

Guyanese envoy meets foreign minister

Bangladesh offers skilled manpower

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has offered Guyana skilled manpower like physicians, engineers and agriculturists to play an important role in utilising its resources.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali made the offer when Jairam Ronald Gajraj, newly appointed non-resident high commissioner of the South American country to Bangladesh, called on him at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Guyana, officially the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, is a sovereign state on the Caribbean coast of South America.

During the meeting, the Guyanese envoy commented that the two countries can set up a joint commission for the benefit of the two nations.

In this context, the foreign minister proposed that the two countries can identify the areas of cooperation and explore new areas through holding regular Foreign Office Consultations (FOC).

The high commissioner, based in New Delhi, accepted the idea and said that his country would soon begin the FOC, a structured system for annual dialogue at the foreign secretary level.

Ctg battery-run rickshaw owners, drivers threaten tougher movement for legitimacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Owners and drivers of battery-run rickshaws yesterday threatened to enforce a tough programme, including hartal, if their vehicles are not allowed on Chittagong city roads within 72 hours.

The demand came from a rally organised by Battery Rickshaw Owners-Drivers' League before Chittagong Press Club.

Speakers said they appealed to the authorities concerned and also to the prime minister but got no response. Jatiya Sramik League's Chittagong city unit general secretary also spoke.

Earlier, police gave an ultimatum to remove batteries from the vehicles or take those off the roads by March 22. The city has around 50,000 battery-run rickshaws.

EC sees no wrong

FROM PAGE 16

local government polls. We have decided to do the same this time to maintain a level-playing field," an election commissioner told The Daily Star, preferring anonymity.

The decision came following media reports that said some ministers had violated electoral code of conduct by attending an election meeting in Chittagong recently.

According to the electoral code of conduct, parliament speaker, deputy speaker, chief whip, whips, ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers and individuals of equivalent ranks or those enjoying the same government facilities cannot take part in polls campaigns and activities.

On March 31, Housing Minister Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Land Saifuzzaman Chowdhury and State Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Bir Bahadur held a meeting at the Peninsula hotel in Chittagong city.

After the meeting, Saifuzzaman told reporters they discussed the electoral strategy to clinch victory for Awami League-backed mayoral candidate AJM Nasir Uddin.

Later, Abdul Baten, returning officer (RO) of Chittagong City Corporation polls, sought the EC's directives on what steps could be taken in connection with the incident.

In response, the EC yesterday said that the incident did not violate the electoral code of conduct.

"It was an indoor meeting. No campaigning materials were used there. The media did not get access there. So we think it is not a violation of the code of conduct. We have informed the returning officer of this," said a joint secretary of the EC.

At a meeting on law and order situation on April 19, the EC will also discuss the issue of restraining ministers and other key persons from carrying out electoral campaigns in favour of any candidate.

Elections to the three city corporations of Dhaka and Chittagong will be held on April 28.

PM to visit Indonesia Apr 21-24

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will pay a four-day visit to Indonesia on April 21-24 to attend jubilant celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of a conference that eventually laid the foundation for the non-aligned movement.

Indonesia will host the 60th anniversary of the Asia-Africa Conference as well as the 10th anniversary of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) in Jakarta and Bandung from April 19-24.

Hasina will lead a high-level delegation comprising ministers, MPs, civil and military officials and others, but the number of the delegation is yet to be finalised.

Foreign ministry officials said they were preparing the list of delegation in consultation with the Prime Minister's Office and would finalise the PM's programme schedule and delegation list in next few days.

The PM has so far visited Myanmar, Japan, China, the UK, the USA, Italy, the UAE, Nepal and Malaysia in last 15 months since the January 5, 2014 general election.

The theme of the anniversary summit is "Strengthening South-South Cooperation to Promote World Peace and Prosperity."

Foreign ministry officials in Dhaka



said the events will strengthen the Asia-Africa cooperation that started decades ago and allow leaders from both regions to share their economic development experiences.

As stated by the Indonesian government, Jakarta has invited over 100 Asian and African leaders and 25 international organisations to attend the conference.

Majority of the gathering will take place in Jakarta while Bandung will host several events, including a world human rights conference and a Smart City Summit -- where mayors from Asian and African countries will talk about the problems their metropolises currently face.

There will also be an Asian-African carnival that will involve 23 participating countries and will include a solidarity walk and cultural performances.

30 lakh expats cross fingers

FROM PAGE 16

The follow-up meeting is now scheduled to take place at the Probashi Kalyan Bhaban this morning.

Over the last one year, IRIS gave assurances to accelerating its work but that never happened. The MRP project management did nothing to force the company to do its job.

"IRIS seems reluctant even after its commitment made last month," an official at Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh told The Daily Star over the phone.

In Saudi Arabia, IRIS is enrolling only 1,000 migrants a day using its six application processing centres (APC), the official said preferring not to be named. The mission was enrolling around 2,000 people at its Riyadh and Jeddah offices daily.

"We can do the enrolments of all the remaining migrants before the deadline if we could ensure minimum 5,000 enrolments a day. But it is not possible now due to lack of equipment and manpower," Mohammed Ayub, counsellor (consular service) at the embassy in Riyadh told The Daily Star over the phone.

Of the 26 lakh migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, five lakh have been enrolled while four lakh already received their MRPs, he added.

The picture in Malaysia is bleak. IRIS cannot get migrants to go to its APCs. Most of the APCs are in remote areas where expatriates refuse to go

fearing they would be mugged on the way.

"IRIS could not even enrol 100 migrants a day in the last two weeks in Malaysia," said an official in the Kuala Lumpur mission. "If the government wants to give MRPs to all migrants before the deadline, at least 58,000 need to be enrolled every month."

Records show that the job contract winner in Malaysia, Dataedge, had enrolled 52,000 expatriates in two months before it was forced to subcontract the job to IRIS last year. IRIS enrolled only 10,000 in seven months, since getting the job.

High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur Shahidul Islam said the mission and the company have to work fast to meet the deadline. Of the seven lakh migrants in Malaysia, two lakh have received their MRPs as of March.

In the UAE, officials at Bangladesh embassy in Abu Dhabi said the Malaysian company is enrolling around 100 migrants a day. The mission is enrolling around 500 from Abu Dhabi and Dubai offices every day.

IRIS has eight APCs in the UAE and all of them were in remote areas, said a mission official. Of the 10 lakh migrants, around six lakh got MRPs.

Realising IRIS's poor performance, the foreign ministry took the initiative to increase enrolment capacity at its missions in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia. But the MRP project authority is dillydallying, said foreign ministry officials.

Biman plans to expand network

FROM PAGE 16

Other cities to which Biman would have more frequent flights are Jeddah, Dammam, Riyadh, Bangkok and Singapore. Some of the cities are already seeing increased number of flight and the others would see it soon.

In his first press briefing since he took the job in January this year, Heywood yesterday said Biman suspended its operation on Dhaka-Rome route last week as it was incurring a loss of \$10 million a year.

"We will be looking for a very advanced plan for other destinations in South Asia, Far East and an option for China with the availability of two brand new aircraft later this year or early next year," Heywood, also the chief executive officer of Biman, told the briefing at Biman's headquarters Balaka Bhaban.

Two brand new Boeing 737s were supposed to join Biman in the winter, he added.

As part of a deal with Boeing to purchase 10 aircraft, the US plane maker is supposed to deliver the two 737s within this year. Biman has already received four Boeing 777-300ERs (extended range) aircraft from Boeing.

"We have been mandated by the government to be a profitable organisation and we have been working on this," Heywood said, adding that the passenger revenue marked a 38 percent rise in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year compared to that of last year.

He also said cargo revenue was also 15 percent up.

The second British CEO of Biman, after Kevin Steele, also said their target was to make a fleet with younger aircraft which is a key to maintain reliability, on time performance and profitability.

He said the average age of aircraft in the fleet would stand at 7.9 years later this year. In 2010, the average age was

24.7 years that came down to 10.9 at the end of last year, he added.

On ground services, he said the level of services being delivered was below the standard. He added that they had ordered some new equipment to be delivered in the next couple of weeks to improve ground services.

Regarding technical fault in a newly acquired Bombardier Dash 8 aircraft that forced Biman to cancel its inaugural domestic flight and delayed several others, Heywood said the technical fault was unexpected but it could have happened to any aircraft.

Biman fixed the problem after a day and put the aircraft in service, he added.

On media reports that Biman could have bought two Dash 8 aircraft with the money it would be spending for leasing two Dash 8s for the next five years, he said the two aircraft were manufactured in 2011 and the lease amount was absolutely justified considering the age of the aircraft.

Talking about resuming direct flights to New York, Heywood said the authorities in Bangladesh had yet to get US Federal Aviation Authority's approval to that end.

He, however, believes direct flights to New York would not be profitable for Biman.

Replying to a query, he said, "We can reduce corruption through better management and my job for the next couple of years is to make that happen."

In response to another query about measures taken to check gold smuggling, the Biman boss said he had already sent a security team to Dubai as it was the most common spot from where gold was being smuggled into Dhaka.

He further said Biman had launched a special security check for passengers and ground staff including cleaners and their cleaning gears in Dubai to check smuggling using Biman's aircraft.

10kg gold seized from warehouse

2 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Police last night seized 120 gold bars and over 60 gold jewelry items from a warehouse at Anu Majhir Ghat in the city.

The recovered gold weighs about 10kg and was worth around Tk 10 crores, police said.

On information, the law enforcers raided the depository rented by an electronic shop -- AC Mela -- around 11:30pm. As they opened a box of microwave oven, they found the bullions and jewelry inside, said Abdur Rouf, assistant commissioner of Kotwali Zone of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

There were over 100 such boxes of electronic appliances inside and police would search them today.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Mizanur Rahman of the CMP said the warehouse had been sealed.

Visiting the spot, CMP Commissioner Abdul Jalil Mandal told the press that the gold might have been smuggled in from Dubai. But the exact details could be known only after an investigation.

Two people named Imran and Titu were detained in this connection.

UN official

FROM PAGE 16

Supreme Court," says the statement.

Kamaruzzaman was meted out death penalty on charges of crimes against humanity by the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal.

The trial was reportedly marked by irregularities and failed to meet "international fair trial standards", says the statement received here from Geneva.

Raising questions about the fairness of Kamaruzzaman's trial, the statement says, "The UN Human Rights Committee, which interprets the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh has ratified, has stressed that 'in cases of trials leading to the imposition of the death penalty, scrupulous respect of the guarantees of fair trial is particularly important' and that any death penalty imposed after an unfair trial would be a violation of the right to life."

Mentioning Kamaruzzaman's filing of an independent review of his death sentence to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on 5 March 2015, the statement alleges that "without hearing the application on its merits, the Supreme Court summarily rejected his petition."

It also points out that "the UN opposes the use of the death penalty, even in cases where stringent fair trial standards appear to have been met and even for the most serious international crimes."

The statement also urges the Bangladesh government to "join the growing number of States that have abolished this inhuman practice."

New HC bench

FROM PAGE 16

Tuesday to deal with the petitions filed against Niko, Gatco and Barapukuria coalmine corruption cases.

Earlier on April 5, another HC bench of Justice Md Moinul Islam Chowdhury and Justice JBM Hassan sent the appeals to the chief justice for necessary decisions, saying the counsels for Khaleda did not cooperate with the bench in dealing with the petitions.

Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan, who filed the cases against Khaleda, told The Daily Star the newly assigned bench led by Justice Nuruzzaman might start hearing the petitions any day.

On April 2, Khaleda had submitted an application to the chief justice through her lawyers, expressing her no-confidence in the HC bench of Justice Moinul and Justice Hassan. Khaleda, in the application, said she might not get justice from the bench in her petition filed in Barapukuria coalmine corruption case.

The bench led by Moinul was set to deliver the verdict in the petition filed for scrapping the Barapukuria graft case on April 5.

In her application, the former prime minister also prayed for transfer of the plea to another bench.

The petitions against Gatco and Nico graft cases are also remaining pending with the bench of Justice Moinul and Justice Hassan.

The ACC filed the Niko and Gatco corruption cases against Khaleda in 2007 and Barapukuria coal mine graft case in 2008.

Kamaruzzaman to consult

FROM PAGE 1

for the Jamaat leader will meet him at the jail at 11:00am today, Shishir Manir, one of his lawyers, told this correspondent last night.

Around 3:00pm, the SC released the full text of the verdict that rejected the review petition of Kamaruzzaman, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-Islami.

He filed the petition on March 5 against the apex court's judgment that upheld his capital punishment. On Monday, a four-member SC bench led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha dismissed the review petition.

Kamaruzzaman, key organiser of infamous Al-Badr force in greater Mymensingh in 1971, was sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal-2 in May 2013 for committing crimes against humanity, including mass killings in Sohagpur of Shergpur, during the Liberation War.

The ICT registrar's office received a copy of the 36-page SC verdict around 4:30pm. Tribunal officials took it to the central jail authorities around 5:45pm.

Farman Ali, senior jail superintendent of the central jail, read out the verdict to Kamaruzzaman, and wanted to know whether he would seek mercy from the president, said jail sources.

The Jamaat leader then told the prison official that he would decide on the matter after consulting his counsels, they said.

SC OBSERVATIONS

In its full judgment, the SC expressed serious doubts about the credibility of a book, "Mahila Muktijoddha", which was placed before it as fresh evidence on behalf of Kamaruzzaman.

The court described it as a "tailor made book".

"Having read the book from the top to the toe, we [SC judges] are immutably convinced that it is a tailor made book that has been published with an ulterior motive to shield the native paramilitia forces from the accusation of crimes against humanity.

"Nowhere in the book has the frenzied role of the collaborators against the liberation forces been depicted.

"The book gives conspicuous and undistorted impression as if Rajakars, Al-Badr played no part in 1971 atrocities, although truth has it that the Paki army would have been totally lost and helpless without the active help and participations of those local poodles. This book has been published by Nari Grantha Prabartana which is also an unfamiliar quantity," the SC said.

During hearing on Kamaruzzaman's review petition on April 5, his counsel

Khandker Mahub Hossain submitted to the apex court the book written by Farida Aktar.

Mahub told the SC that the writer took the interview of prosecution witness-13, who said Pakistani army had killed her husband, and mentioned it in the book.

"The authenticity of this book has never been tested nor has PW [prosecution witness] 13 been ever asked any question on the alleged interview, shown to have been published in that book.

"The book was first published in February 1991, with second edition in December 1994. So, all the publications took place when the party of the petitioner's belonging was in power," it said.

On the defence counsel's prayer for considering commuting Kamaruzzaman's punishment from death sentence, the apex court said it is true that many countries have abolished capital punishment. But it is equally true that a total of 55 countries retain death penalty as of today.

The countries that retain capital sentence include India, the world's largest democracy, and 32 of the 50 component states of the US, the most powerful democracy in the world, said the court.

"According to Amnesty International's latest report, death sentence worldwide jumped by more than 500 in 2014 compared with the previous year and that during that year at least 2,466 people were sentenced to death worldwide", said the judgment.

It said Mahub's argument that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman "exonerated all criminals against humanity is founded on erroneous belief and is hence legally untenable."

"The truth is that Bangabandhu granted mercy to those collaborators only who committed no criminal offence. He did certainly not insulate those who were accused of criminal offences during the Liberation War period. As a matter of fact by dastardly killing him the anti-liberation forces delayed the trial of those guilty of crimes against humanity," observed the apex court.

There was no error in the judgment on Kamaruzzaman's appeal, it added.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik, a judge of the four-member bench, wrote the judgment. Chief Justice SK Sinha and other two judges -- Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique -- agreed to it.

Better amenities first

FROM PAGE 1

serving the Dhaka city dwellers. We have an emotional attachment with the city people. Since I belong to a family that has been tested and trusted for decades, I think the Dhaka people will not disappoint me," said the DSCC mayor aspirant, who has secured the blessing of the ruling Awami League.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Khokon, also the organising secretary of Dhaka city AL, talked about the existing condition of city services, the challenges he would face if he was given the mandate, and his plans for the city.

"The city faces a lot of problems. From birth to death, every Dhaka dweller has to depend on city services. The quality of these services, unfortunately, is only going down and down due to the absence of people's representatives at the city corporations. If I am voted to the mayor's office, my plan is to strengthen these services within the first year," said Khokon.

Where does he want to see Dhaka city 20 years down the line?

"If I say Dhaka would be like Hong Kong, Singapore or Zurich within 20 years, it will not be realistic. But I think Dhaka can be a city like Jakarta at least. And for that, modern leadership and specific planning are a must."

Traffic jam, shortage of public toilet and street light, waterlogging, and the appalling state of road and transport system and waste management are his major concerns. If voted to the mayor's office, he would address these problems within the first year, Khokon said.

From the second year on, he would work to ensure all modern facilities, like those in the world-class cities, for the city dwellers.

Proper coordination between the city corporation and different government offices would be his main challenge.

"To ensure city services, the city corporation has to work with 20 ministries and 52 directorates. Due to bureaucratic tangles in these offices, the city corporation often finds it hard to implement its plans. My challenge would be to remove these barriers. And I would open a cell that would be responsible for coordinating between these offices for smooth operations of city services."

"Change -- this is what I am going to give the city dwellers if they vote for me.

"Like my maternal grandfather Majed Sardar, who was the last Sarder of Dhaka, and my father Mohammad Hanif, I want to dedicate my life to the service of the people of this city,"

Khokon went on.

Asked what made AL chief Sheikh Hasina pick him over other more experienced party leaders for the mayoral race, Khokon said: "It was perhaps her respect for my late father."

He claimed that there was no misunderstanding among the city unit leaders of the party over this endorsement. "We all are united under Sheikh Hasina's leadership and we always accept her decisions."

Secrets of gibbon

FROM PAGE 16

than 450 different calls to talk to their companions.

The research is so significant that it could provide clues on the evolution of human speech and suggests that other animal species could speak a more precise language than has been previously thought, according to lead author Dr Esther Clarke of Durham University.

Her study found that gibbons produce different categories of "hoo" calls -- relatively quiet sounds that are distinct from their more melodic "song" calls.

These categories of call allow the animals to distinguish when their fellow gibbons are foraging for food, alerting them to distant noises or warning others about the presence of predators.

In addition, Clarke found that each category of "hoo" call can be broken down further, allowing gibbons to be even more specific in their communication.

A warning about lurking raptor birds, for example, sounds different to one about pythons or clouded leopards -- being pitched at a particularly low frequency to ensure it is too deep for the birds of prey to hear.

The warning call denoting the presence of tigers and leopards is the same because they belong to the same class of big cats, the research found.

Clarke says that she set out to analyse the loud and conspicuous songs that gibbons are mainly known for. But sitting in the forests of north-east Thailand she began to notice distinct variations -- and patterns -- in the way that the quieter calls were being used.

The discovery that gibbon communication is far more sophisticated than previously thought has implications across the animal kingdom, she says.

Gibbon hoo calls were first identified in the 1940s, yet their intricacies have gone largely unanalysed because they are so quiet and virtually indistinguishable to the human ear.