Fridovich, US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Brigadier General Michael R. Boera, US Pacific Command (PACOM) will visit Dhaka to strengthen bilateral and regional security cooperation.

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.

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 were 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 Itihas' (History of the Liberation War) was published from Pratiti publications while Afsar Brothers published Humayun Ahmed's 'Priyopadokha'.

Some stalls were seen still under preparation while a few had 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 Shahed 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 Jaiyoti Jiboner Jalorekha' by Mohammad Golam Robbani, 'Jago Sobai'

Gano Bektito, 'Nagonno Bektito Morzadar Rajniti' by Dr Robert W. Fuller, 'Purbo Banglar Uppanesh 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.

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 for 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 (NBBS) 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.

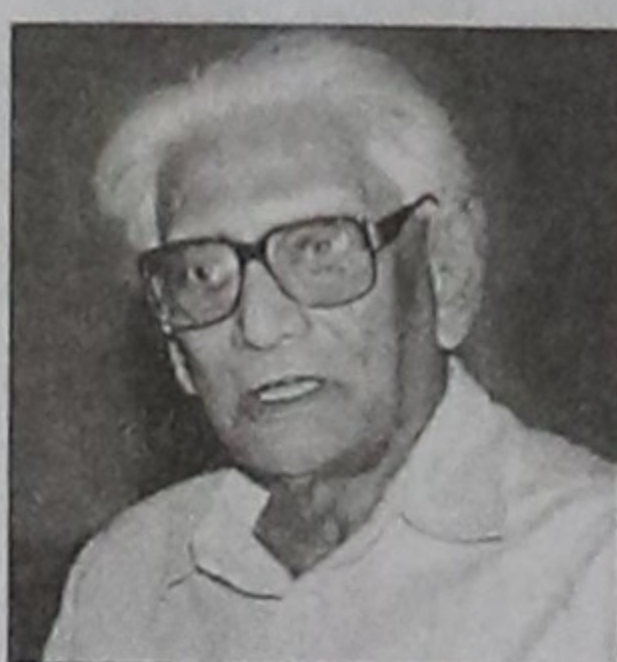
Besides, if the dredging is carried out regularly, the damage caused by floods every year would also be reduced significantly, he added.

The state minister said it is not possible for the government alone to solve the problem, and as such all the organisations concerned should come forward to create awareness about the issue.

Engineer M Inamul Haque, former director general of Water Resources Planning Organisation (Warpo), Dr MA Taher Khandaker, director general of Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, and Dr Akhtarul Islam, a professor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, presented separate keynote papers at the seminar.

In their papers, Engineer Inamul stressed the need for a strong water use act along with increasing mass awareness about preserving wetlands and ecosystem while Dr Akhtarul suggested increasing local expertise for resolving the water-sharing problems.

Noted economist Prof Abul Barakat and NBBS President Muhammad Shariful Islam also spoke on the occasion.



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 Narsingdi.

The programmes include placing wreaths at his grave, Qurankhwan, 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 (Ducus). 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 Narsingdi-2 constituency in 1986. Gonotantri Party was formed under his leadership and he was its president until his death in 2003.

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 Gonotantri 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 Gonotantri Party acting President Afzal Hossain, Azizul Islam Khan, Nurur Rahman Selim, Mahmudur Rahman Babu and Sharafat Ali Hira.

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 this 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-

Central water treatment plant at CEPZ soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A central water treatment plant will be established soon at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) to reduce water crisis.

An agreement was signed in this regard between Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and D-Water Tech Ltd, a local company, at BEPZA Complex in the city yesterday.

With the assistance of Prime Bank Ltd the plant with a capacity to purify 35 lakh gallons of water will be set up within 15 months, the authorities said.

BEPZA Chairman Brig Gen Jamil Ahmed Khan, BEPZA Member Prashanta Bhushan Barua, D-Water Tech Ltd Chairman Aminul Islam Joarder, Managing Director Maj Gen Jamil D Ahsan, and Director Mohasinul Kabir were present at the agreement signing ceremony.

US military team visits BIPSS office

METRO DESK

Lieutenant General (ret'd) Ed Smith, a former US military official and director of Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (APCSS), yesterday visited Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), says a press release.

General Smith was accompanied by Lt Col Brian Nelson, director, Strategic Initiatives Group, APCSS and Major Mark L. Pralat of the US Embassy in Dhaka.

During the meeting they exchanged views with the BIPSS research team.

Smith also gave an update to the BIPSS President Maj Gen (ret'd) ANM Muniruzzaman on the various APCSS programmes and opportunities.

Earlier, Muniruzzaman briefed the APCSS team on security challenges facing Bangladesh and ways to face the challenges.



Dry weather may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather may continue in the country in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning. Mild cold wave may occur over Rajshahi division and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Tangail, Mymensingh and Srimongal, Met Office said.

Night temperature may fall by 1-2 degrees Celsius over the country.

Highest temperature 29.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 7.4 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:46pm today and rises at 6:38am 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	27.1	12.2	49	40
Chittagong	27.2	15.0	68	32
Rajshahi	25.5	10.0	90	58
Khulna	27.0	14.5	56	62
Barisal	26.7	11.6	69	65
Sylhet	27.3	12.5	87	56
Cox's Bazar	29.0	17.0	53	55

Yunus for bailout package for poor

FROM PAGE 16

Prof Yunus, also founder and managing director of Grameen Bank, underlined that the crisis increased the need for special attention to the poor and the rich still had plenty of money.

"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

their own wealth has been hit.

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

During this session, moderated by Kishore Mahbubani of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Singapore, panelists discussed the great prospect of social business, non-loss, non-dividend companies, to address social goals ranging from improved nutrition, provision of safe drinking water, information technology for the poor and others.

They also discussed the on-the-ground experience of social businesses already being operated in Bangladesh by Grameen.

Panelist Franck Riboud, chairman and CEO of French

dairy giant Danone, which has partnered with Grameen in a social business, said that all CEOs would now have to reinvent what business means in light of what is happening, and social business is a way forward for this.

In Davos from January 29 to February 1, Prof Yunus held discussions with business leaders, philanthropists, including Bill and Melinda Gates, heads of UN agencies on joint-venture collaborations in social business to address some of the world's most pressing problems, particularly healthcare for the poor.

He finalised the joint venture agreement to set up production plant in Bangladesh to produce nutrition supplement and treated mosquito nets, with Dr Humbrecht, CEO of BASE, a giant German company.

16 more upazila results may be suspended

FROM PAGE 1

Election Commissioner Sohul said if the allegations of irregularities are found to have authenticity, the election results of those upazilas will be suspended and judicial enquiry will be launched.

In line with the EC's decision, its secretary on last Thursday wrote to the law ministry to take necessary steps in consultation with the Supreme Court to form judicial enquiry committees with district judges to investigate the matters, commission secretariats sources said.

EC Secretariat officials have so far listed 13 upazilas whose election results are not in the process for publication in official gazettes at this moment.

The upazilas include Muladi of Barisal, Raypur of Laxmipur, Nandail of Mymensingh, Daudkandi, Choudhagram and Langolkot of Comilla, Fatikchhari of Chittagong, Pakundia of Kishoreganj, Madarganj of Jamalpur, Atpara of Netrokona, Gaibandha sadar and Saghata of Gaibandha, and Ajemriganj of Habiganj, according to EC secretariat sources.

the manoeuvring in the crucial local body polls.

Awami League-backed candidates won in over 300 out of 475 upazilas where polls were held.

After receiving specific allegations, the EC suspended election results of seven upazilas -- Banchharampur of Brahmanbaria, Araihaar of Narayanganj, Teknaf of Cox's Bazar, Kaliganj of Gazipur, Mehendiganj of Barisal, Muradnagar of Comilla, Raipura of Narsingdi.

Earlier, the EC on the eve of polling and on the election day suspended election to seven upazila parishes following capture of polling stations and intimidation of voters.

The seven upazilas are -- Brahmanbaria sadar, Barura of Comilla, Belkuchi of Sirajganj, Ramganj of Laxmipur, Dighinala of Khagrachhari and Ukhia of Cox's Bazar.

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, Shahadatullah Jewel, Rafiqul Islam alias Rafiq, Abu Taher and Maulana Tajuddin.



Manik's death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Saifuddin 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-committee 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 Yousuf Ali and Treasurer: Md Humayun Kabir.

JU admission tests begin today

AJU 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 Williams, 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 find 02-9891314, 9862774, 9880142, and 9886383 for details.