

Malaysia to ease visa rules for South Asian tourists

AFF, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia will relax visa rules for travellers from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in an effort to boost tourism, an official said yesterday.

At present visitors from the four countries need to obtain a visa before entering Malaysia, after the government in 2008 scrapped a tourist-friendly visa programme for them in a bid to curb illegal immigration.

Under the new rules, they can visit the Southeast Asian nation without a visa while transiting to another country, Tourism Malaysia director general Mirza Mohammad Taiyab told AFP.

"It will be easier for them to holiday in Malaysia with this transit pass. We hope there won't be any abuse," Mirza said, adding that the government had yet to decide how long visitors would be allowed to stay.

He said combined tourist arrivals from the four countries stood at 1.59 million last year, led by Bangladesh with 887,443 visitors.

Malaysia in 2006 introduced a visa-on-arrival scheme for visitors from 24 countries to promote tourism, one of the country's main foreign exchange earners.

Immigration officials however called for it to be scrapped after many visitors were found to have overstayed, the majority of them reportedly Indians who remained to work in restaurants and on plantations.

Malaysia recorded 7.62 million tourist arrivals between January and April this year, up from 7.34 million in the same period last year.

BEPZA CASE
HC judgment on Hasina's petition May 30

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court has set May 30 for the judgment on a petition filed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for quashing the proceedings of the case against her in connection with the appointment of a consultant to the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA).

An HC division bench fixed the date yesterday after closing the hearing on the petition.

On December 11 in 2001, during the BNP-led alliance government, the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case accusing Hasina of misusing Tk 2.1 crore by appointing a lobbyist in the United States for BEPZA during her previous tenure.

Later the case was transferred to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).



Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 21st death anniversary of Group Captain Zia Uddin Ahmed, former Base Commander (AOC) of Bangladesh Air Force, says après release.

On the occasion, a Doa mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at Mohakhali New DOHS Mosque at Dhaka Cantonment.

Colleagues and admirers are requested to attend the Doa and pray for departed soul.

Urs Mubarak

METRO DESK

The annual Urs Mubarak of Fakhrul Muhaddesin Hazrat Maulana Abdul Ghafoor (RA) will be held at 78 Shantinagar in Dhaka today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quran talawa will start at 10:30am and Doa at 12:30pm, followed by distribution of tabaruk.

Ensure triumph of humanity over fundamentalism

President tells Nazrul's birth anniversary programme

UNB, Trishal

President Zillur Rahman yesterday said dreams of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam could be fulfilled through ensuring the triumph of humanity over fundamentalism and ending oppression and deprivation along side improving conditions of the poor people.

"He (Nazrul) was a free spirit in the world of creations and the next generation got inspiration from his free thoughts," he said at a function at Darirampur High School 'Nazrul Mancha', marking the 111th birth anniversary of the rebel poet.

LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam was the special guest at the function, organised by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promod Mankin presided over the function, where Dr Karunamoy Goswami gave the Nazrul memorial lecture.

Reza Ali MP, Begum Khilkhil Kazi and Cultural Affairs Secretary Hedayetullah Al Mamun also spoke at the function.

Addressing the function as the chief guest, Zillur emphasised informing the new generation about



President Zillur Rahman speaks at the inaugural function of the celebrations marking the 111th birth anniversary of Kazi Nazrul Islam at Darirampur High School 'Nazrul Mancha', in Trishal, Mymensingh yesterday.

Nazrul's multifaceted talent, patriotism and profound affection for the poor and universality.

Proper respect could be shown to him through the implementation of his goal and objectives, he said.

"So, I call upon all for combined

efforts to remove hunger, poverty, illiteracy, injustice, oppression, conflict and prejudice," Zillur said, adding: "Nazrul's creations will inspire us forever."

Mentioning Poet Nazrul's position above everything communal,

he said on one hand he wrote Hamd and Naat explaining Towhid (belief in monotheism) and on the other he also had written Shyama Sangeet, Kirton and Bhazan for the Hindu community.

"He (Nazrul) wanted welfare for

all -- with non-communal spirit -- irrespective of caste, creed and colour," he said, adding that in the history of modern Bengali poetry, Nazrul had been able to present in his writings the traditions and culture of both Hindus and Muslims with complete ease and clarity.

Mentioning Nazrul's contributions to Bangla literature and culture, Zillur said his literature, especially poems and songs, had been a great source of inspiration for the people during the War of Liberation in 1971.

He said poet Nazrul first raised the demand for the full freedom in his article titled 'Bangaleer Bangla'.

The president recalled that Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of independent and sovereign Bangladesh, once termed Nazrul as the designer of rebellious soul of Bangla and historically independent spirit of the Bangalee.

He said Nazrul's creative talent was able to visualise and express the holistic spirit of Bengal and for that he is called the poet of Bengal, the National Poet of Bangladesh."

Govt plans to build int'l airport in Trishal

Says LGRD minister UNB, Trishal

LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday said here the government has a plan to build an international airport after the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Speaking at a function marking the 111th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, he said two designs of the planned airport - one from Tangail and another from Trishal - were submitted to the ministry concerned for consideration.

Amidst cheers from the audience, Ashrafur said if the people of Trishal wants, the proposed airport will be established in Trishal.

Paying tributes to the rebel poet, he said Trishal will be made as a 'center of excellence' for academic research on the life and works of the poet by litterateurs and scholars from home and abroad.

Besides, he said an auditorium with 1,000 seating capacity will be constructed in Trishal.

Ashraf, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, said Tk 15.19 crore has been sanctioned for the development of Trishal.

College admission likely to begin in mid-June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The admission process in colleges will begin in mid-June and classes on July 1.

A meeting of the education ministry with the heads of public and private colleges in the city reached this preliminary decision yesterday, meeting sources said.

The ministry's college section convened the meeting at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to find a way out of seat crisis in the reputed colleges.

The meeting proposed reintroducing higher secondary education at Eden Women's University College and Titumir Govt College, said the sources. Earlier, both the colleges provided higher secondary education to students.

Principals of both the colleges, however, said they can reintroduce higher secondary education if they are provided with adequate infrastructure and enough teachers.

Ministry officials urged all the principals to increase the number of seats in their colleges to tackle the pressure of highest point scorers on the reputed colleges, the sources said.

The meeting also preliminarily decided to distribute mark sheets and certificates among the students who have passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations from June 3.

"All the decisions will be finalised on May 30," said a top official preferring anonymity.

Prof Noman-ur-Rashid, director gen-

eral of DSHE, told reporters that they have discussed the steps to increase the number of seats in the reputed colleges and introduce double shifts in some colleges to tackle the huge number of students waiting to enroll.

This year, a total of 62,134 students got GPA-5 (grade point average) in the SSC examinations under eight general education boards. Over three lakh students scored in between GPA 4 and 5.

Joint Secretary (College) Mafidul Islam, chairmen of Dhaka, Technical and Madrasa Education Boards, and principals of Rajuk Uttara Model School, Dhaka College, Notre Dame College, City College, Holy Cross College and Vigarunnisa Noon School and College were present at the meeting.

CANDIDATURE FOR CEDAW Dhaka seeks Brazil's support

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni has sought support of Brazil in favour of Bangladesh's candidature for Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of UN.

She made the request when the new Ambassador of Brazil to Bangladesh Richardo Luiz Viana called on her at the foreign ministry yesterday. CEDAW is UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

States Parties to CEDAW will elect 11 members of the committee on June 28 that will serve four-year terms from January 2011.

The foreign minister told the envoy that Bahrain, Malaysia and Nigeria have already withdrawn their respective candidatures.

During the meeting Dipu Moni said

Bangladesh and Brazil enjoy friendly bilateral relations. She expressed the intention of the present democratic government to work further to strengthen the relationship.

She said the two countries may undertake steps such as exchange of high-level visits, explore new avenues of cooperation in trade and commerce, culture and sports.

Viana welcomed the decision of Dipu Moni to join the third forum of the Alliance of Civilisation (AoC) to be held in Rio de Janeiro on May 27-29.

Foreign minister said Bangladesh would actively participate in the third forum. She appreciated Alliance that promotes policies and initiatives aimed at improving relations between diverse cultural groups.

Viana told the foreign minister that Turkey, Brazil and Iran are jointly working on Iranian Nuclear issue.

Primary teachers demand nationalisation of jobs

Give ultimatum to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Non-Government Primary Teachers' Association yesterday gave an ultimatum to the government to meet their long-standing demand for nationalisation of the jobs of teachers of non-government primary schools.

At a rally at Mukhtangan in the city, the association leaders announced that they would launch a tougher movement if their demand is not met by June 30.

They also submitted a memorandum to the prime minister's office (PMO) to press home their demand.

"We would announce tougher programmes from a press conference on July 1 if our demand is not met by

June 30," said Mansur Ali, secretary general of the association.

He said the teachers have been raising their voice for the demand for the last 20 years. The teachers will receive all facilities as the government teachers after nationalisation of their jobs, he added.

Several thousand teachers from different districts joined the rally at Mukhtangan where they said no successive governments met their demand despite their assurances.

After the rally, the teachers marched towards PMO to submit the memorandum, which led to a massive traffic congestion on Topkhana road.

The police, however,

intercepted the procession in front of the High Court. Later, a delegation of four members submitted the memorandum to the director (administration) of PMO.

At the rally, association president Aminul Islam Chowdhury said, "We will not leave the street unless the government meets our demand."

Association advisers Tofazzal Hossain and Golam Mohammad; senior vice presidents Forkan Ali, Abu Bakkar Siddique and Abdus Sattar; senior joint secretaries general Mohiuddin Khandakar and Emdadul Haque Bablu, among others, also spoke at the rally.



Health Minister Dr Ruhul Haque speaks at a workshop on draft national health policy 2010 at the ministry conference room in the city yesterday.

'Raise awareness to ensure health rights of the elderly'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awareness should be raised among the people to ensure health and legal rights of elderly citizens of the country, experts said at a meeting yesterday.

Experts of the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) and the Elder Support Programme (ESP) also reached a consensus on setting up a geriatric unit, a special unit for the healthcare of elderly people, at the Mirpur branch of CRP.

They also said a final decision on opening geriatric unit will be taken after further discussions.

Naema C Quayes, convenor of ESP, said there are a large number of elderly people in the country who are being neglected and a large number of senior citizens are suffering from various disabilities and

mental illness. So, they need extra care.

"The ESP and CRP want to team up to build a platform from where all of us who are working to ensure the rights of elderly people can work in a coordinated way," she said.

According to unofficial statistics, there are about five crore elderly people in Bangladesh, Naema said, adding that but there is no reliable data about the number of elderly people with disabilities.

Bangladesh bureau of statistics should collect and publish reliable data on elderly people and senior citizens with disabilities, she added.

The meeting was held at the state guesthouse Meghna in the city. Head of Occupational Therapy department of CRP Md Mahfuzur Rahman, among others, was present at the meeting.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Chittagong division and at a few places over Barisal, Dhaka, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

It said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:39pm today and rises at 5:12am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.0 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur and Srimangal.

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	33.5	25.7	71	56
Chittagong	31.0	24.0	69	81
Rajshahi	33.8	26.2	79	76
Khulna	34.8	25.0	80	74
Barisal	33.4	24.6	83	77
Sylhet	32.5	24.8	74	85
Cox's Bazar	33.5	24.0	78	78

Remove Dobhash to ensure fair CCC polls: Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong city BNP president Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday reiterated his call to remove Zahirul Alam Dobhash as acting mayor to ensure free and fair mayoral elections.

Zahirul Alam, being an Awami League leader and candidate for the post of councillor in the upcoming Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) elections, would surely have undue influence on the elections, Khasru said at a press conference at his Mehediabag residence.

Those holding the constitutional posts at the Election Commission

should quit if they cannot understand this simple matter, said Amir Khasru, also the chief election agent of BNP-backed mayoral candidate Mohammad Manjur Alam.

He questioned when Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury has to resign for joining the mayoral race, how another person being a councillor candidate in the same election could take over as acting mayor.

Khasru also called for bringing changes to the electoral law, if there are any loopholes, to ensure a free and fair CCC election.

He also alleged that some of the personal officers of immediate past mayor Mohiuddin were still enjoy-

ing facilities from CCC.

Besides, 1400 metric tons of food grains were allocated to four AL lawmakers and 400 metric tons to two women lawmakers in reserved seats under CCC area for six TR (test relief) projects after te announcement of election schedule in violation of electoral rules, he alleged.

Former whip Syed Wahidul Alam, former lawmaker Roji Kabir, Chittagong city BNP vice-presidents Dostagir Chowdhury, Abu Sufian and Shamsul Alam and General Secretary Shahadat Hossain were present at the press conference.