

Independence day

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Central leaders of Awami League led by party chief Sheikh Hasina started the day by garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhavan in the morning.

The AL leaders later laid wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar. A ceremonial oath was also conducted by Sheikh Hasina. Party leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Begum Sajeda Choudhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, Tofael Ahmed, Muhammad Nasim, Begum Matiya Choudhury, Rahmat Ali and Abdul Kader Siddiqui, among others, were present during the occasion.

Muktijoddha Sangsad, war-wounded freedom fighters and Projonma Ekattur also placed wreaths at the national memorial.

On behalf of the 5-party alliance, wreaths were laid by, among others, Hasanul Huq Inu, Rashed Khan Menon, Nirmal Sen, Khalequzzaman, A F M Mahbubul Huq, Motiuddin Ahmed Khan Badal, and Naim Jahangir.

Other workers and leaders of political parties included Jatiya Shamajtantrik Dal led by Shahjahan Straj, Janata Dal led by Obaidur Rahman, the Patriotic Democratic Front was represented by Abdus Samad, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Nurul Islam Nahid and Dilip Barua, Supreme Court Bar Association also paid tribute at the national memorial led by, among others, Shamsul Huq Choudhury and Dr Kamal Hossain.

Dhaka University was represented by Vice Chancellor Dr Muniruzzaman Mia and Pro-VC Dr Waki Ahmed. DUCSU was represented by Amanullah Aman and Khairul Kabir Khokon. The Dhaka University Teachers Association was represented by Dr Shahdat Ali and Dr Saidur Rahman while the Provost of Rokeya and Shamsunnahar Hall led the students to pay tribute to the martyrs.

In addition, different socio-cultural organisations and people from all walks of life also placed wreaths at the Jatiya Smriti Shoudha.

On that day various socio-political organisations held discussion meetings and programmes to mark the occasion.

Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury Thursday said that there should be no room for confusion regarding the history of independence and demanded proper recognition for contributions in the Liberation War be given to Sheikh Mujib.

Speaking as the chief guest at a discussion meeting to mark the Independence Day arranged by the Jatiya party the leader said that the recent controversy at the independence day was created by ruling BNP by maintaining a sinister silence regarding the citizenship of Golam Azam.

The meeting chaired by Vice Chairman of JP central committee Abdul Bari Wasi, was participated among others by JP Vice Chairman Mahbubul Haq Dulan, Shamim Al Mamun, Ismail Hossain Bengal, AD Shamsul Haq, Saifur Rahman, S M M Alam, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Shah Mostain Billah, Taibur Rahman and Iqbal Hossain Baechu.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy held day-long programmes to mark the Independence Day Thursday.

The officers, artists and employees of the academy began the day's programmes by placing floral wreath at the Savar National Memorial at 6 am.

A poetry recital and musical programme was held at 9.30 am at the academy premises. Academy Director General Kamal Lohani, in a speech, prayed homage to the martyred freedom fighters.

Prominent reciters and artists of the country performed patriotic songs and recited poems broadcast from the Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra during the Liberation War.

Dhaka Metropolitan Young Men's Christian Association in Collaboration with Jagannath University College Leo Club Friday held a voluntary blood donation programme to mark the Independence Day and good Friday.

The programme held at Tejgaon Church Community Centre began at 9.30 am and ended at 12.30.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's blood centre collected the blood at the donation programme.



People's Court' at the Suhrawardy Uddyan Thursday.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia witnessing the Independence Day Parade at the National Parade Square Thursday.

Commentary

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ciably lowered. For this, independent analysts give much credit to the Government of Begum Khaleda Zia. It was a welcome move on the part of the administration to arrest Azam on Tuesday and to send the Jamaat leader to the Dhaka Central Jail, with the clear indication that the Home Ministry would now be looking at his possible deportation from Bangladesh.

The move helped in creating some distance between the BNP ruling party and the Jamaat-e-Islami, which, in political terms, should strengthen the credibility of the Government of Begum Zia in months to come.

If the arrest of Azam had come a couple of days earlier and without the "stern warning" against those staging the trial on Thursday, the Central Committee for the Realisation of the Ideals of the Liberation War, headed by Jahanara Imam, might have postponed its move in favour of more talks with the Home Minister.

Yet another mistake made by the authorities was to blackout the news of the trial and other related developments from the electronic media on Thursday, this forcing people to listen to many unfounded rumours, some unfavourable to the administration, and to monitor foreign broadcasts.

True, some of our worst fears about what could happen on Thursday and Friday have so far failed to come true. But all the alarm signals are now being sounded by various quarters, about a continuing mass movement to force the Government to pass the death sentence on Azam, about trials of more collaborators and, finally, about a confrontation not only between the pro-liberation forces and the Jamaat but also between the ruling BNP party on one side and the opposition Awami League and the Five-Party Alliance on the other.

All these possibilities point to a dangerous de-stabilisation process, affecting normalcy in our economic life and erod-

ing the fledgling democratic norms and practices in the country. If the proposed movement goes through, there will be hartals and work stoppages, increased violence in the universities and perhaps even senseless killings and bloodshed.

A source close to the Imam Committee told BBC's "South Asian Survey" head on yesterday morning, that he was far from clear as to how the proposed movement would be conducted. If his statement suggested that the Committee had no clear-cut sense of direction, then there would certainly be a scramble for leadership and conflicting compulsions pulling the Committee in different directions.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has come forward to take up the leadership of the movement, perhaps complementing the emotional role played by Jahanara Imam.

If this is so, one would hope that Hasina will play a constructive role in resolving the crisis and use her pressure, perhaps through some intermediaries, on the Government to handle the Azam affair within the framework of the Rule of Law. She owes it to the country.

Maybe an initiative should also come from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, as a follow-up on her action in putting Azam in jail. By now, she must have realised that Jamaat, no friend of BNP, will do anything to embarrass her administration.

Let the PM bridge the unreal gap between her party and the pro-liberation forces. Let her also instruct some of her senior party leaders to get together with their counterparts in Awami League and prepare the way for a face-to-face meeting between herself and Sheikh Hasina Wajed. This is the time for politics of power struggle to make way for statesmanship for national salvation. If the two leaders fail in this task, the country may well be heading towards an unprecedented crisis.

Azam arrested at instruction of US, India, says Jamaat

Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, describing the arrest of Prof Golam Azam as "illegal", Friday demanded that he be released unconditionally, reports UNB.

Jamaat Secretary General Matur Rahman Nizam told a rally in Dhaka that the government, by arresting the Jamaat chief, had surrendered to the terrorists who "are hatching conspiracy against Islam."

As part of the conspiracy, he said, foreign agents had formed the so-called Gano-Adalat in the name of staging a public trial. "If people's verdict is the basis of any decision then Prof Azam should be set free as thousands of people had demanded his release," he added.

Jamaat organised the rally in front of the north gate of Baitul Mokarram Mosque after Junjma prayers protesting the arrest of Golam Azam.

Ali Ahsan Mujahid told the rally that Golam Azam was arrested at the instruction of Washington and Delhi.

He claimed that cancellation of the citizenship of 83 people including Golam Azam by the Awami League government was "illegal" and none of them was arrested when they returned to Bangladesh.

Presided over by A T M Azharul Islam the rally was also addressed by Abdul Kader Mollah.

The rally was followed by a procession.

The processionists while passing through Inner Circular Road beat up two motor cycle riders and damaged their motorbike. They were identified as Md Rahman, proprietor of a dying a printing factory and Md Straj.

Ctg newsmen won't cover Shibir's news

CHITTAGONG, Mar 27: A joint protest rally of Chittagong Press Club and Chittagong Union of Journalists today decided not to cover any news of Islami Chharta Shibir, reports BSS.

The rally held in protest against the attack on Chittagong Press Club and damage to its properties by some processionists of Islami Chharta Shibir yesterday, a press release of the club said.

Held at the club premises the rally was presided over by club president Aul Hakim and addressed, among others, by CUJ president M Nazrul Haq, Awami League leader Muslemuddin Ahmed, PDF leader Mohammad Shah Alam, Five-Party Alliance leader Solaiman Khan, Chittagong University Teachers Association leader Dr Abdur Rashid, former CUJ president Akhterunnabi, Press Club general secretary Abu Sulfan, CUCSU Vice-President T Nazimuddin, and Advocate Jafar Ahmed Mustafa.

Dr Kamal

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above law, then the constitution loses its universal character.

Dr Kamal also demanded execution of the verdict of the people's court since, he said, the people's opinion was expressed in the court.

Presided over by the President of local Awami League unit, Abu Mia, the meeting was also addressed by Col (Retd) Showqat Ali MP, and local leaders Qamrul Islam Rats, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Habibur Rahman and Abdur Rahman.

Sangbad

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tack at the Sangbad office.

Meanwhile, Barrister Mainul Hossain and Anwarul Islam, President and Secretary General respectively of Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad Friday condemned the Thursday's attack on Inqilab and Meillat office.

A meeting of the Bangladesh Council of Editors held yesterday also condemned the attack on and the firing incidents at the Inqilab and Meillat office on the Independence Day.

Ghali's envoy

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Eliasson is being despatched by the UN Secretary General Bhutros Ghali for an on-the-spot evaluation of the refugee situation. The visit is expected to result in a better appreciation of the Herculean task Bangladesh faces with the existence of more than two lakh Myanmar Muslims on its soil.

The visit of the UN Under Secretary General follows the talks Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had with the UN Secretary General on the refugee issue during her recent visit to New York.

Myanmar government has agreed to a visit by the high UN official and this reflects the willingness of the authorities in Yangon to discuss the deteriorating refugee issue with the United Nations and international forums. So far, they sought to turn a blind eye to the refugee problem and tended to give such an account of the issue that would only complicate the problem.



Jamaat procession demanding Golam Azam's release after Juma prayers in the city yesterday.

The Midnight File

Ukraine refuses to set up inter-parliamentary assembly

MOSCOW, Mar 27: Ukrainian officials refused today in the Kazakhstan capital Alma-Ata to set up an inter-parliamentary assembly for the CIS, the Tass news agency reported. Fedor Kurshak, Ukrainian Parliamentary Speaker, was quoted by the local Kazreva Agency saying "the inter-parliamentary assembly is one more structure that will be over sovereign states. It is not necessary to set this up at the present time," reports AFP.

China demands World War II reparations from Japan

BEIJING, Mar 27: China's parliament has revived demands for World War II reparations from Japan in what appears to be a purposeful maneuver to pressure Tokyo for more economic assistance. The National People's Congress (NPC) Law and Foreign Affairs Committees considered a motion Thursday calling on Japan to pay one trillion dollars in damages, informed sources said today, reports AFP.

People's Court: Death

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They chanted slogans "Let the arms of 1971 roar again." "Golam Azam, the Razakar, be out of the country."

Meanwhile, the leaders of the National Coordination Committee for Realisation of the Ideals of Liberation War and Resistance to Killers and Collaborators of 1971, the organisers of the trial, gathered at the chamber of Advocate Gazul Huq and prepared the verdict at a meeting at the Supreme Court Bar Association. The leaders spent the previous night outside their residences fearing arrest. They started for the venue of trial at 11:15 am and climbed on to a makeshift stage aboard one of the three trucks parked for the purpose.

By 11:30 the whole of the Suhrawardy Uddyan turned into a human sea. Men, women and children, veterans and the war-maimed freedom fighters joined the motley crowd. Leaders of almost all the political parties belonging to the opposition, the opposition MPs, leaders of the socio-political groups and students and youth forums were also present.

Besides family members of the martyred intellectuals, martyred freedom fighters, and some foreign observers also attended the public trial. The members of the Mrittunjoe brigade, students and youth brigades struggled hard to maintain discipline in the crowd.

The judges, 15 witnesses, three prosecution lawyers and one defence lawyer, and the central leaders of the Trial Committee climbed on to the makeshift stage. The trial began at 11:50 am and continued for about 20 minutes. Jahanara Imam, Convener of the National Coordination Committee, was the Chairman of the tribunal and read out the verdict to the people. Gazul Huq passed on the verdict to the people for their opinion.

However, the verdict was announced without the help of loudspeakers, which, the organisers alleged, were seized by the police at 11:30 am near Shahbagh. The Convener of the City Committee Mofazzal Hossain Maya was also beaten up by police, they claimed.

The trial over, scattered processionists took to the streets of the capital, and people rejoiced in every possible way.

Jahanara Imam went to the residence of the Leader of the Opposition where Sheikh Hasina congratulated her and presented her with a bouquet.

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