

Afghan gunmen hold 19 Pak schoolboys hostage

ISLAMABAD, Feb 20: Three masked gunmen from Afghanistan hijacked a bus filled with schoolboys and teachers Sunday and demanded that Pakistan provide money and food for their war-ravaged homeland, reports AP.

After several hours of negotiations, 55 crying young boys and six female teachers were released Sunday afternoon. The gunmen continued to hold 19 more boys and 12 men who work on the school's clerical staff, Pakistan officials said.

Interior Minister Nasrullah Babaar, who negotiated with the gunman at the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, said no one had been hurt and he expected the crisis to be resolved peacefully.

"Everyone is relaxed. I'm not worried," he told journalists after emerging from the Afghan Embassy. "I promised them safe passage (to Afghanistan) and a helicopter."

The three kidnappers were demanding 15 million rupees (dhs 500,000) and "truck loads of food" for Afghanistan, where heavy factional fighting has led to food shortages in the capital of Kabul.

However, the Afghans also said that they would not release the kids until large amounts of food reach Kabul, an operation that could take days.

The gunmen said they did not belong to any of the warring Islamic factions in Afghanistan, but they wanted to highlight the suffering of ordinary Kabul residents.

The gunmen hijacked the bus in the northwestern city of Peshawar early Sunday, a school day in Pakistan. The gunmen then forced the driver to travel 200 kilometers to Islamabad, the capital.

The bus was parked just outside the gate of the National Assembly, and Babaar was called on board to negotiate.

One killed in Sylhet clash

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 20: A septuagenarian was killed and 12 others were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers at Inathalpur of Daudpur union, under Sylhet sadar thana this morning.

According to the police, the incident was a sequel to previous enmity between the groups over land dispute.

Ismat Ali, 75, died on the spot. Six critically injured had been admitted to the Sylhet MAG Osmany Medical College Hospital.

A case has been with the Kotwali Thana.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia seen amidst the recipients and representatives of posthumous recipients of the Ekushey Padak '93 at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the city yesterday. — PID photo

PM: Ekushey

From Page 1 Col 3

The first bold step towards the democratic struggle of the nation.

"Ekushey February is a glorious day in our national history and will ever remain inscribed with blood-stained letters," she said, recalling that a student-mass unity voiced the demand for recognising mother-tongue Bangla as state language and sacrificed their lives in establishing their right to speak in their own language.

Independence of the nation came at the culmination of this victory, Begum Zia observed.

The Prime Minister said the Ekushey Padak had been introduced for recognition of the contributions in the field of education, literature and culture to immortalise the memory of the great Language Movement.

The Prime Minister said state recognition widens creativity and hoped that many others also would come forward to contribute to these fields.

Begum Zia yesterday distributed to nine people the Ekushey Padak-93 which carries Tk 20,000, a gold medal and a citation.

Three of the recipients were awarded posthumously. The government introduced the 'Ekushey Padak' in 1976 in memory of the language martyrs of 1952.

The recipients are Monir-uddin Yusuf (posthumous), Rabeya Khatun (Literature), Shaheed Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury (Education, posthumous), Reazuddin Ahmad (Journalism), Mohammad Asaf-ud-dowla (Music), Ustad Fazul Huq (Music-posthumous), Dilara Zaman (Drama), Rafiqunnabi (Fine Arts) and Jewel Aich (Magic).

Zero hour

From Page 1 Col 4

in the heart of the Bengali nation.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was the first to place her wreath at the altar of the Shaheed Minar one minute past midnight Sunday.

She was accompanied by her cabinet colleagues and front ranking leaders of the BNP.

DUCSU president and Vice-Chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed followed the Prime Minister to place a wreath.

Leaders of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) and other student organisations were the next to pay tributes.

Political party leaders, professional groups, diplomats and people from all walks of life will converge at the Central Shaheed Minar throughout the day to pay tributes to the valiant sons of the soil.

Vietnamese FM due in June likely

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Ngyoi Manh Cam is expected to visit Bangladesh in June, diplomatic sources said here yesterday, reports UNB.

Bangladesh opened its diplomatic mission in capital Hanoi last year with the hope to establish a good trade link with the country.

Vietnam opened its mission in Dhaka just after liberation in 1971, but closed it down in late 70's due to financial constraints.

Dinkal editor, reporter granted bail

Managing Director and publisher of the Dainik Dinkal Prof Majidul Islam, Acting Editor Sayed Jafar and Senior Staff Reporter Mokhesur Rahman Choudhury were granted bail by the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate when they appeared before his court here yesterday, reports BSS.

The court had issued warrant of arrest against the three on a case, filed by Alhaj Moqbul Hossain, editor of the Dainik Al-Amin and a businessman, for publishing a report titled 'Mona Property Nepathye - Sonargaor Badiuzzamanke Aubangali Sajtje Koti Takar Sampatti Atmasal' in the Dainik Dinkal on February 14 last.

Pledge for stronger democracy

From Page 1 Col 5

ple to work unitedly to safeguard the independence of the country and materialise the hopes and aspirations of the martyrs of the language movement.

President Biswas, paying rich tributes to the martyrs, said Ekushey is the guiding principle of our nationality. As a nation, we are indebted to the language martyrs, he said.

Referring to the glorious history of the nation's language and culture, the President said the people of this country cherish great love for their mother tongue.

President Biswas also underscored the role of the litterateurs, linguists, poets and intellectuals in developing the country's language and culture.

In a similar message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hoped the spirit of great Ekushey would inspire the nation towards developing the Bangla language, promoting democratic ideals and values and attaining self-reliance in all sectors.

She said the sacrifices of the martyrs for the cause of the language could be made meaningful by fulfilling their hopes and aspirations.

Paying rich tributes to the martyrs the Prime Minister said people and the students of this country had achieved a great victory on the day in 1952 by foiling the intrigues against the Bengali language.

Termining Ekushey as a glorious day in our national life, Begum Zia said the Language Movement had not only given Bangla the dignity of a state language but also led to the struggle for the nation's separate identity, flourishing of its own culture and the liberation war.

Awami League chief and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina in her message called upon the people to take a renewed pledge on the Shaheed Day to save democracy and establish non-communal politics in the country.

Hasina urged the people also to take a fresh vow to protect the mother tongue from the hands of the evil forces.

Today is a public holiday. Newspapers have brought out supplements and Radio and Television are putting out special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Series of Pak proposals on Kashmir to India

ISLAMABAD, Feb 20: Pakistan Saturday submitted a series of counter-proposals on the Kashmir issue to India and said it was ready to discuss a date for another round of bilateral talks, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said, reports AFP.

The proposals are part of an informal exchange of ideas between the two governments after talks last month, the first in 15 years, ended in deadlock.

In the proposals sent through the Indian embassy here and the Pakistani mission in New Delhi, Islamabad "expressed its readiness," to discuss the "rescheduling of the talks after Ramadan," the Muslim fasting month which ends mid-March, and after receiving the Indian response, the spokesman said.

New Delhi issued its proposals three weeks ago setting out measures to make the border in Kashmir a "line of peace and tranquillity."

India called for troops on both sides to disengage along the disputed Siachen Glacier and broadening the scope of an existing agreement barring attacks on each other's nuclear facilities.

The spokesman said Pakistan has offered "specific" suggestions for peace along the Line of Control, which divides the Indian-and-Pakistani controlled parts of Kashmir. These included "achieving a balance of forces between Pakistan and India in Jammu and Kashmir as envisaged in the ceasefire agreement and

at the auditorium of the academy at 10 am. A musical soiree participated by renowned artists will follow the discussion.

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (EJAZ) last night paid tributes to the Shaheeds of the historic language movement on the eve of Ekushey February today.

The members of the committee also prayed to the Almighty Allah for the peace of the souls of the Shaheeds of the language movement and expressed their sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

BSS from Chittagong adds: Ekushey February, commemorating the events of the great language movement of 1952 and sacrifices made during the movement, will be observed in the port city and elsewhere in the district today in a befitting manner.

Political parties, trade unions, student organisations and socio-cultural associations have chalked out elaborate programmes on the occasion which include procession in the morning, placing of floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar, discussion on the significance of Ekushey and Bangla language, cultural functions, milad mahfil and special prayers.

City branches of the BNP, Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party will hold discussions at their respective offices while the Bangla Academy and Chittagong University will also hold similar programmes.

Local newspapers and periodicals will bring out special supplements highlighting the occasion and local station of Radio Bangladesh will broadcast special programmes.

Another report from Khulna says, day-long separate programmes have been chalked out by various political, socio-cultural, trade and other organisations in the city in observance of the 43rd martyrs day today.

The programmes include hoisting of national flag at halfmast, processions, placing of floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar, holding of milad mahfil and discussions on the significance of the day.

Khulna centre of the Bangla Academy held a discussion at its office Saturday on the contribution of the people of Khulna in language movement.

at the auditorium of the academy at 10 am.

A musical soiree participated by renowned artists will follow the discussion.

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (EJAZ) last night paid tributes to the Shaheeds of the historic language movement on the eve of Ekushey February today.

The members of the committee also prayed to the Almighty Allah for the peace of the souls of the Shaheeds of the language movement and expressed their sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

BSS from Chittagong adds: Ekushey February, commemorating the events of the great language movement of 1952 and sacrifices made during the movement, will be observed in the port city and elsewhere in the district today in a befitting manner.

Political parties, trade unions, student organisations and socio-cultural associations have chalked out elaborate programmes on the occasion which include procession in the morning, placing of floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar, discussion on the significance of Ekushey and Bangla language, cultural functions, milad mahfil and special prayers.

City branches of the BNP, Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party will hold discussions at their respective offices while the Bangla Academy and Chittagong University will also hold similar programmes.

Local newspapers and periodicals will bring out special supplements highlighting the occasion and local station of Radio Bangladesh will broadcast special programmes.

Another report from Khulna says, day-long separate programmes have been chalked out by various political, socio-cultural, trade and other organisations in the city in observance of the 43rd martyrs day today.

The programmes include hoisting of national flag at halfmast, processions, placing of floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar, holding of milad mahfil and discussions on the significance of the day.

Khulna centre of the Bangla Academy held a discussion at its office Saturday on the contribution of the people of Khulna in language movement.

at the auditorium of the academy at 10 am.

A musical soiree participated by renowned artists will follow the discussion.

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (EJAZ) last night paid tributes to the Shaheeds of the historic language movement on the eve of Ekushey February today.

The members of the committee also prayed to the Almighty Allah for the peace of the souls of the Shaheeds of the language movement and expressed their sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

BSS from Chittagong adds: Ekushey February, commemorating the events of the great language movement of 1952 and sacrifices made during the movement, will be observed in the port city and elsewhere in the district today in a befitting manner.

Political parties, trade unions, student organisations and socio-cultural associations have chalked out elaborate programmes on the occasion which include procession in the morning, placing of floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar, discussion on the significance of Ekushey and Bangla language, cultural functions, milad mahfil and special prayers.

City branches of the BNP, Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party will hold discussions at their respective offices while the Bangla Academy and Chittagong University will also hold similar programmes.

Local newspapers and periodicals will bring out special supplements highlighting the occasion and local station of Radio Bangladesh will broadcast special programmes.

Another report from Khulna says, day-long separate programmes have been chalked out by various political, socio-cultural, trade and other organisations in the city in observance of the 43rd martyrs day today.

The programmes include hoisting of national flag at halfmast, processions, placing of floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar, holding of milad mahfil and discussions on the significance of the day.

Khulna centre of the Bangla Academy held a discussion at its office Saturday on the contribution of the people of Khulna in language movement.

at the auditorium of the academy at 10 am.

The Midnight File

Bosnia for NATO air strikes

SARAJEVO, Feb 20: Bosnia's President today formally requested that NATO launch air strikes against Serb forces in the hills around Sarajevo, saying they had not complied with a NATO ultimatum for surrender of heavy weapons. "I have to tell you NATO's decision has not been respected by the Serb side. I think that heavy weaponry that remains tonight after midnight should be a target for NATO air strikes," Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic wrote in a letter to NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner. The request was reported on Bosnian radio, reports Reuter.

British filmmaker Jarman dies

LONDON, Feb 20: Derek Jarman, the iconoclastic British filmmaker whose homosexuality frankly influenced his work, died Sunday after a long battle against AIDS. He was 52. Jarman died at St Bartholomew's Hospital in central London, a spokesman there said. Although prolific as an author and painter, Jarman was best known as the director of about a dozen films that helped energize independent low-budget British cinema in the 1970s and 80s, reports AP.

JS probe body meet

From Page 1 Col 7

terms of reference surfaced when the opposition members demanded a thorough investigation into the alleged corruptions of the ministry while the treasury bench members refused to entertain the idea. The treasury bench members argued that the Parliamentary Standing Committee was there to monitor the activities of the ministry on a regular basis. The Rules of Procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad provide for setting up special parliamentary committee to investigate specific charges put forward by any legislator against any ministry or minister. The ruling party members have been insisting on investigating the specific charges Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League brought against the Irrigation Minister Majid-Ul-Huq.

On the other hand, the opposition members of the committee have been rejecting the treasury bench interpretations, since the first meeting of the probe body, arguing that the approach towards the investigation was too mechanical to be accepted.

However, the committee resolved at its last meeting that it would meet again only to inform the Chairman of the Committee, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, whether the parties concerned were interested to discuss the matter any further.

The parties were supposed to discuss the issue, before informing the chairman, in their respective party forums.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nasim of the Awami League told The Daily Star yesterday that they were yet to discuss the issue in their party forum.

"However, we are not optimistic about the ruling party's positive attitude towards the investigation," Nasim, a member of the probe body, said. Replying to a question, the AL leader said: "If the treasury bench members once again refuse to change their previous stand on the investigation, we shall most likely demand the subject be debated in the House this time."

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, who is also a member of the probe body, while talking on the subject last night hinted that there had been no major policy change regarding the terms of reference.

The minister felt that what was really necessary was to begin the investigation with the terms specifically suggested by the House. "Once the investigation begins, many documents of the ministry could be called for by the committee," the minister observed.

He expressed his surprise over the opposition members' reluctance to begin the investigation under the terms of reference suggested by the House. "The committee cannot go beyond its jurisdiction when Parliament had asked it to investigate the specific allegation of corruptions," the minister said.

Replying to a question, the minister informed The Daily Star that the treasury bench members on the committee would also discuss the subject in their party forum before attending the next meeting of the committee.

Hosokawa shuffles Cabinet Feb 28

TOKYO, Feb 20: Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa plans to announce his first cabinet reshuffle, on February 28 to rebuild the fragile six-month-old government, local newspapers said today, reports AFP.

The Asahi and the Mainichi newspapers said that Hosokawa was considering replacing several positions including his chief cabinet secretary and political reform minister.

Finance Minister Hirohisa Fujii might lose his job following allegations that an industrial group gave him 10 million yen (95,000 dollars) in secret donations, Asahi said.

Food poisoning: Condition of students improve

By DU Correspondent

The October Smriti cafeteria at the Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University which was shut down Friday following an incident of food poisoning resumed supplying food yesterday.

Meanwhile, the students affected by food poisoning were improving. The hall authorities have asked the canteen keepers to keep the kitchen and dining premises clean.

The authorities also directed the hall tutors to keep vigil on the canteens and food supplied by the canteen owners. They have already taken steps to clean the water Reservoir at the hall premises, hall sources said.

The Provost of the hall talking to this correspondent yesterday said they had taken steps to stop the recurrence of such incidents in the future.

Anwarul Islam's quid held

By Staff Correspondent

The quikhwani of Anwarul Islam Bobby, founding editor of The Morning Sun, was held at his Gulshan residence yesterday, after Asr prayers.

Ministers, political leaders, journalists, relations, friends and admirers attended the quikhwani.

Bobby Islam, who is also the founder of The Daily Life in Chittagong and the medical journal The Pulse, was suffering from blood cancer. He died at a Dubai hospital on February 15 while on way to London for treatment.

His body was buried at the Banani graveyard on Friday.

One killed in gunfight with Savar police

SAVAR, Feb 20: An unidentified young man was killed in a two-hour-long gunfight between police and suspected dacoits at Chowtail village in Dhamrai thana Saturday night, reports UNB.

Police suspected the dead, aged about 30, was a dacoit.

A police squad from the Dhamrai thana, led by SI Quadrat Ali, went to the village at about 2 am to arrest several accused of a dacoity case when the gangmen opened fire on them, police said.

The squad returned fire, gunning one of the gangmen down.

Police also rounded up from the scene three unidentified miscreants.

The Police Super and the Additional Super of Dhaka district visited the village today.

A case has been filed in this connection.

Financial system

From Page 1 Col 7

report on the steps to privatise the NCB.

In the review report, the donors urged the government to take 'concrete' steps to privatise Rupali Bank including solving its over-staffing problem, restructuring the bank and reducing its number of branches and finding realistic solutions to the problem of bad debts.

The report was also critical of the government's much-touted debt recovery programme. "Efforts at debt recovery and bringing defaulters to book have yielded no tangible results."

The spread between the lending and deposit rates continues to be too high, the report said, reflecting bank inefficiencies and the cost of non-performing loans.

"Interest rates no longer reflect the true cost of borrowing from the NCBs as poor management practices and rent-seeking lead to high transaction costs. NCB losses are high and their financial health unsatisfactory."

The report further added that the 'default culture' and the practice of 'insider lending' has also affected the private bank's performance.

It suggested further liberalising the interest rates by removing the floor on deposit rates and the bands on lending rates to preferred sectors and also rationalising the government savings schemes.

Hearing adjourned

From Page 1 Col 8

The Presiding Officers of the polling centres at the University Laboratory School and College and the Science Annex Building on the Dhaka University campus told the probe body that elections were not held properly at those centres. The Presiding Officers, he added, also failed to convince the probe committee members that balloting at the DU centres took place in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

Dr Hossain also quoted the investigation committee report saying a cross section of voters of those three centres, spoke of malpractices in casting votes. The committee also took into consideration the DU teachers' and others' allegations of rigging and the demands for repolling at the said centres. Besides, press reports on violence and false voting at the centres were also considered, he said.

Earlier, Dr Hossain told the court that the EC ordered the investigation after two commissioner candidates, Abul Ahsan Talukder of the BNP and Khwaja Habibullah of the Awami League lodged written complaints of riggings and acts of violence at the Science Annex Building and the University Laboratory School and College centres respectively to the Chief Election Commissioner.

All these created public opinion in favour of fresh polling at the three centres, he said adding, at this stage the EC had to cancel the results and declare fresh pollings.

While concluding his arguments, Dr Hossain commented, in fact no election took place at the DU centres as per rule and, therefore, there was no legal basis of the results sent to the Returning Officer.

The lawyer for the EC also submitted to the court a copy of the probe body report and clippings of press reports in this regard.

Too much sex in films

From Page 1 Col 4

its easier to make money than that," Loren said, adding that there was nothing wrong with an element of sex or violence within a good story.

"But violence and sex by itself, for the sake of money, is absolutely appalling," she said.

"We see a lot of violence and sex in the films, on television, and in the news. Whenever I see this, I think 'poor children' I am really very worried about the (effect it has on) children."

Loren, 59, who has won two Oscars and starred in more than 50 films over four decades made in Italy, the United States, France, Canada and Britain, said she has no plans to retire.

"I never think about it," said the actress, whose films have been featured at this year's festival in a retrospective on her career. "I have no idea when I'll stop. Maybe not until I die."

She plans to start working next month in Paris on a film about fashion called 'Pret a Porter' (ready-to-wear) with US director Robert Altman.

"I like to work with Robert Altman," said Loren. "We are on the same wave length. We like to invent things on the set. I am sure there will be a lot of creative invention on the set."

Her most famous films include the Oscar award-winning 'La Ciociara' (two women) and 'The Millionaire.'

Loren has played roles as a resolute woman with powerful eyes, wide smile and statuesque build alongside Hollywood stars such as Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, John Wayne and Anthony Quinn.

Although she said her favourite actor to work with was Grant, her favourite actor these days is Robert De Niro.

"He's very creative, bizarre, strange and is always doing the unexpected," Loren said.

Her favourite actress is Julia Roberts: "I very much like her because I think she's honest. She's very much free when she acts. She has a beautiful smile that conquers everyone. She's got the right image of an actress today."

Loren said that although she's duly impressed by the technological advances in the film industry, there is a danger that some producers and directors may be putting too great an emphasis on technology and not enough on drama.

"I admire the tricks and the people who do these wonders with computers and lasers," she said. "But if I want to see a film, I want to see a good film that deals with emotion, with sentiment, that deals with relationships. I want to be moved."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Published by Mediaworld Ltd. 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed at City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kairali, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4. Advertisement: 500091 (Direct). Fax No: 88-02-863035. GPO Box No: 3257. Cable: DAILYSTAR DHAKA.