

# London assures Dhaka of increased assistance

BSS, DHAKA

The United Kingdom yesterday assured Bangladesh that development cooperation would become stronger and flow of assistance would increase in the years ahead.

The assurance came when Foreign Minister Dipu Moni had an hour-long meeting with her British counterpart William Hague at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, according to a message received here.

Reiterating continued strong partnership in combating climate change, Hague said Britain would work hand in hand with Bangladesh towards a satisfactory outcome from the next round of global negotiations in Cancun and beyond.

The two leaders agreed on intensifying exchange of high level visits to pave the way for further engagement in promoting trade, investment and economic relations.

Hague appreciated Bangladesh's role in the global peacekeeping operations

and pledged Britain's support to uphold the role.

On a question of the ongoing war crimes trial, Dipu Moni underscored the need for strong resolve of the government of Bangladesh to end the culture of impunity, establish rule of law and bring back accountability in the governance.

Hague, in reply, said his country supports the trial of war criminals in principle.

The discussion covered all aspects of bilateral relations. The British foreign secretary described Bangladesh as one of the most important development partners and a frontline country in Britain's quest to see global climate justice.

He appreciated the role of Bangladesh in a wide range of issues which benefits not only the two countries but the international community as a whole.

He said the UK government considered trade and economic relations as cornerstones of bilateral diplomacy.

Dipu Moni highlighted the historic

links between the two countries and said the two friendly nations should take the multifaceted relations to a new height.

She thanked her counterpart for continued support for consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh.

Dipu Moni also appreciated the role British assistance in a range of areas such as climate change, strengthening democracy, poverty alleviation, literacy, health and sanitation and attainment of MDGs.

In reply, Hague assured that development cooperation would become stronger and flow of assistance would increase in the years ahead.

The foreign minister paid a visit to the British Council headquarters in London in the afternoon.

She was briefed on the activities and programme of the institution in Bangladesh.

The Head of British Council, Martin Davidson expressed willingness of the institution to be a part of the 150th birth anniversary celebration of poet Rabindranath Tagore.



Foreign Minister Dipu Moni calls on British Foreign Secretary William Hague at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY



Planning Minister and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Liberation Army Air Vice Marshal (ret) AK Khandaker visits Ahmed Reza, commander of Naval Commando Force of Bangladesh Army in 1971, at the Square Hospital in the city recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Freedom fighter Ahmed Reza seriously ill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighter Ahmed Reza, Commander of Naval Commando Force of Bangladesh Army in 1971, is seriously ill and under treatment at city's Square Hospital.

He has been suffering from cancer for one and half years and was admitted to the hospital from August 19, said his daughter Rini Reza. Ahmed Reza was in Singapore for treatment in August last year, says a press release.

Planning Minister and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Liberation Army Air Vice Marshal (ret) AK Khandaker visited ailing Ahmed Reza at the hospital recently.

Ahmed Reza, a fighter-bomber pilot, trained the naval commandos in exile in absence of naval officers at the beginning of the War of Liberation.

## AGRI MINISTRY, BJRI PROJECT ON JUTE Target high yield, calamity resistant variety

UNB, Dhaka

Inspired by the genome sequencing of Jute in Bangladesh, the government has undertaken a project to develop natural adversity tolerant variety of jute as well as developing its high yielding line and variety.

The project titled "Basic and applied research on jute" was approved at the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) meeting on Tuesday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The total cost of the project was estimated at Tk 66 crore to be entirely borne by the national exchequer.

Agriculture ministry is the leading agency while Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) is the implementing agency of the project.

The tenure of the project is from September 2010 to August 2013.

According to planning ministry sources, the project activities also include updating the draft genome information of Tosha variety of jute and utilising necessary genes to innovate a variety capable to adapt with changing environment.

It also includes innovation and analysis of genome sequence of local variety to access necessary genes and innovate sequence information of different molecules relating to rotting of jute.

The project objectives also include evaluating the germplasm of jute preserved at the gene bank of BJRI to separate necessary genes and to create a platform for research on genome in Bangladesh.

Sources at Ecne meeting said prime

minister thanked the agriculture ministry and the planning commission to process such an important project speedily.

She also directed the authorities concerned to maintain the secrecy of the project's research activities.

It was learnt that two committees, project steering committee and project implementation committee, have been formed for the projects successful implementation.

Agriculture secretary heads the 13-member steering committee while director general of BJRI heads the nine-member implementation committee.

On completion of the project, the farmers would be able to produce jute with less cost as well as profit much more which is expected to create more employment opportunities, said sources at planning ministry.

The project area covers the main office of BJRI in city's Tejgaon, Manikganj sadar and Rangpur sadar.

Bangladeshi researchers led by Dr Maqsoodul Alam have successfully decoded the jute plant genome in June, opening up a new vista in developing the world's most adorned biodegradable natural fibre.

With the successful sequencing of jute genome, Bangladesh becomes only the second country after Malaysia, among the developing nations, to achieve such a feat.

Researchers from Dhaka University, Bangladesh Jute Research Institute and Software Company DataSoft in collaboration with Centre for Chemical Biology, University of Science, Malaysia and University of Hawaii, USA have decoded the genome.

## REMARKS AGAINST JOY HC stays proceedings of cases against Farroque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for two months the proceedings against Opposition Chief Whip Gainul Abidin Farroque in 15 cases filed on charge for making "derogatory remarks" about prime minister's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy.

The cases were filed in different districts, including Dhaka, by local Awami League leaders for Farroque's alleged statement that Joy has been doing illegal Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) business from abroad causing a loss of Tk 1,500 crore to the state exchequer.

Following separate petitions filed by Farroque, an HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice AKM Zahirul Hoque yesterday also issued separate rules upon the government to explain within four weeks why the proceedings against Farroque should not be quashed.

Earlier, the BNP lawmaker got bail from the HC in the cases.

Advocate Khandker Mahub Hossain appeared for the petitioner.

## Transparency in spending a must Says JS body about massive river dredging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water resources ministry will have to ensure transparency and accountability in spending hundreds of crores of taka allocated for dredging the major rivers of the country, a House body warned yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry also cautioned officials and others concerned about the pilferage and misuse of public money for dredging.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on August 16 approved two river dredging projects involving Tk 1,947 crore that include procurement of 17 dredgers to develop the river routes across the country.

Some 11 dredgers and other accessories will be purchased by June 2012 using Tk 1309.88 crore from government fund to complete the dredging.

"The committee recommended monitoring the amount of mud and silting for dredging. It would be possible to prevent misuse of diesel through comparing the amount of extracted silt and the amount of diesel used for dredging at a particular period," Abdur Razzaq, chief of the House body said.

The committee also asked to use coal instead of diesel to reduce expenses.

While briefing the reporters after the meeting, Razzaq, also the former water resources minister, said the committee asked the ministry concerned to kick off the dredging immediately and to ensure the highest quality of work.

But it expressed disappointment over the slow pace of work by Water Development Board in repairing damaged barrage and dams across the country.

The committee also asked the ministry to take steps so that members of the standing committee can visit China, India and Nepal to gain firsthand experience of water resources management process of those countries.

## Hajj pilgrims' list for police verification by Aug 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) will submit a list of hajj passengers to the government within August 30 for police verification.

"We have prepared thana and district wise list of hajj passengers and will send it to the hajj office in city's haji camp within August 30," Mohammed Ibrahim Bahar, president of HAAB told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said, "The special branch of police will send the list to respective thanas for verification."

The government took the decision in the wake of allegations that Rohingyas went to Saudi Arabia as hajj pilgrims with Bangladeshi passports, overstayed there and engaged in criminal activities, tarnishing the image of the country.

Announcing the decision on Thursday, Home Minister Shahara Khatun directed the intelligence and law enforcement agencies to prevent suspected war criminals, Rohingyas and militants from leaving the country in the guise of hajj pilgrims.

Hailing the government's decision, Ibrahim said the passport issuance authorities should be more serious in this regard and examine the attestation. It is tough for agents to identify the real hajj pilgrims from illegal immigrants because passports received are all issued by Bangladesh.

Around 94,900 pilgrims will be making the journey to Saudi Arabia this year. Of them, 87,000 are going under the private management and 6,500 under the government's scheme. Last year, 58,000 pilgrims went for hajj.

There will be other scrutiny as well to ensure that real hajj pilgrims go to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj.

The hajj agents have already received around 95 percent of the passports and will submit those to the hajj office soon for scrutiny before visa, he said.

## 2,144 more arrested

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 2,144 people on various charges in separate drives across the country in 12 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

Eight firearms and 21 bullets were also recovered during the countrywide drive, said a release of police headquarters.

Besides, 36 motorcycles were seized for not having valid documents during the drives and 331 cases filed in this connection.



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