

Assam govt for Dhaka-Guwahati bus service

Says no to visa relaxation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The government of northeastern Indian state of Assam has opposed a proposal from the Centre to give visa-free entry to Bangladeshi nationals below 18 and above 65 years.

It has, however, accepted two other proposals -- launching of a Dhaka-Guwahati bus service via Shillong and transit for water transport, said Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, of the Congress, in a press conference in Guwahati, the state capital, yesterday.

It is already a very difficult task to trace all foreign nationals with a valid visa and "no-visa will make the task even more difficult for government agencies", Gogoi said.

The Narendra Modi-led government sent a list of proposals to the state government this month seeking its opinion.

The proposals were part of efforts to liberalise visa regime between the two countries.

"The Centre has sought our opinion about multiple-entry in a single visa. We have opposed this proposal too," he added.

Earlier, Assam opposed Delhi's proposal to give work permits to Bangladeshis.

"We want good relations with all

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Abusive words used in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday's session of parliament experienced two unusual events - a blistering verbal attack on the BNP chairperson and the singing of songs eulogising the father of the nation and the prime minister.

Speaking on the budget discussion, ruling Awami League lawmaker Fazilatunnesa Bappy launched a searing criticism against Khaleda Zia using vulgar and abusive words.

The Daily Star refrains from quoting her remarks, considering the intensity of vulgarity they contained.

With the BNP having no representation in the Jatiya Sangsad, none protested her offensive remarks. Interestingly, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury did not warn her to desist either.

Though a number of sessions of the previous parliament made headlines for the use of abusive language by lawmakers of both AL and BNP, this is the first case in the 10th parliament that began its journey through the largely uncontested January 5 election.

In contrast, AL lawmaker Momtaz Begum sang two songs, adding some melody to the JS proceedings.

The singer-turned-parliamentarian extolled Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina in her songs. Hasina seemed quite amused at the time.



Fruit wholesalers sit in their makeshift shops on Badamtoli Road in Old Dhaka yesterday morning with hardly any buyers. Usually, the street is teeming with buyers in the mornings. Fruit retailers keep their shops closed, inset, yesterday at Baitul Mukarram area on the first day of their indefinite strike protesting the recent crackdown on formalin-tainted fruits. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Stop anti-formalin drive

FROM PAGE 1

Fruit vendors will also organise a human chain on Saturday in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Some wholesale markets in Karwan Bazar and Badamtali, however, were open yesterday.

"We have made a vow that we will only sell chemical-free, fresh fruits. So we are not afraid of law enforcers and the drive and have kept our businesses open," said ASM Mahbubul Alam alias Hazi Babul, president of Karwan Bazar wholesale

fruits market.

He added that the traders of the market had been observing the situation and that their business was not very bad on the first day of the strike.

Meanwhile, several hundred mango traders and growers brought out a procession under the banner of Chapainawabganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Eidgah in Nimitala of Chapainawabganj town.

Later, they submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through the

deputy commissioner, reported our Chapainawabganj correspondent.

As many as 100 trucks of mangoes valued at Tk 30 crore have so far been destroyed across the country and a number of mango traders have been fined and jailed, fruit vendors said.

The protesters also alleged that law enforcers were taking bribes from them in the name of testing fruits for formalin.

FORMALIN SEIZED

The DSCC team led by Executive Magistrate Atul Chandra seized 40

drums and 80 cartons full of formalin bottles while raiding a five-storey chemical warehouse near the Chankharpool crossing.

Atul said two unregistered companies named Nazifa Chemicals and Nasir Chemicals were using the place to trade in formalin without any permission.

He added that the authorities had identified 12 spots in the capital, where formalin was being sold secretly, and stated that all those places would be raided gradually.

Crisis deepens in Iraq

FROM PAGE 16

Iraq if it prevented Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters establishing bases which could eventually pose a threat to the West.

But he repeatedly insisted US troops would not be going back in to direct combat in Iraq, two-and-a-half years after the last American soldier came home from the war.

Obama did however pledge to help Iraq bolster its own forces against the advance of the radical Sunni fighters.

"We're prepared to send a small number of additional American military advisers, up to 300, assess how we can best train, advise and support Iraqi security forces going forward," Obama said.

The president also renewed US warnings that only non-sectarian leadership could rescue Iraq from its current plight -- an apparent implicit rebuke of Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

"Shia, Sunni, Kurds, all Iraqis must

have confidence that they can advance their interests and aspirations through the political process rather than through violence," Obama said.

"It is clear, though, that only leaders that can govern with an inclusive agenda are going to be able to truly bring the Iraqi people together and help them through this crisis."

Obama warned that he would not authorise political operations that were designed to promote one sect in Iraq over another.

And he said that he would dispatch Secretary of State John Kerry to Europe and the Middle East this weekend to consult with US allies on the next steps forward on the Iraq crisis.

The White House is also facing pressure from Republican and Democratic hawks in Washington, who are pushing for urgent air strikes to arrest the advance of Isis.

Earlier this week Obama notified Congress up to 275 troops could be

sent to Iraq to provide support and security for personnel and the US embassy in Baghdad. However, neither deployment has a combat role.

The US has ruled out -- publicly, at least -- cooperating militarily with Shia-dominated Iran, which is poised to increase its involvement in the conflict, reports The Guardian. But Obama said Iran "can play a constructive role" in urging the Iraqi government to move past sectarianism, but should avoid entering the conflict as "solely as an armed force on behalf of the Shia".

"Iran has heard from us," he said. "We have indicated to them it is important for them to avoid steps that might encourage the kind of sectarian slips that might lead to civil war." He warned against Tehran repeating its approach in Syria, where he said Iran entered "hot and heavy on one side".

While Thursday's announcement does not return the US military to a leading role in the Iraq crisis, it risks creating pressure to do so should Isis

retain momentum. Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said last week that helping break Isis's momentum would be the objective of any prospective US military aid.

In reserve on the deck of the USS George HW Bush are four squadrons of F/A-18 fighter jets, which the Pentagon ordered into the Persian Gulf on Saturday. The advantage of using naval aviators is that they need not require any regional country's permission to fly over foreign territory. Yet senior Pentagon officials warned on Wednesday that the intelligence picture they possess of a rapidly changing Iraqi battlefield still falls short of what is typically necessary for an aerial attack.

The US military rebuilt the Iraqi military from scratch, largely in its image, after Washington fatefully opted to disband it in 2003, a catalyst for the bloody insurgency that killed nearly 4,500 US troops. At least 100,000 Iraqi civilians are estimated to have died in

All the ruling party men

They committed recent killings, says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night accused the ruling party men of carrying out brutal killings one after another and said the country is now under "a wild and repressive rule."

Khaleda came up with the remark while consoling the family members of Kalshi Bihari camp victims as they called on her at her Gulshan office.

Nine members of Mohammad Yasin's family were killed as miscreants reportedly torched his house at the camp early Saturday while a man named Azad was shot dead in a clash with police.

The former PM handed over Tk 2 lakh to Yasin and Tk 1 lakh to Azad's wife Sultana. She also gave financial assistance to the 36 families of those injured and affected in the incident.

"How come brutal killing like the one at Kalshi take place? In which country are we living? These incidents are seriously denting the country's image," she said.

Khaleda said perpetrators are not getting punishment as there is no rule of law in the country. Law enforcing agencies rather arrested those were affected, she alleged.

The BNP chief reiterates her demand for forming of a judicial probe committee to identify those involved in the Kalshi incident.

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Ctg trader dies in cop custody

Family alleges torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A rape case accused died mysteriously in police custody soon after he was arrested in Chittagong city early yesterday.

The dead, Rokonuzzaman, 45, was a real estate businessman.

Amir Hossain, sub-inspector of Panchlaish Police Station and also the investigation officer of the case, said a joint team of Panchlaish and Bakolia police nabbed Rokan from his Bakolia house around 1:20am in connection with the case.

On the way to Panchlaish Police Station, Rokan fell sick and police

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BSF again kills Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader at Ambari border near Shamshearnagar village of Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat on Wednesday night.

The deceased is Shimul Proddhan, 28, son of Hafizar Rahman of the same village.

Six to seven Bangladeshi traders went across the border to bring cattle on Wednesday evening, said sources at the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

While returning home around 10:45pm, a patrol team of 35 BSF Battalion of Choyangarkhata camp in

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Ex-BCL chief escapes bid to kill him

FROM PAGE 16

When the car slowed down for taking a U-turn in front of Ibn Sina Diagnostic and Imaging Centre, three men came in a motorcycle and opened fire on him, according to the car's driver Kamal Hossain.

Shameem ducked between the dashboard and his seat immediately. However, two bullets pierced through his left hand, Nasir told The Daily Star.

The gunmen then sped away in the motorcycle. Neither the driver nor Nasir could identify the criminals though they had no helmets on.

Shameem was rushed to Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka

Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

He was taken to the CMH around 3:00pm for better treatment, said Ibrahim Khalil, assistant professor of DMCH.

While visiting the spot, this correspondent found some CCTV cameras in front of the Ibn Sina building.

"The camera footages show that three persons on a motorcycle were passing through the spot during the incident. However, the footage is blurred," said a police official of Ramna Division.

Police were working to identify the criminals based on the footages, he said.

Victim's father Abul Hashem said

his son had no personal enmity but he might have political rivalries.

One of the close aides of Shameem told The Daily Star that local politics of his constituency, Shariatpur-2 (Sakhipur-Naria), might be the main reason behind the shooting.

Shameem had disputes with an influential AL leader of Shariatpur who might have masterminded the shooting, said the source, requesting anonymity.

A mid-ranking Jubo League leader might also be involved in it, he added.

State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir

Ahmed visited Shameem at the DMCH.

Shameem served as BCL president between 1994 and 1998. He also led the Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit of the BCL and was the vice-president of JU Central Students' Union between 1989 and 1991.

Meanwhile, JU unit BCL yesterday blocked the Dhaka-Aricha Highway for about an hour protesting the attack and demanding immediate arrest of the attackers.

Demonstrations were also held in Dhaka University and different areas of the capital and in Shariatpur in protest at the attack.

No case was filed till this report came in at 9:00 last night.

Bangladesh-born US citizen held

FROM PAGE 1

Khan is accused of conspiring to recruit people in 2011 to travel overseas to support terrorist activities. Wolfe planned to travel to Syria to help radical groups fighting there, according to the criminal complaints filed against them.

Khan is a full-time University of Texas student who said in an online chat room that he was recruiting fighters for "jihad," an Arabic term sometimes used to mean holy war, the complaint said. He was born in Bangladesh but became a US citizen in 2002.

A separate complaint accuses Wolfe, a Houston native, of arranging to fly with his family to Turkey so he could enter neighboring Syria and fight there. An arrest affidavit details how undercover FBI investigators developed a relationship with him

and his wife, Jordan Nicole Furr, beginning in August.

Wolfe's wife explained that her husband wanted to go to Syria and was "ready to die for his religion," according to the documents. Undercover investigators told Wolfe they could help him with his travel plans.

Wolfe spoke to them using code, referring to the trip as "a musical concert" in Europe.

Wolfe purchased tickets for himself, his wife and their two children to travel Tuesday to Denmark, then Turkey and Syria, the complaint said. Authorities arrested Wolfe at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston as he attempted to board his flight.

He also has a criminal history of drug possession, theft and assault

charges, online records show.

The charges come six months after two Alabama men, Randy "Rasheed" Wilson and Mohammad Abdul Rahman Abukhdair, both 26, were sentenced to 15 years in federal prison for conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists.

Wilson was a Mobile resident and convert to Islam; Abukhdair initially lived in Syracuse, NY, moved to Egypt but was deported and moved to Mobile after becoming friends with Wilson.

DETAILS OF ARRESTEE SOUGHT Bangladesh on Wednesday sought the current status and other particulars of Rahatul Ashikim Khan from the US government, adds our diplomatic correspondent.

Although the US government is yet to officially inform the Bangladesh embassy anything about Rahatul, the

embassy came to know about the matter from media reports, Bangladesh's acting ambassador in US Muhammad A Muhith told The Daily Star.

"We have sought nationality status and other particulars of the arrestee.... We have also informed Dhaka about it and are in touch with the authorities concerned whether there are any instructions or further steps to be taken," he mentioned.

Asked whether Bangladesh is a party to the issue as Rahatul according to US media is an American citizen, Muhith said there are many Bangladesh-born US citizens who are maintaining dual citizenship.

If the arrestee still holds a dual citizenship, the embassy will seek consular access to interview the arrestee, he added.

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