

Bishwa Ijtema begins today

By Staff Correspondent

The three-day Bishwa Ijtema, also called Bishwa Tablig Jamat, begins today at Tongi on the bank of the river Turag. Devotees from about 37 countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, USA, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Jordan, Bahrain, Turkey, the Maldives, Sudan, Libya, Canada, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Burma, and Thailand will attend the Ijtema. It is in the second largest annual religious gathering of Muslims after Hajj in Makkah of Saudi Arabia.

Arrangements for the Ijtema had been completed, with pandals erected on an area of about one square mile.

Amir of Bishwa Tablig Jamat Hazrat Moulana Enamul Ehsan will conduct 'akhari munajat' on Monday, the concluding day of the Ijtema.

The number of devotees is likely to be less this year because of the Gulf war, election campaign and cold wave.

Khaleda's call

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and fair election, reports UNB. Addressing a public meeting at Mohammadpur Bus Stand yesterday afternoon, she regretted that corrupt associates of Ershad were still moving freely and engaged in creating a chaos.

Presided over by Atiqui Islam Matin, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prof Jahannara Begum, Shah Alam, Ehsanul Huq Setu and Nazimuddin Alam.

The meeting was organised by Mohammadpur unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of BNP, in observance of the 55th birth anniversary of late President Ziaur Rahman.

Electoral

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Ahmedul Kabir.

The Five-party Alliance could not succeed in having a meaningful dialogue with the Eight-party Alliance or the Seven-party Alliance. The possibility seems to be bleak and the Five-party Alliance was preparing to contest the polls without any seat adjustments.

The Five-party Alliance submitted a list of about 150 candidates to BNP for electoral understanding. But BNP did not give any reply. Nor did it give any date to the Five-party Alliance to sit together for adjustment of seats till last night.

According to a BNP source, difference of opinion among the hierarchy of the party on electoral understanding has become sharpened on the issue whether it should go for an electoral alliance at all.

Among the Five-party Alliance, Kazi Aref of JSD (Inu), Molnuddin Khan Badal of BSD (Muhibbo) and Nirmal Sen of Krishak Samik Samajbadi Dal, were in favour of an electoral understanding with the Awami League while Haider Akbar Khan Rono of Workers Party and Hasanul Haque Inu of JSD (Inu) were in favour of an alliance with the BNP. BSD (Bhulian), Olkya Prokriya and a section of UCL are also in favour of an electoral alliance with the 7-party.

Five-party sources said, on the other hand Awami League was not in a position to accommodate the leaders of the Five-party Alliance.

AL victory

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ers including Amir Hossain Amu, Mr Ataur Rahman Khan Kaisar, Mr Muzaffar Hossain Palit and K M Jahangir were present.

Sheikh Hasina said, Awami League does politics not for power but to uphold the rights and causes of the common people.

She said, the long struggle for the fall of autocracy had again proved that the Awami League workers could make any sacrifices for establishing the rights of the masses.

Leading the role of Awami League workers of Kotwali and Sutrapur in struggle against the terrorist design of the ousted regime, Sheikh Hasina said, her organisation would give due honour to the workers. "There is no room for the opportunist and seasonal birds in Awami League," she added.

Sheikh Hasina said, the main criteria her party considered while giving nominations, was the sacrifices of the individual candidates for serving the causes of the local people and the society. "We did not sell nominations like some others," she added.

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Kremlin may use Gulf war as cover for Baltics crackdown

VILNIUS (Soviet Union), Jan 18 : Soviet troops detained a Lithuanian member of parliament overnight, fanning fears that the Gulf war could provide cover for a further Kremlin crackdown on the tiny rebel republic, reports Reuter.

The parliamentarian, Vidmantas Pavilonis, was released without explanation Friday morning.

Soldiers patrolled all roads in and out of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, stopping and searching cars and checking passengers' documents.

Pavilonis and his police escort were detained by troops armed with automatic weapons.

The parliamentarian was forced to stand in the cold for three hours with his hands on his head before being made to lie face down in a military truck.

He was then driven to the

military commandant in Vilnius who ordered his release this morning.

The army gave its assurances that there would be no more actions like this, Pavilonis said. "But last night shows they are still out to intimidate and use force. Anything is possible with them at the moment."

A parliamentary spokesman said a Soviet armoured vehicle had crushed a saloon car, but there was no word on casualties.

The army actions were in violation of pledges by the Vilnius commandant - given after paratroopers killed 13 Lithuanians in an assault on the city's television tower last Sunday -- to curtail military operations for the time being.

Latvia

AFP adds from Riga : Soviet

Interior Minister Boris Pugo has agreed to talks with Latvian President Anatolijus Gorbunovs after the pro-independence leader ordered Interior Ministry special troops out of the republic, Latvian radio said Friday.

But the radio gave no date for the talks, involving Mr. Pugo a former Latvian Communist Party Chief and local KGB head. The Interior Ministry in Moscow would not confirm the report.

In a telegram to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev late Thursday, Mr. Gorbunovs said that unless measures were taken to "stop the actions of this unit, our concerns for the population will force us to liquidate this group of bandits".

The special unit, known as the "Black Berets" Wednesday shot dead a 39-year-old truck

driver manning a barricade in the Giga suburbs, erected to avert a military crackdown against the nationalist government.

The Latvian government meanwhile rejected as "disinformation" a declaration by a national Salvation Committee, published by the Russian language daily Sovietskaya Latvia, in which it stated its intention to seize power.

A delegation from the Supreme Soviet, the full-time parliament in Moscow, sent to Riga said the 76-member committee "does not reflect reality".

The Latvians fear a crackdown after last Sunday's military assault on the television station in Vilnius, the capital of neighbouring Lithuania, in which 14 people were killed.

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Hasina begins poll campaign Monday

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will begin election campaign from Tongipara after offering fateha at the mazar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on January 21. She will address a public meeting there.

The programme includes a public meeting at Lalidighi

maidan in Chittagong on January 24. During her stay there, Sheikh Hasina will offer fateha at the mazars of Hazrat Maizbhandari and Hazrat Amanat Shah. She will also visit Kaibulay Dham Mandir.

Sheikh Hasina will address public meeting at Rangamati and Bethunia on January 25 and at Sylhet January 29 where she will offer fateha at the mazars of Hazrat Shah Jalal (R) and Hazrat Shah Paron (R).

'Manju creating terrorism in Bhandaria'

The leaders of Dhaka University Students Union (DUCSU) yesterday expressed their deep resentment at the terrorism created by Ershad's associate Anwar Hossain Manju at Bhandaria, reports BSS.

In a statement Mr. Amanullah Aman and Khairul Kabir Khokan, VP and GS respectively of DUCSU said the victory achieved by people's movement was being threatened because of these anti-people armed hoodlums and mastans of the autocratic ruler, a press release said.

The associates of Ershad were attempting to create anarchy and terrorism in their respective areas in the old style, it pointed out.

The DUCSU leaders demanded that the nominations of the associates of Ershad including Anwar Hossain Manju

PDB plan

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reduction of domestic consumption of electricity. Shops may be asked to shut down by 6 p.m. to save electricity.

Meanwhile, the Petroleum Corporation is establishing contacts with Singapore suppliers to get immediate supply of crude from there. Besides, our missions in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia have been asked to talk with the petroleum authorities in those countries for supplying crude to Bangladesh.

A source in the Petroleum Corporation told The Daily Star that if the war ends within ten to fifteen days, Bangladesh will face no problem. In case of a lingering war, an alternative supply line will have to be opened with countries of South East Asia and Far East. Bangladesh may even approach China to supply crude in case of emergency.

The Midnight File

Bangladeshis in Amman safe

Bangladeshi nationals in Amman, Jordan, are safe, a foreign office source said Friday. Jordan has opened its border and Bangladeshi nationals in Baghdad and Kuwait can enter Jordan without any problem, reports BSS.

Blast kills two in London

BRISTOL (England), Jan 18 : Two people were killed and two injured in the southern English town of Yeovil on Friday in an explosion at a Kuwait-owned petrol station, police said. The injured were taken to hospital and the cause of the blast was not known, a spokesman said, reports AFP.

Pakistan expels Iraqi diplomat

ISLAMABAD, Jan 18 : Pakistan ordered an Iraqi diplomat to leave the country today. Iraqi embassy sources confirmed that Press Counsellor Jassim Mohammed Jabber Al-Sheikh had been declared "persons non grata". The Iraqi diplomat had "incited some elements in the country to organize street agitation against the government," the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) quoted a Foreign Office official as saying, reports AFP.

Earthquake strikes Taipei

TAIPEI, Jan 18 : A strong earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter Scale struck eastern Taiwan Friday, shaking buildings in Taipei and other cities, but there were no reports of injuries or damage. The quake was centred at sea about 50 km (30 miles) south of the eastern port of Hualien, the Central Water Bureau said. Several strong quakes, which are relatively common in Taiwan, have hit the area since mid-December, reports Reuter.

Principal killed in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, Jan 18 : Six persons, including the principal of a college were killed, and two injured in Punjab since last night. A major tragedy was averted following the timely detection of a bomb in a stadium in Ludhiana. Mr O P Vigh was gunned down by four armed militants in the Multan Model College premises in Patiala Friday, reports PTI.

Sharif cancels visit to Iran

ISLAMABAD, Jan 18 : Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has indefinitely postponed visits to Iran and Turkey because of the Gulf war, the government said Friday. Sharif was to leave Saturday for Tehran and then Ankara for talks on economic and regional issues, report AP.

CNN allowed to broadcast

NEW YORK, Jan 18 : Iraqi authorities allowed Cables News Network to resume broadcast feeds from Baghdad early Friday, more than 12 hours after forcing the US television network to suspend its reports. Just before 11 a.m. Thursday (1900 GMT), however, the reporters said they had been ordered by Iraqi military authorities to cease broadcasts, reports AP.

SAARC can lessen war effect'

KATHMANDU, Jan 18 : The Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Mr. K K Bhargava, today called for speeding up the pace of regional cooperation which, he said, had the potential of mitigating the adverse consequences of the Gulf crisis. Mr. Bhargava said that the SAARC member countries could have good exchanges of thoughts about this and "we can jointly place our genuine problems before the international community for assistance to us because we are very badly hit by the crisis," reports PTI.

Diplomats cross into Iran

NICOSIA, Jan 18 : The Afghan Ambassador in Baghdad and his family, nine Algerian diplomats and two Bahraini students crossed the border into Iran. Number of Iraqis have also taken refuge in Iran since US and allied forces began launching heavy air and missile attacks on Iraqi targets since early Thursday, the Iranian news agency IRNA said, reports Reuter.

UN Council

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the fighting.

Iran

AP reports from UN:

Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani is trying to persuade Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and has offered to aid

victims of the Gulf war, Iran's UN Ambassador said Thursday.

Reports from Nicosia: A senior Iranian cleric Ayatollah Emami Kashani said Friday that if Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and has offered to aid

victims of the Gulf war, Iran's UN Ambassador said Thursday.

In further development, 25 US warplanes took off from the Incirlik strategic airbase in southern Turkey early Friday and returned to base sometime later.

It was not immediately clear whether the planes went on a bombing mission against Iraqi targets.

However, Saddam Hussein's missile attack Friday on Israel applied new stresses on Arab members of the US-led anti-Iraq coalition.

On Thursday the Turkish government approved the use of Turkish military bases by foreign forces if necessary.

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Meanwhile the Soviet Union on Friday condemned the Iraqi missile attack on Israel.

The official news agency Tass said the incident marks a new dangerous turning point in the Gulf conflict.

USSR lately has been trying to mend fences with Israel, with which it cut off

diplomatic ties in 1967. Last year, the Israelis and Soviets decided to re-open consulates.

Germany

Germany condemned Iraq's missile attack on Israel today but asked the Jewish state not to strike back. New Zealand and Philippines also condemned the Iraqi attack.

India concerned

PTI reports: The Indian Prime Minister, Mr Chandra Shekhar, said here today that "though India is not in the immediate theatre of Gulf War, as a developing country it will be influenced by the impact of the war if the war does not come to an early end. We are concerned in this because we have to depend on the Gulf region we have closer ties with Arab countries and whatever happened there, will influence India".

Jordan

Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu said on Thursday Japan would provide additional funds to help defray the costs of the US-led war against Iraq.

Rotarian PDG Iqbal Ansari

Khan has been elected delegate from District 328 to the Council on Legislation to be held in the United States in 1992.

NATO-Turkey

AFP reports: In Brussels, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was

Special responsibilities for UPs, pourasavas

The Acting President has promulgated an ordinance giving the union parishads and pourasavas certain special responsibilities for maintaining law and order during the parliamentary elections with a view to ensuring free and fair elections, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

The ordinance, entitled "the Union Parishad and Pourashava (Special Responsibilities) Ordinance, 1991" requires of the union parishads and pourasavas of the country to perform certain special responsibilities, within their respective jurisdictions, to maintain law and order during the parliamentary polls.

The ordinance empowers the government to dissolve any union parishad or pourashava in the event of its failure to perform any of these responsibilities.

Under the ordinance, the union parishads and pourashavas will be required to perform the following special responsibilities within their respective jurisdictions during the period of parliamentary polls, that is, from the last day of filing nomination papers for the elections to the seventh day after the polls.