



Students of Bharateswari Homes displaying physical exercise at the National Stadium (top) and BNP (left top) and AL procession in the city on the occasion of Victory Day Wednesday. — Star photo

Nation celebrates V-Day

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A 31-gun salute heralded the beginning of the day. The day was a public holiday. National flag was hoisted atop all government offices and private houses. Main streets and road islands in the capital were decorated with miniature national flags.

Colourful march past, rallies, processions, cultural shows and fairs were organised in the capital in celebration of the day.

The Prime Minister in a nationwide broadcast called on the nation to take firm pledge for protection of independence and hard-earned democracy.

She attended a juvenile rally and inspected a march past of school children at Dhaka Stadium Wednesday morning.

The Prime Minister said her government was working to mitigate the sufferings of the people and make the hard-earned independence meaningful.

There are many who are being deprived of education and passing their days in sufferings. Our victory will be meaningful if we can bring smile on their faces," she told the children's rally at the National Stadium.

The Prime Minister urged the children to groom themselves as the future leaders of the country, saying "you have to love the country and think about the people."

Nearly 10,000 children of different schools, Boys Scout, Girls Guide, orphanages and socio-cultural organisations participated in the rally, followed by cultural function. Mounted police and an elephant also took part in the parade.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Begum Biswas hosted a reception at Bangabhaban Wednesday afternoon in celebration of the Victory Day.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attended the reception.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder said the BNP government was working towards realising the dreams of freedom fighters for establishing a democratic, happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

Addressing a rally in front of the National Press Club, Talukder said the 1971 Liberation War was fought to establish a democratic order and an exploitation-free society and to improve the socio-economic condition of commonman.

Earlier, a huge procession which began from the central office of the party, paraded different thoroughfares in the city and terminated at the venue of the rally.

A massive victory march led by Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina charged with joy and festivity rocked the streets in the capital commemorating the historic victory of the 1971 Liberation War.

Thousands of jubilant people joined the victory march, biggest in recent time, witnesses said.

The marchers carried paper-made cannons, dummy guns, models of freedom fighters, rajakars, Pakistan army and Golam Azam on push-carts and trucks.

At the end of the procession, effigies of Golam Azam, Rajakars and Pakistani soldiers were set afire.

Sheik Hasina called on the people to rise against the "neocautocracy" of ruling BNP and anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir to consolidate the country's hard-won independence and democracy.

Hasina was addressing a jubilant crowd of thousands of people on the street outside the Bangabandhu Bhaban Wednesday evening at the end of her party's massive victory march.

Tens of thousands of enthusiastic people thronged the Dhaka University campus Wednesday to enjoy various colourful programmes marking the celebration of Victory Day.

The university campus wore a festive look with various socio-cultural organisations holding a series of cultural functions throughout the day.

At about 10 in the morning, a large procession jointly organised by Mukti Juddha Chhatra Command and Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, participated by children, youths, old men and women, paraded the city streets and campus. It was brought out from the Central Shaheed Minar.

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UNICEF chief says 'Daal Bhat' programme to reduce malnutrition

By Staff Correspondent

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative in Dhaka Rolf C Carriere Thursday suggested that the "Daal Bhat" programme initiated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia would be able to bring down the country's existing malnutrition rate.

The Prime Minister's 'daal bhat' programme, if focused on prevention of malnutrition, as well as on dealing with the child under two and on adolescent girls in their last growth spurt, will be able to bring down malnutrition rates significantly, even with current available resources," he said.

Carriere, however, pointed out that the programme involves education for behaviour change regarding distribution of food within the family, and monthly weighing of babies, which he termed a major challenge.

The UNICEF Representative was speaking to the press at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on the occasion of launching the 1993 State Of The World's Children report (SOWC).

The daal bhat programme of Begum Zia aims at alleviating poverty and providing minimum nutrition to every individual of the region.

Bangladesh has the largest number of moderate and severely malnourished children within its borders. According to a study, the per capita calorie intake for about 11 crore 50 lakh people is 2191.

Carriere lauded the success achieved in the country's health and nutrition sectors, particularly in the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI), use of birth control materials, and in the essential drugs policy, which he dubbed a visionary one.

He said that EPI has become the country's flagship programme and with the coverage of more than 70 per cent, the programme now saved the lives of 72,000 children every year.

"It also prevents 4.2 million episode of illness and averts 6400 cases of polio paralysis," he added.

Dacoits loot Tk 50,000 gold ornaments in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 17: Dacoits armed with automatic weapons looted gold ornaments worth about Taka 50,000 from a residence opposite the District Judge Court here this evening.

The house owner and a resident were injured in the incident.

According to witnesses, the dacoits numbering seven to eight hit Advocate Nurul Islam on his head with a pistol making him unconscious and looted the ornaments.

A case has been registered with Narayanganj police and nobody in this regard.

Ratan Sen murder: Juba Dal leader gets bail

KHULNA, Dec 17: One of the accused of sensational Ratan Sen murder case was released on bail today, reports UNB.

Shaharuzzaman is president of the Khulna unit of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, the youth front of ruling BNP.

He was received by local BNP leaders at the Khulna Jail gate when he was enlarged this afternoon.

Shahar was taken in the town in a truck procession brought out by transport workers. He is also president of the Khulna Minibus Samity.

Ratan Sen, an elderly leader of CPB, was killed here on July 31. The murder case is pending at the District Judge's Court.

Ten killed, 44 hurt in accidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least ten people were killed and 44 others injured, 16 of them seriously in road and train mishaps at Gazipur, Rajbari and Bogra.

UNB reports: Seven people including a woman were killed and 12 others were injured Tuesday in a road mishap near Sutrapur in Kaliakoir thana of Gazipur district, police and hospital sources said yesterday.

The deceased are: Belal Hossain, 35, Yakub ali, 28, Hedayat Hossain Bablu, 30, Ashraf Ali, 60 and Nurul, 45, Nurul Islam, 40 and Sabjan Begum, 25.

Of them, Yakub was killed on the spot and Ashraf died on his way to hospital while Sabjan succumbed to her injury at Qumudini Hospital.

Of the injured, three were referred to 'Dhaka Pangu Hospital' in a critical condition while nine others were admitted to Qumudini Hospital.

Eyewitnesses said the incident occurred when a Dhaka-bound speeding tempo (Tangali, Ba-339) and tempo (Chattr-Metro Pa-2023) coming from opposite direction, collided head-on near Sutrapur.

Our Rajbari Correspondent says, two persons including a madrasa teacher were killed and 20 others injured when a minibus fell into a road side ditch after knocking down a bicycle on the Rajbari-Faridpur highway at around 11 am yesterday.

Md Golam Maula, 40, teacher of Sripur died on the spot as the minibus hit him. He was riding the bicycle and was on his way to the madrasa three miles away.

Anwara Begum, 20, succumbed to her injuries in the hospital at around 3 pm. Five other persons were also stated to be in a critical condition. They are: Md Montaj, 25, Abu Bakar, 20, Nurul Islam, 25, Shahjahan, 30, and Mujibur, 50. The rest were released after giving first aid.

The Midnight File

Australia to drop Elizabeth from oath of allegiance

CANBERRA, Dec 17: Australia has decided to drop Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, still titular head of state of the former British colony, from the oath of allegiance taken by new citizens. Australians-to-be will instead swear allegiance to Australia. Prime Minister Paul Keating told reporters. In the new oath that Keating released today, would-be citizens will pledge loyalty to Australia, its democracy, rights, liberties and laws, reports Reuter.

Lebanon to block entry of deported Palestinians

BEIRUT, Dec 17: The Lebanese army was ordered Thursday to block the entry of 418 suspected Muslim fundamentalist activists slated for deportation from Israel's occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, military sources said. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the decision was taken after the Lebanon representative of the fundamentalist Palestinian faction Hamas, Abu Mohammed Mustafa, called on Lebanese officials to refuse to take the deportees, reports AP.

US offers warplanes to enforce Bosnia air ban

BRUSSELS, Dec 17: The United States on Thursday offered aircraft to enforce a ban on Serbian aircraft over Bosnia-Herzegovina but failed to rally support for such a move from its NATO allies, officials said. Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek said US Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger made the offer at a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the 16 NATO nations. It is unclear if the United States would act unilaterally without a NATO consensus, reports AP.

Stranded Pakistanis

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Bangladesh social investment bank... to serve the community from the grass-roots level." On the Babri Mosque issue, Dr Naseef reiterated the Rabita stand that the Indian government failed to take adequate steps to protect the mosque and demanded that the mosque be rebuilt.

He also urged the Indian government to take necessary measures to ensure the safety of Muslims and religious institutions in India.

Replying to a question, he said that his organisation is already involved in relief operations in Bosnia. He urged international organisations, including the United Nations, to issue statements on Bosnia "much more positive than they are issuing today".

Earlier, at a dinner hosted by the executive committee of the Motamar al-Islami Bangladesh, Dr Naseef pointed out that Rabita had been active in humanitarian services for nearly half a century after being founded by King Abdul Aziz.

Motamar Bangladesh president and member of Rabita central committee Maulana Mohiuddin Khan and secretary general of the organisation Nader Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Accompanied by Shaikh Ahmed Salah Jamjoom and Dr Muhammad Abduh Yemani, both former ministers in the Saudi government, Dr Naseef is scheduled to leave today after a three-day visit.

Rao: No-confidence

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newspapers indirectly came out in support of the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), the main opposition.

Editorials said Rao, 71, had played into the BJP's hands, and the party would now project itself as more sinned against after being widely seen as the sinner in the Ayodhya outrage that ignited bloody Hindu-Muslim violence.

The Economic Times, India's most respected financial daily, called the dismissal "retrograde and probably counter-productive". The Tribune said it was "ill-advised", while The Times of India described it as "over reaction".

The centre has now taken a step which is blatantly anti-democratic and opportunist," added The Observer, which along with the newspapers had been mostly supportive of the Rao government's measures against Hindu hard-liners.

The Pioneer, which had also taken a strident anti-BJP line, warned: "This can only win sympathy for the BJP when the need of the hour is to isolate it."

Another report says, India's major communist and centrist parties applauded early yesterday the decision to sack three pro-Hindu state administrations.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist), which governs two of India's 25 states, said the governments of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh had "no moral authority to stay in power."

Rao remains under continuing pressure from within his own party to quit for failing to act in time to prevent the razing of the mosque.

Armed men snatch convict from escort

JHENIDAH, Dec 17: A convict, reportedly a left-wing political activist, was snatched by an armed group from an escort on way back to jail from hospital today, reports UNB.

Police said Moshfiq Islam Bilu (29), said to be member of Biploby Communist Party, was serving a 10-year prison term in Jhenidah Jail in an arms case tried two years back.

He was taken to the Sadar Hospital today after he fell sick and released after some time.

Moshfiq, returning to jail in a rickshaw-van, was freed by a band of 12 armed men who came in four motor-bikes.

They halted the van near the bar library in the town, blasted at least three crackers and wrest Moshfiq freed.

The two sentries, who were unarmed, were injured in the explosions, jail authorities said.

Plan to build 22 cyclone shelters

The government has planned to construct 22 cyclone shelters at Dhulbarchar and its surrounding areas along the coastal belt in Bagerhat district. Official sources said that the project would cost about Tk 8 crore.

Manikganj, Dec 17: Some 1,500 loaded trucks have been stranded at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ferry ghats for the last three days because of navigation problems in two major river channels, reports UNB.

BIWTC officials said many shoals had emerged in the Aricha-Nagarbari and Aricha-Daulatdia routes in the Jamuna and the Padma, affecting ferry movement.

Ferries take an additional two hours to reach their destinations owing to the sandbars as well as low visibility of the river routes because of dense fog, they said.

Loss of navigability of the river channels is blamed on low flow of Ganges water and erosion of river banks.

Dhaka risks losing support

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The Bangladesh government thinks the talk of Dhaka's using force in the repatriation is an attempt at maligning its policy. Bangladesh, according to Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman, remains committed to voluntary repatriation. "No one will be sent home forcibly," he said in a recent press interview.

Harping on the voluntary nature of the repatriation is simply not enough. It's equally important that the international donors properly understand the policy, say official sources here.

According to its mandate, the UNHCR cannot be party to repatriation if there is any element of force. But Bangladesh cannot afford to keep the refugees for long. The government is not only facing resource constraints, there is also a strong domestic political pressure to send the Rohingyas home as soon as possible.

Officials at the Dhaka mission of the UNHCR are tight-lipped about the current situation. "We have reached a very sensitive stage," said one official.