



INDIAN OCEAN CONFCE

Enhancing co-operation key objective

PM to open the 2-day event today; 150 representatives from 25 countries to attend it

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The two-day Indian Ocean Conference begins in Dhaka today as the coastal countries aspire to establish the region as a free, open, inclusive, prosperous and peaceful one.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the conference titled “Peace, Prosperity and Partnership for Resilient Future”.

The event is being jointly organised by the India Foundation, and the foreign ministry of Bangladesh at the hotel InterContinental Dhaka.

Mauritius President Prithvirajsing Roopun, Maldives Vice President Faisal Naseem, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Deputy Assistant Secretary Afreen Akhter, Seychelles Minister of Internal Affairs Errol Fonseka, Madagascar Defense Minister Josoa Rakotoarijaona, Sri Lankan Minister of Ports, Shipping and Aviation Nimal Siripala De Silva and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tharaka Balasuriya, Singapore’s Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Maliki Osman, and Bhutan Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji have already arrived in Dhaka to join the event.

Delegates from Nepal, Bahrain, Japan, Cambodia, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Somalia, Vietnam, the Philippines, the US, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Thailand and Germany and D-8, Saarc and BIMSTEC will also take part in the conference.

The event will bring together about 150 high-level representatives from at least 25 countries.

The participating nations will have an idea about the actions they might have to take in future amid the ongoing world events, said foreign ministry officials.

Bangladesh will be able to use the information shared in the event to decide on the issues it needs to deal with, they added.

“The entire Indian Ocean region is very important. Everyone needs to work together on how to make the most of the region’s changing geopolitical and geo-economic potentials. Besides, regional stability is essential in the current global context,” Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told journalists on Wednesday.

Bangladesh’s partnership with the countries in the Indian Ocean region will be strengthened through hosting the IOC, he added.

Bangladesh and India, as two responsible states, are committed to ensure the rise of a “free, open, inclusive and rules-based” Indian Ocean region, according to the concept note of the conference.

The global order is rapidly evolving, power axis is shifting, and the complacency of the past is making way for greater confidence in future, it says.

Marking the event, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has highlighted the need for cooperation among the countries to combat unconventional security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region, according to the Facebook page of India Foundation.



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AK Abdul Momen
Foreign Minister



Shop owners, traders and staffers block an entrance to a two-storey building in Karwan Bazar wholesale market in the capital around noon yesterday during a drive by the Dhaka North City Corporation to seal off the structure declared risky. The DNCC team returned after the traders refused to vacate the building without being rehabilitated. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Biman sending 100 officials ‘to help hajj pilgrims’

Insiders say the carrier is wasting crores of taka even when it has people to do the job in KSA

ZYMA ISLAM and RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman is spending crores to send around 100 officials to Saudi Arabia to assist Bangladeshi hajjis even though it has a general sales agent and several fully-fledged offices in the kingdom for this job.

According to sources, Biman will spend between Tk 8 and Tk 10 crore on the 100 officials for their 37-day stay in Saudi Arabia. The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the amount.

Biman is sending at least 33 officials from the customer service department, eight officials from the engineering and material management department, 28 sales and marketing officials, and two administration and HR officials.

Aviation industry insiders questioned the logic behind sending such a large team when Biman has a General Sales Agent (GSA) and country and station offices in Jeddah, Medina and Makkah.

“GSA is obligated to do all kinds of ticket-related work. Then why are 28 officials from the marketing and sales department going?” an official of Biman said.

Ground handling services are provided by Saudi authorities under an agreement.

A Biman official will get a daily allowance between \$220 and \$225 (around Tk 24,000) which will be

around Tk 9 lakh for the 37 days, said a Biman official. This amount will be given in addition to other facilities.

The allowance varies depending on the position of the officials, the official said.

Biman Managing Director and CEO Shafiqul Azim told The Daily Star that they were not sending any additional manpower.

He said last year Biman sent 119

M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, president of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, said under the Makkah Route Initiative, Saudi-appointed employees carry the pilgrims’ luggage between the airport and their hotels. They also carry the Zamzam water containers, he added.

officials to Saudi Arabia when it carried around 30,000 hajj pilgrims. “This year Biman will carry around 62,000 pilgrims.”

Explaining the matter, the Biman boss said Biman employees have to do everything, including carrying the luggage of pilgrims to and from hotels and the large Zamzam water containers when they depart Saudi

Arabia.

They also have to manage the pilgrims’ luggage in line with the weight limit.

There is a lot more work that needs to be done within a short time after a Biman flight lands there, he said.

“In case of an hour’s delay [for departure], the Saudi authorities will impose a huge fine,” he added.

However, M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, president of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, said under the Makkah Route Initiative, Saudi-appointed employees carry the pilgrims’ luggage between the airport and their hotels. They also carry the Zamzam water containers, he added.

Sheikh Mohammed Yasin of Baliakandi in Rajbari performed hajj in 2019. He said it was bus staffers who carried the pilgrims’ luggage from the hotel to the airport in KSA.

He said Biman staffers in Dhaka gave them the water containers which were flown in the cargo hold of the plane under Biman management.

Apart from Biman, Saudia and Flynas are also flying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia from Bangladesh. The two carriers are not sending any additional officials to Bangladesh for processing pilgrims, officials of Saudia told The Daily Star.

A Saudia official said their GSA would be carrying out the work.

ESSENTIALS’ PRICES

Ministers should quit if they fail to break syndicates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Industries Kamal Ahmed Majumder yesterday said ministers concerned should quit if they can’t break up syndicates controlling the economy and essentials’ market.

Many consumers are in trouble as they cannot buy what they need with the money they have in their pockets, Kamal said.

He made the comments while addressing journalists at a workshop on “the role of the media for the development of SMEs after the Covid-19 pandemic” organised jointly by the Economic Reporters’ Forum (ERF) and SME Foundation at the ERF office in Dhaka.

The state minister added that many people became owners of banks taking loans from state-owned banks. Their names should be published.

The remitters are not sending money via the formal channels and this is why the county is facing the shortage of dollars, he said.

7,000-yr-old stone road found under sea off Croatia

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have unearthed a strange 7,000-year-old stone road buried under a layer of sea mud in the sunken remains of an ancient settlement off the coast of Croatia.



The ancient stone road was uncovered by researchers from the University of Zadar in Croatia after they cleared off deposits of sea mud off the coast of the locality of Soline on Korčula island.

The road likely connected a sunken prehistoric settlement of Hvar culture to the coast of Korčula, according to archaeologists. They said the stone plates, which were part of the four-metre-wide platform, seem to be carefully stacked.

Radiocarbon dating of preserved wood near the site was used to estimate that the entire settlement may have been built around 4,900 BC.

Archaeologists believe ancient people of the time walked on this road, which connected the artificially created island to the coast, “almost 7,000 years ago”.

“In underwater archaeological research of the submerged neolithic site of Soline on the island of Korčula, archaeologists found remains that surprised them,” scientists from the University of Zadar said in a statement on Facebook.

“Namely, beneath the layers of sea mud, they discovered a road that connected the sunken prehistoric settlement of the Hvar culture with the coast of the island of Korčula,” they said.

Probe into Biman’s 787 glitch begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman has formed a probe committee to investigate why the weather radar systems of a Boeing 787 broke down during its return flight from Tokyo after it dropped off Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Capt Enamul Haque Talukder, chief of safety, was made the convener of the two-member committee, Biman said in an office order signed by Director Siddiqui Rahman on May 9.

The committee was asked to submit its report within three working days.

The Daily Star on May 9 ran a news titled “Biman 787 suffers glitch on return flight from Tokyo”.

The plane dropped off the PM on the morning of April 25, refuelled, and departed for Dhaka an hour and 45 minutes later.

The pilot then noticed that neither of the two weather radar systems were working.



PEEK-A-BIRD... A lineated barbet peeks out of its home in a tree hollow at the Botanical Garden in the capital. This species of Asian barbets is non-migratory and found mostly across Southeast Asia, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. They prefer sheltering in deciduous forests, or parks and gardens where they can not only camouflage themselves in the canopies of trees and nest in the cavities but can find plenty of food – fruits and small insects. Highly aggressive and territorial, lineated barbets stay only in pairs and are very protective of their homes. This is why you will hardly ever see them in groups. Although they are in the “Least Concern” category of the IUCN Red List, pet trading does pose a threat to this species.

PHOTO: MD RIDWANUR RAHMAN

SUDAN CONFLICT

Pressure needed to halt fighting

Says UN rights chief as more people undertake dangerous journeys to safety across borders

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday called on the international community to exert all possible pressure on the fighting sides in Sudan to resolve the conflict and end “the wanton violence”.

The fighting has plunged “this much-suffering country into catastrophe”, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said.

Addressing a session of the UN Human Rights Council, he urged “all states with influence in the region to encourage, by all possible means, the resolution of this crisis”.

His comments, via video message, came as fighting continued in Khartoum, pushing more people to undertake dangerous journeys to safety crossing borders.

More than 750 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced in the fighting that began on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

“I condemn the use of violence by individuals who have no regard for the lives and fundamental rights of millions of their own compatriots,” Turk said, slamming “this wanton violence, in which both sides have trampled international humanitarian law”.