



Forum for Planned Chittagong forms a human chain at Fisherighat Ring Road in Chittagong yesterday protesting construction of an unplanned market along the Karnaphuli riverbank. (Story on Page 5)

GEN MUBEEN IN INDIA Further ties between 2 armies discussed

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Visiting Chief of Staff of Bangladesh Army Gen Abdul Mubeen called on Defence Minister of India AK Antony at South Block here yesterday. They discussed issues of mutual interests, South Asian security situation and future areas of cooperation between the armed forces of the two neighbouring countries, defence ministry officials said.
Gen Mubeen met his Indian counterpart Gen Deepak Kapoor two days ago.
Earlier on the day, the Bangladesh army chief visited Leh in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir state.
In Leh, he was briefed by 14 Corps Commander Lt Gen SK Singh about the deployment of Indian armed forces in high altitude areas, their operational characteristics and the terrain there.
However, Gen Mubeen's planned visit to the Siachen Glacier could not take place due to bad weather.

weather.

In Leh, the general, who was accompanied by his wife Begum Syeda Sarifa Khanam and a delegation of four army officers, was received by General Officer Commanding of 14 Corps Lt Gen SK Singh, said an Indian defence ministry spokesperson.
He also visited Shanti Stupa, an iconic landmark in Leh town, where he interacted with Head Lama, Buddhist monk, who briefed him on the rich cultural heritage of the region and presented traditional Buddhist scarves to the delegation.
"The visit to Leh has played a significant role in promoting and strengthening the bonds of friendship, mutual trust and confidence between the two armies as well as the nations," the spokesperson added.
The Bangladesh army chief will also visit key military training establishments and field formations in Jaipur, Ajmer and Kolkata.

ACCOMMODATION CRISIS AT SM HALL Students go berserk

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Salimullah Muslim (SM) Hall of Dhaka University ransacked the room of hall provost and set fire to furniture of guest as well as TV rooms yesterday, as their problems, including accommodation crisis, were not solved yet.
Witnesses said over a hundred aggrieved resident students gathered in front of the provost's office with a procession around 11:00am.
As the provost was not present, they ransacked door and windows of his room and some furniture of guest and TV rooms. They also set fire to some tables, chairs and sofas.
Later, the students brought out another procession and chanted slogans against Provost GM Chowdhury for his 'failure' to reduce their sufferings.
Though SM Hall is the oldest dormitory of the university, its students have been suffering from a number of crises for long, they added.
Four extension buildings at the hall

were allocated for teachers and staffs, though several hundred students have been passing days on the hall corridors years after years, they claimed.

Some students further said that the condition of water at the hall is worse than the water supplied by Wasa for its bad odour.
There is a huge scarcity of books at the hall library, shortage of chairs at the reading rooms and infestation of bugs have made the lives of the students miserable.

They also claimed that the television of the dormitory often goes wrong and the drainage system is too poor.

The agitating students said they requested GM Chowdhury several times to solve the problems, but he did not take any steps in this connection.
About the students' demands, the provost said, "Students had raised some problems on which we are still working. But there are some problems which we cannot solve due to some limitations."

Dhaka to seek

FROM PAGE 1
factory in Fenchuganj.

Hasina will hold official talks with the Chinese premier tomorrow at the Great Hall where she will be given a formal reception. The next day Hasina will hold a meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues.
Hasina will also meet the Chairman of China's National People's Congress. On her way back Hasina will fly to Kunming to see for herself the proposed Chittagong-Kunming road and railway links.

Construction of a regional highway by linking Kunming with Chittagong via Myanmar will get priority during the visit. Aiming to establish the connectivity, Bangladesh has already constructed a road up to Gundum border.

Three agreements are expected to be signed between the two countries during the trip. The agreements are: Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, Framework Agreement on Shahjalal Fertiliser Factory and Agreement on Seventh Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge.

Sources in the prime minister's office said Bangladesh would seek Chinese support to resolve bilateral issues with Myanmar like settling maritime boundary and Rohingya repatriation.

Dhaka may request Beijing to help Bangladesh build the planned deep-sea port. Purchase of military hardware from China may also come up in the discussion, they hinted.

They said Bangladesh might also place some specific proposals, including increasing investment in Bangladesh and allowing duty-free excess of more goods to Chinese market, in an attempt to reduce the existing huge trade imbalance of \$3.5 billion.

The high-profile visit is considered as a very significant step in boosting economic ties between the two countries.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Dipankar Talukdar will be in the 16-member official delegation. Some eminent citizens, a business delegation and AL leaders will also accompany her.

Help set up food processing units

Hasina requests Thailand

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Tuesday requested Thailand to help Bangladesh for setting up food processing industries in the country.
She made the plea when the outgoing Thai Ambassador to Dhaka Chaempol Thanchitt called on her at the prime minister's office (PMO).
Hasina said that Thailand is expert in food processing sector and their expertise could be useful for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and Thailand have friendly relations, she said, and hoped that the bilateral

relations between the two countries will be further strengthened in future.
The premier also expressed her hope that Thailand would accept more export from Bangladesh.
Hasina said she would visit Thailand at a convenient time when the Ambassador invited her to visit the country.
Press secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad briefed the reporters after the meeting.
Ambassador at large M Ziauddin, Principal Secretary MA Karim and Secretary to the PMO Molla Waheduzzaman were present.

JS body finds allegations against members baseless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on the water resources ministry has found that the allegations against some of its members of interference in the ministry's activities are baseless.

The committee came to the decision after holding a meeting yesterday.

"We discussed allegations against some members of the committee of interference and taking undue favour from the

ministry following different newspapers' reports. But we didn't find any substance," Abdur Razzaq, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the water resources ministry, told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

The parliamentary body also discussed on the rehabilitation works of the Aila-ravaged areas and formed a sub-committee to investigate reasons behind delay in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of dams and bridges in the

Aila-hit area. The sub-committee led by Jatiya Party lawmaker Ruhul Amin Hawlader was asked to come up with a report within a month.

"The sub-committee will also look into it if there is any negligence of the ministry to do the rehabilitation tasks," Razzaq said after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

He said the sub-committee will also visit the Aila-hit area to see the present situation.

Sculpture of Bangabandhu to be built at Sonargaon

BSS, Narayanganj

Bangladesh Folklore and Crafts Foundation at Sonargaon will construct a sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on its premises at an estimated cost of Tk 2 crore during the current fiscal year.

The Foundation sources said a five-member expert committee headed by artist Kaiyum Chowdhury has been formed.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jahanara Begum, wife of Ehiar Rahman, passed away at her residence at village Galimpur

Shahbad under Nababganj upazila in Dhaka district on February 25 at the age of 70, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, five sons, one daughter and admirers to mourn her death.

She was laid to rest at Galimpur Shahbad graveyard.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the eighth death anniversary of Sabrina Ahmed, former joint district judge of Comilla, says a press release.

She was killed in a road accident on her way to Comilla.

She was the daughter of late Hasibuddin Ahmed, a retired district judge of Chittagong, and sister of renowned footballer Khandaker Wasim Iqbal.

Md Saif Hossain

METRO DESK

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Md Saif Hossain, a student of Institute of Business Administration of Dhaka University who died in a road accident on this day in 2006 at the age of 23, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at House # 37, Road # 3, Dhanmondi in the city after Asr prayers.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Salimullah Muslim (SM) Hall of Dhaka University set fire to furniture of the guest as well as TV rooms of the dormitory in front of the provost's office yesterday demanding steps to ensure adequate accommodation facilities.

Tk 946cr surplus on less spending

FROM PAGE 1

of the reality, with the resoluteness of our objectives."

"As I am presenting the half-yearly progress report to the great parliament, I feel that we have been able to live up to our promises," he added.

According to the report, in the first six months of FY 2009-10 the total revenue collection was Tk 35,553 crore which was 15.7 percent higher on the corresponding period of FY 2008-09. The total revenue collection target this fiscal year is Tk 79,461 crore, which the finance minister hopes to reach in the remaining months.

He however said the government is considering shortening the list of tax exempted items, for increasing revenue collection.

For quick disposal of tax related litigations, the government is considering setting up a dedicated bench in the High Court, and introduction of alternative dispute resolution, the minister added.

Budgetary spending in the first six months of the current fiscal year was 6.1 percent lower than in the same period of the last fiscal year, according to the report.

In the July-December period of the current fiscal year, expenditure was Tk 34,607 crore out of the total budget of Tk 113,819 crore for the entire year, of which the government could spend 29 percent in the first six months.

government spent less on farm subsidy, payment of interest, food procurement, and employment programmes.

In the July-December period of the current fiscal year, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation also did not spend money on subsidy. Moreover, the additional spending due to the declaration of the new pay scale for government officials was not included in the first six months' accounting.

Development expenditure however increased in the first six months of the current fiscal year on the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

The expenditure for annual development programme increased by 42.2 percent to Tk 8,807 crore compared to the last fiscal year's corresponding period.

The size of ADP is Tk 30,500 crore for the entirety of the current fiscal year, of which the government could spend 29 percent in the first six months.

The finance minister said the progress in ADP implementation was significantly higher than other years', due to the present government's initiatives, its dedication to work, and efficient financial management.

In the first six months of the current fiscal year inflow of foreign assistance increased by 368 percent to Tk 5,161 crore, while in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year it was Tk 1,101 crore.

The finance minister in his speech described the current state of the country's macroeconomy including the export-import situation, and inflation.

Muhith said in June 2009 the point-to-point inflation was 2.3 percent, which increased to 8.5 percent in December of the same year.

Under the impacts of price hikes on the international market and due to increase in remittance flow and foreign currency reserves, the inflation showed an upward trend, he said adding, several measures were put in place including unhindered supply of commodities, to contain inflation.

Bangladesh Institute of Director Studies (BIDS) Research Director Zaid Bakht said the surplus in the budget has both good and bad sides. The good side is that the revenue earning is close to the target. The bad side however is that the government could not spend the money, he added saying, as a result the people were deprived of the benefits they could have got.

Bakht said implementation of ADP was higher than in the last year's corresponding period, but it was still only 29 percent of the government target set in the annual budget.

He also said sales of government savings instruments soared significantly, contributing to the high implementation of ADP, one of the bad sides of which is that in the future the government expenditure on account of payments of interests will go up.



PHOTO: STAR

Police intercept the leaders and activists of Jatiyatadabi Jubo Dal when they try to hold a meeting in front of the central office of BNP at Naya Palatan in the city yesterday in protest against the false cases filed against the party leaders and activists across the country.

TODAY

Conference
The concluding ceremony of a conference titled 'Microfinance regulations: Who benefits?' organised by Microcredit Regulatory Authority will be held. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 10:30am.

Seminar
Legal Education and Training Institute organises a seminar on 'Child rights and justice for children: Emerging need for a comprehensive legal framework'. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 5:00pm.

Discussion
The Destiny will hold a discussion titled 'Fiery March: The expectations of the new generation'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.