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Shab-e-Barat tonight

UNB, Dhaka
The holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed across the country tonight.

Also known as Lailatul Barat, the night of fortune, Muslim devotees will spend the night offering prayers and munajat, seeking forgiveness and divine blessings of the Almighty.

Special prayers and milad will be held at all mosques. Different socio-cultural and religious organisations will hold milad and discussions on the occasion.

Besides prayers, the devotees will visit the graves of their close relations to offer fateha, seeking peace for the departed souls. They will also visit the mazars of Muslim saints in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

National anthem glitch: Probe body seeks more time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The probe body formed to investigate the technical glitch that stopped playing the national anthem at the October 7 formal opening of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference yesterday sought one week's time to complete its task.

The three-member body headed by Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain missed the Thursday night deadline set by the prime minister for submission of the probe report within 48 hours.

The two other members of the committee are Home Secretary Omar Faruq and Public Works Secretary Aminur Rahman. Khandakar Delwar told newsmen yesterday he consulted the prime minister and sought time to complete the probe.

Due to his involvement in various activities of the CPA conference, the probe could not make much headway, Delwar added.

Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today (Saturday) on the occasion of holy Shab-e-Barat.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Sunday).

Crime curb not ample, admits prime minister



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday delivers an over-the-air speech to mark the coalition's two years in power.

Stern action against graft promised

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government would not hesitate to take stern measures to stop any irregularity and waste of government fund.

On the election pledge of cutting crime, she said her government was carrying on efforts to improve law and order. She, however, admitted without hesitation that 'our success in this field is not adequate'.

"Curbing crime is an uncompromising, laborious and continuous process. I am assuring you once again that our government would always remain active to fulfil the

commitment to people to erase crimes," she said.

She made an appeal to sink antagonism among different political parties and groups to build Bangladesh as a strong, successful state.

"Broad-based unity is a priority following democratic norms and principles, development strategies, foreign and defence policies for further strengthening the foundations of Bangladesh," she said in her address to the nation, marking the second anniversary of the four-party coalition rule.

Explaining the reasons for her SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Graft check, capacity building top CPA plan

Canadian Speaker Milliken replaces Sircar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The CPA General Assembly yesterday resolved to work for avoiding war and conflict in the world and adopted a strategic plan with corruption check and post-conflict capacity-building as two major areas of focus in the next five years.

"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association members will try to contribute in avoiding wars and conflicts and we will use our forum as a 'pressure group' working for the cause of global

peace," outgoing president of the grouping Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar told newsmen after chairing the 26th general assembly.

The assembly was held in the plenary hall of Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre yesterday afternoon as part of the ongoing 49th CPA conference in Dhaka.

The assembly, attended by over 250 lawmakers from across the Commonwealth world, adopted a five-year (2003-2007) strategic plan for the association, identifying 10

areas for attention.

The areas are: post-poll assistance, interface between parliament and other state branches, parliamentary scrutiny and oversight, post-conflict capacity-building and fight against corruption, gender discrimination and human rights violations.

The plan also committed to focusing on election observation, participation of lawmakers in debates on major global issues and on specific interests stemming from SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Westmont gets the nod for Baghabari plant

STAR REPORT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee last week bent its own rules to approve an unsolicited proposal of Westmont Power for setting up a 130 MW gas-fired barge-mounted power plant in Baghabari.

As per the Private Sector Power Generation Policy of Bangladesh, all independent private power projects should be built on the basis of competitive bidding.

The committee attached some conditions to safeguard the national interest and stay clear of any obligation to Westmont, sources said.

Westmont, which has been operating a 90 MW barge-mounted power plant for over three years, submitted a proposal earlier this year for setting up the Baghabari plant on a build-own-operate (BOO) basis.

The company has proposed to

supply power within six months of obtaining approval.

Westmont has also offered a per-kilowatt levelised power tariff of US \$2.79 cents for 20 years. This tariff is 40 percent lower than that of its existing power plant, which is 4.31 cents.

In return, the company seeks a gas tariff of \$1.11 per thousand cubic feet (mcf). In contrast, AES Meghnaghat pays \$2.4 per mcf gas and sells power at 2.79 cents for 22 years.

Westmont, however, seeks no minimum guarantee of the Power Development Board (PDB) to buy its power and offers a 'no electricity, no payment' term.

It also needs no government guarantee for the project as it did before and does not impose any condition on obtaining land for the project. SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

India, Thailand sign free trade accord

AGENCIES, Bangkok

India and Thailand on Thursday signed five agreements covering a wide range of issues, including a landmark free trade agreement following a one-to-one meeting between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra in Bangkok.

The agreement will allow for free trade on all goods by 2010. The two countries will also slash tariffs by 50 percent on 84 products under an early harvest scheme to go into effect March 1 of next year.

In addition, ways to combat terrorism and intelligence sharing were also discussed, with India offering to sell defence equipment to Thailand.

Vajpayee blamed Pakistan in an interview published Thursday for the failure of a free trade pact in South Asia while asserting that a similar agreement with Thailand is bound to succeed.

"The India-Thailand FTA (Free Trade Agreement) looks like it will work, while the South Asia FTA and the South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement have not seen real prog-

ress solely because of the unreasonable obstructions of one South Asian country," Vajpayee told The Nation newspaper, in a clear reference to Pakistan.

Vajpayee, the first Indian prime minister to visit Thailand in a decade, said the India-Thailand trade agreement, which would be one of the highlights of his four-day trip ending Sunday, would be the first such pact outside the South Asian region.

In a wide ranging interview conducted in New Delhi before his departure for Indonesia, Vajpayee was asked questions on such issues as India-China competition in Southeast Asia, New Delhi's deepening engagement with Asean and the liberalisation of the Indian economy.

Vajpayee said the rapid intensification of India's trade and investment relations with Southeast Asia was an integral part of New Delhi's foreign policy.

Vajpayee, who arrived here from Bali after attending the ninth summit of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean), said India- SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference President and Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, second from left, speaks at the CPA General Assembly at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

'Involve more women MPs in policymaking'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commonwealth lawmakers yesterday urged the governments of member countries to increase women's participation in legislation to ensure men-women partnership in nation-

building.

They also called upon the political leadership to ensure greater participation of women lawmakers in policymaking in their own parties and political parties to allocate proportionate representation of

women in national and state parliaments.

The legislators, both men and women, were speaking at a workshop, 'Partnership in Nation-building: Role of Women' SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Ebadi first Muslim woman to win Nobel Peace Prize

REUTERS, Oslo

Iranian human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi became the first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday in an award intended to foster wider democracy in the Islamic world.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee praised Ebadi -- Iran's first female judge before the 1979 Islamic revolution forced her to step aside in favour of men -- for fighting for children

and women and for taking on cases others were too afraid to touch.

Ebadi, 56, won from a record field of 165 candidates including Pope John Paul and former Czech President Vaclav Havel. She said she was shocked but proud to learn she had won the \$1.3 million prize, to be handed out in Oslo on December 10.

Iran's conservative-run state media reported the country's SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Muggers loot Tk 12 lakh at Tongi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed muggers looted Tk 12 lakh from a team of three employees of a paper factory and shot one of them at Tongi Bazar yesterday, police sources said.

The gang members attacked the employees when they were leaving Tongi Bazar at about 01.00pm to board their car parked on the road nearby.

Driver of the car Joyal Hossain said they went to Tongi as part of their weekly routine to collect dues from shopkeepers.

The gang of more than 10 carrying firearms, knives and hockey sticks encircled the three employees and asked them to hand over the money to them. On refusal, they shot Selim, who was carrying the bag that contained the money, snatched the bag and fled, firing blank shots.

The three -- Abul Kashem, Selim and Nasir -- are employees of Rana Enterprise at Nabab Market at Moulavi Bazar in old part of the city.

Selim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he underwent an emergency operation.

Abul Kashem filed a case with Tongi Police Station.

Officer-in-Charge of Tongi Police Station Nur Ahmed said last night they arrested three persons on suspicion of their involvement in the incident.

Accept failure, step down: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the BNP-led four-party coalition government to step down with no delay in a call that coincided with the alliance's celebrations of two years in power.

"People want the government to quit after admitting to its failure and misrule. The government has no right to cling to power anymore," Hasina, also Awami League (AL) chief, said in her address to an anti-coalition event.

Hasina called for a greater unity of progressive-democratic forces and professional bodies against the government, which she said sank into corruption, harboured violence, violated human rights and failed to run the state.

"Countrymen became hostage to the misrule of the BNP-Jamaat government," Hasina said pegging the coalition as anti-people.

"Let's build a national consensus for progress, prosperity and welfare and show the people the way to freedom," Hasina told the programme, attended by several hundred leaders of the AL and its front organisations, academics, journalists and other professionals.

"We were with people... we are ready to



make any sacrifice for them," she said describing her party as a carrier of all movements and struggles in the past.

During her 37-minute written speech, the AL president listed the government's "failures" from law and order downslide to pervasive corruption to a 'non-functional' parliament.

Hasina, who was the prime minister in 1996-2001, said, "We are not claiming our government was fully successful, as there might be some unexpected mistakes in running the state. But we will step into the future by taking lessons from our past mistakes."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Hayden breaks Lara's record

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia batsman Matthew Hayden smashed a world record Test score of 380 in the first Test against Zimbabwe in Perth on Friday.

Hayden beat the previous mark, 375 by West Indies batsman Brian Lara against England in 1994, before being caught at deep square leg by Stuart Carlisle off Trevor Gripper shortly after tea.

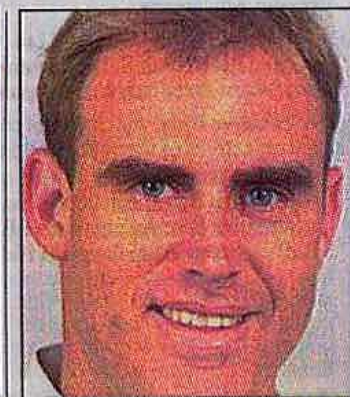
Australia declared on 735 for six

immediately after Hayden's dismissal with Adam Gilchrist unbeaten on 113.

The Queenslander pushed left-arm slow bowler Ray Price for a single to long on in the last over before the tea break to reach 376 before swinging his bat above his head in celebration and raising both hands to the applause of the crowd.

Hayden kissed his baggy green cap and was bear-hugged by SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Weather Coat advertisement: The one time paint for many seasons... anti-fungal, anti-fading, anti-flaking



Hayden breaks Lara's record advertisement: Australia batsman Matthew Hayden smashed a world record Test score of 380 in the first Test against Zimbabwe in Perth on Friday.

Naseem Sheermal House advertisement: Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim, Bangladesh Iran Joint Venture Grand Opening Today, Delicious Food Items, Produced by: NASEEM SHEERMAL HOUSE, 1, New Bailey Road, Phone: 8355876, 7117571, 7166894