



PM off to Germany to attend security conference

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday left Dhaka for Germany on a three-day official visit to attend the 53rd Munich Security Conference (MSC) beginning today.

Apart from delivering speech in the main conference, Hasina is expected to attend different panel discussions and address climate and security issues. She will also conduct bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference.

She is leading a 57-member delegation, which includes Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, secretaries of different ministries, government high officials and members of the media. The premier is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Munich tomorrow.

Diplomatic sources said participants will debate on topics of importance in international security. More than 30 heads of state and government, along with more than 80 foreign and defence ministers, are set to participate in the February 17-19 conference.

The MSC is an important international forum which meets annually to discuss current and future security challenges with the participation of numerous high-level political leaders, politicians, decision-makers, academics and international security experts.

The PM left Dhaka by an
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A traffic policeman is seen removing a rope used for managing vehicles at the capital's Gulshan-1 intersection. Such manual controlling of traffic without using signal lights has become a growing practice at many intersections. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

EU COUNTRIES Govt to bring back irregular migrants

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has agreed to arrange repatriation of irregular migrant Bangladeshis living in the European Union countries.

"In this context, it was also agreed to finalise work on the Standard Operating Procedures regarding the return of irregular migrants with no right to stay in the EU as soon as possible," according to a joint statement issued during the EU-Bangladesh Diplomatic Consultations in Brussels.

On Wednesday, the EU delegation, led by Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific Gunnar Wiegand, and the Bangladesh delegation, led by Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, met in their second diplomatic consultations in Brussels.

As part of the repatriation effort, Bangladesh and the EU will launch an awareness campaign and organise a workshop on risks of irregular migration on February 28 in Dhaka.

In the joint statement, the EU and Bangladesh also agreed to intensify cooperation on HORIZON 2020 and jointly explore scopes of cooperation in new areas including science, technology and innovation.

According to diplomatic sources, the EU has long been urging Bangladesh to take measures for the repatriation of over 80,000 irregular Bangladeshi migrants, whereas Bangladesh had been maintaining that scopes for regularising the irregular migrants need to be explored considering their contributions to EU economies.

All the irregular migrant Bangladeshis did not enter
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Work for people's welfare

President urges the army

UNB, Rajshahi

President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the members of Bangladesh Army to work for public welfare apart from ensuring the country's security and sovereignty.

"The members of the army have already earned respect and love from people as well as the trust of the nation through their services and responsibilities. They'll also contribute to public welfare in the future in the greater interest of the country and the nation," he said.

He was addressing the 2nd Corps Reunion of Bangladesh Infantry Regimental Centre (BIRC) at Rajshahi Cantonment.

Hamid, also the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (AFD), paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the 1971 Liberation War and the 1952 Language Movement.

He recalled the sacrifices of Army members who had contributions to developing

the Bangladesh Infantry Regiment (BIR). Stressing the need for providing training, Hamid said training for the armed forces members is an ongoing process to build an efficient and professional force.

The government has already prepared Bangladesh Armed Forces Goal-2030 in line with its 'Vision 2021', he said.

The Army members have shown remarkable efficiency in global arena and upheld the country's image. They have been contributing to addressing national calamities and other services-oriented activities, Hamid said, adding, Army is also playing an important role in implementing Padma Bridge Project.

Earlier, the President inspected the parade of Artillery Corps and received salute.

Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sharif, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, Chief of Army Staff General Abu Belal Muhammad Shaiful Huq and senior officials of the government and Bangladesh Army were present on the occasion.

Raise voice against 'extortionists'

Khokon urges city dwellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday called upon the city dwellers to unite and raise voice against those who are opposing the DSCC's eviction drives of clearing the roads and sidewalks from illegal occupation and instigating the hawkers for their own interests.

Termining them extortionists, he said, "They are opportunists... we must raise voice against them."

He was addressing a views-exchange meeting organised by bdnews24.com, and journalism and mass communication department of Daffodil International University (DIU) on its main campus in the capital to celebrate the sixth anniversary of blog.bdnews24.com, a platform for citizen journalism.

"No one will be allowed to park their vehicles anywhere they like. It creates a severe gridlock..." he said. The mayor said a long-term planning is needed to reduce the city's air pollution.

He once again requested the dwellers to throw household waste in designated places after 7:00pm.

To solve social problems, all should come forward, suggested Chief Information Commissioner Prof Dr Golam Rahman. "Otherwise, no problems will be solved."

Earlier, citizen journalist Nitai Babu was awarded for his reports.

DIU's Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Yousuf Mahbulul Islam, Trustee Board Chairman Sabur Khan and editor of arts.bdnews24.com Muhammad Nurul Huda also spoke.



Smoke and fumes above the fire that destroyed around 221 shanties in the Banshbari slum near Shia Mosque at Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

'It was all ashes when I returned'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the fire started, most of the slum residents were asleep. The flames spread fast, and within one hour, 221 shanties were reduced to ashes.

The devastating fire broke out at Banshbari slum near Shia mosque in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday morning, leaving more than 200 poor families homeless.

It took one hour for 13 fire-fighting units to extinguish the blaze, which started around 4:00am.

The source of the fire was not known immediately.

"I was in deep sleep when I heard a noise outside. I got up and stormed out with my family. But in the morning when I returned I saw only ashes in the place of my one-room house," said Rahim.

At 40, the physically-challenged man's only shelter was the shanty. With the house gone, his six-member family, already living on a subsistence income, has to spend nights under the sky.

Originally from Charfesson of Bhola, he had been living in the slum for the last 25 years. He used to earn Tk 200 to 250 every day by begging and pay Tk 1,500 for the one-room house.

Tafazzal, a chanachur (snack mixes) seller, lost not only his home, but also his savings. He kept Tk 7,700 between the folds of the bedding the night before. "I tried to slide my finger into the folds to take the money out but I couldn't. I only saved myself," he said. The fire also gutted some shops in front of the slum.

Shah Alam Mal, 70, the owner of wood

shop, said all his stocks were burnt. "I borrowed Tk 50,000 from a local association two months ago and bought the wood," he said.

Alam had been a resident of the slum for 30 years.

Grappling with uncertainties, the victims, however, said the fire might be an act of sabotage, triggered by a dispute over ownership of the slum land.

A local government representative, who wished to remain unnamed, said three groups of people were feuding over the slum land.

There were allegations that two masked men set fire to the slum, but The Daily Star could not contact any witness to verify the claim. However, local ward councillor Tarequzzaman Rajib does not think it was an act of sabotage as this the fifth time a fire broke out in the slum since it was established around 40 years back.

Earlier, the residents rebuilt their homes, he said.

Asked about their rehabilitation, Rajib said no decision was made yet, but initially the victims would be staying in nearby schools and under-construction buildings.

Dhaka North City Corporation has made a list of 221 shanties and will give 30kg of rice and Tk 3,000 to each family a day, he added.

"Some NGOs are assisting the fire victims while Dhaka Wasa is providing water."

The councillor said initially free meals were being distributed.

While visiting the place, local lawmaker Jahangir Kabir Nanak said the families would receive aid, and the allegations of sabotage would be investigated.



President Abdul Hamid cuts a cake on the occasion of the 2nd Corps Reunion of Bangladesh Infantry Regimental Centre at Rajshahi Cantonment yesterday. Earlier, the President, also the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Division, inspected the parade of Artillery Corps and received salute. PHOTO: PID

Nation will miss a dedicated leader

Say citizens in remembrance of Suranjit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suranjit Sengupta was not only a seasoned political leader, but also a pioneer in the movement against fundamentalism and communalism in the country, speakers said yesterday at a discussion commemorating the leader's life.

The nation will miss this veteran parliamentarian whose demise has left a void in the political arena of the country, they also said.

Suranjit Sengupta Smaran Nagorik Committee organised the discussion at the central Shaheed Minar where cultural activists, politicians and social workers took part as speakers.

"Many take up politics as a matter of convenience, but Suranjit treated politics as worship ... and that
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INDICTMENT OF DEAD MAN War tribunal accepts SP's apology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 will not proceed against Superintendent of Police in Mymensingh since he had offered an unconditional apology for his "inaction and negligence" in communicating timely to avoid indictment after death of a fugitive war crimes accused.

The two-member tribunal led by Justice Md Shahinur Islam with member Tribunal Shohraward yesterday, however, cautioned the SP Syed Nurul Islam "not to repeat such inaction in carrying out tribunal's order in future."

However, the tribunal did not accept the explanation of inspector general of police (IGP) submitted on the cause of delay and negligence found in executing a warrant issued by the tribunal for arresting the accused, as it was not signed by him (IGP).

As the report was submitted by the law officer of the IGP office, the tribunal directed the IGP AKM Shahidul Hoque to submit a written explanation with his own signature within 10 days from the date.

Fugitive accused Wazuddin of Mymensingh's Phulbaria upazila died of "old-age complications" on May 7 last year. But police didn't inform the tribunal of the matter until January 12 when a media report brought the matter to the fore.

However, the office-in-charge of Phulbaria police on August 22 last year informed the SP about Wazuddin's death and gave him a reminder on December 24, but the SP did not inform the tribunal.

The "unusual delay and negligence" in informing the
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Publish ads for 3 Mymensingh fugitives

ICT directs registrar's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday directed its registrar's office to publish advertisement in two national dailies asking three fugitive war crimes accused from Mymensingh to appear before it.

As per the order, the accused have to appear before the tribunal within two weeks after publish of the advertisements in a Bangla and an English newspaper.

Earlier, police submitted a report mentioning them as fugitives. The tribunal fixed March 5 for passing the next order in the case.

The fugitives -- Mohammad Abdus Sattar, Mohammad Fakruzzaman, and Khandakar Golam Rabbani -- are among the eight accused of the case filed for allegedly committing crimes during the
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Students of the fine arts faculty of Dhaka University bring out a procession on the campus in protest at Wednesday's attack on them allegedly by activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, Bangabandhu Hall unit. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN