



President Abdur Rahman Biswas taking salute during the Independence and National Day parade held in the city Sunday

ISPR photo

Independence Day celebrated

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hoisted atop public and private buildings. Important buildings were illuminated in the evening.

Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television put out special programmes while newspapers published special articles highlighting the significance of the day.

Important islands and street corners were decorated with miniature flags and bunting. Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR and police played bands in different parts of the city.

The Prime Minister visited the mazar of her late husband, President Ziaur Rahman, to pay tributes to the late leader on the occasion of the Independence Day.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by her party colleagues including Abdul Mannan, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed and Zillur Rahman, visited the Smriti Shoudha and placed wreaths there.

BNP leaders, including party secretary general Salam Talukder, Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and MK Anwar visited the Smriti Shoudha and placed wreaths.

Dr Kamal Hossain, president of Gano Forum along with party leaders laid wreaths at the Smriti Shoudha. The Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin also placed wreaths.

Leaders of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) placed wreaths at the Smriti Shoudha at 8.30 am. Front leaders Hasanul Haq Inu, Shahidullah Choudhury, Khalequzzaman, A/M Mahbubul Haq and Dilip Barua were present.

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon along with other party leaders laid wreaths at the Smriti Shoudha in the morning. The party also held a discussion meeting in the afternoon.

The newly-appointed Director General of the Bangla Academy, Prof Mansur Musa, placed wreaths at the national monument. The academy also held a cultural programme at its premises.

Mrs Lill Chowdhury, wife of martyred teacher of Dhaka University Prof Munir Chowdhury, opened a memorial plaque on the university campus.

The plaque, built near the residence of the Vice-Chancellor, bears the names of those teachers, students and employees of Dhaka University who embraced martyrdom during the Liberation War.

The Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) held an impressive cultural function at the TSC auditorium.

Many other political and socio-cultural organisations also placed wreaths and organised discussion meetings and cultural functions to mark the day of independence.

PM to visit Nepal, Pakistan next month

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will visit two SAARC countries next month to promote regional cooperation within the South Asian forum, reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan said that the upcoming visits by Begum Zia, in her capacity as the current SAARC chairperson, will take her to Pakistan and Nepal.

Nurses damage car of project director

The striking nurses damaged the car of the Project Director of the Nursing Education Department, at Bijoy Nagar in the city yesterday.

The Bangladesh Diploma Nurses Association (BDNA) and the Bangladesh Student Nurses Union (BSNU), enforcing a strike since March 18, to demand their 8-point demand, brought out a procession at noon yesterday.

While marching towards the Jatiya Press Club, the processionists stopped near the Diploma Nurses Institute at Bijoy Nagar and damaged the car of Minoti Sharma.

Foreign secy's briefing

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tackle the issue bilaterally and on its own merit.

Farooq Sobhan, who was the country's high commissioner to New Delhi before taking up his new assignment, said he had followed the instructions of the government and had pursued the water issue with the Indian authorities on a regular basis.

He also said that he had raised the water issue during his farewell call with Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and also the ministers for External Affairs, Water and Commerce.

Asked if India was linking the water issue with transit, the foreign secretary evaded a direct reply and said, "Both countries have their own position on the water issue and they were known to one another. We hope we will be able to hear from the Indian side."

Farooq Sobhan said Bangladesh had repeatedly pointed out to India the immense hardship and suffering caused by the unilateral withdrawal of water and added, "Our approach had been to find out the best possible solution."

He mentioned the last Secretary-level meeting between the two countries were held two years back. He also referred to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to New Delhi in May 1992, when the matter was discussed.

He said the Indian Prime Minister had given an assurance to our Prime Minister when they met in New Delhi about finding a solution to on the water issue.

Replying to a question Sobhan said it was unlikely that the Indian Prime Minister would visit Dhaka shortly, or that our Prime Minister would make a trip to New Delhi prior to holding of the SAARC summit, now scheduled for early May in the Indian capital.

The foreign secretary told the newsmen that India had said they would release more water in 1994 and 1995. However, when asked about the quantum, he said it had no definite figures.

Sobhan said that the new Indian high commissioner was due to arrive in Dhaka today and he would find out the latest developments on the Ganges water.

Meanwhile, the foreign secretary informed the newsmen present that the Foreign Ministry will from now on hold press briefing every Sunday.

He requested newsmen to give their questions on Saturday to the Director General, External Publicity, so that the DG could reply to those at the regular briefing.

He also assured that he would try to brief the press once a month, and would also provide background briefings in small groups to newsmen.

Some 30 hand bombs were exploded by the two groups.

Clash leaves 10 hurt in BMC

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Mar 27: At least 10 students of the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College were injured in a clash between two rival groups on the campus today.

Some 30 hand bombs were exploded by the two groups.

Manzur murder

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Meanwhile, two other accused in the Manzur murder case Maj. Gen (Retd) Latif and Col. (Retd) Shamsur Rahman were still in the Dhaka Central Jail. Relatives of the two were not allowed to visit them till yesterday. Jail authorities said they did not receive any order in this regard. Jail officials, however, told the relatives of Maj Gen Latif that he was well.

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan yesterday dismissed press reports that two ambassadors of the country have been called back in connection with Gen Manzur murder case.

The foreign secretary said "there is no basis of the newspaper reports" about his sending of letters to the two envoys asking them to return home.

He said that there should be a limit to speculation and those who printed the news ought to have checked its authenticity.

Farmers

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A serious crisis of fertiliser has been persisting in the thana. There is no fertiliser in the local markets of the thana, the farmers said.

Meanwhile, crisis of diesel has compelled the farmers to suspend operation of hundreds of their shallow and deep tubewells hampering irrigation in boro fields.

Another report said, farmers looted 230 bags of fertiliser from a Rangpur-bound truck at Ullapara thana on Nagarbari-Bogra highway Sunday night.

The truck, carrying fertiliser booked for Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur, broke down near village East Delua of the thana.

Police said, at about 10 pm, some 500 farmers from nearby village came to the spot, looted the fertiliser and kidnapped the helper of the truck.

The driver Fazlur Rahman rushed to Ullapara police station and informed about the incident but police could not recover the looted fertiliser.

Meanwhile, some agitated farmers pelted stones at Ullapara TNO office on Sunday mid-night as the thana administration failed to give them fertiliser as per their commitment.

Forest fire doused in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, Mar 27: A wild forest fire that had been raging in parts of Maheshkhali island of Cox's Bazar for three days was extinguished yesterday after frantic efforts by local officials and people.

The fire caused extensive damage to Eucalyptus and Sinag trees in Shamlapur, Dinajour and Kalamarchara areas.

Myanmar

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and video cameras came to Bangladesh for eight hours on transit visas. They were handed over to Cox's Bazar police who sent them to the district jail.

Myanmar border guards, however, protested the arrest and demanded their release.

The border guard officials of Myanmar and Bangladesh are scheduled to hold a flag meeting at Mongdow tomorrow to solve the problem.

WB unhappy over system loss

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MCCI. Referring to the impact of the GATT accord on developing countries, Anis Ud Dowla pointed out that new issues on labour standards are being raised, which would affect the competitiveness of least developed countries like Bangladesh.

Noting that the World Bank had already sought labour market reforms in Bangladesh, he urged organisations like the Bank and the ILO to continue to have a say on labour issues instead of leaving them to the World Trade Organisation.

Noting that it was too early to predict if the WTO would deal with the issue, Landell-Mills, however, assured that the Bank would protect the interests of the LDCs.

The chamber chief also pointed to the 'mismatch' in economic liberalisation between Bangladesh and neighbouring India resulting in India capturing the local market while Bangladesh goods cannot find market access to that country.

Advocating harmonisation of fiscal policies with investment needs, which has been included in the Chamber's tax proposals, Anis Ud Dowla sought a reduction of the corporate tax rate and the continuation of the tax holiday incentive which expires in June next.

Landell-Mills, however, felt that the tax holiday incentive is not an efficient way to attract investment, but agreed that the corporate tax rate should be lowered.

On administrative reform, the MCCI chief noted that the gap between government policies and their implementation has widened in spite of assurances of a good and efficient government.

Landell-Mills agreed that it is important to change the role of government from a regulatory to a facilitatory one. Noting that a number of studies on administrative reform have already been done and the Bank is also undertaking a sectoral study on the subject, he pointed out that the cabinet committee on administrative reform, headed by

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, is expected to complete its report soon.

On the importance of human resource development raised by Anis Ud Dowla, the Bank chief noted that only 50 per cent of those completing primary education have the basic numeral literacy and emphasised the need to improve the overall quality of education in the country, in line with present day demands.

Manzur Elahi, Chairman of Apex Tannery, observed that the recent changes of rules in the capital market, particularly relating to the one-year lock-in period for foreign initial public offering placements, would have a negative impact on attracting foreign portfolio investment in the country.

Landell-Mills agreed that the information cited about the situation in India was not correct, as the 5-year lock-in period for foreign institutional investors is only for private placements abroad. He suggested that a capital gains tax could be far less damaging to the image of Bangladesh.

Winnie ousted from cabinet

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Mar 27: President Nelson Mandela fired his estranged wife, Winnie, from his government Wednesday following weeks of embarrassing controversy and calls for her ouster.

The sacking rids Mandela's Cabinet of a rebellious and divisive figure who publicly criticized his conservative economic policies. It does not affect Mrs. Mandela's standing in the African National Congress, where she has strong grassroots support.

Firing his wife marks the most dramatic act Mandela has performed since coming to office almost a year ago in South Africa's first all-race elections.

Mrs. Mandela has defiantly criticized the government's approach to social reform, made an unauthorized trip abroad, split the ranks of the African National Congress Women's League, and most seriously, been accused by police of bribe-taking and influence peddling.

3 die in separate incidents

By Staff Correspondent
One person was killed, one drowned and another committed suicide in the city yesterday.

Shahjahan, 23, a resident of Shokdi under Demra police station, was stabbed to death reportedly after a brawl with one of his neighbours over plucking flowers from a garden.

Md Parvez, 20, of Jahuri Mahalla under Mohammadpur police station, drowned while bathing in a pond inside the Botanical Garden at Mirpur.

Munna, a 14-year boy, reportedly committed suicide by taking poison at his Jigatola residence.

The cause of his committing suicide could not be known immediately.

All three bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

SKOP hartal deferred to Apr 11-12

The 48-hour countrywide hartal, called by the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP), will be observed on April 11-12 instead of April 4-5, reports UNB.

The SKOP leaders yesterday rescheduled its programme on account of Maize Bhandar Urs, said a press release.

No salt crisis, says minister

The government was determined to maintain the normal supply and price stability of all essentials including salt and ruled out any crisis of salt in the country, reports BSS.

This was expressed at a meeting held here yesterday at the Ministry of Commerce with M Shamsul Islam, Minister for Commerce and Information in the chair, a press release said.

Lankan President due today

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be held in New Delhi in May, the Foreign Secretary said.

They will also discuss recent international developments of interest to the two countries as well as South Asia, he said.

The visit by the Sri Lankan leader, he said, would have all emphasis that the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka relations are important to both the countries and that the significance of such relations go beyond South Asia.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadir Gamar, will accompany President Kumaratunga.

The formal talks between the two leaders will be preceded by a tete-a-tete between them at the Prime Minister's office.

The Foreign Secretary described it as "a healthy development" in South Asia that President Kumaratunga following her election in 1994 had taken it as a matter of priority to visit all the South Asian countries to develop personal contacts for a faster development of relations and cooperation among the countries of the region.

Farooq Sobhan said, "It's important to have more interactions at the highest level to develop trade and economic cooperation at a faster pace."

He said that the ASEAN experience showed that it was important to have more frequent meetings and consultations at the highest level without fuss to develop cooperation.

According to the official programme released to the press by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs President Kumaratunga will fly to Savar shortly after her arrival here to lay wreaths at the Jatiya Smriti Shoudha to honour the martyrs of the Liberation War.

On her arrival at the Zia International Airport, earlier the Foreign Minister, ASM Mostafizur Rahman, and his wife Sofia Rahman will receive the Sri Lankan leader.

Prime Minister Begum Zia will call on President Kumaratunga at the state guest house Korotoa, where the Sri Lankan leader will be staying, in the evening.

Shortly afterwards President Kumaratunga will attend a reception to be hosted in her honour by the Sri Lankan High Commissioner.

The Sri Lankan leader will, later call on the President, Abdur Rahman Biswas, at the Bangabhaban where she will also have dinner to be hosted by President Biswas.

Mob kills dacoit, burns body

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Mar 27: A mob doused the body of an alleged dacoit with petrol and set it alight after beating him to death at Sitakundu Saturday night, police and local people said.

The man was identified as Md Hossain, locally called 'Hossainna dakal'.

The mob also ransacked the Sitakundu Health Complex while snatching the victim from there.

Police at this stage opened 20 rounds of fire to disperse the unruly crowd.

Several thousand people gathered at Fakirhat under Sitakundu thana when Hossain was caught at the bazar on Saturday night. Hossain allegedly let loose a reign of terror in Sitakundu area by committing various crimes that angered the local people, police said.

The mob also put up a barricade on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Sitakundu.

Tk 5.2 crore

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board meeting of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) held yesterday at the JMBA office with Communications Minister Oli Ahmad in the chair. Executive director of the authority, secretaries of different ministries and divisions and the members of the panel of experts attended the meeting.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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