

Eid on Saturday

FROM PAGE 1
have arranged special trains and launches.

All sorts of transports leaving the city were seen overloaded. Buses and launches were charging much higher than normal fares. Train, launch and bus tickets were selling in black markets at higher rates.

President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages greeting the people on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

In his message, the President said the instance of sacrifice set by Hazrat Ibrahim (RA) for carrying out the orders of Allah is 'ever glittering.'

"The Muslims observe the Korbani festival each year in memory of that sacrifice," he said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her message urged parents and guardians to inspire their children to work for welfare of the society.

She said the holy festival was introduced when Hazrat Ibrahim (RA) and Hazrat Hajera took preparations to sacrifice their beloved son Hazrat Ismail (RA) as per the will of

Allah.

"On the occasion of the Eid, we have to wash out our lusts, jealousy, illusion, meanness as well as human faults, deviation and weakness," she said.

In her message, Sheikh Hasina called upon all to stand beside the oppressed humanity with a sense of sacrifice and service.

On the eve of the Eid, the Dhaka City Corporation has leased out 22 city spots as temporary markets for sacrificial animals.

In the capital, the main Eid-jamaat will be held at the National Eidgah Maidan at 8 am. In case of inclement weather, the main jamaat will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at the same time.

Four Eid jamaats will be held at the Baitul Mukarram at 7:15 am, 8 am, 9 am and 9:45 am. Other major Eid jamaats will be held at Dhaka University mosque at 8 am and 9 am and at the BUET mosque at 8:15 am.

Besides, the Eid congregations will also be held at different mosques, eidgahs, play grounds, premises of schools, madrassahs and colleges.

Ekushey

FROM PAGE 1
It is the biggest news in the history of the nation, the news that is always fresh. Its fiftieth anniversary is significant both as a sign of survival and sustainability of the people's march towards a national destination. It will be celebrated in many forms and ways all over the country and by individuals and organisations. It will be a celebration of history and identity.

What was once dubbed as a militant procession of unruly elements by the authorities and the firing was considered justified by them through a judicial inquiry fifty years ago—the Ellis Report that has been excerpted in the Daily Star Ekushey supplement—has been surpassed by the force of history. The law and order issue has transformed into Ekushey, a symbol of national identity. It's this transformation from an event to history that we report on. It's the rise of a nation that history itself reports and in its fiftieth anniversary, it has become the most stable source of inspired information.

Yet the fiftieth anniversary has come at times of uncertainty as Bangladesh grapples with a grim international trade situation, internal constraints of the economy and political uncertainty. Lack of political accommodation by the major parties has contributed to the dilution of the joyous space on this day.

But there will be many observations and to ordinary people it is being seen as a triumph of will in history. Fifty years of a search for nationhood is not a breaking news but one which has overcome the vicissitudes of time to become permanent news.

The year 2002 is special because it is hosting the fiftieth anniversary. There is something extraordinary about the single most universal event in our history and is a landmark defining every space in our social and mental landscape.

It is also about the struggle to overcome the burdens of history and economics which has become part of the new world order. Amidst newly emerged questions about the efficacy of globalization as it affects the poorer countries, Bangladesh has already paid its dues in the global world of families by ensuring that Ekushey is observed as the International Mother Languages Day. This day will hopefully protect many languages all over the world which are already endangered by the pressures of modern societies and technology. That achievement is global and universal, a hard news.

The streets continue to be red-dyed by the marks of struggle and protest but after fifty years there are flower petals of victories as well. Despite every odd, Bangladesh struggles to find a space in a calm sea of prosperity, peace and dignity.



Preparations are on to hold the main Eid congregation at National Eidgah Maidan in the city.

PHOTO: STAR

Fantasy Kingdom

FROM PAGE 12
thousand guests from Dhaka and surrounding areas on Tuesday evening.

The function was also addressed by the managing director of Dhaka Bank Mokhlesur Rahman and the editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam.

There will be another grand opening next month after completion of some unfinished task, park authorities said.

The cost of the entire project with five-star standard hotel and motel is estimated to be about Tk 400 crore.

The amusement park was built keeping in mind the memories of a several century old legendary kingdom in the area.

According to the legend, prince Ashu and princess Lia were passing their days in happiness. But that kingdom was obliterated due to a catastrophic event.

The Fantasy Kingdom is an endeavor for revival of the legend to relieve some of the memories of those bygone and happy days.

Builders have tried to give an impression of the lost kingdom in the structure of the park. Statues of Ashu and Lia will welcome the visitors at the gate.

The theme park with its multifari-

ous rides holds the promise of a good time for people, particularly children.

A number of large and small statues of dinosaurs and python on the lagoon with big stones on both sides give the feeling of a pre-historic age.

There is also a floating café where visitors can snack.

Works on at least 21 exciting rides and other amusements have already been completed and many others are awaiting a final touch. A ride on the small ZU train or a roller coaster that spirals around the whole area will give visitors the entire view of the park.

Other amusements include, Zip Around, Pony Adventure, Skill Games, Spider, Sun and Moon, Happy Kangaroo, High Way Convoy, Speed way, Crazy Bump, Santa Maria, Bumper Boats, Cinema 180 and Giant Splash.

There are package programmes for different combinations of these amusements. A minimum entry fee of Tk 150 was charged, which includes three rides.

The total charge for enjoying all the facilities would be around Tk 1,000.

"The main objective of the park is to give the city-dwellers some relief

from the pollution and congestion of the city," said Kamaluddin in his inaugural speech, adding that lack of adequate entertainment facilities in the country was one of the reasons for the society's degeneration.

"Entertainment is also a basic demand of human soul which is often neglected in our society," Kamaluddin said and hoped that the Fantasy Kingdom would be a respite from the hectic city life.

He hoped that an environment-friendly satellite city would grow up centering the park area.

"Business is not the main goal of the project but rather to give the people some comfort and entertainment," said Mokhlesur Rahman, the managing director of Dhaka Bank that co-financed the project.

Mahfuz Anam wished park's success and hoped that it would continue to provide entertainment to people for a long time.

Food and accommodation facilities would be set up in phases so that families can stay here for a few days of joyous and memorable time, he added.

He thanked the local engineers and planners for completing the huge construction work within a short time.

Santi murder Bail petition of Haji Selim rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday rejected the bail petition of former Awami League MP Haji Mohammad Selim, an accused in Shamsul Haque Santi murder case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order following a criminal appeal for bail by the defence lawyers.

In its order, the court mentioned that the charges brought against Haji Selim were proved on the basis of statements of prosecution witnesses in the charge sheet.

Earlier, the defence lawyers had submitted the appeal to the Judge's Court against the rejection order of the CMM's Court.

The CMM's Court rejected the bail petition of Haji Selim on January 23.

The Judge's Court heard the appeal on February 5 and passed the order yesterday.

Santi, 32, a BNP leader was shot

dead by a group of assailants at Killamor in the city's Lalbagh area on June 9, 1996.

Victim's mother Sakhina Begum filed a murder case with Lalbagh thana the following day, accusing JCD leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and 17 others.

But the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case submitted the charge sheet dropping the names of 14 FIR-named accused, including Pintu on January 20, as the allegations brought against them were not proved.

Selim was charge sheeted in the case although his name was not in the FIR (First Information Report). Moreover, the complainant of the case did not accuse Selim.

Selim was shown arrested in the case on January 22.

In the charge sheet, 30 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Egyptian train

FROM PAGE 1
(0000 GMT) in the rear part of the train, which continued for several kilometres (miles) before it was brought to a halt, forcing many passengers to jump from the windows, police added.

However, most of the others were trapped in what General Ali Abdel Aal, head of the rescue operations, likened to a "burning prison" as they had trouble opening the doors and escaping through barred windows.

Well over 100 bodies, most of them charred, were laid out by the tracks, as firefighters searched the carriages for more victims and retrieved others who had jumped for their lives from further up the line.

The acrid odor of burned flesh hung in the air.

A firefighting official on the scene near Al Ayatt, 70 kilometres (45 miles) from the capital, said rescue workers had counted at least 300 dead bodies.

An AFP reporter saw many small charred figures which may have been children. Many children were believed to be on the train travelling with their parents.

Fire officials said 54 people were injured in the accident.

Train number 832 from Cairo to Aswan, 800 kilometres (480 miles) to the south, was packed with Egyptians heading home for the Eid al-Adha holiday, which celebrates the Muslim pilgrimage, or hajj, to Makkah in Saudi Arabia.

"The fire was started by cooks used by passengers during the journey," Ebeid told reporters on the scene, without saying whether they were cooks fueled by gas or kerosene.

Gas stoves are banned in pilgrims' camps in Makkah and nearby Mina after a fire in 1997 ripped through the tent grounds killing 343 pilgrims and leaving 1,500 more injured.

Ebeid ruled out a technical error for the Al Ayatt tragedy or one made by the train operators.

The train driver was not immediately aware there had been a fire because it erupted in the rear carriages, but reacted well when he realised, the top rescue official said.

"The driver had an excellent

Tk 42 lakh

FROM PAGE 12
point.

In another incident, armed gang took away Taka 8 lakh from the officials of Gulshan Apparels who were on way to office with money withdrawn from a local bank at Dewanhat crossing under Doublenmooring thana in the city at about 2.30 pm yesterday.

Eyewitnesses and police sources said a gang of five halted the officials of the company and snatched Taka 8 lakh from them at gunpoint and left the scene by an autorickshaw.

reaction when he quickly separated the burning carriages from the others before the flames could reach them," said General Ali Abdel Aal, head of the rescue operations.

"His reaction probably saved hundreds of people from a horrible and certain death, as he drove the remainder of the train further on," he added.

Seven carriages were charred completely while nine others were saved by the driver.

Rescue officials said doors were difficult to open and windows hard to escape through because they had metal bars. "It's like a cage, which turned into a burning prison," Abdel Aal said.

Hasina protests arrest of Laxmipur BCL leader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League president and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina has strongly protested the arrest of Laxmipur district BCL general secretary Syed Nurul Azam Babar.

In a statement yesterday, she said the present government has been unleashing torture and repression on the leaders and workers of Awami League across the country.

Sheikh Hasina demanded immediate release of their leaders and workers including Nurul Azam Babar and withdraw the fural cases, filed against them.

ADP chop

FROM PAGE 1
now hopes to strike a balance between its dwindling resource mobilisation and development needs. However, such cuts may affect the growth rate. The Asian Development Bank in its country report has forecast this year's growth to sap to around four to 4.5 per cent from last year's above six per cent.

The latest budget slash however did not live up to the expectations of donors. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had demanded ADP cut of around Tk 6,000 to Tk 7,000 crore to match spending with capacity.

However, the government now feels that such massive trimmings would as well have some political fallout, as the ruling party lawmakers now want loads of funds to keep their constituencies happy.

Earlier in November last, the government embarked upon another pruning exercise but could barely shed Tk 1082 crore from the ADP. But this time, it put in more efforts and still could scale the development budget down by

around 14 per cent.

Fierce Israeli attacks

FROM PAGE 12
Arik, west of Ramallah on the West Bank, opening fire before escaping into Palestinian territory.

Six Israeli soldiers were killed and one injured.

Israel swiftly hit Arafat's Gaza compound, with Palestinian security officials reporting an attempted beach assault by Israeli marines on the building, but there was no independent confirmation.

Minutes after the first strike, an F-16 fighter-bomber blasted Gaza City police headquarters and Apaches helicopters launched five hours of strikes.

They fired 20 missiles at targets across the city, including a civilian building quartering policemen and Arafat's heliport, which was hit in December.

Arafat was not in the building -- he has been confined to Ramallah since December 3, when Israeli helicopters destroyed his helicopters in his Gaza City compound.

Israeli tanks then killed nine Palestinian policemen in clashes on the eastern edge of the West Bank town of Nabulus, Palestinian security sources said.

The tanks bombarded Palestinian checkpoints at the entrances of the city on the eastern and southern borders, killing the policemen, the sources said. At least four more Palestinians were wounded in the clashes.

Clashes continued as Palestinian police and gunmen took to the streets to battle the Israeli tanks posted outside the town.

A Palestinian man died of his wounds after Israel rocketed a

security building in Ramallah, while in a nearby village a Palestinian policeman was killed in clashes with the army, Palestinian security sources said.

Israeli helicopter gunships fired five rockets at Palestinian targets, two near Arafat's office.

The Israeli army blamed its coordinated missile attack against Arafat's office in the Gaza Strip on the Palestinian Authority's "inaction" to quell militant attacks.

"The army will continue to operate against Palestinian terror, in order to secure the lives of the citizens of Israel and soldiers," the army added in a statement.

The army also sealed off all Palestinian towns, cities and villages, and shot one man trying to cross a checkpoint in Ramallah, seriously wounding him.

Sharon advisor Zalmun Shoval said Israel was facing a "total confrontation, since the Palestinian entity wants to supplant the Jewish state, and its leader Yasser Arafat is seeking an escalation knowing full well he cannot conquer us."

The Palestinian leadership was to call for an emergency session of the UN Security Council to address the massive upsurge in the conflict with Israel, top Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rudeina said.

The explosion of violence, veering the Palestinian intifada towards a full-blown guerrilla war, came after a wave of Palestinian suicide attacks, which previous Israeli air and tank strikes had failed to deter.

Hajj pilgrimage begins

FROM PAGE 1
Some pilgrims were riding on bus roofs while traffic jammed the 16 highways linking Makkah with Mina.

As midday shade temperatures hit 33 degrees Celsius (91 Fahrenheit), many on foot carried white umbrellas to shield themselves from the heat. Others sought respite in the warren of tunnels leading to Mina.

Enormous signs lining the roads urged pilgrims to avoid bottle-necks, also informing them they were forbidden to sleep outside the camp area, especially on pavements or bridges.

Pilgrims spend the night under 44,000 fire-proof tents in a campsite with space for 1.5 million people, also boasting 60,000 toilets, hundreds of telephone boxes, running water and electricity.

In line with tradition, Saudi King Fahd, who maintains a palace in Mina, and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz were to travel to the valley to supervise the arrangements, newspapers reported.

Around 1.4 million pilgrims have poured into Saudi Arabia, joining up to one million Saudi and other Muslim pilgrims who live in the kingdom, for the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam.

Haji Minister Iyad Madani said he expected the number of pilgrims this year to exceed last year's figure of two million.

Saudi authorities have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to cut down the risk of disaster during the annual mass gathering of the Muslim faithful.

Thousands of police and civil defence personnel, backed up by nine helicopters, have been mobilised to oversee security.

Security officials have had to turn back 60,000 pilgrims from Makkah in the last three days alone for trying to enter the city illegally, a senior security official said

Gold smuggling case against Ershad: Next hearing Mar 24

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former president Hussain Mohammad Ershad, an accused in a gold smuggling case, appeared in the First Additional Metropolitan sessions judge's court, Dhaka yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Rezaul Islam fixed March 24 for next hearing of the case.

It was alleged that Ershad, while in office, made an attempt to smuggle 3000 tolas of gold bars worth about Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

Later, a smuggling case was filed against Ershad and five others.

Earlier, three prosecution witnesses were cross-examined.

Advocate Sheikh Sirajul Islam appeared in the court on behalf of Ershad.

Ekushey Book Fair ends today

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

Amar Ekushey Book Fair-2002 organised by the Bangla Academy draws to a close today.

The three-week book fair was yesterday day with book enthusiasts, prominent writers and publishers.

This year, the Bangla Academy implemented the ban on polythene bags and prohibited smoking and use of loud speakers at the fair. Huge dust was a nuisance, though.

The fair saw an array of about 1,500 new books, publishers said.

The fair will remain open from 8.00am to 9.00pm today.

Meanwhile, the two-day Bengali calligraphy exhibition by Arham, a young artist, began at the fair ground yesterday.

The academy organised a discussion titled "Fifty years of Amar Ekushey: Reflection of the Language Movement on Bengali Literature".

Prof. Bishwajit Ghosh delivered the keynote speech at the discussion.

Language martyrs

FROM PAGE 1
tions congregated on the wreath-laying venue.

This year's Ekushey bears a special significance, being the golden jubilee of the Language Movement against Pakistani rulers' denial to recognise Bangla, the mother tongue of the majority, as state language.

On this day in 1952, valiant sons made sublime sacrifice by shedding blood to pave the way for the country's independence from Pakistan.



PHOTO: STAR

Terrorists' bullets made holes through the windows of a business concern at Swarighat during a shootout between two groups of gunmen over toll collection in the area yesterday.

Cattle traders

FROM PAGE 1
extortion.

Traders at Gabtali cattle market said prices of sacrificial animals are higher this year than that of previous years due to extortion at different points and increase of transportation cost.

Besides, a large number of traders have not brought their cattle to the city markets this year due to extortion and harassment in the past, market sources said.

Shiekh Asaduzzaman, a trader at Karwan Bazar cattle market, said he had to pay Tk 100 to 200 at least at five points while carrying a truck of cattle from Rajshahi. "Mastaans (musclemen) of lessees of the market took Tk 500 from me for unloading the truck here," he said.

On the eve of the Eid-ul-Azha, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has leased 22 city spots for use as cattle markets. Besides, Gabtali cattle market is a permanent one.

As per rules, lessees of cattle market will get five per cent of the amount for which a sacrificial animal is sold. But traders have to pay a 'certain amount' to local extortionists for unloading each truck of sacrificial animals.

With only 6 lakh land telephones for 13 crore people, Bangladesh offer the lowest telephone access to its people. However, telecom connection fees remain highest in the world while telephone charges are much higher than in most countries.

The T&T however remains a major contributor to the government exchequer. Last year it contributed Tk 1400 crore.

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh is yet to have the universal computer code of its language since the country is not a member of the Unicode Consortium, a body on formation of a global character standard or universal computer code. The Unicode Consortium has successfully created International Standard ISO/IEC 10646 for languages.

Bangla works in the English operating system as a 'mask', and users have already lost Bangla as a language in the system, said Mostofa Jabbar, an ICT expert.

There is no Bangla software available in the rules of Bangla dictionary or according to the rules of Bangla, he added.

"We would not be able to proceed further with Bangla until we could integrate it into operating system," Jabbar said.

He, however, said the use of the language is increasing gradually since over 30 crore people use the language, which is the state language of an independent nation and mother language of a large number of people in West Bengal, India.

Even, many tribal people use the Bangla alphabet in their languages like Ahomia, Monipuri, Naga and Chakma.

The then government in 1987 initiated a move to have the universal computer code for Bangla, but no progress has since been made, sources said.

As a solution to the problem, Bangladesh needs to become a member of Unicode Consortium, Jabbar suggested.

The consortium has developed different languages of the world in a unified language code, since computers deal with numbers. They store letters and other characters by assigning a number to each other. Before invention of Unicode, there were hundreds of encoding in assigning these numbers. Unicode provides a unique number to every character, no matter what the programme is and what the language is.

Global computer giants like Microsoft, Apple, Xerox, HP and IBM ignored inclusion of Bangla in their operating system due to absence of implementation of copyright in the country, said Akhtar Hussain, an ICT expert working at a multinational company.

He said the companies lost their interest in Bangladesh though having a potential market, as people use pirated software rather than buy them.

"If we could implement the copyright laws, the large-scale companies would come forward to adopt Bangla in the operating system," Jabbar said.

He said the implementation of Unicode is a problem for Bangla, as the letters in use are not Unicode. So, a combination of Bangla letters and glyphs is a must and a list of

Police asked

FROM PAGE 12
the chair, the meeting suspected ill motives behind the incidents.

At least 55 killings occurred in the capital and its suburban areas during the last 18 days, creating a sense of insecurity among people.

Of the 23 top terrorists whose names were published by the home ministry at least two months back, police could not arrest any.

Discussing the matter, the cabinet committee again ordered police to take all steps to arrest the listed terrorists and their minions who resorted to terrorist acts and extortion in different places in the capital.

To improve the law and order in the country, the meeting asked the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take effective steps and intensify the vigilance by special branch, detective branch and CID.

Police were also asked to ensure security of buyers and sellers at cattle markets and on way to markets and homes ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

The meeting ordered police to ensure security in and around the Central Shaheed Minar, keeping close touch with the Dhaka University