



President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury along with political leaders and MPs offering *munajat* during the Eid congregation at the National Eidgah in the city on Monday.

Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated

BSS, UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest religious festival of the Muslims, was celebrated in the capital and elsewhere in the country on Monday with due religious fervour and enthusiasm.

Streams of people dressed in all their finery rushed to nearest eidgahs, mosques and open spaces in the foggy winter morning to offer their Eid prayers.

After the prayers, special *munajat* was offered seeking divine blessings for the peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as greater welfare of the Muslim Ummah.

The Eid-ul-Fitr, one of the happiest occasions for Muslims, marks the end of a month-long fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. After offering prayers at eidgahs, SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury (left) and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (right) pay homage to martyrs of Liberation War at the National Memorial at Savar on the Victory Day.

Victory Day celebrated Nation pays homage to martyrs

UNB, Dhaka

The nation celebrated the Victory Day on Sunday, December the 16th, paying homage to the valiant sons of the soil who embraced martyrdom for country's independence 30 years ago.

At daybreak, all roads led to the National Memorial at Savar as various socio-cultural and political organisations as well as common people thronged there with wreaths.

About 30 lakh Bengalis sacrificed their lives while two lakh women were violated in the wartime abyss, rated one of the darkest chapters in world history.

The bloody Liberation War, which began on the night of March 25, 1971, finally came to an end when the Pakistani occupation forces surrendered in Dhaka on December 16.

The President and the Prime Minister laid wreaths at the National Memorial Sunday morning paying tributes to the independence martyrs.

The government as well as social and political organisations observed the day with a patriotic zeal and renewed pledges to consolidate the country's independence and sovereignty.

The day was a public holiday. In the capital Dhaka, the day's programme began with a 31 gun-salute. The national flag was hoisted atop all public and private buildings across the country at dawn.

Main thoroughfares and road islands of the capital and other big cities were decorated with colorful festoons and bunting while important government buildings illuminated.

Victory Day receptions were held at Bangabhaban and all Bangladesh missions abroad.

Bangladesh Betar and Television broadcast special programmes while newspapers on Saturday published special supplements and features high SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

News Analysis

Gas: Minister's remarks stir up confusion

SHARIEF KHAN

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain has once again stirred up confusion about gas reserve and its market in the country.

In an interview with UNB on December 11, Mosharraf said a survey by the US Geological Survey (USGS) has put the 'mean reserve' at 32.1 tcf while Petrobangla estimated it at 11 tcf.

In another interview with BBC on the same day, he said the country did not have market for gas and that it was incurring Tk 500 crore loss a year in purchasing gas from international oil companies (IOCs).

BBC interviewed the state minister following Unocal's reiteration of its statement that the company would stop exploration activities in the country unless ensured of a gas market. Unocal had long been saying that Bangladesh did not have

a gas market and therefore there was no point in further oil and gas exploration. Bangladesh should export gas to India through pipeline so that oil companies continue to invest in the country and it earns profit from exports.

Mosharraf told BBC that it was the country's responsibility to sell gas discovered by the US company. However, the state minister's statements contradict facts.

While he said the USGS and Petrobangla took opposite stances on gas reserves, in reality both the organisations had full convergence on gas reserve issue.

The USGS and Petrobangla jointly undertook a gas 'resource' study two years ago and concluded it in January this year. While officially presenting findings of the study on February 14 this year in the city, USGS and Petrobangla experts said Bangladesh's 'average potential' for finding gas is 32.1 trillion

cubic feet (tcf) in the next 30 years while there is a 95 per cent chance of finding 8.4 tcf new gas and only 5 per cent chance of finding 65.7 tcf.

USGS agrees with Petrobangla's estimated reserve of 11 tcf.

The state minister apparently mixed up the term 'resource' with 'reserve'. Reserve estimate is based on what is available for extraction while a resource estimate is based on potentials and possibilities.

While the state minister says it is the country's responsibility to market Unocal's gas, the production sharing contract (PSC) under which Unocal operates the Bibiyana gas field imposes no obligation on the government to sell Unocal's gas.

While the state minister's remarks about loss incurred by purchase of IOC gas might give the SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

\$199m ADB loans for power system dev project

UNB, Dhaka

Asian Development Bank has approved loans totaling US dollar 198.9 million for Bangladesh's West Zone Power System Development Project.

Under the project, 500,000 new subscribers, a significant portion of whom live in the rural areas, will receive electricity, said an ADB press release in the city on Tuesday.

The project also supports ongoing government reforms to improve governance, build institutional capacity, improve system efficiencies and facilitate private sector participation in the power sector.

In addition, the ADB is providing a US dollar 900 technical assistance grant to corporatise Bangladesh Power Development Board's distribution system in the west zone and introduce modern management to the new company.

Earlier, ADB approved a US dollar 65 million loan for Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project in Bangladesh aiming at educating 1.6 million illiterate adults, mostly women in 29 rural districts, who did not go to school.

Grenade blast kills one in Kashmir

AP, Srinagar

Suspected Islamic militants tossed a grenade into a crowded market in the northern Indian state of Jammu-Kashmir yesterday, killing one person instantly and injuring at least 60, police said.

In the town of Kunzur, police said that a member of Jaish-e-Mohammed, the other Pakistan-based militant group accused in the Parliament attack, had been killed in an encounter with security forces.

In Baramullah, 65 kilometers north of Srinagar, three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militants were killed and three security troops were injured when the guerrillas opened fire on the troops, police said.

Two militants were killed in Bazipora and three were killed in Sopore, in separate shootouts between militants and security forces, police said.

In Sopore, near Baramullah, the three militants were killed when they attacked an army patrol, police said, adding that an army captain and a soldier were injured in the gunbattle.

BNP interviews by-election candidates

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Parliamentary Board yesterday interviewed 34 candidates who sought party nomination for the ensuing by-elections in Munshiganj-1, Faridpur-4, Barguna-3, Narail-1 and Narail-2 constituencies.

Among them Mahi B Chowdhury, son of President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, appeared before the board for contesting from Munshiganj-1 while Akmal Ibne Yusuf, brother of Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, from Faridpur-4.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia chaired the interview session.

Senior party leaders M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Oli Ahmed, Dr RA Ghani, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Abdul Motin Chowdhury, Dr Khandaker

Mosharraf Hossain, Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, Moudud Ahmed and Khandaker Mahub Uddin were present.

BSS adds: The government officials and employees and their wives or husbands, daughters or sons and the persons under government custody or imprisonment, who are willing to cast their votes through postal ballot paper or postage in the coming by-election, have been asked to submit their applications to the returning officers concerned within 15 days of announcement of election schedule, an official hand-out said.

The by-election to Narail-1, Narail-2, Barguna-3, Faridpur-4 and Munshiganj-1 seats will be held on January 17 next.

Upon receiving the postal ballot SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



Hasan Ahmad new envoy to USA

UNB, Dhaka

Government has appointed Syed Hasan Ahmad, former ambassador to Belgium, as the country's next envoy to the United States.

During his long career in government service Ahmad served in a variety of important capacities from 1960 to 1992.

After retirement he served as Ambassador to Belgium with concurrent accreditation to the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the European Union from 1992 to 1996.

Ahmad is a member of BNP Chairperson's Council of Advisors, a Foreign Ministry press release said SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

PM unveils plaque of Mahakhali flyover

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said yesterday that measures will be taken for a scientific management of city transports to bring an end to traffic jams and reduce road accidents.

The transport system will be modernised to meet the growing need of people, she said while unveiling the plaque of Mahakhali Flyover at Abbas Garden near Mahakhali Rail Crossing in the afternoon.

The 667.74 metre long and 17.90 metre wide four-lane Mahakhali Flyover will be constructed within 30 months at a cost of over Tk 1135.27 million. It is being jointly funded by the government and World Bank.

The flyover, under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), was designed to ease traffic congestion at Mahakhali. It will be constructed by a Chinese construction firm.

Khaleda Zia assured all that the construction work of Jatrabari Flyover under this project will also

begin soon.

The prime minister said development that the country's communication network as well as reduction of traffic jams in the capital was one of her party's election commitments.

She said Dhaka city will be transformed into a beautiful and clean city with modern communication network for overall development of the country.

Pointing at the growing population and the rapidly increasing demand for public transports, she assured that the government will do everything possible to meet requirements.

She said efforts were made by the previous BNP government in 1992 with the support of UNDP to identify various problems of transport system in Dhaka in order to take remedial measures. The present BNP government has planned construction of flyovers and bypass roads in different areas of the capital, she said.

One arrested for entering PM's house at cantt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested one person for entering the prime minister's house at Dhaka cantonment trespassing the security cordon on Sunday night.

The arrested was identified as Enamul Haq, 45, son of Abdul Hamid of Pakundia upazilla under Kishoreganj district.

Police said the man was mentally imbalanced. He entered the prime minister's residence at the saheri time.

The Special Branch of Police has taken him for interrogation.

Three security personnel who were on duty there have been charged for their negligence of duty.



Former Navy chief Sultan Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Sultan Ahmed died after prolonged illness at the Combined Military Hospital in the capital city on December 15. He was 70, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife and only son.

Ahmed was laid to rest with full military honours at the military graveyard in Banani in the city on December 16.

Earlier his namaz-e-janaza was held at noon on December 16 at the Naval Headquarters at Banani. It was attended, among others, by Chief of Army Staff Lt General M SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

SAARC Secy Gen due in city today

BSS, Dhaka

The outgoing Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Nihal Rodrigo arrives this morning on a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

During his stay in Dhaka, Rodrigo will pay farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman and meet Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury.

2 missing as trawler sinks

UNB, Barisal

Two passengers were missing after a goods-laden trawler capsized in the Pangasia river yesterday.

Witnesses said the mishap occurred when the trawler was hit by passenger launch ML Shawon-2 at 2pm.

15 killed in gunbattle with al Qaida men in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Al-Qaida fighters who had fled Afghanistan staged a gunbattle yesterday with Pakistan forces that left 15 Arab militants and Pakistani security forces dead, officials said.

Seven Arab followers of Osama bin Laden and eight Pakistani troops were killed in the shootout in Sadda, a town in the Kurram semi-autonomous tribal agency, about 120 kilometers west of Peshawar.

The Arabs had been detained in recent days near the border after fleeing US bombing raids and ground attacks by Afghan forces on their hideouts in Afghanistan, officials said.

Local administration officials said the al-Qaida fighters snatched arms from their guards while they were being moved to a jail.

Seven Arab prisoners, seven paramilitary troops and one Pakistan army soldier were killed in the clash, the officials said.

No other details on casualties were immediately given, but the officials expressed fears that the death toll could rise.

Provincial government officials in the northwestern

city of Peshawar said the al-Qaida fighters had been detained at Alizai, a village near Sadda.

"The clash erupted when the authorities were moving the prisoners to a jail," an official said.

Hundreds of al-Qaida militants are believed to have crossed into Pakistan after training camps and hideouts in the White Mountain range in eastern Afghanistan came under weeks of relentless attacks.

According to some Afghan government leaders and militia commanders, bin Laden himself may have crossed into Pakistan from his lair of caves and tunnels in the Tora Bora region of the White Mountains.

Afghan militia finally took Tora Bora last weekend and hundreds of al-Qaida fighters fled the area then.

Pakistani authorities have captured dozens of foreign fighters crossing the border, according to press reports and officials.

Thousands of troops are patrolling the mountain frontier on foot and in helicopter patrols looking for signs of bin Laden or any of his fighters.

Western intelligence services are certain that Taliban and al-Qaida officials have taken refuge in the tribal zones along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Tofail's passport returned

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday returned the passport of former industries minister and Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed.

Officers of the Special Branch of police returned the passport of the Awami League leader at his residence following a High Court order.

Authorities on October 22 confiscated the passport of Tofail but the High Court, following a writ, ordered the government to show cause why the impoundment would not be declared illegal.

The High Court on Dec 10 directed the authorities concerned to return the passport of Tofail Ahmed within 10 days.