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Inside Today Article

Ekushey and Educating the Masses
Can BNP and AL lead the way?
Column: The third view by Mahfuz Anam Page 4

International



Bofors asked to reveal all about kickbacks to Rajiv
Page 5

Business

Facilities for container ships at Chittagong Port need of the hour
Page 7

Feature

Health

Dental patients should stop seeing quacks
Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



'Movement' that Moved millions
Page 3

Holiday

The Offices of The Daily Star will remain closed on Friday, February 21, 1992, on account of 'Shaheed Dibash'.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the paper on Saturday, February 22, 1992.

—Management

Notice

Today's issue of The Daily Star includes an eight-page Supplement on 'Shaheed Dibash'. Price remains unchanged at Taka 4.00

—Management

Amar Ekushey today

By Staff Correspondent

The nation commemorates the 40th anniversary of the Shaheed Day today, amidst growing feeling of confidence about the future of democracy and liberty in the country.

Bangladesh has innumerable reasons to be forever grateful to Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, Abdus Salam, Rafiquddin and others. Their supreme sacrifice on February 21, 1952 sparked off a fireball that devoured the neo-colonial rulers of Pakistan within a span of 20 years.

The journey embarked upon 40 years ago was a journey to make Bangla one of the state languages of Pakistan; but the nationalist fire that the martyrs kindled in the Bengalee people did not stop burning until the country itself was freed on December 16, 1971.

In fact, that fire of Ekushey is burning brighter today than perhaps ever before.

The restoration of democ-

cracy in 1990 after two bouts of martial law and years of despotic rule, owed its success to the awareness of the people. That awareness was a product of the two-decade long struggle against neo-colonialism which was sparked off by the epoch-making events 40 years ago.

The history of the world has seen many extraordinary events, but rarely has a nation so passionately rallied in defence of its mother tongue and culture. Ekushey was not only about a simple matter of language; it was a most emotional, yet logical, forceful yet deliberate expression of Bengali nationalism.

One of the most extraordinary things about Ekushey was that no party or individual actually "led" the movement on that historic day. It was a spontaneous burst of indignation as well as righteousness.

The students of Dhaka See Page 12 Col 1



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was the first to pay tributes to the Language Martyrs at the Central Shaheed Minar as clock ticked one minute past midnight Thursday. —Star photo

PM hands over Ekushey Padak '91

Spread literacy, uphold spirit of Ekushey

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia distributed the "Ekushey Padak '91" to the recipients at a formal ceremony held at Osmany Memorial Hall Thursday evening, reports BSS.

The recipients of the 1991 Padak are: Ahmed Sharif for Literature, Kabir Chowdhury for Literature, Salahuddin Ahmed for Education, A M Harun-Ur-Rashid for Education, Faiz Ahmed for Journalism, Sanjida Khatun for Music, Mohammad Aminul Haq for Drama and Kazi Abdul Basset for Fine Arts.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister gave a call to take pledge to spread the Literacy Movement all over the country to uphold the commitment and spirit of the

Ekushey. Begum Zia said "The appeal of Ekushey will remain unfulfilled till there remain a single citizen unlettered."

She said, "Ekushey is our pride and source of national consciousness. It is our commitment and beacon of light." Ekushey was not only a Language Movement but it had a far reaching and wide-ranging significance, she said, adding it was a movement for political, economic and cultural emancipation.

The award-giving ceremony was attended, among others, by Ministers, members of parliament, political leaders and high officials.

Earlier, the Cabinet Secretary Ayubur Rahman gave See Page 12 Col 1

Beijing urges Yangon to settle issue with Dhaka

By Farid Hossain

China favours peaceful negotiations between Myanmar and Bangladesh to resolve the current border tensions, diplomatic sources in Dhaka said on Thursday.

They said China firmly believes that Myanmar and Bangladesh will be able to solve the problems in the spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness that exist between them.

China maintains good friendly relations with both Bangladesh and Myanmar

(Burma). They said though China is not offering any mediation between the two countries, it recently contacted Myanmar to say the border dispute can be resolved peacefully through negotiations.

Relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar chilled since Dec. 21, when a Myanmar patrol killed a BDR jawan and a civilian in an attack on Rejupara BDR outpost.

Myanmar has since then See Page 12 Col 4

IDB team will assess Rohingyas' problems

TRIPOLI, Feb 20: The Islamic Development Bank board of Governors has decided to send a mission to Bangladesh to assess the extent and dimension of the problems of the Rohingya Muslim refugees and to devise ways and means of extending succour and relief to the distressed humanity, reports BSS.

The conference also unequivocally condemned the atrocities perpetrated on the refugees.

The decision was taken in response to the statement made by the Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman at the plenary of the 16th meeting of the IDB board of governors being held here in the Libyan capital.

The Finance Minister said more than one hundred thousand Muslims from Myanmar

had taken refuge into Bangladesh into harrowing tales and as victims of gross violation of human rights.

Initially, he said, the government of Bangladesh, acting in accordance with the principle of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence had thought that the problem could be bilaterally settled.

Unfortunately, the situation aggravated and now it has reached such an unmanageable level that it is beyond the resources and capability of Bangladesh alone to manage, he said.

Termining this as a common human problem of immense proportion, he called upon the IDB member countries to extend their moral and material support to cooperate in the solution of this gigantic prob-

See Page 12 Col 1

EC aid to cope with refugee influx

BRUSSELS, Feb 20: The European Commission announced emergency aid worth 500,000 ECU to help Bangladesh cope with a flood of Myanmar Muslim refugees, and said the amount might be doubled shortly, reports Reuter.

Commissioner Abel Matutes, in charge of north-south relations, told visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman that the Commission would fund relief supplies including food, blankets and medicine.

Rahman said 70,000 Rohingya refugees, had fled from what they said was persecution by Myanmar hardline military rulers, posing a serious problem for Bangladesh.

They are living in makeshift camps, often in appalling conditions.

Matutes said the EC money would be channelled through the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the French branch of the Charity Medicines Sans Frontiers.

A Commission spokesman said the EC executive would probably give a further 500,000 ECU to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees once the latter's relief operations were under way.

Congress-I sweeps Punjab polls

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: India's ruling Congress (I) party today won elections boycotted by millions of voters in the troubled state of Punjab, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

The Congress secured more than half the seats in Punjab's 117-member legislature in Wednesday's ballot, the news agency said. The elections were the first in the northern state since 1985.

No further details were immediately available. Only 25 percent of Punjab's 13 million electorate cast their votes after Sikh political parties and militants called for a poll boycott.

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