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Countdown to Amar Ekushey begins

By DU Correspondent

The month of 'Amar Ekushey' (immortal February 21) which makes the Bangladeshi nation recall one of its hours of trial and glory and the memories of the martyrs of the historic Language Movement of 1952 begins today.

The Language Movement had led to the establishment of Bangla as a state language in the then Pakistan and provided the veritable gun-powder that eventually led to the struggle for independence and the inevitable emergence of independent Bangladesh.

People across the country will pay homage to the martyrs through elaborate programmes. During this month, the countrymen will take fresh vows to materialise the martyrs' dreams for a democratic society free from all forms of exploitation of man by man and economic emancipation of the masses.

Different political, socio-cultural and professional organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day with due solemnity and sanctity.

Marking the Ekushey February, Jatiya Kabita Parishad (National Poetry Council) has drawn up a two-day National Poetry Festival, scheduled to begin from this morning.

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Where even the opposition candidate doesn't vote for himself Page 5

Business

SEC may present market reviving proposals to JS body today

WTO entry seen speeding up brand-name push in China

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Prayer Timings

February 1		
Fajr	5:45	6:15
Zohr	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:50	5:54
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

President told not to be party to 'black' law

Khaleda goes to Bangabhaban to plead against Public Safety Bill

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP chief Khaleda Zia requested President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday not to assent to the Public Safety Bill, passed in Parliament on Sunday, reports UNB.

"It's primarily intended to suppress the democratic rights of the opposition," she told the President to justify her request in a meeting at Bangabhaban yesterday evening.

A press release from the President House said Sha-

habuddin gave a patient hearing to the leader of the opposition and her delegation members and reminded them of his constitutional limitations.

"After 15 days of presentation of the bill, it becomes automatically an act if the President does not assent to it," the President told the opposition BNP delegation.

The 11-member delegation also included deputy leader of the opposition AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, M Saifur Rahman MP, Khondaker Del-

war Hossain MP, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP, Nazmul Huda MP, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain MP, Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, Moudud Ahmed and Khondaker Mahbubuddin.

Briefing newsmen on return from the Bangabhaban, the BNP leaders said they requested the President 'not to be a party to the law' and refrain from assenting to the bill.

Party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the news briefing at 29 Minto Road

said the President had told them that he had sanctioned it as a money bill and that if he did not sign, it would automatically be passed.

He said they told the President that it didn't fall under the category of money bill, as 'the government pushed it through as money bill'.

The BNP leaders informed him about submission of note of dissent on behalf of BNP in the parliamentary standing committee meeting. They ex-

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Praying for eternal peace

Peace and prosperity may have been elusive for him in this mundane world, but this old man joins two million others to pray to the Almighty for a better life after.

— Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

Biswa Ijtema ends

By Staff Correspondent

The three-day Biswa Ijtema at Tongi ended yesterday with more than two million people from home and abroad joining the Akheri Munajat at noon seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

Moulana Jobaer Hasan of India, one of the three top leaders of World Tablig Jamaat, led the Munajat.

The Ijtema, the second largest religious congregation of the Muslims next to Hajj, was attended by devotees from all over the country, besides around 5000 from 70 countries.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and some other senior ministers including Zillur Rahman, Mohammad Nasim, Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury and Salahuddin Yousuf joined the Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers).

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, who was scheduled to participate in the prayers, could

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Laws to deprive officials of ill-gotten assets proposed

By Staff Correspondent

The Law Commission (LC) has suggested 'introduction of new laws to deprive corrupt officials of their ill-gotten assets' and said the existing laws for prevention of corruption have significantly failed to check corrupt practices by public functionaries.

"We propose that a law of forfeiture may be enacted as a supplementary to the Ombudsman Act, 1980, in order to meet the deficiency and as a measure for curbing corruption from public life," the LC said in a report submitted to the government recently.

The report said, "Corruption, has taken a deep root in our society and has spread like a hydra. There is corruption in execution of projects, in awarding

contracts, in making purchases, in issuing licences and permits in making appointments, in election to various bodies and so on and so forth."

The LC said effective laws for curbing and preventing corrupt practices by different categories of public functionaries have become the crying need in the country. Without this, "the canker of corruption cannot possibly be tackled."

It referred to the existing Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1958 and the Anti-Corruption Act, 1957 and said these laws have 'significantly failed' to check corrupt practices by public functionaries.

Under these acts, the number of prosecutions and more so the

number of convictions are 'ridiculously low compared to the enormity of corrupt practices among public servants'.

The report further said a top public servant is hardly ever prosecuted under these acts and even in the rare event of being prosecuted, the prosecution hardly ever reaches conclusion because of innumerable procedural obstacles intentionally created by the accused.

Such litigations are dragged on endlessly often defeating the objective of criminal prosecution and the end results of the prosecutions of powerful public servants are that they 'come out scot-free becoming more powerful and more desperate', the Commission noted.

10 survive the disaster

Kenyan plane with 179 crashes, 94 bodies found

ABIDJAN, Jan 31: A few survivors were found clinging to wreckage and swimming in water scattered with corpses Monday morning, hours after a Kenya Airways jet carrying 179 people slammed into the Atlantic Ocean, reports AP.

Guided by spotlights from hovering helicopters, rescuers in boats scoured the frigid waters for survivors. The cold ocean temperatures would make it difficult for anyone to survive after a few hours, officials said.

At least 10 people survived the disaster. By dawn, 14 bodies had been brought to shore, and at least 80 more were coming in by boat, rescue workers said.

The plane, an Airbus 310, had taken off from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, at 9:08 pm (2108 GMT) into relatively clear skies. It was destined for Lagos, Nigeria, but crashed into the ocean after just one minute in

the air, according to George Dapre Yao, the head of air traffic at the city's Felix Houphouët-Boigny Airport.

One Nigerian survivor who was plucked from the water said the plane was having problems immediately after takeoff.

"It wasn't quite balanced, and the next thing we knew we were in the water," Samuel Ogbada Adje said, wrapped in a blanket at Abidjan's port.

It wasn't clear what went wrong. Some people near the site of the crash said they heard two loud sounds, as if the plane or parts of it had slapped the water twice.

Adje, who suffered a swollen eye, was propelled into the water by the force of the crash and managed to swim from the wreckage. He and others waited at least two hours for rescuers.

"If they had come sooner, a lot of us would have been saved," he said angrily before

being pushed into an ambulance and driven away.

Officials refused to comment on why it took hours for some people to be rescued.

Flight 431 had been carrying 10 crew members, 167 adult passengers and two children. Yao said, though Kenya Airways officials said there were 168 passengers and 11 crew members. It originated Sunday as Flight 430 out of Nairobi, and was to have landed in Lagos that afternoon. But because of bad weather, it went on to Abidjan.

Airline officials declined to speculate on what caused the crash, but Kenya Airways Technical Director Steve Clarke, speaking in Nairobi, said that "there were no technical problems of any significance."

Kenya Airways engineers and investigators were heading

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PM hints at using new law to deal with political violence

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has hinted that the Public Safety Act might be applied "in case of violent political programmes, if covered by the new law."

The indication from her came at a press conference yesterday, a day after the Jatiya Sangsad passed the controversial law amid massive street protests and demonstrations by opposition parties claiming that it would be used for political persecution.

"Whoever is found guilty of creating obstruction to free movement of vehicles will be punished," she said in reply to a question if Clause 8 of the law would be applied in case of political protest like procession on street.

Clause 8 provides for 3 to 14 years Ri with financial penalty for obstructing movement of vehicles, trains and river transports by force or threat, or compelling their diversion from normal course.

"Do you want obstruction to free vehicular movement to continue? But the people want to move freely on road, rail and waterways. The constitution has also guaranteed them the right to free movement," said Hasina, also chief of ruling Awami League.

She advised opposition parties to raise their voices on the floor of the parliament. "This law does not aim at victimising any body politically. The law in

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Commentary

Scrap this 'mini-martial law'

By Mahfuz Anam

AL passes a dangerous Bill and puts our fundamental freedoms at risk.

We termed this bill as "dangerous" in our editorial and we repeat the same today. Sheikh Hasina, while she was in the opposition, termed the BNP sponsored anti-terrorism bill as "mini-martial law" and a "black law". Today we use her own words to describe the bill she enacted. This is a black law, it poses serious threats to our fundamental freedoms and will live to haunt us, the citizens, as

the Special Powers Act has done for the last 26 years and the BNP sponsored anti-terrorism act did for the time that it was in force. Let us tell the ruling party most categorically and emphatically that whatever you have said so far has far from convinced us about the necessity of this bill and our position remains firmly against it.

Our judgement is based on the bill itself, the circumstances in which it was speedily and surreptitiously driven through the opposition-empty parlia-

ment and the track record of the party that has passed it.

First the bill. It turns on its head the very foundation of our legal process that "All are assumed innocent till proven guilty". The underlying tenor of the bill is the very opposite, that "All are guilty till proven innocent", and till so proven an accused has to suffer the indignity of imprisonment. The government's attitude to the bill issue has all along been that everyone that police arrests is

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PM's relative found dead

Star Report

A top businessman's wife who happens to be a close relation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was found dead in her bedroom at her residence at Uttara in the city late yesterday afternoon.

Afsana Mosharraf, 48, is the mother-in-law of Saima Wajed Putul, the only daughter of Hasina, and wife of Mosharraf Hossain, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries.

The body was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at around 12:20am.

There was bullet wound in her body. Her family was quoted by two news agencies to have said that she might have

committed suicide.

But when contacted by The Daily Star, the family refused to give details. A nephew of Afsana said the family version was given to state-run BSS and private UNB news agencies.

The two agencies quoted unnamed family sources as saying that there were bullet wounds in her neck. Both the agencies quoting the sources said Afsana Mosharraf had been suffering from depression.

"Afsana Mosharraf was suffering from mental depression and imbalance for quite some time in the past," BSS said.

Later at her house at Uttara, an aide to the prime minister told reporters that she used a li-

cenced pistol of her husband to kill herself sometime in the afternoon.

A relative who claimed to have seen the body said that one bullet pierced through her head.

Uttara police said no case was filed till filing of this report at 11 pm last night. The body was kept on the first floor of the three-storey house at Uttara.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited the house at 7:45pm and stayed there for about an hour.

Senior police officials were on the spot till filing of this report. The whole area adjacent to

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The Daily Star Anniversary Supplement

The Daily Star will bring out a 40-page Special Supplement on February 9, 2000 to mark its entry into the Tenth Year of publication. The Supplement which is designed to focus on the first quarter of the new millennium will carry scholarly writings about the directions we need to take as well as reports of our own correspondents highlighting some positive trends in specific areas of national life.

The price of the 56-page Daily Star anniversary issue, inclusive of the normal 16-page spread-out, remains unchanged at Tk 6.00.