

# BNP programme on Ekushey begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP's six-day programmes marking the golden jubilee of the Language Movement as well as the International Mother Language Day will begin in the city today.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at 4pm today will formally inaugurate the programmes featuring discussion meetings, recitation of poetry, musical soiree and dance at Ramna Batamul.

BNP's cultural wing Jasas will arrange a discussion meeting on 'Our Mother Language and Our Culture' at the Central Shaheed Minar at 4pm tomorrow. A musical soiree will follow the discussion.

On Feb 18, the Zia Shishu-Kishore Sangathan will arrange a prize distribution for children's painting competition at Shishu Academy premises at 4pm. The function will be followed by a cultural evening. On the same day, Jasas will arrange a musical programme at the Central Shaheed Minar.

On Feb 19, Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal will hold a discussion meeting at Ramna Batamul at 4pm followed by

a cultural programme.

On Feb 20, BNP central committee will arrange a discussion meeting at Ramna Batamul at 4pm. There will be a musical soiree also after the discussion.

On Feb 21, the BNP will hoist national and party flags at half-mast in the early morning and hoist black flag at the party central office. Leaders and workers of BNP will assemble in front of Balaka Cinema Hall at Nilkhet at 6am, wear black badges and march towards Azimpur graveyard to place wreaths and offer fateha at the graves of the Language martyrs and then go to the Central Shaheed Minar to place wreaths there.

At 4pm on the Amar Ekushey Day, Jasas will arrange a discussion meeting and cultural programme at Ramna Batamul.

Meanwhile, BNP's district, city and thana committees have also arranged elaborate programmes to observe the Amar Ekushey in a befitting manner. They have also chalked out programmes such as probhat ferry, placing of wreaths, discussion meetings and cultural programmes, said a press release.

# Stop terrorism

**FROM PAGE 1**

"We are witnessing a maddening scenario of brutality emerged out of politics," Prof BK Jahangir of Dhaka University said in his paper titled "State-sponsored Terror".

Referring to post-election terrorism that forced many to become "refugees in their own country", he said, "This is politics of dispossession from their rights, properties and human dignity."

Describing incidents of alleged rape, torture and arson in different parts of the country that followed the October election, Prof Jahangir said, "These are human rights abuses done by the government against their own people."

"This catalogue of suffering does not deter the government from discriminating systematically against the people... It means human freedom is at stake," he added.

Calling religion-based nationalism a kind of nihilism, he said such a nationalism does not allow any political debate or movement or alternative political ideas. "Bangladesh State suggests a unity of politics and culture," he said blaming the ruling BNP-Jamaat alliance for instituting ethnic cleansing to delink culture from politics.

In his paper titled "Religion and Politics", Islamic scholar Abdul Awal noted that the nation had to pay dearly due to abuse of religion in politics in the sub-continent.

Listing 66 religion-based organisations in the country, he said, "These organisations not only abuse religion for political ends but

also sponsor terrorism in the name of religion."

Former diplomat Waliur Rahman's paper on "Terrorism and its strategic use: Bangladesh context" said terrorism is such a tool that states in different parts of the world used for political purposes. "Terrorism has now become a threat to humanity."

Veteran journalist Waheedul Haque in his paper on "Living in Culture or among Criminals" analysed the historic role of states, specially in the subcontinent, in mishandling religion and culture.

Referring to recent acts of human rights violation, he said, "The truth must be out. And the criminals resisted, socially and through law and punishment. Social resistance will mainly be effective through cultural resistance. Books and songs and plays must expose this most heinous crime against humanity."

The paper on "Violence against women" by Tania Amir termed the post-election violence against women and children as part of a systematic political persecution and manifestation of an extremist religious or political ideology.

Citing extract from an investigative report on atrocities in different parts of the country, she compared those with war crimes in 1971.

Dr Haroon-ar-Rashid of Dhaka University presented a paper on "Criminalisation of Politics: An Overview" depicting use of guns and goons by military dictators and thus denying people's democratic and fundamental rights.

# Afghan Hajj goers

**FROM PAGE 1**

the roads leading to the main entrance.

"We lost a good man, an educated man," said a top aide to Rahman, Mohammed Yakoub Nuristani. "He wanted to help rebuild Afghanistan."

"The interim administration is shocked, obviously, and very saddened by this incident," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Omar Samad. "We're looking into the criminal actions that have taken place here."

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who arrived yesterday for talks with the interim government, immediately conveyed his condolences to Abdullah Abdullah, the foreign minister.

The fatal confrontation was sparked when Rahman went to the Kabul airport Thursday afternoon for a flight to New Delhi, according to accounts by government and Afghan airline officials. Hundreds of pilgrims, who had been stranded at the airport awaiting Saudi visas and transport to Mecca, blocked Rahman's plane, beginning a standoff that went on for about five hours, airline and government officials said.

The mob stormed the plane when Rahman emerged to try to talk to the crowd, said Abdul Wahab Nuristani, the deputy chief of a military division in eastern Afghanistan. Rahman was seized, beaten and his body tossed to the tarmac below, he said, citing witness accounts.

"This is so terrible, so illegal," he said.

Dozens of friends, family and government officials gathered at Rahman's Kabul home as word spread of his death. The mourners listened quietly as a mullah read verses from the Quran.

Rahman, 49, was trained as a medical doctor. He fled Afghanistan when the Taliban took over and had been living in exile in New Delhi.

A contingent of British and French peacekeepers, stationed half a kilometer away in the military part of the airport, were apparently unaware that the situation had flared out of control. Earlier, they had sent food and blankets for the growing crowd.

The security force "knew there was an ongoing incident, but it happened very quickly," said British Capt. Graham Dunlop, a spokes-

man for the peacekeepers. He said the civilian area of the airport was under the control of Afghan authorities.

"We were not involved," he said. "It's not our jurisdiction."

Dunlop said he did not know how many peacekeepers were on the airport grounds at the time of the mob attack.

Mohammed Anif, a Kabul man who was waiting to see off his father on the pilgrimage, saw the angry mob rushed the plane after a rumour ran through the crowd that it was about to take off.

"They went running up the steps and inside the plane, and we saw struggles and a body thrown out of the plane," he said. He said he could not tell from a distance if it was Rahman's.

Some accounts, though, said that Rahman left the plane of his own accord to try to talk to the crowd.

**Abducted boy**

**FROM PAGE 12**

Another source said that the gang had demanded Tk 2.5 lakh from the family.

Following the abduction, victim's father had filed a case with Pallabi Police accusing Mohammad Javed and Abdur Razzak.

Police said Javed went to Nurul Islam four months ago and had asked his daughter Noor Nahar Jolly's hand in marriage. But Islam refused and married Jolly off to another man.

After that, Javed threatened Islam saying that he would have to face serious consequences for his refusal.

Pallabi Police arrested Javed from the Cantonment area on Wednesday evening for his alleged involvement in the abduction and took him on a one-day police remand.

Meanwhile, an unidentified phone caller informed Islam that the body of his son was floating in the lake in front of Dhaka Commerce College.

Pallabi police recovered the body of the victim and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Police is interrogating Javed but they are yet to confirm about his involvement in the killing. A police team is currently looking for the other accused Abdur Razzak.



PHOTO: STAR

Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, co-convenor of the National Convention on Crime Against Humanity reads out the Dhaka Declaration at its concluding session at the Institution of Engineers in the city yesterday.

# Try offenders in tribunal

**FROM PAGE 1**

The convention appealed to the international community to express solidarity and share the concern with the victims of the crime against humanity.

Calling for a stiff resistance to such cruelties, it expressed the view that imbued with the spirit of the liberation war, every one irrespective of political affiliation and belief must get together to uphold democracy, secularism and rule of law for building Bangladesh as a modern country 'in keeping with the progressive aspirations of mankind.'

Foreign participants in the convention expressed 'whole-hearted' support for the declaration, terming it a South Asian declaration for human rights.

Former Nepalese Speaker Damman Dungana, Nepalese poet Dr Baniraj Giri, American Jurist William Floan and Belgian ex-minister Dr Morrels addressed the concluding session, chaired by convenor of the national committee Justice KM Sobhan.

The convention called upon the government to 'stop the process of political and religious cleansing' in all its forms and dimensions so that the people can assert their free will and enjoy their freedom of choice on the basis of free flow of information in an atmosphere of peace and democracy.'

The declaration followed a series of plenary sessions on various aspects of alleged violence against the religious minority and opposition activists since the general election in October last. It demanded effective steps to ensure payment of compensation to the victims and their families and for their rehabilitation.

The convention highlighted the 'post-election violence' in which many Hindu women were allegedly raped, their houses were torched and belongings looted. Some of them reportedly fled to India. A large number of opposition activists were allegedly assaulted or killed.

A select group of 'victims' narrated their experience at the opening session on Thursday.

Human rights activists from home and abroad attended the convention with the organisers blaming the government for refusing visa to some other foreign invitees.

The declaration said similar conventions would be organised in other cities of the country to mobilise public opinion against 'persecution of all kinds under political influence.'

Meanwhile, the ruling coalition announced Thursday that it would organise a convention on March 15-16 to highlight 'political persecution' during the tenure of the immediate past Awami League government.

# Ten traders

**FROM PAGE 12**

travelling from Naniarchar to Mahalchhari.

In another incident, two turmeric traders were also abducted at gunpoint while travelling in a bus from Mahalchhari to Rangamati.

The abductors have sent a message to Mahalchhari Bazar demanding Tk 10 lakh ransom for release of the ten.

The abducted traders were identified as Sujan Dev, 20, Biplob Das, 25, Kajala Biswas, 40, Liton Basak, 22, Ranjit Dev, 45, Pradip Dev, 16, Suranjit Dev, 28, Amir Chand, 20, Badal Biswas, 30, and Anu Mia, 38.

Hearing the news, sss traders at Mahalchhari upazila headquarters brought out a procession demanding release of their fellow traders.

Sources said armed cadres of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) are allegedly involved in the incidents of kidnapping in different areas of Khagrachhari and Rangamati districts.s

# Cell phones

**FROM PAGE 1**

Secretariat is not entitled to mobile phones under the existing rules.

Currently there is no budget for operating cost and maintenance of these phones, for which request has been made to the finance ministry.

# Rupsha Bridge

**FROM PAGE 12**

big amount of toll.

As a result, consultants, engineers and contractors have got frightened to continue work of Tk 582 crore project for construction of 1360-metre long bridge over the river Rupsha which is expected to be completed by November, 2004.

According to Mohammad Monirul Huq, Director of the project, the police commissioner has been requested to ensure security of all consultants, engineers and contractors.

Officials of Shimizu-ITD joint venture company have also informed the government of the hurdles being faced by them in doing works due to the terrible situation being created by miscreants. But the Project Director did not mention the names of the miscreants in his official letter to police commissioner.

The police commissioner has already stepped up security measures in the project area and residences of those who are allegedly being threatened by miscreants.

According to people of Rupsha Bridge Project area, the armed miscreants are followers of ward commissioner Mohammad Hossain Mukta. His armed cadres are threatening Shimizu-ITD consultants and local contractors for tolls and employment in the project, people of Labonchora alleged.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises yesterday.

# Iranian FM calls on Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Kharazi yesterday called on opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and discussed matters of bilateral interest and international issues of common concern.

Kharazi described Bangladesh-Iran relationship as excellent and said there is scope for further improving the bilateral cooperation in various fields, economy in particular.

Hasina said both Bangladesh and Iran enjoy good ties for a long period. She said the two countries could strengthen economic cooperation and take up joint-venture projects.

Referring to her 5-year rule, the former Prime Minister said her government achieved self-sufficiency in food, increased economic growth to 6.5 per cent and brought down inflation to 1.59 per cent.

Besides, she said, socio-economic condition of the people had improved substantially.

Hasina also mentioned her struggle for restoration of democracy, voting rights and non-party caretaker government. She alleged massive rigging in last October election and repression on her party members.

Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad MP, Hasina's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and press secretary Jawadul Karim were present.

Awami League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad MP, Hasina's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and press secretary Jawadul Karim were present.

# Milosevic

**FROM PAGE 12**

them to mass graves to cover up the murders.

Milosevic could face life imprisonment if convicted of any of 66 charges against him in what is seen as the most important war crimes trial since World War II.

Prosecutors say the 60-year-old former president is responsible for a decade of violence in the Balkans that accompanied the disintegration of Yugoslavia. They have indicted him for crimes against humanity in Croatia and Kosovo, and for genocide in the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

After hours of exhibiting photographs of what he called war crimes by the NATO forces, he turned his guns against the three-judge tribunal and the prosecutors trying him.

"What kind of tribunal can you talk about if you refuse to try people for all these crimes?" he said. Charging the court with drawing up its own rules of competence, he said "some perpetrators of crimes were exempt."

He said, "You have defined yourselves as the exponents of the side that perpetrated the crimes, and as accomplices in crime against people who defended themselves in their own territory."

Although he said he would publish a list of his witnesses later, Milosevic said he would summon leaders who were "direct actors" in the Balkan conflicts and in the 1995 Dayton peace talks that ended the war in Bosnia, including the entire American team at Dayton.

# Massive raid

**FROM PAGE 1**

day and raided different rooms of the hall.

Students said BDR harassed general students of the hall during the raid and arrested six of the on-duty employees at the hall.

Dhaka University employees organised a rally yesterday protesting the arrest of their colleagues.

Police sources said the block raid was aimed at arresting extortionists, terrorists and murderers from different areas of the city.

Sources said all mobile phone services were shut down during the raid.

# Wetlands

**FROM PAGE 12**

ment, effluent from tanneries, municipal wastes and fuel from river transports are polluting the Buriganga and pollution has now reached such proportions that even the fish can no longer survive in the toxic water. That the river is under the process of dying a slow death because of the greed and mindlessness of the people living in the nearby areas is a shocking blow to the environment preservation campaign. Although the government recently took some measures to clear the riverbanks of all encroachments and bring life to the dying river by taking some remedial steps, the prospect of relief still looks grim.

Unless determined efforts are made by all quarters concerned to redeem the water bodies under threat of extinction including the Buriganga, which is the lifeline for the metropolis, a catastrophe seems imminent. We have all along observed that government decision to improve the water scenario in and around the city are never followed up with timely action due to resource constraints or bureaucratic red-tape. Some really bold steps need to be taken to save the endangered water bodies from extinction, and in turn, the city itself.

# Iran arrests 150 foreigners

AFP, Tehran

Iran has arrested 150 foreigners, mostly Arabs, some of them holding French, British, Belgian and Dutch passports, who had infiltrated from Pakistan, state radio announced Thursday.

"Those foreigners, of Arab and African origin, entered Iran illegally after having travelled 750 kilometres from Pakistan," the radio said, quoting an Iranian security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"We have informed the relevant embassies of the illegal entry of these people, some of whom are accompanied by family," the official said.

He stopped short of saying the arrestees were members of the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan or of the al-Qaida terror network, but confirmed press reports according to which such suspects were on Iranian soil.

Reporting on the arrests, the official state agency IRNA only said the 150 arrestees were "suspected of links to hardline Taliban and al-Qaida," but also quoted an anonymous source as saying none of them were leading figures of the fundamentalist militia or of chief terror suspect Osama bin Laden's

network.

The Jomhuri Eslami daily, quoting unidentified parliamentary sources, said Thursday morning that Pakistan has pushed back al-Qaida members into Iran.

Washington alleges that Tehran has allowed al-Qaida fighters and members of the ousted Taliban regime to enter Iran, which Iranian officials have hotly denied, demanding evidence.

In a BBC interview US President George W. Bush's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, said Washington had given Tehran details of alleged Iranian interference in Afghanistan and help to al-Qaida fugitives.

Britain's Guardian daily quoting sources close to the Taliban said Tuesday that al-Qaida and Taliban fighters had evaded US forces in Afghanistan by fleeing through Pakistan along drug-smuggling routes to Iran and beyond, notably to the Gulf.

# Ershad returns today

UNB, Dhaka

Former president and Jatiya Party Chairman Hussain Muhammad Ershad returns home this morning after a long stay abroad since October 1 general election.

Ershad, left Dhaka a day after the election and underwent treatment for heart ailment in London and on his way back home made stopovers for few days in Dubai and India.

GM Kader MP, younger brother of the deposed president, told UNB that Ershad would arrive in Dhaka by a Biman flight from Kolkata.

Ershad was convicted in a corruption case and barred from contesting the last general election. He is also facing dozen other cases, including a murder case.

# CU under 'siege'

**FROM PAGE 1**

It will also remain closed from today to February 28 due to Saraswati Puja, Shaheed Day and Eid-ul Azha, the sources said.

With these vacations, the number of days the university will remain closed will be 357 in the last 14 months.

The prolonged deadlock created at least two to three years' session jam for many departments. The university has about 14,000 students in 30 departments. Appointment of the new VC had raised expectations among students that the stalemate would end. But nothing tangible is still in sight, the sources said.

After his appointment, the new VC had said he would take steps to resolve the stalemate.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, many students expressed their frustration due to the prolonged deadlock. Many of them said they feel shame to identify themselves as students of this university.

# 3 BCS exams

**FROM PAGE 1**

scheduled to be published by November last year.

Several thousand candidates sat preliminary, written, viva-voce and psychological tests under the 21st BCS examinations.

Many students awaiting the final results of the 21st BCS examinations strongly criticised the government for the 'unnecessary' delay in publishing the results.

"The government did not listen to the issue, but this is crucial for us who are struggling for survival," lamented one unemployed youth.

Some 15,000 students sat the written tests under the 22nd BCS examinations, and the results were scheduled to be published in November.

Applicants for the 23rd BCS examinations are sons and daughters of freedom fighters.

Viva-voce and psychological tests of those who passed the written examinations were scheduled to start in November.

But all processes were halted following the government's decision to scan 'irregularities and corruption' in the process.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption is investigating the recruitment under the 20th BCS examinations. Appointments under the 20th BCS examinations may also be cancelled, if gross irregularities are found in recruitment.

Sources, however, said recruitment through BCS examinations will resume soon after the appointment of PSC chairman.

The post has been lying vacant

# Osmany

**FROM PAGE 12**

Amirul Islam, CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Nur-e-Alam Siddiqi, Gano Forum general secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Jugantar Editor Golam Sarwar, and Manavzamin Editor Matiar Rahman Chowdhury will take part in the discussion among others.

Sylhet Division Development Council will organise a discussion meeting on 'Osmani in War of Liberation' at the Jatiya Press Club at 3:00 pm today. Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka will attend the function as chief guest.

Jatiya Janata Party will hoist national flag and party flag at half-mast atop central office at 7:00 am, place wreaths at the portrait of Osmany at 8:00 am and hold a memorial meeting at 4:00 pm today.

On Feb 18, the party will organise a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club at 3:00 pm and on Feb 20, a discussion meeting at Osmany Udyan.