

Dhaka seeks

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The ministry is dispatching additional officers who will be arriving at the Libyan borders with Egypt and Tunisia. Bangladesh embassy in Egypt is in touch with those arriving on Egypt border, it said.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Libya M Nuruzzaman told UNB last night that Chinese State Company has agreed to evacuate 700 workers from Benghazi to Egypt and South Korean Own Company will evacuate 450 Bangladeshi workers in a day or two.

The actions came at a time when thousands of Bangladeshis, mainly low-paid workers, left by their employers in the camps are regularly becoming victims of looting and attacks by Libyans.

Libya is in grave turmoil with massive street protest against the rule of Muammar Gaddafi.

Talking to The Daily Star, the workers described their horrendous stories. Left by their employers and running short on food, they had to watch Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, Egyptians workers leave the country.

Shaheed Uddin, from a camp in Tripoli yesterday, said Libyans set fire to a labour camp and looted valuables Thursday night. The camp housed around 1,000 Bangladeshi workers. One Bangladeshi was killed and some others got injured, he claimed.

"Those Bangladeshis then fled wherever they could," he said, adding that such incidents have become regular and his camp housing 300 workers could be next.

The attacks occur mainly during the night when Libyan men and women throw them out of the camps and loot their belongings, Shaheed said, adding, "The whole day is quiet due to curfew. In the night comes gun fights and looting."

An official of the expatriates' welfare ministry said they heard of an attack on a labour camp in Tripoli where some Bangladeshis were injured but there were no reports of deaths.

Shaheed said they had lunch yesterday with rice and lentil but there was no food left for any further meals.

In Shaheed's camp there are nationals of Egypt, Philippines, Thailand and Sudan who are leaving Libya with the assistance of their governments.

Monir Hossain of Dohar in Nawabganj said his brother Amir Hossain was jobless among 100 others for the last four months. Amir wanted to return home four months ago but the Libyan company did not allow him to.

Robbing them off money and mobile phones is normal, he said, adding that with the situation becoming turbulent, the Bangladeshis are in crisis now.

"My brother does not even have the money to call me. He just hangs up before we pick up so that we can call back. He talks about his worries," Monir said.

Describing the food situation in Libya, UN food agency said Libya's food supply chain is at risk of collapse, reports the BBC.

In the last few days, The Daily Star talked to stranded groups of Bangladeshis in Libya who told horrifying stories urging the government to take immediate action to bring them home or shift them to safer places.

Of around 50,000 Bangladeshis in Libya, 5,000 are in Benghazi, which is now under the control of the rebels. Around 30,000 are in Tripoli while the rest in other parts of the north African nation.

Those in Benghazi were trying to move towards the Egyptian border, but those in Tripoli are in trouble, as they are unable to move due to curfew in day time and clashes in the nights.

The IOM said about 750 Bangladeshis are moving towards Egyptian border.

Bangladesh government is asking Bangladeshis in Libya to move to the safer places, even to Tunisia and Egypt, said a foreign ministry official.

Tunisia and Egypt have also been requested to allow Bangladeshis to enter even if they do not have travel documents, he said.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan

said the government is looking at all the options--relocating the workers to safe places within Libya, out of Libya and bringing them home.

"We have asked our civil aviation authority for flights, which may be required any time for evacuation of our people," he said. He said a Chinese and a Malaysian company have agreed to shift the Bangladeshis to other countries.

Meanwhile, the IOM has made urgent appeal for an initial \$11 million to assist migrants caught out by the violence in Libya and who are in dire need of evacuation and repatriation assistance. This fund would be used to help 50,000 migrants in trouble.

The countries that formally approached the IOM for help include Egypt, Bangladesh, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

The IOM officials are in the borders of Egypt and Tunisia. The initial fund would allow the IOM to immediately set up evacuee reception and processing centres at both sites and ensure better registration of and assistance to migrants crossing Libya's borders with its neighbours.

The centres would also serve as crisis information points as well as staging areas for the provision of transportation assistance to migrants.

If the situation in Libya further deteriorates, the organisation could plan evacuating them home, said an IOM spokesperson, adding that joint team of the United Nations agencies started visiting the Egyptian border city of Sallum yesterday.

However, airports, road communication and telecommunication networks in Libya are not fully functional and under security risk, which is hampering humanitarian efforts by any international organisation, the IOM statement said.

Meanwhile, at least 40,000 people have already crossed into Tunisia and Egypt in the last few days with more arriving every day.

Thailand evacuated the first 600 of 23,000 Thai workers to Tunisia, while China arranged to evacuate half its 30,000 citizens in Libya on four ferries chartered from Greece.

South Korea is expected to send a chartered flight to Libya to evacuate its nationals.

The Indian government has said it will operate two flights a day out of Libya for the next 10 days to evacuate 18,000 nationals, reports the BBC.

CONTROL ROOM
Guest workers and their relatives have been asked to contact the Expatriates' welfare ministry control room.

The contacts: 7168606; Mobile: 01712245986, 01912899102, 01712205155, 01731015257, 01819261735, 01715029123, 01678000137, 01914871118, 01552368551, 01819262175, 01714040093.

Fax: 7160688, 8319948, 9353203 and emails: js@probashi.gov.bd, js@probashi.gov.bd, js.emp@probashi.gov.bd, ahmkamal2020@yahoo.com and ahmkamal2020@yahoo.com.

10-TRUCK ARMS
CID gets 36 more days to probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court on Thursday granted Criminal Investigation Department (CID) 36 days more to complete investigation into the sensational Chittagong arms haul case.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge AKM Shamsul Islam passed the extension order, effective from February 23, to complete further investigation till March 30 upon a prayer by the CID for 90 days.

With this, the court extended the time limit for the 12th time since Investigation Officer (IO) of the cases Md Muniruzzman, also a senior ASP of CID, started investigating the case on February 4, 2009.

Khaleda

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there is no hope for these during the tenure of the present government since influential people were behind the conspiracy.

"Many army officers have been dismissed for raising questions [about Pikhana killings]. Threats of a repeat of incidents like the Pikhana mutiny are being heard within the army. The country has no alternative but to get a patriotic ruler now."

The former premier said people in many countries have lately spoken out against oppression, putting an end to misrule, exploitation, corruption and injustice there.

Success of those cases made Bangladeshis hopeful and courageous.

The prevailing situation in the country is ripe for a tougher movement, she noted.

Not only opposition activists but also eminent citizens are being humiliated by the government, Khaleda said.

Without mentioning any name, she said "a member of the ruling family has siphoned off thousands of crores of dollars and stashed those in foreign banks."

She said the present government came to power through election rigging. Caretaker government chief Fakhruddin Ahmed and the then army chief Moeen U Ahmed must be brought under trial in future.

Khaleda said the opposition did not announce any protest programme due to world cup cricket and mentioned that during the previous BNP regime, Awami League announced hartal one after another.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Brig gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, among others, spoke at the discussion with Shamsar Mobin Chowdhury in the chair.

In the morning, a team of BNP leaders led by its standing committee member ASM Hannan Shah placed a wreath at the monument built in memory of deceased army officials at Banani graveyard.

Nipah claims

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Dinajpur, and Rakib, son of Shahabuddin of Kawnia upazila in Rangpur, were admitted to the hospital on Thursday, he said.

Since January 31, Nipah encephalitis claimed the lives in seven districts--Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Dinajpur and Kushtia.

Celebrations

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from the stadium at 10:45pm and reached Dhaka Sheraton Hotel around midnight.

It took 20 minutes to get the bus out of the stadium area, said Officer-in-Charge of Mirpur Police Station Kazi Wazed Ali.

Thousands of people at different points on route were standing to cheer and wave at the bus carrying the match-winning side.

Dhaka turned into a city of celebration, slogan and music of cheering people after the last Irish wicket fell. Streets in and around Mirpur, TSC of Dhaka University, Dhanmondi and Gulshan Lake were crammed with people celebrating.

"Bangladesh came back to win the game after scoring so low, I think this is the reason behind the fans' boundless joy," said Capt Imtiaz, a pilot who drove to TSC from Gulshan with his eight-member family to join the celebration.

Many people enjoyed the game on big screens at different spots of the city.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated Bangladesh cricket team over the telephone. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a massage also congratulated the Bangladesh team.

However, there were some low points in yesterday's festivities.

At least 15 youths were injured when a truckload of cheering fans turned over near Mohakhali around midnight. The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, a group of unruly youths harassed some young girls on the Mirpur stadium premises after the match. Police rescued the girls and took them to the police station on the grounds of their safety.

Bird flu strikes

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They blame that the fisheries and livestock ministry for doing nothing in this regard despite having a Tk 100 crore budget for development of poultry sector.

The government has neither set up laboratories at divisional headquarters nor trained the poultry farmers. Even its vigilance at union and upazila level is very poor, association members said wishing anonymity.

The livestock department, however, said farmers are reporting the outbreak more now after the government has doubled the compensation to those affected.

Earlier, they had a tendency to conceal it fearing culling of the poultry, said a top official.

The first outbreak this year occurred in Dohar, on the outskirts of Dhaka in January--5,970 fowls and 2,000 eggs were culled there. Later it spread to Gazipur, Joypurhat, Gobindaganj, Barisal and Chittagong.

On February 8, nearly 2,000 fowls were destroyed at the BDR headquarters in the capital.

Since 2007, when it first broke out in the country, the bird flu affected 49 districts costing the country's poultry industry worth around Tk 8,000 crore.

However, only one human infection was reported in 2008.

Of the 520 people infected during this period, at least 307 people have died elsewhere in the world.

"But that does not mean we are safe. The danger period lies ahead because April to October is the season of influenza in our country," said Mushtuq Husain, senior

Rare goose

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Since the last year, the group has been conducting the enumeration attaching small satellite transmitters and rings to the legs and bodies of the migratory birds to monitor their movement, behaviour and locations.

Basir Ahmed, an officer of the Department of Environment at Kulaura of Moulvibazar district, told the reporters the enumeration is being held every year at Hakaluki Haor.

Representatives from The Bird Club and different non-government organisations and students of different universities were members of the enumeration team.

Biman asked

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not aware of the matter.

He said Biman pays arrears to the CAAB from time to time.

Biman also owes around Tk 65 crore to the CAAB for using Hazrat Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong and Osmani International Airport in Sylhet.

The CAAB extended the AOC on Thursday for three months from February 25 as the previous certificate for using Shahjalal airport expires today, CAAB officials said.

However, it could not be known whether Biman has received the letter.

CAAB sources said the arrears have been accumulated since Biman turned into a public limited company in 2007 when the government exempted it from debts of over Tk 1,194 crore to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and over Tk 573 crore to the CAAB.

HSC exams

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Earlier, the ministry in its annual plan announced April 1 for beginning the exams, as like last year.

Board sources said the date was put back by five days taking the ongoing World Cup and public holiday into consideration.

According to the routine, the written examinations of HSC and its equivalent Alim and Business Management will continue until May 31. Practical examinations will be held afterwards.

The exam routine is available on the Dhaka Education Board website: www.dhakaeducationboard.gov.bd.

scientific officer of IEDCR.

"If the avian flu cannot be controlled before April, chances of human infection will increase," he warned.

According to experts, the rate of human fatality due to the virus is nearly 60 percent.

They recommend maintaining safe distance from the affected birds, using gloves and masks while handling those and using disinfectants in the farms.

They also advise that people cover their mouth while coughing and wash hands with soap frequently to limit its spread.

The WHO recommends that poultry meat be cooked thoroughly to destroy the Avian influenza virus.

UN fears

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in power as swathes of the east fell to opposition control and others into lawlessness.

- In Az-Zawiayah, 23 people were killed and 44 wounded when regime loyalists mounted a ferocious rear-guard action against protesters in the key oil refinery town and heavy fighting was reported in Libya's third city Misrata, and in Zouara, further west towards the Tunisian border.

- Kadhaf al-Dam, a close Gaddafi aide, had resigned in protest against the handling of the crisis.

- Gaddafi deployed an elite brigade commanded by Col Gaddafi's son Khamis in Tripoli to affirm control.

- Nato ambassadors were holding emergency talks to impose sanctions.

- The chief EU diplomat said the United States and EU countries had discussed the possibility of imposing a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent Gaddafi forces from bombing protesters.

- France and Britain have proposed the UN Security Council pass a resolution calling for sanctions and a total arms embargo against Libya ahead of its meeting later to discuss the crisis.

- UN Human Rights Council is expected to expel Libya.

- No need of military intervention yet: EU

- World governments scrambled to evacuate expatriates Evacuations by sea continued yesterday, somewhat hampered by rough weather.

- World crude oil price soared close to \$120 a barrel.

- US President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron promised to "coordinate on possible multilateral measures on Libya."

Bus crushes

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"Finding the road busy after crossing halfway, Taher continued walking towards the north along the road divider. At that time the bus hit him from behind and pulled ahead for around hundred yards," said Mohammad Shah Alam, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station.

Locals rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead around noon.

The bus driver and his helper escaped the scene leaving the vehicle, police said.

The law enforcers seized the bus and were trying to arrest the driver and helper, noted the OC adding, no case was filed till last evening as the victim's family members were busy with burial at his village home at Homna in Comilla.

Secretary of the Establishment Ministry Iqbal Mahmud said Abu Taher was a former chairman of Mongla Port Authority.

According to family sources, Taher had served the government as a joint secretary of communications and finance ministries. Two years ago he was made officer on special duty at the establishment ministry.

Earlier the government had taken various measures to stop reckless driving after woman and children affairs secretary (in-charge) Razia Begum and BSCIC chairman Siddiqui Rahman were killed on July 31 last year in a road crash in Manikganj on Dhaka-Aricha highway.

The authorities had made fastening seat belt mandatory and prohibited using cell phones while driving.

But all the measures were being overlooked after a couple of weeks, leaving the public at peril on roads.



Literature museum attracts visitors

RAKIB AHAMMED

A private university student Nibir and his friends were mesmerised watching collections of the Jatiya Sahitya O Lekhak Jadughar on the Bangla Academy complex yesterday.

The museum displays an array of documents, articles, graphics and photos on the evolution of Bangla language and literature. Manuscripts and portraits of eminent writers of Bangla literature and belongings of some late poets were also displayed.

"I had little knowledge that Bangla language and literature is so enriched, and that dedication of so many poets and writers lies behind it," said Nibir.

Nibir, who came to buy books from the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, visited the museum set up on the ground floor of the historic Burdwan House in the city.

Bangla Academy authorities opened the museum right after the inauguration of the

month-long book fair on February 1.

The place displays works of prominent poets and writers including Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Jibananda Dash, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay, Deen Bandhu Mitra, Buddhadeb Basu and Fakir Lalan Shah.

"The photographs of young Rabindranath and manuscripts of some of his poems and stories attract me most," said Jewel, another visitor.

Alongside, belongings of late poets Sufia Kamal and Shamsur Rahman exhibited there made the elderly visitors nostalgic.

Some visitors said the museum was a big inspiration, and that its space should be enlarged to house more collections.

Meanwhile, the book fair witnessed a huge rush last evening, as it was the last weekend before the fair closes this month.

Manipulation

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are investors and buyers and sellers," Muhith told journalists during a seminar on South Asian politics and economics in New Delhi yesterday.

A commission has been set up by the government to look into the crash in the bourses and its head is expected to submit an interim report to him, said the minister.

The volatility of the share market can be measured by the fact that the index rose from 2,000 to 9,000 in just six months, he said.

Although the number of investors in the capital market has gone up from 1.9 million to 3.1 million, most of the entrants have very little idea about how to invest and go about trading, Muhith added.

Replying to a question if credit crisis is affecting investment in the stockmarket, Muhith said although it was true the commercial banks in Bangladesh did impose some curbs on lending for stockmarket activities, "there is no crisis of funds as such."

In fact, many banks and other institutional investors were not investing finding the market volatility, he said.

"However, I believe, it [the capital market] is more or less stabilised at 7,500 points," the finance minister said.

Tracking the history of the capital market in Bangladesh, he said it was closed in 1976 and remained shut till 1988. "There was a collapse in 1996 and there had been no activity in the stockmarket till 2007."

Muhith said no other government, except that of Awami League, took any interest in the country's stockmarket development.

The finance minister said Bangladesh urgently needed investment in transport and energy sectors.

Replying to another question, he accused the developed countries of being the biggest defaulters in financially helping the Least Developed Countries like Bangladesh.

"In the 1980s, developed countries had promised to invest 1.5 to 2 percent of their GDP in LDCs but in 1991, the share declined to 0.9 percent", Muhith pointed out.

He said Bangladesh's performance in developing the sanitation sector is a powerful repudiation of developed countries' criticism that LDCs cannot come up with projects to secure funds.

He said India's recent decision to extend additional 500 million US dollars in line of credit to LDCs would blunt to some extent the developed countries' view that more prosperous developing countries have not helped LDCs.

Tigers cross

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for a paltry 205.

In the second session everything fell in place in favour of the Tigers as not only the slow bowlers did their jobs but also young Shafiq brilliantly recovered from his first match hiccup against India as well as a niggling shoulder injury to restore the party for the home team.

Shafiq was absolutely brilliant, especially in his third spell and claimed four wickets to wrap up the Irish innings for 178 runs in 45 overs. There had been a lot of talk about the spin bowlers before the game but finally Shafiq became a hero in the match to make sure that the pacers domination continued against the Ireland team at Mirpur.

The Tigers' fielding was also at its absolute best in the match.

For a while, Niall O'Brien looked like taking the match away for the Irish but a stunning diving catch at deep midwick by Tamim Iqbal, who dived forward full length to scoop the ball inches off the ground, sent back the left-hander to the dressing room for a 52-ball 38, off the bowling of Shakib.

And it was then Kevin O'Brien who also threatened the Tigers during his 40-ball 37 before Shafiq got rid of him to bring back the Tigers into the match. From then on it was all going right for the pacer as he went on to pick three more wickets.

Mohammad Ashraf, failed with the bat but repaid the faith shown in him as his occasional spin bowling accounted for two wickets. Shakib too claimed two for 28 runs.

But despite the victory there were still a lot of negatives in this game, and the most prominent of it was an awful batting show from the home side.

The Bangladesh middle order spoiled the flying start provided to them by openers Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes who put on 50 runs in 5.4 overs.

But the plot was lost once Kayes returned to the pavilion courtesy of a good stumping by O'Brien.

The rest of the batting descended into a series of foolish strokes, epitomized perfectly by captain Shakib himself, who seemed not to have learnt the lesson from a dropped chance provided to him just before he perished.

Mushfiqur Rahim (36) and Rokibul Hasan (38) provided solidity and consolidated on the bright start with a 61 run stand, but both men fell while trying to accelerate the score on a difficult wicket.

Much faith was put on Ashraf when the dashing right-hander came into bat with another 17 overs to go, but somewhat predictably, he fell, as he has on so

many occasions recently, trying to improvise a little to early.

The senseless batting from the middle order left the bowlers with a daunting task but a superb team effort meant that the end was memorable for the Tigers.

And it was a fact widely recognized as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia both congratulated the Tigers on the victory late last night.

SCORES IN BRIEF
BANGLADESH: 205 all out in 49.2 overs (Tamim 44, Imrul 12, Mushfiqur 36, Shakib 16, Rokibul 38, Naeem 29, Razzak 11; Johnston 2-40, Botha 3-32, Dockrell 2-23)

IRELAND: 178 all out in 45 overs (Porterfield 20, Joyce 16, N O'Brien 38, White 10, K O'Brien 37, Botha 22; Shafiq 4-21, Razzak 1-30, Naeem 1-36, Shakib 2-28, Ashraf 2-42)

Result: Bangladesh won by 27 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Tamim Iqbal.

Call for

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opposition BNP, the chiefs of three services, and the director general of Border Guard Bangladesh, previously known as Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), paid tributes and observed one minute solemn silence in memory of the slain officers.

Special prayers were also offered at different mosques including Dhaka Cantonment and Pikhana headquarters for the salvation of the departed souls. Hundreds of BGB officials, soldiers and family members and relatives of the slain army officials joined the prayers.

Both Home Minister Sahara Khatun and State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku took part in the programmes and expressed solidarity with the families of the murdered officers.

The home minister said, "I hope the killers will be handed down exemplary punishment in the trial." Sahara also called upon everyone to be aware of such incidents in future.

Earlier during placing wreaths on the Banani graveyard, Sahara told reporters the trial of the suspected mutineers, which is being held in BGB special courts, will be completed soon. She said a complete chain of command has been established within the paramilitary force.

On behalf of AL, Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury along with other leaders placed wreaths on the memorial.

BNP standing committee members Mirza Abbas and ASM Hannan Shah, meanwhile, placed floral wreaths on the memorial on behalf of party Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia.