

Bhutanese royal couple in town

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The king and queen of Bhutan arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a five-day private visit.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni greeted the royal guests and their entourage at Shahjalal International Airport.

Later the foreign minister met the monarch and his wife at Sonargaon Hotel, where the royal dignitaries will stay during the visit.

The meeting with Dipu Moni was merely a courtesy call closed to the media, said an official of the royal office.

Mohammad Monirul Islam Kabir, foreign ministry's public relations officer, however, said that all issues of bilateral interests were to be brought up in the meeting.

The king and queen are expected to call on President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow and on Sunday respectively.

This is King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck's second visit to Bangladesh in less than two years. His first visit was in March 2011.

However, this is the first visit of Queen Gyalsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck.

The king and queen are scheduled to visit Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery in Kamalapur today.

They will visit places of industrial, historical, cultural and other interests and meet the Bhutanese community in Bangladesh, reported the Bhutan Observer.

The visit is believed to add an impetus to the growing relations between the two countries, it said.

They are scheduled to leave Dhaka on Tuesday.



Secularism fundamental to constitution: CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secularism is one of the fundamental principles of the country's constitution, as its people are non-communal by nature, Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain said yesterday.

He said lawyers had a very important role to play in order to ensure the development of this non-communal spirit and human and fundamental rights of all people.

Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and people of other religions are amicably living in Bangladesh, he told

the reunion of Bijaya 2012 at Supreme Court Bar Association.

The chief justice said religious festivals like eids, Durga Puja, Buddha Purnima, and Christmas Day had been part of the country's culture.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam said religious rituals could not be performed peacefully if congenial and democratic environment did not exist in society.

The programme was attended by most judges and lawyers of the Appellate Division and the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.

Mock parliamentary debate contest begins in city

DU CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary debate competition for university level students, aiming to shed light on different issues of the forthcoming national election, started at Bashundhara city in the capital yesterday.

In the first mock parliament, Dhaka Medical College and Ahsanullah Science and Technology University students debated on the caretaker government issue as the ruling party and opposition party respectively.

Abdus Shahid, chief whip of the parliament, and Joynul Abdin Farroque, the

opposition chief whip, inaugurated the contest titled "Student Parliament", said a press release.

In the inaugural ceremony, the chief whip said the Election Commission could make the 10th national election transparent because several free and fair elections had taken place under it.

The opposition chief whip however laid stress on the caretaker government system, saying the BNP would not run in the election under a partisan government, and if it did not, the election would not be accepted.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Majera Khatun, mother of Wadud Ali, chief of the daily Ittefaq Rangpur office and GTV Rangpur correspondent, died of old-age complications at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday. She was 70.

She left behind three daughters, two sons and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

She will be buried at Nurpur Baro graveyard after her namaz-e-janaza held on the graveyard ground in Rangpur city today.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 14th death anniversary of Mottahar Hossain Siddiqui, editor of the weekly Dhaka Times.

In his journalistic career, he also served Dainik Millat and the English daily New Nation.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held after Juma prayers today at his Gopibagh residence in the capital. Relatives are requested to attend the programme.

Indian FM due tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India's External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow on a two-day visit to attend the second meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) where Dhaka and New Delhi will discuss a host of important issues, including signing of the Teesta water sharing agreement, ratification of the land boundary agreement, and border killing.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Salman Khurshid who will co-chair the JCC meeting, will review the progress in bilateral cooperation in all areas--trade, connectivity, power, water resources, security, border management, infrastructure, people to people contacts, culture, environment and education.

The external affairs minister will also do the groundwork for Indian President Pranab Mukharjee's March 3-5 visit to Bangladesh. During his stay, Khurshid is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and meet the home minister and the water resources minister.

The JCC was established under the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development signed by the two prime ministers on September 6, 2011. The commission reviews progress in various areas of relationship, identifies thrust areas, and gives directions for further growth of bilateral partnership.

The first meeting of the commission was held in New Delhi on May 7, 2012.

The February 16-17 visit will be Khurshid's first visit to Bangladesh since he took over as the external affairs minister on October 28 last year. He had earlier visited Bangladesh in May 2012 as the minister for law and justice and minority affairs at the joint celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the "Bidrohi" by Kazi Nazrul Islam.



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