

# South Korea’s presidential envoy due today

UNB, Dhaka

South Korea’s special presidential envoy for “future strategy” Jang Sung Min arrives in Bangladesh today on a three-day visit.

He is scheduled to meet Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at his ministry tomorrow.

The special envoy is likely to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during his stay in Dhaka.

Bangladesh and South Korea are celebrating the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations this year.

Min has been helping the South Korean president to formulate policies. Details about his engagements in Dhaka are yet to be known.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The photo shows beautiful paintings done by a team of expert artisans on tea stalls at Dhaka University’s TSC, which were inaugurated yesterday to mark the first day of spring today. Last year, the TSC received a similar glow-up by the same team.

# EU worried by ‘politically motivated violence’

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union and delegations of its member states in Dhaka said in a joint statement that they were “deeply concerned about politically motivated violence” in Bangladesh.

European Union in Bangladesh issued the statement on Twitter Sunday night.

“The EU and EU member state missions in Dhaka are deeply concerned by the recent reports of politically motivated violence and strongly encourage all those engaged in political activities to conduct them in a peaceful, lawful manner,” read the EU’s tweet.

At least 200 people, mostly BNP activists, were injured in clashes with the ruling Awami League activists and police in different districts on February 11.

Four policemen were injured in the clashes in two districts during this period.



# TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE Rescue phase ‘coming to a close’

Says UN aid chief as death toll rises above 37,000

AGENCIES

The phase of the rescue after the major earthquake struck Turkey and Syria a week ago is “coming to a close” with urgency now switching to shelter, food, schooling and psychosocial care, the UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said during a visit to Syria yesterday.

“What is the most striking here, is even in Aleppo, which has suffered so much these many years, this moment ... was about the worst that these people have experienced,” Griffiths said from the government-held northwestern Syrian city of Aleppo that was a major front line in the Syrian civil war.

With hopes of finding many more survivors in the rubble fast fading, the combined death toll in Turkey and neighbouring Syria from last Monday’s 7.8 magnitude quake rose above 37,000 and looked set to keep increasing.

Griffiths said the United Nations would have aid moving from government-held regions to the rebel-held northwest, a front line across which aid has seldom passed during the conflict.

Aid appeals would be issued for all the regions hit by the disaster, he added. “We’ll

have assistance moving from here into the northwest but the northwest is only one part of Syria ... it’s also very important that we take care of the people here,” Griffiths said.

Griffiths also said he had heard traumatic accounts of the disaster from survivors in Aleppo.

“People who lost their children, some of whom escaped, others stayed in the building. The trauma of the people we spoke to was visible and this is a trauma which the world needs to heal,” he said.

But as he was speaking, teams in southeastern Turkey plucked more people from the rubble. Officials said a young girl named Miray was rescued in Adiyaman 178 hours after the earthquake and a 35-year-old woman was also rescued in the same city.

A woman named Naide Umay was carried alive from a mess of crumbled masonry and twisted steel rods in Antakya, a video shared online by the mayor of Istanbul showed. Workers clapped as she was put in an ambulance.

Broadcaster Haberturk reported another woman and two children were rescued in Antakya, while CNN Turk

reported a woman taken from the rubble in southern Gaziantep province.

Rescue workers in the Turkish city of Kahramanmaras said they had contact with a grandmother, mother and baby trapped in one room in a three-storey building, with a fourth person possibly in another room, reports Reuters.

Rescuers, who included a Spanish team and the Turkish police and army, said they were trying to break a wall to reach the survivors but a column was delaying them. One rescue worker said the women were 3 metres below ground.

Residents and aid workers from several Turkish cities have cited worsening security conditions, with widespread accounts of businesses and collapsed homes being robbed.

Some business owners emptied their shops on Sunday to prevent merchandise from being stolen by looters.

Turkish authorities have started to crack down on social media accounts making “provocative” posts viewed as spreading fear and panic amid the public, the country’s police headquarters said yesterday. It said 56 people had been detained and 14 remanded in custody.

# 29 BNP men sued over vandalism, arson

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Twenty-nine BNP leaders and activists were sued yesterday on charges of vandalism, looting, and arson in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Mahendranagar union’s BNP president and also the Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Majid Mandal was made the prime accused in the case filed with Sadar Police Station.

Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ershadul Alam said 19 named and at least 10 unnamed people were made accused in the case.

Police detained three persons whose names were not mentioned in the case.

On Saturday afternoon, there was a clash between Awami League and BNP activists in the upazila’s Burirbazar area.

Later, BNP men vandalised his house and also set it on fire, Rakib Hasan, owner of the house who filed the case, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Abdul Majid told this correspondent over the phone that a false case has been filed to harass them.

# Lawyer arrested over attempted rape of university student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Rab arrested a lawyer in a case filed over the attempted rape of a female university student in Gopalganj.

Md Alamgir Hossain 45, was arrested in Dhaka’s New Market area Sunday afternoon.

On February 10, Morad Hossain, deputy registrar at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, filed the case against the lawyer, who practised at the Gopalganj District Court.

Alamgir offered the student a job to tutor his children. She accepted it and went to his place on the evening of February 10.

However, his children were not home and there, he attempted to rape her.

When she screamed for help, neighbours rescued her and Alamgir fled the scene.

# Missing schoolboy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajbari

Police yesterday recovered the body of a schoolboy two days after he went missing from Charpara Beribad area under Habaspur union of Pangsha upazila in Rajbari.

Akash Mollah, 11, son of Nasir Uddin Mollah, was a fourth-grader at Sengram Govt Primary School.

On Saturday afternoon, he took out his father’s rickshaw van for work and did not return after nightfall.

Police later discovered Akash’s body after interrogating a suspect, said the boy’s uncle Surya Sheikh said.

Masudur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Pangsha Police Station, said, “As it is an ongoing investigation, we cannot reveal any further details.”

# New structures

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information on what life was like for the people who inhabited the city.

“There must be more residential groups that have not been explored yet. The study of these peripheral groups, around the central part, could tell us about other families, other groups that made up this great city,” said archaeologist Jose Osorio Leon.

The area has been under exploration since 1998. In 2018, a second pyramid was discovered hidden deep within the famous Kukulkan pyramid.

Around 2 million people visit Chichen Itza site in southeast Mexico each year, according to official data.

It was founded as a Mayan pilgrimage center by the Itza, or “water sorcerers.”

# India’s Adani tries

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manipulation, allegations the group has denied.

The turmoil continued yesterday, with shares in the listed companies extending their losses.

Seeking to calm investors, the conglomerate in a statement to Reuters said the balance sheet of each of its independent portfolio companies was “very healthy”, adding it had secure assets and strong cashflows, with its business plans “fully funded”.

“We are confident in the continued ability of our portfolio to deliver superior returns to shareholders,” Adani Group said in the emailed statement.

Bloomberg News reported yesterday the group had halved its revenue growth target and planned to scale down capital spending. A company spokesperson told Reuters earlier in the day the report was “baseless, speculative”, without elaborating.

The Adani crisis has sparked worries of financial contagion in India, protests in parliament where lawmakers have

demanding an investigation, ratings outlook downgrades of some Adani units and cast a shadow on the group’s capital raising plans. Gautam Adani has also lost his crown as Asia’s richest person.

Adani Group’s statement said “once the current market stabilises, each entity will review its own capital market strategy.”

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has been probing the market rout, including examining trade patterns and any potential irregularities in the \$2.5 billion share sale of flagship company Adani Enterprises ADEL.NS that the Adani group was forced to cancel due to the stock’s plunge, Reuters has previously reported.

SEBI confirmed the existence of the investigation for the first time in a Supreme Court filing.

“SEBI is already enquiring into both the allegations made in the Hindenburg report as well as the market activity immediately preceding and post the publication of the report,” the regulator said in the filing seen by Reuters, adding the matter was in early stages of examination.

# Skill factor hinders rise in remittance

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The data of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) shows a record 11.35 lakh workers went abroad last year as economies started opening up with the easing of the Covid crisis.

Analysing government data, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in its 2022 Migration Trends Report said about 78.64 percent of workers who migrated last year were less skilled. It was 75.24 percent the year before.

It said last year about 3.26 percent of the workers were semi-skilled – like tailors, construction workers, and light machine operators.

At least 17.76 percent of the migrants were skilled – like garment workers, drivers, mechanics, heavy machine operators and people who can work in the manufacturing sector.

Less than one percent of the migrants were professionals – like medical professionals, engineers, and teachers.

The IOM conducted a survey on 1,000 remittance-receiving homes in 2020 and found that over the previous decade, skilled migrants on average sent home Tk 2.55 lakh a year whereas less-skilled ones sent Tk 1.55 lakh.

The skilled workers send money to their wives on average for 10 years before returning home but the less-skilled workers send money for six years, it found.

Prof CR Abrar, executive director of the RMMRU, said apart from earning less, less-skilled workers often face challenges like fraudulence. They pay hefty amounts to go abroad and many become unable to recoup the money spent.

Considering various recent economic shocks, remittance has now become even more crucial and “almost a lifeline” for the country’s economy but there is no qualitative change in sending skilled workers abroad, he said.

Bangladesh has so far been

unsuccessful in giving its migrants the required skill sets that not only bring in higher remittance but also provide protection to migrants.

He also said there appears to be a nominal difference between a semi-skilled and a less-skilled worker.

Syed Saiful Haque, chairman of Warbe Development Foundation, which works for migrants’ rights, said in many cases, Bangladeshi workers are not given the promised jobs in host countries.

“Those who get jobs earn less. As a result, we don’t see much improvement in terms of getting remittance,” he added.

Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Oivabashi Karmi Unnayan Programme (Okup), said Bangladesh has traditionally been sending workers who can do “3D jobs” (dirty, dangerous, and difficult).

He said in most cases, the workers go abroad following the “purchase of visa, known as visa trading”. This group of migrants are more inclined towards low-skill jobs.

Stressing the need for more initiative on enhancing workers’ skills, Shakirul said the government needs to upgrade its training courses and also encourage labour receiving-countries to invest in skills training in Bangladesh so that they can hire more skilled workers from here.

**RATIO OF SKILLED MIGRATION DROPPING**

Of the 4.99 lakh workers who migrated in 2019-2020 fiscal year, 33.3 percent or 1.66 lakh were skilled, according to the expatriates’ welfare ministry.

The following year, which was affected by the pandemic, 2.71 lakh migrated and 22.68 percent or 61,690 of them were skilled.

In 2021-2022, about 9.66 lakh migrated and of them 20.4 percent or 1.97 lakh were skilled.

Seeking anonymity, a leader of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies said they receive more demand letters for less-skilled and semi-

skilled workers than skilled workers from Middle East countries, where Bangladeshis migrate the most.

However, Bangladesh, the sixth largest source country of international migrants, has the scope for sending more skilled workers there despite the fact that the market is being catered by the Philippines and India, the leader said.

Shakirul Islam of Okup said there is a demand for skilled workers in many countries and Bangladesh needs to identify those and train aspirant migrants accordingly.

Prof Abrar said with the easing of the pandemic, tourism and hospitality sectors are now thriving again in many countries.

He said Bangladesh should take steps to tap into this potential.

Senior Secretary Ahmed Munirur Saleheen of the expatriates’ welfare ministry said different institutions under the ministry are active in workers’ skills development. The ministry itself is aligned with the National Skills Development Authority, he said.

According to the 2021-2022 report of the expatriates’ welfare ministry, at least 64 technical training centres and six institutes of the marine technology under the guidance of the ministry provide aspirant migrants, and whoever wants it, training on 55 different trades.

The ministry website says 86,437 people got training at those institutes in 2021-2022 fiscal.

Saleheen, however, said the migration of skilled workers has not been as per expectations. “One reason could be that those who are migrating lack the interest in gathering skills before migration,” he added.

He urged aspirant migrant workers to undergo institutional training before migration. Skills ensure both money and dignity, he said.

Saleheen, however, refused to comment on RMMRU findings but said the data of RMMRU could be “authentic”.

# Nation gets next head of state

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In response to the BNP’s reaction that it has “no interest” in the president, Quader said the BNP has “no interest” in the country’s constitution or democracy and “this is not surprising for us at all”.

He hoped that the BNP would take part in the next national election as his party wants a competitive election.

When BNP candidate Abdur Rahman Biswas became the president in October 1991 following the restoration of democracy, it was the first and so far the last presidential election that saw a contest.

The presidential election takes place in parliament and members of parliament elect the head of state.

Abdur Rahman’s successors – Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Professor Iajuddin Ahmed and Zillur Rahman – were elected unopposed between 1996 and 2009.

Abdul Hamid became the acting

president following the death of Zillur Rahman. He was elected unopposed twice in April 2013 and February 2018.

His second tenure will end on April 23 and he cannot become president again as he held office for two terms.

According to Article 123 of the constitution, the presidential election must be held 60 to 90 days before the expiry of each five-year term.

The post of the president is mostly ceremonial as he or she is to act as per the advice of the prime minister, except when appointing the premier and the chief justice, but it takes on some significance during the polls. The head of state has a say in issuing directives to help the Election Commission function effectively.

With the 12th general election slated for January next year, top AL leaders believe someone trustworthy should be holding the president’s office during that crucial period.

Nicknamed Chuppu, Shahabuddin

is a retired district judge and a former commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

A valiant freedom fighter, he was imprisoned for several years following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975.

He also served as the chairman of a labour court and a lawyer of the Supreme Court after his retirement.

In May 2017, he was appointed a director of Islami Bank Bangladesh board after Chattogram-based S Alam group took over the lender in January of that year. Yesterday, he resigned from all the positions at the bank.

As an ACC commissioner from March 2011 to March 2016, he was vocal against the World Bank’s allegations of corruption in the process of building the Padma Bridge, after the global lender backtracked on its \$1.2 billion deal for the project.