

DOWN TO EARTH

Eid Jubilation in City

The end of the holy month of Ramadan is drawing near to usher in Eid, the festival of cheer and merrymaking. After the observance of self-discipline and restraint during the month of Ramadan, the Eid festivities acquire a special significance with an undertone of sobriety. The high spirits affecting us all at this time make us forget, however temporarily it may be, some of our problems in life and whatever be our station in life, we set about, with unusual zest and gusto, making preparations for observance of the festival within our available means.

In the down to earth view of things, the problems of Eid celebration that we commonly face relate mainly to shopping, visiting ones near and dear ones living in village homes and preparation of various tasty dishes for family and friends.

The major part of the preparations consists in shopping for the various new things needed. For most people, Eid shopping proves to be a painstaking job. As Eid draws near, the buying gets momentum in crowded roads and shops.

For Eid shopping there are different locales for different classes of people. Affluent, less affluent and the vast majority of people with limited means. For the affluent, shopping presents very few problems, for they care very little about bargaining. They have select shopping centres and plazas where the buyers just pick up the things of their choice and pay up. Price matters little here; if there is any bargaining here, it is on a marginal scale.

The real problem is faced by other classes of people. In the initial part of Ramadan, a general rise in price of many things is noticeable. As Eid draws near, there is a further spurt in price. This seems to be in contrast with situation in many countries where at times of festivals, reduction sales are a normal feature. But we find no such trend here. Of course during this season, reduction sale banners bedeck the exteriors of many shops dealing in dresses, shoes and other consumer articles. In most cases, these banners can be misleading. Some observers are of the

opinion that most of these are just eyewash to attract customers.

But a distressing thing is seen in the wide variance in prices of the same article in the same area from one shop to another. The shopkeepers, of course, have their ready explanation for this, but that does not appear convincing. The wise thing in such situations, according to some experienced shoppers, is to verify a price, as far as possible, from a couple of shops before making a purchase. But it is not easy to follow this dictum in the heavy rush of shoppers during this season. In many cases, shoppers, in general financially strengthened by Eid bonus, do not feel like taking extra trouble involved in verification of prices.

Many economy-minded people will take resort to shopping on footpaths in the city. Roadside shops proliferate during this season to such an extent that there are few things which are not available at these places. But to buy anything here, you should have the ability for deft bargaining. This is no place for chicken-hearted shoppers. The price initially asked at such places may be high but the expert player knows where to begin in the bargaining game. All this is admittedly exacting and time-consuming. But in our eastern outlook of life, the exercise of bargaining has its attractions.

Another important aspect of the joyous occasion is the frantic bids of a good number of city population to leave the city to join their near and dear ones in their village homes. The exodus, filled with sentimental feelings, will reach the height of its momentum when public and private offices close for the Eid holidays. The sight of the mass movement by railways, buses, steamers and launches is staggering in the extreme. The respective agencies run some additional services to meet the extra demands, but the travelling public, by and large, expect that, considering the enormity of the traffic rush, the concerned authorities will try their utmost to make further additional arrangements.



DANCE AS YOU LIKE: Local and foreign ladies at a party organised by the International Women's Day Celebration Committee at the Ramna Batamul in the city yesterday. — Star photo

6 Pakistanis held in Delhi for spying

NEW DELHI, Mar 4: Indian police have arrested six alleged Pakistani intelligence operatives in India, Delhi's police chief said today, reports Reuters.

Police Commissioner Mukun Behari Kaushal told a news conference that the six men, arrested in the Indian capital on Thursday, were Pakistani citizens.

"This is the first time we have arrested actual Pakistanis," Kaushal said. "Previously, (Pakistan) used Kashmiri and other militants to carry out anti-India operations."

A Pakistani official denied Kaushal's claim, saying, "This is total rubbish. It shows how India is getting panicky."

He said the arrests were apparently linked to the International Human Rights meeting in Geneva where Pakistan has moved a resolution seeking a fact-finding mission for Kashmir.

Pakistan said Indian troops have been torturing Muslim militants and raping girls following a separatist uprising in which at least 15,000 people have been killed in four years.

India denies the charges but said some reported violations have been investigated and the culprits punished.

Kaushal said the six men were armed with bombs and poison.

Separatist militants in India often carry Cyanide capsules to commit suicide to evade arrest.

"We have interviewed them on the video. They have confessed to a conspiracy to target sensitive targets," Kaushal said. He did not elaborate.

Diplomats said the arrests were likely to lead to a fresh round of acrimonious allegations between the two arch-foes.

Pakistan expelled four Indian diplomats last year for alleged spying. India responded by expelling four Pakistani diplomats.

Both sides say their diplomats are harassed and sometimes beaten by secret police in each other's country.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training militants in the northern states of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

The government has accused Muslim groups in Bombay of carrying out a string of bomb attacks in India's commercial hub, saying they were helped by Pakistan. Islamabad denies the charges.

At least 250 people were killed in the blasts.

Int'l Women's Day programme begins

By Staff Correspondent

Women activists of different organisations of the country yesterday began a five-day programme to observe the International Women's Day on March 8 with a vow to 'break shackles of centuries' raising slogan: My Body, My Decision.

About 2500 women gathered at the Bangla Motor crossing at 8:40 in the morning to mark the beginning of the programme arranged by International Women's Day Observation Committee.

The gathering later turned into a procession led by a number of women bike riders towards the Ramna Park where they held a cultural programme.

They demanded an end to all forms of repression on women and implementation of rights to decide all matters related to their physique.

The cultural programmes included short dramas depicting struggles of women for self dependence and the social repression.

The International Women's Day Observation Committee members include: The Nari Moitree, Concern, Palli Mangal Karmashuchi, Fulki, ASA, Girls' Guide and some other NGOs.

The Midnight File

Muslims, Croats meet in Vienna

VIENNA, Mar 4: Bosnian Muslim and Croat negotiators met at the United States embassy in Vienna this evening for a "get-acquainted" session ahead of up to 10 days of talks on forming a federation. They are due to settle the details of a UN-brokered accord to establish a Croat-Muslim federation — with the hope of ending nearly two years of fighting — under the auspices of US President Bill Clinton's special envoy, Charles Redman, reports Reuters.

ROK regrets revival of Super 301

SEOUL, Mar 4: South Korea today expressed regret over the reviving by the US government of the Super 301 trade provision. A foreign ministry spokesman said that the South Korean government deeply regrets that the US government revives the Super 301 provision through administrative means, at a time when the Uruguay Round of talks is almost bringing about a worldwide free trade system after seven years of negotiations, reports Xinhua.

Indonesia assures Bosnia of NAM support

JAKARTA, Mar 4: Indonesian President Suharto today assured visiting Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic of the support of Indonesia and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for the embattled Bosnia-Herzegovina, report agencies.

"The President assured me that the support of NAM and his personal support in bilateral meetings with heads of states will continue for Bosnia-Herzegovina for its sovereignty and territorial integrity there," Silajdzic said after paying a courtesy call on Suharto at the presidential residence.

He also said he discussed the local situation in Bosnia with Suharto — current NAM Chairman — who assured him 'he will do all he can do, and all Indonesia can do, to help Bosnia-Herzegovina.'

Silajdzic said earlier Friday that the support of NAM and Russia was necessary if the Serbs were to be brought to the negotiating table.

Meanwhile British UN troops in central Bosnia came under attack today when three mortar shells hit their base in the town of Zepce, a UN source in Zagreb said.

One of the 82-mm mortar bombs, believed to have been fired by the Bosnian Serbs, landed near the main building, but no casualties nor damage was inflicted, so the British did not fire back, the source said.

Another report says, the UN commander in Bosnia today voiced 'disappointment' over the lack of response to an urgent UN appeal for more troops in Bosnia and warned it could 'make things fail.'

UP chairman wants trial of BNP MP

A Union Parishad Chairman belonging to the ruling party yesterday demanded the trial of a Parliament member of his own party, A T M Alamgir, for abusing power, reports UNB.

Abu Sayeed Helali, Chairman of the Uttar Howla Union Parishad in Laksham thana, Comilla, voiced the demand at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

He alleged that the local administration in Alamgir MP's constituency could not work freely because of his undue interference. "Since becoming an MP he (Alamgir) has done everything in his personal interest."

Helali said the MP had 'illegally recommended to the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry to remove him from the post of UP chairmanship.'

He further alleged that Alamgir, who is the Chairman of Bangladesh Shipa Bank, is interfering in union parishad's activities violating the rules of the LGRD and Relief Ministries.

The UP chairman appealed to the Prime Minister, Ministers and his party leaders to save the people of Laksham and protect the image of the BNP from the autocratic activities of Alamgir MP.

Truck kills minor girl in Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 4: A minor girl was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck on Sylhet-Tamabil Road yesterday. The accident occurred at about 2 PM near Chiknaguri Primary School when the girl Shahida, 7, was crossing the road. She died on the spot.

Shahida, daughter of late Tota Miah of village Kukulgarh, was returning home with a bag of wheat she received from the UP office under Vulnerable Group Development Programme.

Police sent the body to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital morgue. The driver and helper had escaped but police seized the truck.

Two killed in mishaps

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons were killed and two others injured in separate incidents in Dhaka and Narsingdi yesterday.

A nine-year-old boy, Nazrul Islam, was run over by a speeding truck at Pollabi in the city yesterday morning.

Fatally wounded Nazrul was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

In Narsingdi, Monir Hossain, 16, was stabbed to death and his elder brother Abul Kalam, 18, sustained stab injuries in a clash over possession of a land at village Nihat yesterday. Kalam was admitted to the DMCH.

In another incident in Dhaka, one Tofazzal Hossain, 35, was severely beaten up in Babu Bazar area by a group of unidentified people. He was admitted to the DMCH.

JS stalemate

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he said.

Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim of the Awami League, Suranjit Sengupta of Ganatantri Party, Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party, Moudud Ahmed of Jatiya Party and Abdus Sobhan of Jamaat may be present at the meeting.

The opposition during Wednesday's and Thursday's parleys insisted on two points — unqualified apology from Huda and a general debate on Hebron massacre.

The treasury bench members have already accepted the second demand for discussion on Hebron and said Information Minister's regret in the House tantamounts to apology in parliamentary norms.

But the opposition leaders demand for unqualified 'apology' has lingered the stalemate in parliament.

The leaders of opposition parties in parliament will hold a joint meeting at 12 noon today to sort out strategy to face the crisis.

Deputy leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad will chair the meeting which is expected to be attended by representatives from Jatiya Party, Jamaat, Workers Party, Ganatantri Party, IOJ, NDP and CPB.

The negotiation is likely to begin after the joint meeting of the opposition.

7 out of 9 Goalpara power units idle

From Munir U Ahmed

KHULNA, Mar 4: Shortage of funds, inefficiency of the ministry concerned and lack of skilled manpower have plagued the age-old generating units of the Goalpara Power Station in Khalishpur.

According to sources in the Power Development Board only two out of nine units are producing power, that too in reduced quantity. The other units remained idle because of shortage of funds and lack of technical manpower.

Installed in 1973, the Czech aided 60 MW power plant was shut down in September 1990. The PDB and the ministry could not procure funds timely to overhaul the plant. Earlier, the plant remained closed for nine months in 1977 and again for 14 months in 1981 for overhauling and servicing.

According to local engineers, about 30 million dollars was needed for rehabilitation work of the plant but the authorities failed to procure the money in time. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation cost has gone upto 600 million dollars' as the condition of the plant has been fast deteriorating.

After receiving a report from local and foreign experts in 1991, the government reportedly approached the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to allocate funds for the rehabilitation of the 60 MW power plant. But the donors did not send any positive response till date.

A source at the ministry, on condition of anonymity told this correspondent, that there should be an inquiry as to why no timely action was taken to procure funds for rehabilitation work of the plant.

He said it was not wise to spend 600 to 700 million dollars now for rehabilitation of an age-old power plant.

Instead of spending such a huge amount for repair work, the money should be utilised to set up a new power plant, he observed.

The plant could be made operational only at a cost of 30 million dollars if repair work was done on time, the source added.

Mahathero's mortal remains taken to his village

CHITTAGONG, Mar 4: The mortal remains of late Mahaganayaka Visuddhananda Mahathero was taken today to his native village at Gozra of Rajgan thana, reports BSS.

Earlier a silence procession carrying the mortal remains of late Buddhist religious leader was brought out from Katalganj Nabapandit Vihar and it passed through some important city roads.

Newly elected city mayor Alhaj A B M Mahiuddin Chowdhury, local MP Mohammad Yusuf led the procession. Countless devotees including Buddhist monk chanting the sacred verses from the Tripitaka participated.

His body was also kept for some time at Enayetbazar Buddhist temple.

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Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

Hasina leaves for Ajmeer

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka for Ajmeer yesterday morning along with her sister Sheikh Rehana, reports BSS.

During their stay in Ajmeer Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana will offer Fateha (ziara) at the holy mazar sharif of Khwaza Moinuddin Chisti (R.A).

Prior to her departure for Ajmeer Sheikh Hasina sought blessing of the countrymen.

Awami League leaders including Abdus Samad Azad MP, Abdul Jalil, Obaidul Kader, Abul Hasan Chowdhury MP, Dr Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Mannan, Dr Mizanul Haq MP, Harun ur Rashid MP, Mesbahuddin MP, Mosharraf Hossain MP, were present at the Zia International Airport to see her off.

BCL leader, five others arrested in Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 4: Former general secretary of Sylhet district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-I) A T M Fayez Uddin and five others were arrested at the early hours of today.

According to Sylhet Kotwali Police, Fayez is an accused in two murder cases.

Police arrested them from a house at Puran Lane area of the town at 3 am. The other arrested persons are Rakib Zilani Titu, Mosharraf Hossain, Shamim, Amir Hossain Khokan, and Liaquat Ali Sohel.

The district unit of the BCL (M-I) brought out a procession in the town today protesting the arrest of Fayez. They also demanded immediate release of the BCL leader.

India to export rickshaws

NEW DELHI, Mar 4: Indian, Cycle giant Atlas Cycles announced plans Friday to export rickshaws — the traditional taxicab of Asia — to Holland and Germany, reports AFP.

The special bicycle-powered rickshaw models would be aimed at the 'more advanced, environment-conscious markets' of Europe, a company official at the Atlas plant in Haryana state told the Press Trust of India news agency.

Rickshaws and scooter-taxis outnumber taxicabs in India and are the cheapest mode of transport after public buses.

Mishu expelled from party

By Staff Correspondent

A student leader Friday lost her party membership for congratulating the World Bank and for her alleged 'anti-party activities'.

Mushrefa Mishu, former president of the Student Unity Forum, was expelled by the central committee of the party on charges of being 'an agent of the World Bank and other imperialist forces,' upholding the ideals of an NGO, and making the party her 'pocket organisation'.

Mishu attended a two-day conference of the European Parliament on the Flood Action Plan (FAP) on May 27 and 28 last year and addressed one of its sessions.

Speaking on the possible displacement of people due to embankments, adverse environmental impact of the FAP and change in the cropping pattern, Mishu commented, 'congratulations to the World Bank for their enlightened approach towards sustainable agriculture in their World Development Report, 1992.'

A press release which announced the expulsion of the Forum leader attached a copy of her speech to the Euro-Parliament with her comments highlighted.

Power disruption in Elephant Road areas

By Staff Correspondent

Electricity snapped at least five times in Kataban and Elephant Road areas causing immense sufferings to the Eid shoppers, shop owners and the residents, yesterday evening.

Sources in the DESA when contacted said, power supply in that area was disrupted repeatedly as a transformer near the Zahurul Haq Hall broke down and a cable snapped several times despite repairs yesterday.

The DESA workers repeatedly repaired the power line but it continued to disturb till 10 pm.

Several residents of the area told The Daily Star over telephone last night that such power disruption was an every day affair in the area.

Some of the residents said that electric supply lines men always delayed in restoring power supply in this particular area, whereas electricity was always restored promptly in the neighbouring areas.

Attack on Adel's house : Suchi sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

Humayun Kabir alias Suchi, who was arrested following an armed attack on the residence of a Jatiya Party leader in the city was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

An armed gang exploded crackers and opened gunshots at the Armanitola residence of the JP leader, Jahangir Mohammad Adel during an iftar party Thursday.

Suchi was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday.

Kotwali police said their petition to bring him on a seven-day remand was rejected by the court.

DCC polls results: Tabulation begins today

By Staff Correspondent

Consolidation of results of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections will begin today at the Returning Officer's office at Segunbagicha in the city.

According to a notification of the Returning Officer yesterday, the results of mayor and commissioners of ward numbers 1 to 40 would be compiled today while those of the rest wards will be compiled tomorrow.

The candidates or their agents would be allowed to be present during the tabulation.

Dhaka concerned at environmental degradation

Participants attending an international conference in the Indian capital yesterday stressed the need for global cooperation for the conservation of tiger population, a message from New Delhi said, reports BSS.

The High Commissioner of Bangladesh in India, Farooq Sobhan who led the country's delegation at the meeting expressed solidarity with other range countries in conserving tiger population and protecting their natural habitat.

Sobhan expressed concern at the environmental degradation of the habitat of famed royal bengal tiger due to rapid salinity and deforestation.

Indian team to see condition of returnees

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 4: An Indian delegation including leaders of tribal refugees now encamped in Tripura in India, is expected to visit the Chittagong Hill Tracts after Eid to see for themselves the resettlement of tribal returnees in their homes, administration sources said.

The delegation will be headed by Upendra Lal Chakma, Chairman of the Tribal Refugees Welfare Association based in Tripura.

The Indian side and the refugee leaders have expressed their desire to visit the CHT and accordingly, invitations would be sent to them soon.

If the delegation finds the rehabilitation of the tribal returnees satisfactory a process is likely to be initiated to begin the second phase of repatriation of the Chakma refugees.

However, in the first phase of repatriation that took place from February 15 to 22, 1849 tribal refugees of 379 families returned voluntarily to their homes in CHT under a negotiated agreement between Dhaka and New Delhi.