



Home-coming Day of Bangabandhu today

By Staff Correspondent

The Home-Coming Day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be observed in the country today.

This day in 1972, the Father of the Nation returned home from captivity in Pakistan.

Bangabandhu, architect of the country's independence, was arrested from his Dhanmondi residence in the city on the night of March 25 in 1971, taken to the then West Pakistan and kept in prison during the nine-month Independence War.

The people of Bangladesh achieved victory in the War on December 16, 1971. Then the Pakistani authorities had to free Bangabandhu and he returned to

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Two CID 'informers' shot dead in Demra

By Staff Correspondent

Two CID informers were shot dead by unidentified assailants at Gobindapur in the city's Demra area yesterday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Jahangir, 30, son of Asif Ali, of Badma area and Kabir Hossain, 38, son of Mafizuddin of Bhanga press area in Demra.

Sources said Kabir was a stuntman belonging to Arman group.

Jahangir and Kabir were sitting at a tea shop at Gobindapur on Dhaka-Chittagong highway. A gang of five arrived there in a minibus at 2:45 pm and sprayed bullets on them (Jahangir and Kabir).

Jahangir died on the spot while Kabir succumbed to bullet injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at around 6 pm.

Khokan Gazi, son of the tea shopowner, was also shot in his right leg and admitted to DMCH.

Police could not unearth the motive behind the killing immediately.

No case was filed with Demra Police Station in this connection till filing of this report at 7 last night.

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Biman 'under pressure' to procure 4 used Airbuses

By Shehab Ahmed

A strong lobby backed by influential people is trying to force Bangladesh Biman to procure four used Airbus A340-300 aircraft either on lease/lease purchase or through purchase by swapping its four DC-10-30 aircraft.

Efforts are being made to procure the used aircraft from an American "broker"- Max Power Aerospace- which "does not qualify" for the deal as per provisions of tender documents sources said.

The sources said that the four used Airbus A340-300 aircraft offered by Max is now in the possession of Boeing company, which procured those from Singapore Airlines last year by selling four 777-200 ER to it.

The initiative taken by certain officials surprised many in the airlines, who said this would dampen reputed airlines' interest in Biman's proposal for offering 40 per cent stakes to a strategic partner (SP) under a World bank aided restructuring programme, the sources said.

A Request For Proposal (RFP) for SP was floated on November 17. The last date for sending RFP was December 2, which was extended till January 7.

Since floating of RFP for SP, Biman received only two written proposals from Gulf Air and Qatar Airways. A number of other airlines showed interests but later shied away, allegedly because Biman, at the same time, was trying to procure the Airbus A340-300 aircraft from Max, a

"broker" which deals in obsolete aircraft and scraps, the sources said.

Max is in the list of 10 companies which submitted in November RFPs for supply of either Airbus 340-300 or Boeing 777-200 ER aircraft to Biman. The RFP for supply of aircraft was floated in the middle of last year.

The bidders included Airbus Industrie, a European consortium that manufactures four-engine A340-300 and Boeing which manufactures two-engine 777-200 ER aircraft.

The Fleet Planning and Evaluation Committee of Biman which met yesterday for financial evaluation of the offers from the bidders could not take any decision.

The meeting was postponed without fixing a date for the next meeting. The matter along with the RFPs for SP will be referred to the Biman Board of Directors, a Biman source said.

But pressure was on by high ups to take a decision on financial evaluation of the bidders for procurement of aircraft, the sources said.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mosharraf Hossain on January 3 said that Biman would not procure any aircraft before finalising deal with a potential SP. "The SP would take a decision on the type of aircraft. We are only doing the spade work", he told a Bengali daily on Jan

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Humayun Zahir murder case

Babu acquitted, 2 get death sentence

By Court Correspondent

Two persons have been sentenced to death, one given life term and four others including the main accused Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu acquitted in the sensational Humayun Zahir Murder Case.

The judgement was given by the 8th Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday.

The court gave death sentence to Fazlur Rahman Tannoy and Hedayetul Islam Bulu and life term to Abdul Matin.

Tannoy is in Dhaka Central Jail and Matin is absconding.

The three others acquitted are Mosiur Rahman Towhid, Mohammad Kaiser and Mohammad Alam (approver). Towhid is absconding.

The convicts can appeal in the High Court within 7 days from pronouncement of the judgement.

The Judge, Mir Mohammad Awlad Hossain, pronounced the verdict at a packed court room after about 8 years of filing of the case.

A large crowd thronged the court, its premises and roads nearby to hear the judgement.

In the 223 page judgement, the judge said that two of the accused Tannoy and Hedayetul Islam -- were given death penalty and another -- Abdul

Matin -- was given life term as the allegations against them were proved.

Matin was on bail, which expired yesterday. The four were acquitted as the allegations against them were not proved, the judgement said.

Matin's lawyer Mosarraf Hossain Kajol submitted a petition for time for delivery of the judgement as his client was suffering from dysentery but the court rejected the prayer.

Babu, Tannoy, Alam and Kaiser were in the dock. Hearing the judgement, Tannoy broke down in tears but the three others remained calm.

The judgement further said that punishment of the absconders would begin when they would surrender or be arrested.

The case was earlier transferred to seven courts for disposal. But one of the courts felt "embarrassed". Later the High Court directed the 8th Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court to dispose of the case.

Humayun Zahir, a leading businessman, was murdered by a gang of assailants on the premises of his Dhanmondi residence in the city on April 8, 1993.

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New Year session of Parliament

Obituary ref to precede president's speech

By Nazrul Islam

In a breakaway from tradition, a condolence motion on the death of an incumbent MP will precede the presidential speech on the inaugural day of the New Year session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Conventionally, the year-opening session of the parliament starts with the President's speech. This year, however, the House has decided to move a condolence motion on the death of ruling party lawmaker Kamal Bakht Saki. The Satkhira-1 MP died on December 15. The presidential address will follow after a formal recess.

The details were finalised at Business Advisory Committee meeting yesterday, with Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury in the chair.

The session, scheduled to start tomorrow (Thursday), will run through January 31, unless

businesses of the House require an extension.

The committee allocated 20 hours for general discussion on the thanks-giving motion on President Shahabuddin Ahmed's speech. In the millennium session last year, the House expended 23 hours and 48 minutes for the general discussion on the presidential speech.

The Cabinet has already approved the draft of the address, which will highlight the successes of the Sheikh Hasina government.

According to parliament sources, the House will deal with three new bills -- the Supreme Court Judges (Remuneration and Privilege) (Amendment) Bill 2001, The Law Commission (Amendment) Bill 2001, and the Standards of Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill 2001 --

in the 15 working days of the upcoming session.

Besides, the House will also address three out of 17 pending bills, including the much-talked about Constitution Fourteenth (Amendment) Bill for retention of 30 women's reserved parliamentary seats. These bills have already been finalised by the parliamentary standing committees concerned. The rest are being vetted, the meeting advisory committee was informed.

Another important bill seeking invalidation of the Vested Property Act to hand over the "enemy property" to its genuine owners may also feature in the upcoming session. The cabinet approved a draft bill in this regard earlier this week.

The speaker in yesterday's meeting informed the members

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Akhteruzzaman Babu comes out of the court upon being acquitted in the sensational Humayun Zahir murder case. The Eighth Additional District and Session's Judge's Court sentenced two to death and one to life imprisonment yesterday. The remaining four of the seven accused in the case were acquitted.

--Star photo

Showcouse on Kabir Chy for alleged forgery

Star Report

The Fourth Assistant Judge's Court, Dhaka, has issued a showcouse notice on chief adviser and sponsor director of the proposed Self-Employment Finance Ltd National Professor Kabir Chowdhury and two others and Bangladesh Bank upon a petition filed by one Ayesha Begum alleging that Prof Chowdhury forged her signature and removed her as its sponsor director.

The court asked the defendants to reply within seven days of receipt of the notice issued on Thursday.

The two other defendants are Prof Din Mohammad Bhuiyan, Chairman of the proposed company and AKM Saifur Rahman.

The petitioner, Ayesha Begum of 2/B Mymensingh Road in the city, also alleged that Prof Chowdhury unilaterally sold out major shares of the proposed company to Rawshan Akhter

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Myanmar massing troops along border

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Myanmar has started deploying regular troops along the southeastern border of Bangladesh since yesterday morning.

According to sources, Myanmar army have moved to forward positions within one and a half kilometres off the frontier on the river Naf, which separates the two countries.

Nasaka, border forces of the Myanmar who traded fire with BDR on Monday, have also called in reinforcement, the sources said.

Myanmar have deployed regular soldiers across Ulobonia, Palangkhali, Rejupara, Chakdala and Ashartali border outposts of BDR, it is learnt.

Deployment of troops within eight kilometres or five miles of

the zero line is a violation of international border regulations.

Following movements across the border, BDR have called in additional reinforcements from Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Rangamati. Bangladesh Army, however, have not made any move yet.

Tension hung heavy in the air near Palangkhali Border Out Post (BOP) in Ukhaia thana, 48 kilometres off Cox's Bazar.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent reported that some villagers of Ulobonia and Palangkhali areas already fled their homes following Monday's skirmishes that lasted for several hours.

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Opposition calls 48-hr hartal in Ctg from today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 9: Chittagong chapter of All-party Action Committee (APAC) organised rallies and processions in different parts of the city today in support of its 48-hour hartal beginning from 6 am tomorrow.

APAC has called the hartal in the port city demanding withdrawal of case filed against BNP central leader M Morshed Khan, MP and release of the opposition activists arrested during a dawn-to-dusk hartal here on January 7.

Morshed Khan and his son Faisal Morshed were sued in a case under Public Safety Act (PSA) for 'ransacking' shop at GEC Crossing in the city on December 26.

Security has been beefed up in the port city ahead of the hartal with deployment of additional police force, administration sources said.

Paramilitary BDR will also be deployed at important points in the city during hartal hours, sources added.

Besides, police and BDR personnel will portal the vulnerable points in the city to foil any attempt of violence, CMP sources said.

Official talks

Dhaka, Kathmandu agree to bolster economic ties

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Bangladesh and Nepal yesterday agreed to bolster bilateral economic ties by increasing trade, commerce and tourism.

At official talks here, the two countries decided to take steps for smooth transit of Nepalese goods through Bangladesh and to set up a committee to look into the existing problems in this regard.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and his Nepalese counterpart Chakra Prasad Bastola led the two sides at the talks.

Briefing newsmen after the talks, Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami said the two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral issues, with emphasis on road and rail transit, trade, investment, defense, education, water and energy sectors.

Bangladesh will discuss with Nepal measures for making the Bangladesh-Fulbari-Kakravita route more effective for expansion of bilateral trade and a sub-committee has been formed to recommend the measures, the foreign secretary said.

Besides two rail and two road transit points, Dhaka has offered Nepal the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports and is willing to extend cooperation to make those fully effective.

The road transit points are Banglabandh-Kakarvitta and Radhikapor-Birol. The rail transit points are Burimari-Changrabandh and Rohanpur-Singhabad.

Dhaka has agreed to examine Kathmandu's request to reduce duty to give Nepalese primary products more access to Bangladesh.

The sides did not discuss any specific proposal on opening of a direct Dhaka-Kathmandu bus service but decided that they could cooperate for growth of tourism.

The two sides will issue a joint statement today detailing the outcome of the Nepalese foreign minister's visit, the foreign secretary said.

9 Ijtima devotees killed in Bogra road accident

BOGRA, Jan 9: Nine devotees, returning home from Biswa Ijtima, were killed and 30 others injured in a tragic road accident at Jamalpur, 12 km south of Bogra town last night, reports UNB.

Survivors and police said the bus carrying the devotees collided with a truck on Dhaka-Bogra a highway at 10 pm, leaving five dead on the spot and 30 others injured.

Police and local people rescued the victims and sent them to Bogra Mohammad Ali Medical College Hospital where four died this morning. The condition of five others was stated to be critical.

Of the dead, seven were identified as Shaju, 35, Sattar, 40, Jinnah, 42, Emdad, 38, Semil, 35, and Moazzem, 35.

Eleven of the injured were identified as Hafez, 40, Razzak, 26, Azan Ali, 40, Mainuddin, 40, Srij Ali, 40, Nazir Hossain, 55, Jamat Ali, 60, Javed Munshi, 60, Pear Ali, 40, Mustafa, 40, and Mustafa, 40. The identity of the rest could not be known immediately.



Women from all strata of the society gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to hail the High Court verdict banning fatwa.

-- Star photo

BNP still in dilemma

Militant movement or polls preparation?

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance is yet to finalise its agitation strategy for a tougher movement to topple the Awami League government to facilitate holding of early general election.

Sources concerned said although BNP and its allies have separately and jointly announced a series of mass contact programmes for this month, alliance leaders are still discussing a 'complete strategy' to achieve their goal. They are likely to call a hartal within this month.

They mentioned that all the four component parties of the alliance -- BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote -- are now facing intra-party conflicts over various issues like formation of a central committee of Jatiyatabadi

Chhatra Dal, release of jailed JP Chairman HM Ershad and fatwa - related trouble centring IOJ leader Fazlul Haq Amin.

The issues have created a negative impact among leaders and activists of the opposition parties. The fatwa issue and Amin's stance against the High Court verdict in this regard have put the alliance partners, particularly BNP, in an embarrassing situation.

Frustration has gripped JP leaders and activists as they find little scope for release of Ershad. Moreover, majority of senior leaders of the party have strong reservation about acting Chairman of the party Roushan Ershad and the role of Party Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manjur.

Sources said the trouble

within BNP is much more serious than in the other parties in the alliance. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is now busy resolving intra-party feuds.

They pointed out that although the Central Liaison Committee and policy makers of the four parties sat separately and jointly for a number of times, no concrete decision was taken so far as regards how the opposition would proceed in the coming days and intensify movement.

Insiders said BNP is still to decide whether it should go for a militant movement or prepare for the coming general elections. Hardliners in the party have been pressing its leadership to intensify movement while moderates favour preparing the party for

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