

Recruit more manpower from Bangladesh

Hasina urges Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei

UNB, Port of Spain

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina requested the governments of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei to recruit more manpower from Bangladesh and provide the Bangladeshi expatriates in the Asean countries with maximum facilities.

She made the request when she had bilateral talks separately with Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong and Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah in the meeting rooms of Hotel Hyatt Regency Trinidad on Saturday on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2009.

Briefing newsmen after the talks, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said Hasina urged these three countries to import leather, pharmaceuticals and ceramic products from Bangladesh.

"These high-quality products are of international stan-

dards," the PM said while making the request.

She further called for investment from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei in large volumes in Bangladesh. Hasina laid emphasis on boosting Bangladesh's bilateral trade and business with Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei for national and regional development.

In reply, the two PMs and the crown prince assured her of their government's continued assistance and cooperation with Bangladesh to help the country achieve its development objectives.

Hasina was highly praised in the meetings for her voice in the international forums regarding vulnerability of underdeveloped and developing countries, including Bangladesh, to the perils of global warming and climate change.

The PMs of Malaysia and Singapore and the crown prince of Brunei said Hasina with her strong and effective statements in the recent international summits successfully

made the global leaders understand well the devastating impacts of the global climate change on the Bangladesh-like countries.

Hasina, in reply, renewed her call for coordinated efforts by the international community to protect the Most Vulnerable Countries (MVC) from the climate threats.

She also called for providing separate climate adaptation funds for the MVCs.

Hasina categorically said climate change needs to be faced strongly with international efforts as it has serious negative impact on food production.

"Unless we can face the challenges of the climate change successfully, attaining universal food security will remain a far cry," she said.

During her talks with the Singapore Prime Minister, she requested him to ease visa-processing system for the Bangladeshis, particularly for students, and providing them long-term visas.

All the three leaders appreciated the performances of

Bangladeshi workers and students, saying that the Bangladeshi overseas workers and students are "disciplined", abiding by the rules and regulations of the respective countries of residence.

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni and Ambassador-at-large M Ziauddin were present at the meetings.

Malaysia's state news agency, Bernama says: Malaysia has turned down Bangladesh's request to lift the freeze on hiring its immigrant workers because of concerns that workers are being exploited by agencies.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made the request to Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago last Saturday.

"I explained [to Sheikh Hasina] that we decided on the freeze to prevent unscrupulous agents from exploiting workers," Najib Razak told Bernama.

The decision will disappoint the 55,000 Bangladeshi workers whose work visas were cancelled in March this year.

At the time, Malaysia cited the global economic recession as the reason for the freeze.

Since the middle of 2006, approximately 4 lakh Bangladeshi workers have immigrated to Malaysia.

There have been an overwhelming number of reports alleging malpractice by brokers and agents in Malaysia.

The Malaysian prime minister also stated that many Bangladeshi workers were duped by agents into believing they would find well-paid jobs once they arrived in Malaysia.

Some of them, he added, had even sold their belongings - including livestock - to fund their journey.

"This is the kind of deception we want to prevent," said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Many of the Bangladeshis who are currently waiting for work visas have already paid large handling fees to brokers and agents.



PHOTO: STAR

Eid holidays are over but many government employees are yet to join their offices. This photo was taken inside the secretariat in the city yesterday, the first working day after Eid holidays.

Cox's Bazar tourists allege rip-offs

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The world's longest unbroken beach, Cox's Bazar, is abuzz with tourists, with hoteliers taking full advantage of high demand for accommodation during the Eid holidays.

Hundreds flock to the spot to bask in the sunshine, bathe in the sea, visit fountains and hill caves and go boating. People from across the country come to Cox's Bazar in small and large groups.

Hoteliers hope the high tourist inflow will continue until December 16, Victory Day.

But allegations of rip-offs abound.

No rooms are available in any of the 250 hotels, motels and guesthouses in the town, said Abul Kasem Sikder, general secretary of Cox's Bazar Hotel, Motel and Guesthouse Owners' Association.

Failing to find accommodation in Cox's Bazar, many tourists are going to Teknaf, St Martin's and other places of the district instead.

A businessman who came to Cox's Bazar with his

family from Sutrapur in Dhaka said after hours of searching for a room in more than 40 hotels, he found a room but had to pay four times the normal rent.

Some other tourists also alleged hoteliers are charging Tk 800 to Tk 900 for a room that is worth Tk 200, cashing in on the rush of holidaymakers. They said administrators are not monitoring the situation.

According to a list of room charges submitted to the tax department in Cox's Bazar, Urme Guest House has stated that it is charging Tk 200 for a single room, Tk 300 for a double room.

Sea Hill showed that it is charging Tk 1,050 for a single and Tk 1,250 for a double room. St Martin's Resort showed a single room at Tk 500, a double bedroom at Tk 600 and a room with three beds at Tk 650. Bay Beach Guest House showed a single room at Tk 150 and a double room at Tk 250, while Diamond Palace showed a single room at Tk 800 and a double room at Tk 900.

The owners of hotels and

guesthouses pay revenues to the government on the basis of charges stated on this list. In reality, they are charging from Tk 2,000 to Tk 5,000 from tourists, which is eight to nine times the listed fares. Receipts are not provided to guests for room rents upon checkout either.

Hoteliers will be driven off business if they follow fixed room charges, said a top official of the hotel and guesthouse owners' association, asking not to be named.

Sikder said a decision has been taken to hang the room rates outside the hotels, motels and guesthouses.

Deputy Commissioner Md Gias Uddin Ahmed said the hotel owners had been warned about charging high hotel fares. Several magistrates are investigating the matter.

Superintendent of Police Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain said additional police have been deployed in different areas to minimise harassment and tourist sufferings. They are also investigating the allegations.

Dr Milon's 19th death anniversary observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and workers of different political parties and socio-cultural organisations paid rich tributes to Shaheed Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon on the occasion of his 19th death anniversary yesterday.

On this day in 1990, the armed cadres of the then autocratic ruler HM Ershad killed Dr Milon, joint secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association, near the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) on Dhaka University campus to foil an imminent mass upsurge.

Different political and socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at the monument of Dr Milon near the TSC.

Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers' Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Gonotantrik Bam Morcha, Gono Sanghati Andolon and other organisations also observed the day.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote and Jai Bangla Sangskritik Jote also observed the day through different programmes.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a meeting with Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong on Saturday on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Port of Spain.

Death toll rises to 76

FROM PAGE 1

Deputy Commissioner of Bhola Mesbahul Islam told The Daily Star, "Now I can't give you the exact number of the people who were on board. But I think the launch was carrying passengers three times higher than its capacity."

RESCUE OPERATION
Police, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), and Fire Brigade and Civil Defence teams are carrying out the search and rescue operation.

Divers were scanning the riverbank, but locals said the search could not get off to a full start because of rushing currents and swirling waters.

A bigger salvage rescue vessel of BIWTA, tug vessel Hamza took more than 24 hours to arrive at the scene at 11:00am on Sunday, setting off from bordering district Barisal the previous morning.

Officials said the river is low

at this time of year, which caused poor navigability. Salvage vessel MV Hamza, erected the capsized launch allowing rescue workers to better reach the hull. Some smaller boats are also in the operation.

RELATIVES' AGONY
Thousands of people watched the salvage operation as divers brought out bodies one after another from the sunken vessel.

"It's like torture standing here watching each body being brought out, wondering if it's them," said Kabir whose brother and nephew were on the launch.

"I just want his body," said another woman, Halima, wailing loudly clutching two baby sons. "Oh Allah, help us find my husband."

A distraught man, Mahfuz, surrounded by wailing relatives, said his cousin Sabuj was among the rescued bodies. "We just thank God that his body has been found and we

can bury him," he said.

"We've finally found our uncle," said Faruq Ahmed. "He was a crew member. We knew it was him, because he was wearing his favourite shirt."

MINISTER'S VISIT
Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan and officials of BIWTA visited the spot Saturday afternoon.

"Before retrieving all the bodies, we can't say anything about the number of dead," the minister said. "It will take two to three more days to get the accurate casualty figure," he added.

He however said the families of the dead and the injured will be compensated, but he would not say anything about the missing.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Abdul Karim also visited the site yesterday afternoon and assured family members of the victims all out cooperation from the government.

Hearing on defamation case against Amar Desh editor Feb 14

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed February 14 as the date for hearing on a defamation case filed against the acting editor, publisher, chief reporter and a reporter of the daily Amar Desh by Bangladesh Telecomunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The accused are Acting Editor Mahmudur Rahman, Publisher Alhaj Md Hasmat Ali, Chief Reporter Syed Abdal Ahmed and Reporter Oliullah Noman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shahadat Hossain set the date after the complainant appeared before it yesterday.

On October 28, BTRC Deputy Director Tarek Hassan Siddiqui filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against the four accused on charges of publishing defamatory reports and cartoon on October 2, 3 and 8 issues of the newspaper.

The same day the court issued summons asking the accused to appear before it yesterday (November 30).

However, the accused are yet to receive the summons.

Meanwhile, the High Court granted a four-month anticipatory bail to the accused on November 11 and asked the government to explain why the accused would not be granted regular bail.

In his complaint, Tarek mentioned that the accused had published two reports titled 'Bharatiya Kabjai BTRC' and 'BTRC Bharatiya Nagorik Nigoye Bishistajander Udbeg: Rastriya Nirapatta Humkitye Parbe' on October 2 and 3.

The reports were false, fabricated, defamatory and politically ill-motivated, the complainant said.

The accused also published satirical cartoons on October 8 with an intention to mislead the people, create hatred against the government and incite political unrest, he added.

Eid-ul-Azha celebrated

FROM PAGE 1

To commemorate Hazrat Ibrahim's devotion to almighty Allah illustrated by his readiness to sacrifice his dearest son Hazrat Ismail, able Muslims sacrificed animals of their best choice.

Ordained by Almighty Allah to sacrifice his eldest son, Hazrat Ibrahim arranged everything to execute His order at Mina near Makkah. Satisfied with his sincere willingness, Allah ordered Ibrahim to sacrifice an animal instead.

Muslims around the globe sacrifice animals on the 10th day of the month of Jilhaj marking the event that depicts the highest loyalty and submission to the Almighty.

The main Eid congregation was held at the National Eidgah at 9:00am. Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Prof Maulana Salahuddin Ahmed conducted the prayers.

The Islamic Foundation also arranged five Eid congregations at Baitul Mukarram mosque at 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, 11:00am and 11:45am. Dhaka City Corporation organised over 350 Eid congregations across the city.

Eid congregation was held for the first time at the south plaza of Parliament. Speaker Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister's Adviser Alauddin Ahmed, Whip Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury and parliament members offered Eid prayers at the new venue.

Eid congregations were also held at different mosques and eidgahs in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country, with the biggest one taking place at Sholakra Maidan in Kishoreganj.

On the occasion, national leaders issued messages calling upon the people to imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and work in amity for building a happy society for all.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader of the Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia issued separate messages.

Marking the festival, main streets and road islands were decorated with miniature national flags and banners inscribed with 'Eid Mubarak'.

A three-day government holiday for Eid-ul-Azha began Friday. Newspaper offices also remained closed on these days.

President Zillur Rahman, ministers, Dhaka City Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, VIPs, foreign diplomats, and senior military and civil officials offered Eid prayers at the National Eidgah.

A special munajat (prayer) for peace and prosperity of the country as well as welfare of the people and greater unity of the Muslim Ummah was offered at the main congregation.

Government and political leaders hosted receptions for dignitaries, elite and cross-sections of people on the occasion.

President Zillur Rahman hosted a reception for diplomats and the elite of the city at Bangabhaban.

The state-run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television (BTV) and private TV channels have arranged special programmes on the occasion.

Special meals were served at jails, orphanages, vagrant centres and dormitories on the day.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad and Mohanagar Sarbojoni Puja Committee also greeted people on the occasion.

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