

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN PM to leave for Saudi Arabia Nov 5

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to attend the International Conference on Women in Islam on November 6-8.

Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are hosting the conference, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters at the ministry yesterday.

The conference aims to clarify women's rights and responsibilities in Islam, especially women's rights to education and work as per the teachings of Islam, with broad participation from scholars of the Islamic Ummah.

Islami Andolan gets DMP nod to hold rally in city tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) yesterday received permission from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to hold a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan tomorrow.

Nazmur Raihan, special assistant to the DMP commissioner, told The Daily Star that the rally was allowed to be organised on 20 conditions in response to the party's application on October 22.

The DMP, however, in its approval letter, said the police permission does not necessarily mean approval for the use of the venue, meaning the party will have to obtain permission separately from the authorities concerned for using the grounds.

The 20 conditions include: confining the rallies to the designated spaces; not gathering people on the streets or sidewalks outside of the approved places; only allowing people to assemble two hours before the start of the rallies; concluding the rallies within the allotted time; not giving provocative speeches or distributing leaflets; and not using sticks or rods in the name of carrying banners or festoons.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Staffers of Shyamoli NR Travels' ticket counter spent their time at work watching a game of cricket as passengers were scarce yesterday -- the second day of BNP's nationwide blockade. Commuters have been refraining from using buses in fear of violence.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SAFETY

UK, US, China sign pledge at first summit

AFP

Countries including the UK, United States and China yesterday agreed the "need for international action" as political and tech leaders gathered for the world's first summit on artificial intelligence (AI) safety.

The UK government kicked off the two-day event at Bletchley Park, north of London, by publishing the "Bletchley Declaration" signed by 28 countries and the European Union.

In it, they agreed on "the urgent need to understand and collectively manage potential risks through a new joint global effort to ensure AI is developed and deployed in a safe, responsible way for the benefit of the global community".

Sunak called the declaration a "landmark achievement" while King Charles III, in a video message to the summit, urged international collaboration

to combat the "significant risks" of unchecked development.

"There is a clear imperative to ensure that this rapidly evolving technology remains safe and secure," he said.

UK technology minister Michelle Donelan told AFP that the declaration "really outlines for the first time the world coming together to identify this problem".

The announcement came shortly after the UK and United States both said they were setting up their own institutes to assess and mitigate the risks of the fast-emerging technology.

The release of the latest models have offered a glimpse into the potential of so-called frontier AI, but have also prompted concerns around issues ranging from job losses to cyber attacks and the control that humans actually have over the systems.

The conference at Bletchley Park, where top British codebreakers cracked Nazi

Germany's "Enigma" code, focuses on frontier AI.

Donelan told AFP the event was a "historic moment in mankind's history" after earlier announcing two further summits, in South Korea in six months' time, and in France next year.

But London has reportedly had to scale back its ambitions around ideas such as launching a new regulatory body amid a perceived lack of enthusiasm.

Donelan accepted that the summit "isn't designed to produce a blueprint for global legislation", but was instead "designed to forge a path ahead,... so that we can get a better handle and understanding on the risk of frontier AI".

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was one of the only world leaders attending the conference, although tech giant Elon Musk was already present on the first day, and will talk with Sunak on Thursday.

What will follow the fiasco?

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at the helm of Bangladesh cricket who can provide the exact reason behind the debacle that brought back the ghost of the 2003 World Cup.

Now question is whether the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials, most of whom who travelled to Kolkata with their leader Nazmul Hassan Papon, will take the responsibility to unearth the truth behind the disaster.

Fans have been the leading force behind Bangladesh's success. Over the years, BCB members might've witnessed first-hand the arduous journey they have had to go through in order to follow Bangladesh.

However, in recent times, it appears that the team has lost touch with one of its biggest strengths and the BCB must be wary of this as it may bring greater repercussions if fans turn away from the team.

There were many fans who decided that it wouldn't be worth the journey to follow the Bangladesh team from Kolkata to Delhi.

With Bangladesh now lingering at the bottom of the 10-team table, a few players are solely hoping for divine intervention and seeking "prayers" while others are struggling to find answers. The puzzled and hapless faces in the group raise questions of whether the team even has any desire left to play for the qualification for the 2025 Champions Trophy which requires them to finish in the top seven of the World Cup table.

After taking on Sri Lanka, Bangladesh will cap off their campaign with a daunting match-up against the mighty Australians on November 11.

As things stand, even unlikely victories in the last two matches would not be a face-saving act as the state and the real standard of the team – a far cry from the demands of modern cricket – have been laid bare.

But it will be important to see whether the BCB would take any steps to first perform an autopsy on this fiasco, identify the actual problems and then remedy those.

Even if the board manages to rectify the problematic areas, will it be willing to dig deep and look to find a long-term solution with proper planning?

Or, will there be yet another attempt to sweep the failures under the carpet by choosing to achieve the short-term glories, utilising favourable home conditions, as it always has been?

Protests rage on amid search for middle ground

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Under this provision, workers do not get paid if they do not work.

This provision also allows owners to close factories and withhold payment if workers participate in strikes that are considered illegal. A strike is considered illegal if it is enforced without prior notice.

"There should not be any confusion about imposition of section 13(l) of the labour law which says that if any factories cannot operate, they will be shut down for the greater interest of the industries and for the country," said Faruque Hassan, president of BGMEA, the apex body of RMG factory owners.

The decision came from an emergency meeting of 200 factory owners held at the BGMEA office in the capital's Uttara.

Faruque Hassan directed the owners to shut down their production units if they cannot operate.

At a press briefing after the meeting, he said a few hundred factories were vandalised over the last one week.

In response to recent concerns regarding the garment industry, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi has warned of tough actions against anyone "destabilising the garment sector" in the name of wage hike.

During his visit to the Cancer Hospital in Rangpur on Wednesday, the minister said discussions are underway to review the wage structure, aligning it with international labour standards.

Leaders of RMG factory owners held an emergency meeting with the home minister yesterday evening and informed him that they would shut down their factories from today and implement no work no pay.

Mahabubor Rahman, the chief of industrial police, confirmed the matter.

"Leaders of factory owners

discussed the issues and requested for more security. We have already taken measures to beef up security measures.

"We believe there are outsiders' instigation behind the unrest. We have taken steps to identify the outsiders and take legal action against them."

Also yesterday, a section of garment workers observed work abstention and staged demonstration in Dhaka's Mirpur-II, demanding pay increase and protesting Tuesday's police action and attacks on workers, allegedly by some pro-government activists.

Garment factories around the area were vandalised, as workers were chased away by people wearing T-shirts with the word Awami League written on them, witnesses said.

Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shah Ali Police Station, said a section of workers were throwing brick chunks at factories that were open.

Yesterday, about 300 people gathered in the area around 10:00am and blocked the road.

Clean Clothes Campaign, the international garment industry's largest alliance of labour unions, sent a press release saying that workers have a right to demonstrate.

"We are witnessing history repeating itself, as the playbook for the suppression of workers' demands, which was successful five years ago, is being used again this year by the government apparatus and the BGMEA alike. Furthermore, we call on the government of Bangladesh to stop politicising the wage protests and instead acknowledge the unrest as a direct reaction to the BGMEA's outrageous wage proposal, which would simply trap workers in poverty for another five years, regardless of the political landscape in Bangladesh," it said.

Taslima Akter, coordinator of a platform of unions and organisations

fighting for better pay, said workers are fighting for their right to food.

"They came to the streets only because the factory owners proposed a minimum wage that is so much less than what they had demanded," she said.

Amirul Haque Amin, the head of Industrial ALL Bangladesh Council, called on the workers to stop the violence.

"But closing the factories is not a logical solution. Setting a new minimum wage quickly is."

Corrigendum

In a report headlined "Better-pay demo: Outsiders attack RMG workers in Mirpur factory" published in The Daily Star on Nov 1, 2023, some quotes were mistakenly attributed to Reazuddin Al Mamoon, chairman of Epyllion Group. The quotes – "Workers from surrounding factories had taken to the streets, and there was a rumour that they had been attacked by police. Our workers were attempting to leave the factory to join them, so we locked the gates. They then became violent, trying to break down the gates, and started fighting among themselves." He added that the workers were provoked by a rumour that two coworkers were killed. Mamoon further claimed, "We bore the treatment costs for the injured." – in reality, were from Sheikh Maruf Hasan, the chairman's secretary (Secretariat to Board of Directors).

The chairman's actual quote was, "A 100 or more people barged into the factory, past the three or four security guards. They broke the CCTV cameras. I am so frustrated that these workers have been assaulted like this."

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EC invites BNP, other parties to dialogue

The officials said there were nearly 4,000 officers ready to perform duties as executive magistrates. The EC replied that it would need around 3,000.

It was discussed that a Bangladesh Bank representative should be present when commissioners settle appeals against scrapping of nominations.

The EC said if a candidate defaulted in paying credit card bills, they will be termed loan defaulters. The EC instructed the BB to ensure that Credit Information Bureau act judiciously while labelling a candidate as a loan defaulter.

If expatriates inform the foreign ministry that they are willing to vote, the EC will take necessary steps.

Anyone whose name is on the voter list will be able to exercise franchise, the EC said.

Hasina, Modi open 2 rail links

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unit-II of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant.

The premier said Bangladesh and India have proved that friendly relations between the neighbouring countries help attain mutual development. "I think it is an example for the world."

Addressing the event, Modi said, "This is a matter of great delight that we have again come together to celebrate the success of India-Bangladesh mutual cooperation. Our relations are seemingly reaching new heights continuously."

He pledged to stay beside Bangladesh to transform the country into a developed, prosperous, and smart nation by 2041.

"The work we have done together in the last nine years was not accomplished even in the decades before this," Modi said.

Chief Minister of Tripura, Manik Saha, also virtually joined the event.

The 12.24km Akhaura-Agartala rail link project, with a 6.78km dual gauge rail line in Bangladesh and 5.46km in Tripura, has been implemented under India's grant assistance of ₹392.52 crore.

The trial run of a cargo train on this route – from Bangladesh's Gangasagar to Nischintapur Railway Station in Agartala – took place on Monday. The trial run of a passenger train will be conducted soon.

The Khulna-Mongla Port Rail Line project, worth \$388.92 million, has been implemented with 69.18 percent funding from India's concessional Line of Credit.

With the opening of the 64.7km rail link, Mongla, the second largest seaport in Bangladesh, has been connected to the broad-gauge railway network.

The Maitree Super Thermal Power Project has been implemented in Khulna's Rampal under an Indian concessional financing scheme loan of \$1.6 billion.

Hasina said the two newly inaugurated rail link projects would help boost trade, business, tourism, and people-to-people contact between the two countries.

The thermal power plant will also help provide uninterrupted power supply at affordable prices in Bangladesh, she said.

The PM said the Akhaura-Agartala rail link will especially help boost communication between the people of the two countries, which will be economically beneficial for both countries.

Hasina said the Khulna-Mongla Port rail line will connect the Mongla port with the existing rail link. "It will help transport imported goods to the northeastern part of the country at an affordable cost."

The premier lauded the Indian government and her counterpart Modi

Onion price now Tk 150 per kg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The price of locally grown onions rose to Tk 150 per kg at retail stores in Dhaka yesterday, up from Tk 140 the day before.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh marked a Tk 5 rise in local onions compared to the day before. However, the price is usually higher in retail markets.

The wholesale price of onions has been increasing every day for the past week, said Humayun Kabir, a retailer at West Tejturi Bazar area in Farmgate.

"As a result, I have to sell the local variety for up to Tk 150 per kg," he added.

At Mirpur's Pallabi, another retailer also asked for the same price for a kilogramme of locally grown bulbs.

The price of imported onions also went up yesterday, selling at Tk 110-120 per kg, up from Tk 75-85 five days ago, according to TCB data.

Bangladeshi man found dead inside Indian territory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

The bullet-hit body of a Bangladeshi national was found dead inside Indian territory along the Banglabandha border in Panchagarh's Tentulia upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Ainul Haque, 32, of Dakkhin Kashimganj under the upazila, said Banglabandha UP Chairman Quadrat-e-Khuda Milon.

"Members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) of Fakirgach Camp allegedly opened fire on a group of people around 2:00am when they trespassed into Indian territory through pillar no. 448," he added.

Ainul died on the spot, while his accomplices escaped unhurt, local sources said, adding that the victim and his fellows frequently illegally entered India to bring cattle.

On information, the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) asked its Indian counterpart to hold a flag meeting in this connection. But the BSF has yet to respond in this regard till the writing of this report at 5:00pm.

When contacted, BGB 18 Commanding Officer (CO) Lt Col Jubayed Hasan said, "We've been informed that a Bangladeshi man's body was found abandoned inside the Indian territory near the Banglabandha border."

"We've asked the BSF to hold a flag meeting to learn more about the incident. After holding the meeting, we'll know the cause of the victim's death," CO added.

for the assistance in implementing the projects.

She said Bangladesh and India have achieved great success due to mutual cooperation in recent years.

Hasina said the mutual efforts have helped ensure peace and stability in the northeast region of India and establish connectivity between many Indian states and its northeastern parts via Chattogram and Mongla ports.

The first unit of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant was inaugurated jointly by the two prime ministers in September last year.

Govt open to talks

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main instrument. There is no alternative to dialogue."

He then added, "We always welcome dialogues. We also think political problems should be resolved through dialogues. The dialogues must be held according to the constitutional structure. Sarah Cook has agreed."

Many political parties are expressing their willingness to hold dialogues, he said, adding that the BNP has to express its intention to hold dialogues.

Referring to the BNP's announcement that it would not participate in dialogues with the Election Commission, he said, "They made a similar decision in 2014. A party that has lost people's support will not win the election. They do not want dialogues; they want to incite violence and create an atmosphere of turmoil, hoping that the people will listen to them. However, our citizens do not want violence."

Arson attacks on vehicles are isolated incidents, he said, adding that law enforcers are fulfilling their responsibilities to maintain law and order.

Shops are open, courts are operational, and traffic is moving, he said.

Meanwhile, the British High Commission in a statement said at the meeting, the high commissioner reiterated "the UK's deep concern at the violence and loss of life seen on 28 October. She expressed the UK's call for all stakeholders to exercise restraint, eschew violence and work together to create the conditions for free, fair, participatory, and peaceful elections."

Rampant

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He started the day needing just 69 more runs to pass 500 for the tournament when the Proteas were sent in to bat. He was eventually out for 114 caught by Glenn Phillips off Southen, ending a 200-run partnership for the second wicket with Van der Dussen.

David Miller added a blistering 53 off just 30 balls with four sixes as South Africa ended their innings with Aiden Markram arriving at the wicket for the last ball which he dispatched for six.