



## Victory Day programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muktijuddho Jadugar (Liberation War Museum) has taken elaborate programmes to observe the 30th anniversary of the Victory Day.

A week-long programme has been chalked from December 24 at the auditorium of the museum. The programme includes discussion meeting, musical function, dance, recitation and cultural performance. The programmes commence at 5 pm everyday.

This year the celebrations have been scheduled for the later part of the historic month due to Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

The programmes will be inaugurated on Monday, December 24 with a discussion meeting on a book titled 'Bangladesh War of Liberation' by Maj Gen (ret) Imamuzzaman, Bir Pratik. Air Vice Marshal A K Khondakar, Dr Anisuzzaman, Dr Syed Anwar Hossain, Lt Col Noor-un-Nabi Khan, Bir Pratik and the author himself will take part in the discussion meeting.

Artists of Chhayanaut will

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## Badruddoza meets Shahabuddin

BSS, Dhaka

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury and Hasina Warda Chowdhury made a courtesy call on former president Shahabuddin Ahmed and Mrs Shahabuddin Ahmed at the latter's Lalmatia residence yesterday.

They stayed with the former president and his wife for some time, enquired about their welfare and exchanged pleasantries with them.

## Order dismissing Maulana Obaidul Haq annulled

The order dismissing Maulana Obaidul Haq from the post of Khatib of Baitul Mukarram mosque on April 23 was annulled yesterday, a press release issued by the Islamic Foundation said.

The High Court had stayed the dismissal order on April 26. But it was not annulled by the then Islamic Foundation authorities.

Moulan Obaidul Haq joined the National Mosque as Khatib on September 26, 1984.

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## ACI Iftar

## Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
18	4		5-14
19	5	5-03	5-14
20	6	5-03	5-14

# Saifur in Delhi, hints at selling surplus gas

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday outlined broad parameters of the BNP-led government's economic policy and indicated willingness to sell natural gas to India if there is a surplus.

Participating in an interactive session at the World Economic Programme organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in New Delhi, Saifur said this government would press ahead with economic reforms in key sectors.

He said the thrust area of the government would be privatisation, free economy and legal reforms to ensure transparency and accountability and convergence of policies. However, the Finance Minister sent out signals of caution about the economic reforms.

In an apparent criticism of main opposition Awami League, Saifur said "inequitable and divisive politics" has been the bane not only of Bangladesh but also of South Asian economies as well.

"Parties propose economic reforms when in power but oppose them when in the opposition," he said adding "sound politics is essential for sound economy."

Saifur asserted that the BNP government would not buckle under pressure from the opposition parties because it has come to power armed with a massive mandate of the people in October 1 general election.

He accused the previous government led by Sheikh Hasina of putting the economic reforms on backburner and pushing the economy in disarray. He also charged that AL government had "destroyed" the economic institutions during its rule.

Answering a question on sale of gas to India, Saifur said "a wealth is not wealth if it is not utilised." He said there was no harm if Bangladesh sells surplus gas after assessing its reserves and domestic need.

The Finance Minister said three foreign companies are working in estimating gas reserves of Bangladesh.

In this context, Saifur said Awami League favoured

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## Govt taking steps to develop IT sector: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said her government is taking comprehensive steps for developing IT industry in Bangladesh to generate employment at home and abroad.

Khaleda said this to a 15-member delegation of Asian-Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation (ASOCIO) led by its president Harres Tan when they called on her at Prodhmantri Bhavan yesterday evening.

More than 20 countries including Bangladesh, are members of ASOCIO, which promotes business in the fastest growing sector of the present world.

The prime minister informed the delegation that computer training centres would be set up in each divisional and district headquarters of Bangladesh.

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A member of the special security forces for Sheikh Hasina leaving her Dhanmondi residence yesterday.

## Special security for Hasina withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the elite Special Security Force (SSF) and the President's Guard Regiment (PGR) were withdrawn from security duty for Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

The parliament on Sunday repealed the Father of the Nation's Family Members Security Act, 2001 under which Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana were entitled to state security for life.

Over 50 members of SSF and PGR packed up and left Hasina's Dhanmondi residence Sudha Sadan yesterday evening.

However, the government last night provided 18 policemen for security of Sheikh Hasina who is Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament. Besides, six plainclothes policemen from the Special

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Police taking away microphones from Awami League leaders at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday. They also barred the party from holding a protest rally there.

# Police bar AL from holding protest rally, snatch mike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid repeated interventions and lobbying of tear gas shells by police, Awami League held a rally in front of the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday protesting police action on party leaders and activists during Sunday's hartal.

At one stage police snatched the microphones.

Several hundred AL leaders and workers gathered in front of the party office and chanted slogans against "police attack" on "peaceful" AL processions during the hartal.

As soon as the rally started at about 2:45pm, police cordoned the Bangabandhu Avenue and announced over loudspeakers that procession and rally there were banned.

As the rally continued, police cordoned it. Fearing police action, many leaders and activists left the rally and took shelter in safer places.

A police squad led by an official went to the dais and told AL leaders to stop the rally. Asked by AL Presidium member Tofail Ahmed why rally can not be held, the police official told him that there was a

government order against holding rally.

At one stage AL leader and former agricultural minister Motia Chowdhury was locked in an altercation with police. She wanted to know whether police had any government order to prevent holding of rally. The rally, which was in progress then with advocate Kamrul Islam addressing it, was interrupted for a few minutes.

As the dispersed AL activists gathered again in front of the party office, Motia Chowdhury took the microphone and castigated police

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## US urged to invest more

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has urged Washington to take steps to encourage more US investment in Bangladesh to boost further the friendly bilateral ties between the two countries.

It has also urged that US investors make investment in backward linkage industries to boost Bangladesh's textile sector.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said this when a delegation of US-Bangladesh Business Council (USBBC) met him at his office yesterday. The hour-long meeting was described by the foreign ministry as "a courtesy call".

During the talks, the USBBC delegation was learnt to have raised the issue of gas export. But it could not be confirmed officially.

The foreign minister is learnt to

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## AL to stage protest rallies on Dec 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League has decided to hold rallies and demonstrations across the country on December 7 to protest the ruling alliance's 'repression' on AL leaders, activists and members of the minority community and also to protest cancellation of special security for Sheikh Hasina.

The December 7 programme is also aimed at denouncing 'police attacks' on AL leaders and workers during the AL-called hartal in the city on Sunday.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) held at the party's election office at Dhanmondi with

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# Taliban vow to defend last bastion

Afghan power-sharing deal may be signed today

REUTERS, Near Kandahar/Bonn

Afghan factions haggled yesterday over who will sit in a new interim government as the besieged Taliban threatened to mount a bloody last stand in Kandahar.

US B-52 bombers pounded Taliban positions near the southern Afghan city and ethnic Pashtun forces fought fierce battles against the Islamist fighters for Kandahar's airport.

Warplanes bombarded a suspected mountain hideout of Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan, killing 58 people, the Afghan Islamic Press news agency reported.

Among the ranks of the Taliban trapped in Kandahar are hundreds of Arabs and Chechens loyal to bin Laden, who face little future in defeat and are unlikely to surrender. A top defector from

the Taliban said the movement's Afghan spiritual leader Mullah Mohammad Omar would also fight to the death.

"One point is clear. He knows that with or without a fight the Americans will kill him for sure," Haji Mullah Khaksar, the Taliban's former deputy interior minister, told Reuters.

"He would reason that if the Americans are going to kill him or if he is going to die in jail, why shouldn't he die in war?" he said. "It is and was in his character to fight to the death."

Senior Taliban official Maulvi Najibullah maintained the Taliban still controlled all of Kandahar airport. "All Taliban officials are safe and sound," Najibullah said. "The bombing is causing misery only to civilian people."

Afghan groups at talks in Germany have agreed on a UN-brokered power-sharing deal

and will sign it in Bonn today, a Northern Alliance source at the talks told AFP. "A complete agreement has been reached. It will be signed tomorrow," the source who asked not to be named said. A diplomatic source close to the talks also confirmed that the final draft of a seven-page text, which envisages among other things an interim administration for Afghanistan, had been finalised. Reuters says, after talking late into the night, beary-eyed Afghan negotiators rose before dawn in Bonn yesterday for a seventh day of negotiating a post-Taliban government. The four Afghan factions represented at the UN-sponsored talks in a top-security hotel have agreed the broad outlines of an interim government but still face the toughest task of agreeing on who will occupy the 29 seats in a new cabinet.

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## Gas-based items can be exported by setting up more gas-fired units

Hasina tells US-Bangladesh Business Council team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina has said the domestic market for gas can be further developed and expanded and gas-based products can be exported by establishing gas-fired industries.

Talking to a delegation of US-Bangladesh Business Council at her Dhanmondi residence in the city yesterday, Hasina reiterated her party's position that gas could be exported after keeping reserves for 50 years' domestic consumption.

The former prime minister said only three per cent of the country's population is consuming gas now. More people can be brought under the gas supply network and gas-fired industries developed, she said.

She said Bangladesh can hardly

earn Tk 1000 crore a year by gas export. This amount can be earned by developing other sectors. In this regard, she sought cooperation of the Council so that Bangladesh's products can gain tariff- and quota-

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## Rehabilitation move BCL activists didn't go to DU halls

DU CORRESPONDENT

The rehabilitation process of the ousted workers of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in the different dormitories could not be started yesterday as BCL activists did not go to the halls for the process.

University authorities said that no BCL workers came to their respective halls for rehabilitation within the scheduled time.

BCL leaders said that the university authorities had not made necessary arrangements to vacate the halls to rehabilitate the ousted

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