



A large portion of vegetable fields go under floodwater in Elenga of Tangail. Similar situation is seen in Jamalpur, *top right*, and in Keraniganj, *bottom right*.



PHOTO: STAR

Japanese PM's 21-hr busy schedule

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who arrives here this afternoon by a special flight, will spend a busy schedule during his twenty one and a half hours official tour.

According to the programme schedule, Abe is expected to arrive at the VVIP terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 1:00pm where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will receive him. He will be given a guard of honour by a contingent drawn from the three services.

The Japanese PM will visit National Mausoleum in Savar at 2:00pm to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War. From there, he will go to Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi at 3:00pm. He will then go to Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel where he will be staying during his visit.

Shinzo Abe will address the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Forum jointly organised by Bangladesh Board of Investment (BOI), Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) at the Ballroom of Sonargaon Hotel at around 3:00pm.

He will leave for Prime Minister's Office at 4:00pm for summit meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart. Later, the two leaders will join the delegation level official talks.

After introduction of Japanese business delegation, signing ceremony and joint press conference at the PMO, the Japanese premier will leave for Bangabhaban to call on President Abdul Hamid.

After that, Abe is expected to meet the leader of the opposition Raushan Ershad and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Sonargaon Hotel.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Investment main focus

FROM PAGE 1

senior foreign ministry official in Dhaka has said.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga at a press conference in Tokyo has said Abe's trip to Dhaka is aimed at advancing the "Japan-Bangladesh Comprehensive Partnership".

Abe, who arrives here at 1:00pm today on a twenty-one-and-a-half an hour whirlwind official tour, will have a summit meeting with Hasina at 4:00pm today.

His entourage will include executives from top 50 companies in a variety of fields, such as trading, construction, energy, power generation, infrastructure development, IT, textile, RMG, pharmaceuticals and automobiles.

A visiting Japanese delegation during a dialogue with officials in Dhaka last

month stressed improvement of investment environment in Bangladesh, including infrastructure development, stable energy supply, transparency, removing bureaucratic bottleneck, corruption and accelerated processing of permits, licences, etc to facilitate and promote Japanese investment in Bangladesh.

Japan also looks to seek support from Dhaka for Tokyo's bid for a nonpermanent seat in the United Nations Security Council next year, sources say. Abe will discuss this with Hasina.

Bangladesh's support is crucial for Japan as Dhaka has also expressed its interest in contesting the nonpermanent seat and been campaigning since 2002. But only one member state from the Asia-Pacific region can win each election.

In 1978, Bangladesh was elected non-permanent member of UNSC defeating

Japan.

Though Dhaka has not made any public commitment in response to Tokyo's request to withdraw its candidacy in support of Japan, Hasina at a press meet during her visit in May hinted that Bangladesh would withdraw its candidacy before the council election in 2015, saying, "For a trusted friend, Bangladesh is ready to make any sacrifice."

If Dhaka supports Tokyo, diplomatic sources said, Japan will come up with huge economic package and investment proposals, like assisting in a series of major infrastructure projects and a special economic zone for Japanese companies.

The Japanese proposals might include supports in linking Dhaka with Matarbari near the port city of Chittagong, some 40 billion yen for an

industrial zone and another 15 billion yen to set up a special-purpose company for building an industrial park. Tokyo will help with infrastructure construction and corporate financing as well.

The Japanese PM is likely to make a positive announcement to support a range of specific projects in regard to construction of Ganges Barrage, multi-modal tunnel under river Jamuna, dedicated railway bridge over river Jamuna, multi-modal Dhaka Eastern Bypass, ecological restoration of four rivers around Dhaka, etc.

Abe will be the first head of government visiting Bangladesh since the one-sided January 5 election in which as many as 154 candidates from the ruling Awami League and its partners were elected unopposed amid boycotts by the opposition BNP-led alliance.

permissions -- such as trading, import, bond and factory licences; environmental clearance; TIN and VAT registrations; certificates for fire safety and tax exemption -- that are required for setting up a business.

The investors described foreign garment manufacturers' current incapacity to obtain the utilisation of declaration (UD) certificate as a major hurdle to investing in textile and garments industry. The certificate is currently issued only by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

They have also urged the government to address the difficulties expatriate staffs face in obtaining work permit in eight sectors, including logistics and service fields.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh plans to allocate 500 acres of land for a special economic zone for Japanese investors. Besides, 40 plots and two factory buildings have already been designated for them in the existing five Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

The Japanese, however, initially want at least 300 acres. But they said another 250-500 acres may be required for future expansion. The land has to be free from floods and within one and a half hours' drive from Dhaka city. And the price of the land should be at par with that in other Asian countries, according to the proposal.

Dhaka is planning to set up the exclusive economic zone at Mirsarai in Chittagong.

Apart from these, the investors' mission cited various concerns related to banking, customs and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

BB Governor Atiur Rahman on Thursday told The Daily Star that the banking-related problems had already been solved and the PMO was working to address the other issues.

The Japanese mission also offered a credit programme with an interest rate slightly higher than the rate on their official loans which is only 0.1 percent.

This credit will be used for providing loan facilities to local entrepreneurs entering into joint ventures with Japanese investors, and for infrastruc-

ture development of the special economic zone to be designated for Japan.

Direct investment from Japan in Bangladesh is very low. In 2013, the inflow was only \$100 million, though three times higher than the previous year that saw around \$30 million in investment.

The Japan government too has indicated that it would provide loans and this has been discussed between the officials of Economic Relations Division and the investment promotion mission from Japan, according to finance ministry sources.

Though the loan amount has not been disclosed yet, they expect it to be between \$300 million and \$500 million.

Nikkei Asian Review, a leading Japanese newspaper, in a report on August 26 said Japan will give 40 billion yen, equivalent to \$361 million, to develop the exclusive economic zone. And a "15 billion yen fund will be set up by the next fiscal year ... Tokyo will help with infrastructure construction [of the economic zone] and corporate financing as well."

EXTORTION

Chandpur BCL leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Police arrested Awami League's student wing BCL's Hajiganj unit head Shukur Alam Shuvo yesterday, hours after he called the local police chief a BNP agent for 'accepting' an extortion case against him.

Hajiganj police station's officer-in-charge Shah Alam confirmed that Shuvo was arrested from in front of his house in Hajiganj Pashchim Bazar area around 12:30am.

"The arrest follows a case filed against Shuvo on specific extortion allegations," Alam said.

Earlier on Thursday evening Shuvo held a press conference at his business firm Sara Enterprise where he claimed the case filed against him was false and unfounded.

Shuvo said the case defamed him before people and called the Hajiganj police station officer-in-charge a 'BNP agent' for accepting the case.

The said case was filed by Saiful Islam on August 28, two days after a group of three - spearheaded by Shuvo - allegedly beat up the complainant and two others for refusing to pay toll. The complainant Saiful was engaged in construction works along Hajiganj Biswa Road with assistance from employees of MS Ahsan Habib Arun Traders on August 26 when the incident occurred.

Khilgaon OC withdrawn

FROM PAGE 1

The criminals took away Tk 47 lakh but the deceased's uncle Mujibur Rahman yesterday in a case filed with Khilgaon Police Station said the muggers took away Tk 38 lakh.

He accused three to four unnamed people in the case, said Sub-Inspector Fazlul Haque.

Muggers on Thursday night shot Sharif Hossain Simon dead and wounded his father Israil Hossain, the owner of Universal Money Exchange, near Khilgaon Fire Station.

Morgue sources said Sharif received two bullets.

Israil is now undergoing treatment at National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation. He received around six bullets and was expected to go into surgery, family sources said quoting doctors.

Israil has been informed about his son's death and he wanted to see the body. Sharif's body was kept at Birdem mortuary after a namaz-e-janaza held at his Khilgaon home after Asr prayer yesterday.

yesterday.

Deceased's cousin Mosharaf Hossain Rubel told The Daily Star that Sharif and his father had no personal enmity with anyone. Criminals might have shot them for the money they were carrying.

The two were bringing the money home at Shantipur from their work in Motijheel as they ran out of time to deposit it in the bank that day.

The snatching of the money after shooting people has become a common phenomenon in the capital

recently. The law enforcer could not either trace the criminals or recover the money.

On August 17, muggers shot Mujibur Rahman and took away Tk 30 lakh from him in broad daylight in Mirpur-2. Mirpur police are yet to arrest anyone or recover the money.

Even though detectives claimed that they had arrested four suspects involved in the snatching away of Tk 31 lakh in Moghbazar last month, they could not recover the money.

down heavily on the BIWTA chairman for arresting the Pinak-6 owner, said meeting sources.

In the meeting, a nine-member body was formed to scrutinise the demands of the owners. The body will also chalk out plans to ensure river safety.

The owner of Pinak-6 Abu Bakkar Siddique and his son Omar Faruque Limon were arrested on August 13 and 15 respectively in connection with a case filed by a traffic inspector of BIWTA following the launch capsize in the Padma on August 4. The accident claimed the lives of about 110 people. Among them, 62 people still remain missing.

does not mean those have to be met. Law will take its own course."

Regarding the release of Pinak-6 owner, the minister said, "Enquiry is going on into the accident. Steps will be taken on the basis of the enquiry report."

BIWTA Chairman Shamsuddoha Khandaker, however, said the case had been filed under the code of criminal procedure as the owner of Pinak-6 and his son committed criminal offence.

Meanwhile, the owners have already threatened to enforce countrywide strike in waterways if their demands are not fulfilled immediately, sources at the BIWTA

FROM PAGE 16

completion of the investigation, said the owners.

"It is our legal demand. We are the main stakeholders of this sector. So, the government should not do anything that may harass the vessel owners," said Badal.

The minister has assured us that the owner of the launch and his son will be released soon, and verbally directed the BIWTA chairman not to arrest any owners for the time being, he added.

However, the shipping minister denied it and said, "They (owners) can demand many things. They are demanding from their side. But it

Flood

FROM PAGE 1

500 grams of green chilli for Tk 60 at the New Market kitchen market. "I had to pay an extra Tk 20 for half a kg of green chilli today compared to last week."

There too, retailers blamed the price hike on the floods.

"We are paying extra, between Tk 5 to Tk 30 a kg, to buy vegetables from wholesalers," he said. Prices may increase further next week for the flood situation, he added.

Swelling rivers in the country's north inundated many areas, leaving people displaced and houses, schools, and croplands submerged.

In five eastern upazilas of Bogra, 334 hectares of vegetable fields were flooded, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension.

Hossain Sheikh, a 70-year-old farmer in Purba Bhoronshahi of Dhunat upazila, cultivated aubergine on 10 decimals of land. But the floods crushed his hopes of a good yield.

"The croplands are completely damaged now," said Sheikh.

At least 54,000 hectares of arable land are flooded in five upazilas of Sirajganj.

"If vegetable fields remain under water for three to four days, the produce is damaged," said Naimul Islam, an agriculture official of Sirajganj district.

Flood waters also hit transport businesses, said Rustom Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck-Covered Van Owners' Association.

The movement of trucks and covered vans on the roads in the northern regions fell by 25 percent owing to the floods, he said. "Like the consumers, we too are counting losses."

India mulls

FROM PAGE 16

Ministry of Home Affairs has received representations from time to time. The Home Minister approved the setting up of a task force to monitor and expedite processing of citizenship and long-term visa applications, which will start functioning in two weeks time," a home ministry statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had, during the parliamentary election campaign earlier this year, said in separate rallies in West Bengal and Rajasthan states that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Hindu refugees will be treated like other Indian citizens.

There are around one lakh Hindu refugees from Bangladesh and Pakistan in India, according to official sources. Most of the Hindu refugees from Bangladesh live in West Bengal and some in Northeastern states of India.

There are about 400 Pakistani Hindu refugee settlements in cities like Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Jaipur in the desert state of Rajasthan.

Delay in processing applications cause hardships and difficulties to citizenship and long-term visa applicants, especially to minorities from neighbouring countries who are often of poor economic standing, the sources said.

The Home Ministry task force will be headed by the Joint Secretary (Foreigners) and it will expedite cases having complete documents so that all processing is finished within two months.

Besides, the task force will follow up with the state governments concerned where representations are received about specific pending cases in state governments.

Since the initial applications are filed online, the task force would monitor the applications and keep a track of the progress in processing them.

"For many applicants, the grant of long-term visa would have to be processed/considered first. The Task Force will coordinate long-term visa-related matters also," the statement said.