

Dhaka should be Obama's 1st destination in Muslim world

Says US researcher

BSS, Dhaka
Dhaka should be Barack Obama's first destination among Muslim countries, says Lisa Curtis, senior research fellow of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington.

Muslim countries. According to Curtis, economic option in Bangladesh now seems brighter than earlier. She hoped there will be more tolerance among the political parties to work together for the people of Bangladesh.

much investor friendly than other countries in the region. Kabir also urged the US companies to take advantage of the investment opportunities in Bangladesh.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over a special meeting of cabinet at the Cabinet Division conference room of the Secretariat in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Tight security for smooth observance of Amar Ekushey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 7000 police and 800 members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) would be deployed in and around the Central Shaheed Minar in the city for smooth observance of Amar Ekushey February.

crucial issue in forming a modern and digital Bangladesh as per the government's election pledge. It is also a big challenge," he said.

When asked whether there are any security fears during the programmes of International Mother Language Day, the state minister said such incidents may take place at any moment, not only on the day of February 21.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Naveem Ahmed. Meanwhile, Dhaka University (DU) authorities have formed a coordination committee for smooth observance of the International Mother Language Day.

Indian FM to open rehab model project for Sidr-hit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukharjee is expected to inaugurate the final rehabilitation model project of 11 Sidr-hit villages of Bagerhat during his brief official visit to Bangladesh on February 9.

Deputy Commissioner of Bagerhat Aparup Choudhury yesterday said he did not get any official instruction yet about the Indian foreign minister's visit to Sharankhola and Morelganj.

While visiting the Sidr-hit villages of Bagerhat in December 2007, Pranab Mukherjee announced his government's decision to undertake the rehabilitation project for the villages ravaged by the cyclonic storm.

Sources said a plan was developed to rebuild the villages as per a model by a consultant engineering firm appointed by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

The model plan includes construction of 1600 new houses, a multi-purpose cyclone shelter, distribution of solar energy units and arrangement for safe water supply.

India has allocated 34 crore 30 lakh rupees for full implementation of the project which may further increase, if necessary.

'Raise awareness about AIDS'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called on Sandhani to increase its awareness building programmes for blood and eye donation in order to protect people from AIDS.

The central council of Sandhani organised the seminar on 'Prevention of AIDS, role of youth and Sandhani' at the National Press Club in the city to mark its 32nd anniversary.

Quoting UNAIDS and WHO statistics of 2005, advisor of Sandhani central council Dr Mani Lal Aich Litu said

around 11,000 to 13,000 people in the country are living with HIV and AIDS. Overall prevalence was 0.6 percent in 2004-05. HIV prevalence among injectable drug users is already 4 percent and Bangladesh is at a very high risk zone due to the neighbouring country, he added.

2 Bangladeshis shot dead in Michigan

ENA/NEWS World from Michigan

At least two Bangladeshis were shot dead in Michigan in the United States on Tuesday and Wednesday night.

ENA says, a Bangladeshi identified as Abdur Rahman, 46, was shot dead by the miscreants at Hamtronics city in Michigan on February 3 night.

A Hamtronics police detective said miscreants fired two shots on Rahman.

Police detective Mike said rescue workers rushed Rahman to nearby Detroit Receiving Hospital in critical condition where he succumbed to his injuries. Rahman will be buried in Michigan.

Former president of Jalalabad Association in Michigan Syed Shahedul Haq told news agency ENA that Abdur Rahman was living in the Hamtronics city along with his wife and three sons. Rahman went to the USA in 1991 and had been working at a downtown restaurant.

News World from Michigan adds: A Bangladeshi identified as Rafiqul Islam was shot dead by a gang of miscreants at Michigan on Wednesday night. Rafiqul Islam, only earning member of the family, was the resident of Hamtronics city in Michigan.

Biharis demand rehabilitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bihari community yesterday called on the government to take initiatives for proper rehabilitation of their community as they were granted citizenship last year.

They also urged the government not to evict the Biharis from the camps unless they are properly rehabilitated.

At a press conference in the city, the Urdu-Speaking People's Youth Rehabilitation Movement (USPYRM) also placed a six-point demand, including establishment of schools for Bihari children, special employment quota for them and renovation of dilapidated buildings in Wapda Bihari colony at Mirpur.

USPYRM President Sadakat Khan said the government must take necessary initiatives to help Biharis, also known as stranded Pakistanis, integrate into the mainstream society.

"Having been stateless for more than 37 years made the Bihari a marginalised community in Bangladesh, as we did not have access to the basic rights," he said.

"We could not own property as we did not have citizenship rights. We had very little access to resources and employment. Proper schooling and healthcare facilities are still absent in our camps. Starting all over again without any skills or resources is very hard for us," explained Khan.

The leaders also urged the

United Nations, donor countries and international organisations to assist Bangladesh government in rehabilitating the Urdu-speaking community. They said the Biharis should be rehabilitated in the area they are now living in so that they can continue in their traditional profession. Moving somewhere else would disconnect them from the only work they know, they added.

Majority of the Biharis are engaged in producing 'Benarasi' sari and in 'Karchupi' work.

There are around three lakh Biharis in Bangladesh. Of them, around 1.6 lakh are living in 166 camps across the country, according to a survey of UNHCR.

Chehlum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Chehlum of Md Harunur Rashid Punu Mia, a retired accountant of Agriculture Research Institute, will be held at his village home at Delua under Kaliganj upazila in Gazipur after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Rashid passed away due to cardiac arrest on December 3 at his residence at Agriculture Research Institute quarters in Gazipur.

Dhaka urged to be member of Arbitration Court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of International Permanent Court of Arbitration Christian MJ Kroner yesterday urged Bangladesh to become a member of the court.

Kroner made the proposal when he paid a courtesy call on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud at the foreign ministry in the morning.

He said he has come to Dhaka to request Bangladesh to become a member of the court.

Kroner said least developed countries do not have to donate to the fund of the court.

The secretary general said the court maintains a fund with the assistance of the developed and rich countries for settling disputes and developing countries like Bangladesh may get assistance from the fund.

He said the 110-year-old organisation has settled many disputes between countries using modern technique.

RENEWAL OF TRADE TREATY WITH INDIA Come to parliament and give suggestions

Commerce minister asks BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday called on BNP to come to parliament and give suggestions on how to use the bilateral trade agreement with India without undermining the national interests.

"It is a matter of regret that BNP is now opposing the renewal of Bangladesh-India trade agreement although they first signed it and renewed it in 2006," he told reporters after a view exchange meeting with the representatives of Bangladesh Grey and Finished Fabrics Mills and Exporters Association (BGFMEA) at the conference room of his ministry.

Unlike the previous BNP-Jamaat government who used trade and commerce as a political weapon, the present government would use them as a tool for development, the minister said.

Referring to BNP's threat to launch agitation against the renewal of the agreement, the commerce minister said the BNP wants the country to lag behind in the competitive world market.

He said the BNP-Jamaat government had renewed the agreement in 2006 secretly without the approval of the cabinet. "But this time it will be discussed in parliament to make the people aware of it."

At the view exchange meet-

ing, BGFMEA President Md Harun-ur-Rashid placed several demands, including lowering the interest rate of bank loans and providing financial assistance for the businessmen.

The commerce minister also sought cooperation from them in building a prosperous country.

He also assured them of taking necessary measures to resolve their problems and said that the government is planning to provide financial assistance.

The commerce minister also hoped that the prices of essentials would come down if the businessmen cooperate with the government.

Corrupt, Jamaat downed BNP

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discussions at the party's headquarters in Naya Paltan. Apart from airing their views on what led to the polls debacle, they briefed the central leaders about organisational state of their units.

A meeting source quoted Ashraf Ali, president of Mirzaganj upazila BNP in Patuakhali, as saying, "Teaming up with Jamaat was the main reason why we fared badly in the election. People did not take our ties to war criminals positively."

At the talks between the panel for Rajshahi division and Pabna district leaders, Mahbub Moshed Jyoti, president of Sathia BNP, said the party suffered the humiliating defeat because of Jamaat.

Some leaders of Patuakhali demanded that the high-command dissolve immediately the district committee led by former home minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury. They said they lost four seats due to failure of this committee.

"We got drubbing in the

polls because of the bitter wrangle between Altaf Chowdhury and his general secretary," Kazi Mahbub, president of sadar upazila BNP, was quoted as saying by a participant.

Mahbub also asked the central body to form a new committee by ballot.

After the meetings, Kalapara BNP President ABM Mosharraf Hossain told The Daily Star that they have suggested that the high-command arrange for fresh committees to be set up through vote at all levels of the organisation.

Abdus Samad Montu, president of Pabna sadar upazila BNP told this correspondent that weak organisational base was the key reason for dismal election performance. He said the leadership should also hear the ward- and union-level leaders for proper assessment of the grassroots conditions.

Bera upazila BNP General Secretary Raisuddin said former lawmaker Selim Reza

Habib is to blame for the internal conflict in local BNP and the polls disaster. "The party should purge itself of all controversial leaders through councils," he told The Daily Star.

A leader from Moulvibazar district said activities of former finance minister Saifur Rahman and his son Naser Rahman brought on the election defeat. "Some close aides to Saifur including his son diminished the party's polls prospects by amassing wealth through abuse of power," he said requesting anonymity.

Asked about discussions with the central team, Advocate Abdur Rahman, president of Sarail upazila BNP (Brahmanbaria district), told The Daily Star, "We've asked the central leaders to reorganise the party so we can get over the internal problems soon."

Besides, he said, as the caretaker government did not play a neutral role, their party could not work freely in the lead-up to the election.

Dutch envoy meets PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said all problems of the country would be solved if people could be inspired to stand confident and united.

She told the Dutch envoy in Bangladesh that her government would work together with the people of all walks of life to free the nation from all crises.

She was talking to the Dutch Ambassador, Berendina Maria (Bea) ten Tusscher, when she called on her at the PM office and discussed matters of bilateral interest of Bangladesh and the Netherlands.

The ambassador formally handed over the letter of felicitation from the Dutch prime minister to Hasina on assumption of her office as prime minister.

The PM and the Ambassador had a discussion on Bangladesh Water Development Board. They recalled the technical assistance agreement on water resources signed between Bangladesh and the Netherlands in 1973.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the fifth death anniversary of Dr ABM Mafizul Islam Patwari, former

professor of Dhaka University law department and founder of Dhaka International University, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residences at Devi Chowdhurani and Maniram in Rangpur.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Nazia Begum, mother of Nazmul Haque Sarkar, city editor of the Bangla Bazar Patrika, will be held at her village home Boraganj in Domar, Nilphamari today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil and Qurankhwani will be held.

Nazia passed away due to old age complications at her village home on November 27 at the age of 70.

She left behind her four sons and two daughters.

Maleka Samad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Maleka Samad, sister of Probe News Magazine Chief Editor Irtiza Nasim Ali and wife of former PWD engineer Rezaul Karim Chowdhury (Khasru), will be held at her Dhanmondi residence in the city after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

DHAKA TODAY

Film show

Mosabir Cancer Care Centre, Dhaka will screen a documentary on cancer followed by a musical soiree. Venue: Biam auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Reunion

The first reunion of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Dhaka University will be held. Venue: Curzon Hall. Time: 9:00am.

Book launch

The launching ceremony of the book titled 'Moromi literature in Bangladesh and Syed Ahmadul Haq's works on Rumi' authored by Mohammad Bahauddin, a lecturer of Persian language and literature department of Dhaka University, will be held. Venue: Nabab Nowab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Experience sharing programme

North Alpine Club Bangladesh (NACB) organises an experience sharing programme on its stride of Mount Everest and Mount Langsira Ri expedition. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Flute recital

Rotary Club of Dhaka Premier organises a flute recital by Ustad Azizul Islam. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 6:30pm.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra's book reading programme will begin. Venue: Ramna Batamul. Time: 9:30am.

Drawing contest

Ain O Salish Kendra organises a drawing contest for the underprivileged children to mark the International Mother Language Day. Venue: Fine Art Institute. Time: 10:00am.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather is likely to continue over the country in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country during late night till morning, Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 30.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 09.8 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:48pm today and rises at 6:37am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius, Humidity in percentage, Morning, Evening. Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

NOISE POLLUTION

Cases against 17 vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) filed cases against 17 vehicles, including buses and private cars, in the city during a drive against noise pollution yesterday.

The cases were filed during the drives in Dhanmondi and Sat Masjid Road area.

A team led by DoE Deputy Director Dr Mostafa Kamal Faruk conducted the drives where Executive Magistrate Md Abdul Samad, DMP police and BRTC officials were present.

The drives were aimed at creating awareness among the drivers and its passengers of the bad effect of noise pollution.

The anti-noise pollution team also realised Tk 9,900 and seized hydraulic horns from eight vehicles.

ACC for working ties with govt

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hope such process will continue in future," he said. Pointing out Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent assurance of cooperation in fighting against corruption, he said ACC will continue discussions with the government highlighting its advantages and disadvantages.

About the lawmaker's comments on publishing information about corruption by the press, Hasan Mashud said the information about the corruption can be discussed if it does not work against the commission's security. If the information dissemination process is stopped, transparency of the commission cannot be maintained, he added.

Replying to a query on the wish of prime minister to reconstitute the ACC, he said, it will not be decent for him to make any comment on the prime minister's statement.

"I will never agree to the statement that the commission

has carried out its activities after being politically motivated. There is no reason to think that there was any political motivation in pursuing the fight against corruption," he said while replying to another query.

About his resignation, the ACC boss said this is not the moment to take such decision keeping the commission's role questioned adding "I don't think there is any reason to take any decision suddenly at the moment getting excited."

Regarding the two-member committee formed to scrutinize the allegation against him involving money laundering, Hasan Mashud said, "I think, work of the committee is not being hampered anyway. They are working independently as per directives of the government."

He added that he is one of members of the committee and the other commissioners are not subordinate to him, so there is no chance of influencing the work of the committee.

He declined to comment on the prime minister's statement about ACC in parliament but said the commission's activities were not politically motivated.

"I hope the government will take initiative considering our problems and ongoing fight against corruption will continue as it carried out in the last two years," he said during a routine press briefing at ACC headquarters yesterday afternoon.

The ACC chief said they are still committed to the policy, which are dealing with the corruption cases based on evidences and facts and hoped that it will continue such efforts in future in cooperation with the government as pledged by the prime minister.

"The commission design its graft cases based on the evidences and facts and court also has pronounced verdict in the cases based on the same way. I