

Bangabandhu never granted amnesty to war criminals

Says Hasina at Victory Day meet

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangabandhu had never granted general amnesty to the war criminals and collaborators.

"The general amnesty declared by Bangabandhu did not cover those who were charged with war crimes, rape, arson and other offences," she said.

Hasina was speaking at a reception organised by the AL in honour of the valiant freedom fighters (FFs), artists and other employees of Swadhin Bangla Beter Kendra on the occasion of the Victory Day at Sudha Sadan.

She said the anti-liberation elements, who directly acted as accomplices of the Pakistani occupation forces, were sentenced to jail under Collaborators Act. Besides, special courts were set up

in all districts to try the criminals. Hasina said Bangabandhu banned religion-based politics and annulled citizenship of those who were directly involved in anti-liberation activities.

The AL chief alleged that the so-called FFs had scrapped the act by promulgating martial law after the assassination of Bangabandhu. They also withdrew the ban on religion-based politics and restored the citizenship of the war criminals.

Former secretary and valiant freedom fighter HT Imam, Chairman of the Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, crippled freedom fighter Farid Mia, Bir Protik, and Swadhin Bangla Beter Kendra artists and technicians Shila Bhadra, Shafiqur Rahman Dulul, Syed Abdus Saker and Dr Jahid Hossain Proshan, among others,

spoke on the occasion. AL leader Asaduzzaman Noor conducted the function.

AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Obaidul Kader, Maj Gen (ret), Subed Ali Bhuiyan, Capt (ret) Tajul Islam Taj, Abdur Rahman, Abdul Mannan, and artistes Ajit Roy and Nomita Gosh were also present.

Hasina said after the 1975 change over, the vested quarters distorted the history of the War of Independence.

She said the next generations will not forgive those who distorted the history and undermined the role of the real heroes of the Liberation War.

On the going movement, Hasina said, "We are now struggling to protect the voting rights of the people. People's right to food can not be ensured unless their voting rights are established," she said.



New Bhutanese king

Bhutan's king abdicates

Hands power to son

AFP, Guwahati

The king of the remote Himalayan country of Bhutan has abdicated in favour of his Oxford-educated son, a royal official said yesterday, stunning the tiny Buddhist nation.

The announcement came amid royal moves for the country, nestled between Asian giants India and China, to change to a constitutional form of absolute monarchy.

"I am confident that a very bright future lies ahead for Bhutan with the leadership of a new king and a democratic system of government," the outgoing king said in the web edition of the state-run newspaper Kuensel.

King Wangchuck, 51, declared a year ago he would abdicate in 2008.

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Mushrooming brickfields threaten hill air, farming

Authorities turn blind eye to environmental rules violation by owners

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Mushrooming brickfields in Khagrachhari with the connivance of corrupt officials of different government departments concerned pose a serious threat to the environment and agriculture in the entire region.

Kilns in these brickfields continue harming the environment by wiping out the invaluable natural forest for firewood, emitting harmful gases to the atmosphere and using up cultivated land in the area.

Environmentalists fear the vast natural forests of Khagrachhari will disappear soon unless the use of the natural forest as firewood is stopped in the brickfields.

Most of these brickfields are polluting the environment with emissions by setting up chimneys only 20 to 30 feet high defying the Department of Environment (DoE) specified chimney height of 120

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PHOTO: STAR

Brick kiln owners pile up logs to bake bricks at Khagrachhari chopping down trees in forests even though there is a ban on using firewood for this purpose.

Call for unified movement to wipe out war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muktiyoddha Gono Parishad leaders yesterday urged to forge a unified movement once again to wipe out the traitors of the liberation war from Bangladesh.

They were addressing a rally at Comrade Moni Singh-Farhad Trust Bhaban auditorium marking the 35th victory day. Apart from criticising the political strategy of BNP that is dominated by its war collaborator clique, the speakers also expressed grave concern over the controversial role of the caretaker government.

Paying homage to

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HILL CUTTING 2 buried alive in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons were buried alive and 10 others injured when a huge chunk of earth fell on them during illegal hill cutting in Chandanaish upazila yesterday.

The killed were identified as Shahabuddin, 38, and Abdur Rashid, 28, both from Raijoara in the upazila.

According to sources, the accident occurred when some 15 people were cutting hills at Raijoara in the morning. Shahabuddin and Rashid were killed on the spot.

Of the injured, eight were admitted to the upazila health

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A vibrant and colourful ceremony marks the end of the 15th Asian Games at Doha in Qatar yesterday.

Chavez denies Castro cancer claim

BBC ONLINE

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has dismissed suggestions that Cuban leader and ally Fidel Castro has cancer, but said he was fighting a serious illness.

Chavez said that Fidel Castro was struggling with "a great battle" but denied the illness was terminal. The Venezuelan leader said he had spoken twice on the telephone with Castro who was in good spirits.

Earlier, US director of National Intelligence John Negroponte said Castro was very ill and close to death.

"Everything we see indicates that it will not be much longer... months, not years," he told the Washington Post.

Although he did not say that Castro's health was improving, as he has indicated in earlier speeches, Chavez said he was optimistic about his ally.

"Some comments have come out, that Fidel has a terminal cancer - Fidel does not have cancer," Chavez said.

"We have a lot of faith that those 80 years will become 90, 100 years," he added.

Eighty-year-old Castro temporarily handed over power to his younger brother in July following intestinal surgery and has not been seen in public since.

His last appearance on Cuban TV, looking frail and wearing pyjamas rather than his trademark military fatigues, was in late October.

Cubans were told that details of

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80 hurt as parties clash on V-day

STAR REPORT

At least 80 people were injured as BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir activists clashed with Awami League (AL) and its student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) men in Chittagong, Moulvibazar, Mymensingh and Pabna during Victory Day celebrations yesterday.

Trouble in port city Chittagong that left 12 people injured began when BNP leaders and workers entered the Shaheed Minar pre-

mises through the exit, ignoring request of the on-duty security personnel.

City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, who first placed wreaths there at midnight, also requested the BNP leaders and workers to enter the premises through the designated entrance and place wreaths, reports UNB.

The BNP men left the scene without placing wreaths to come back at around 1:00am through the exit, witnesses said.

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Looming fund crisis may make RU staff salaries uncertain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Some 3,300 staff of Rajshahi University might not get their pay cheques at the end of this fiscal year as the university is likely to suffer a severe fund crisis soon due to wastage of money through 'illegal and unnecessary recruitment'.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently informed the education ministry that the university's budget deficit is

increasing due to recruitment of manpower beyond budgetary provisions, sources said.

The UGC also warned the university authorities of suspending funds, they added.

Around 450 employees have been appointed to the varsity since June on 'political considerations and in exchange for money,' sources said adding that some 400 more will be recruited within a few months.

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Nepal parties, Maoists okay draft constitution

King to have no right in state affairs

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's ruling alliance and Maoist rebels yesterday approved the draft of an interim constitution, a key step to implement their landmark peace deal ending a conflict which has killed thousands, negotiators said.

The document, an interim law that paves the way for Maoists to join a provisional parliament and government, was signed by top leaders of the alliance including

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and the Maoist rebel leader Prachanda.

"This is yet another major achievement for the establishment of peace in Nepal," said Bharat Mohan Adhikary, a senior leader of the Communist-UML party, the second biggest group in the seven-party coalition.

"The prime minister will carry out the work of the head of state and the king will have no right in state

affairs," Adhikary told reporters.

There was no immediate comment from the king, who has already lost most of his powers after he was forced to restore democracy in April following weeks of mass street protests against him.

Analysts said the beleaguered monarch had no choice but to accept the decision.

"There is no alternative for him. Whatever he has lost can't be taken

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India missed chance to resolve Kashmir row in 1972

Says Advani

PTI, New Delhi

Senior BJP leader L K Advani yesterday maintained that India had lost an opportunity to resolve the Kashmir issue in the wake of the surrender of more than 90,000 Pakistani troops in the 1971 Bangladesh war.

"It was the biggest surrender since World War II. Had the Indian government of the day used this advantage properly in summit talks with Pakistan in Shimla in 1972, the Kashmir issue could have been solved once and for all," the

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Zambian U-turn on protests ban

BBC ONLINE

The Zambian government has withdrawn a ban on all political gatherings just hours after it was announced. It now says political parties are free to hold rallies according to the law.

The authorities had earlier warned that anti-government rallies organised by the opposition leader, Michael Sata, posed a serious threat.

His supporters have been challenging the results of September's presidential election, which was officially won by incumbent President, Levy Mwanawasa.

On Thursday, a court dropped charges against Sata of making a false declaration of his assets.

Even after his election defeat, Sata has continued to draw large crowds at his rallies - and he has repeatedly accused the president of, as he puts it, selling Zambia to Chinese and Indian companies.

Sata's Patriotic Front party had said it would challenge the rally ban in court.

Last week, the president said the opposition leader, whose nickname is King Cobra, was on the verge of treason.

Abbas calls for early election in Palestine

Hamas slams it as 'coup d'etat'

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas called for early presidential and parliamentary elections yesterday, prompting the ruling Hamas movement to accuse him of staging a coup d'etat.

"I decided to call for early presidential and legislative elections," Abbas said to applause during an eagerly awaited speech in Ramallah to lay out his plans for ending a spiralling political crisis.

"Basic law stipulates that the people are the source of power," he said. "Let the people have their say and decide."

"I will talk as quickly as possible with the central elections commission to launch the preparations" for the ballot.

The headline Islamist Hamas movement, which has only been in power since March, immediately

rejected the move. The Hamas-led government said Abbas's actions were "a coup d'etat against the will of the Palestinian people."

Hamas official Ismail Raduan told AFP "we reject the call by president Abbas to hold early elections, as this contradicts Palestinian basic law."

The Palestinian Basic Law, the effective constitution, does not address the issue of early elections.

Hamas says the absence of such a provision prohibits holding early polls, while the Abbas entourage says such an election can be held since there is no passage specifically prohibiting it.

The current Palestinian parliament was elected in January and is due to remain in office until the end of 2010.

Senior Abbas aide Yasser Abed Rabbo said the elections "will take

place between now and three months.

"All legal opposition to these elections will be examined in conformity with the president's powers," he said.

During an impassioned speech, Abbas said he had the authority to fire the Hamas government and vowed to prevent civil war that some observers warned would break out if he chose to call early polls.

"Firing the government is a constitutional right that I can exercise when I want," he said.

"Despite the suffering, the pain, the confrontations, whoever is responsible for them, we will not allow ourselves to sink into a civil war," Abbas said. "Palestinian blood will remain a border that will not be crossed."

The announcement by Abbas

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PHOTO: STAR

Liquid waste from nearby dyeing factories at BSCIC estate at Konabari in Gazipur end up in Baimile Beel rendering it inhabitable for fish and making it barren during the dry season.

US health advisers suggest restricting antibiotic

AP, Washington

Benefits of an antibiotic linked to rare reports of severe liver problems, including several deaths, outweigh its risks in treating pneumonia but not less serious bacterial infections like bronchitis and sinusitis, federal health advisers said Friday.

The nonbinding recommendations raise the prospect the Food and Drug Administration could modify its approval of the Sanofi-Aventis SA drug, called Ketek, to exclude the treatment of the two lesser infections, which often clear up without drug treatment.

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Prayer Timing		
December 17		
	Azan	
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-22	5-25
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation