

## Victory Day today

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much-cherished freedom on December 16, 1971.

People will also take a fresh vow on this day to build a prosperous Bangladesh free from the curse of hunger, disparity and exploitation as dreamt by the martyrs.

Today is a public holiday. National flag will be hoisted atop all government, semi-government and important establishments. The day will be heralded by a 31-gun salute at dawn.

Tributes will be paid to the Liberation War heroes by placing wreaths at the National Mausoleum at Savarin the morning today.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

The president in his message extended his deep respects to the martyrs of the liberation war and freedom fighters and congratulated and greeted the countrymen and Bangladeshis living abroad.

He called upon all to make a coordinated effort to achieve a self-reliant economy, alleviate poverty and eradicate illiteracy.

The prime minister made a call for all to join in a new struggle for building 'a terrorism and corruption-free, happy and prosperous society' with the same patriotic zeal with which the nation won the victory in the liberation war.

Sheikh Hasina was critical of the government in her Victory Day message. She said, "... the BNP-Jamaat coalition government has come to power through implementation of a blueprint in connivance with the killers of '71 and '73."

On December 16, 1971, chief of 93,000-men strong Pakistani occupation forces General AK Niazi surrendered to a Bangladesh-India joint command at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka following its defeat to the Bengali Mukti Bahini (guerrilla forces) in the nine-month war.

The Pakistani army earlier on March 26 indulged in the cruellest carnage committed in the annals of human civilisation by killing at will the freedom-loving unarmed Bengali people in the then East Pakistan.

On the occasion of the Victory Day, special prayers will be offered at

## Ministers

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days, however took another three months.

But the committee was supposed to submit its report on the bill yesterday, which it failed to do for not being able to meet on the issue.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Law Minister Moudud Ahmed met yesterday to finalise the amendments to the bill.

Under its extended jurisdiction, the commission would be able to implicate accomplices of a corrupt person in the case.

The commission will also be able to pursue cases relating to customs, excise, banking and foreign exchange dealings, which are now being dealt by the anti-corruption bureau.

## I'm Saddam...

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regards -- 'President Bush sends his regards'.

When darkness fell, the Americans moved into position, 600 of them, from infantrymen to elite special forces. Their target: two houses in this rural village of orange, lemon and palm groves. Someone big was inside, they were told.

But when they struck, they found nothing.

Then they spotted two men running away from a small walled compound in the trees. Inside, in front of a mud-brick hut, the troops pulled back a carpet on the ground, cleared away the dirt and revealed a Styrofoam panel. Underneath, a hole led to a tiny chamber, just big enough for a single person to squeeze into.

At first they did not recognize the man hiding inside, with his ratty hair, his wild beard and the pistol cradled in his lap. But when they asked who he was, the bewildered-looking man gave a shocking answer.

He said he was Saddam Hussein. No shots were ever fired.

'Caught like a rat'

"This will be just caught like a rat," said Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division, which led the hunt in the area for one of the world's most wanted men and conducted the raid that caught him. "When you're in the bottom of a hole, you can't fight back."

The farm is near the town of Adwar, nestled among palm trees along the Tigris River just a few miles from Saddam's birthplace, Uja. One of the many palaces built by the dictator is just across the Tigris, and Saddam used to come here to swim.

Adwar is the hometown of one of his most trusted aides, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri.

People in the area are fierce in their support for Saddam. "Saddam Hussein raised us. He's our father," neighbor Sohaby Abdul-Rahman said Sunday.

So U.S. forces had been watching the area for months. Odierno said forces had patrolled the dirt road running alongside the shack and searched the area repeatedly.

Over the past few weeks, as U.S. intelligence agencies began to focus on Saddam's extended family, prisoners captured in raids and intelligence tips began to lead to increasingly precise information, a U.S. official in Washington said on condition of anonymity.

Gradually, CIA and military

mosques, temples, churches and other places of worship seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of the country. Improved diets will be served at hospitals, jails, orphanages, child homes and vagrant centres. Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar will air special programmes and newspapers will bring out special supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

Ruling BNP has planned to celebrate the Victory Day with hoisting of national and party flags at the party offices across the country, placing of wreaths at Savar National Mausoleum and offering wreaths at the graveyard of late president Ziaur Rahman in the morning.

In observance of the day today, Awami League (AL) will hoist national and party flags atop all party offices across the country at 6:30 am.

It will lay wreaths at Savar National Mausoleum at 7:45 am and at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 7:00 am. AL front organisations drew up similar programmes.

The AL will bring out a 'victory procession' from its central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 2:00 pm and hold a programme of gono sangee (songs for the masses) in front of Bangabandhu memorial museum at 6 pm at road No 32, Dhanmondi.

Jatiya Party (Earshad), Jatiya Party (Manju), Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Bangladesh National Awami Party, Samajtantrik Dal of Bangladesh, Jatiya Janata Party, will place wreaths separately at the National Mausoleum in Savar and have chalked out separate programmes to mark the day.

Fifty armed forces officers and personnel have been awarded honorary commission and promoted on the occasion of the Victory Day. Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force have jointly organised an eight-day long military hardware display at the southern end of the old airport at Tejgaon. The display begins today and will remain open for general public from 9 am to 5 pm until December 22.

## Biswa Ijtema from Dec 27

UNB, Tongi

Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation after the Hajj, will be held December 27-29 on the bank of the river Turag in Tongi.

Akheri munajat will be held in the morning on December 29.

Organisers hope that about four million devotees from home and abroad would take part in the Ijtema this year.

A meeting to review progress of arrangements was held at the Ijtema ground yesterday with minister-in-charge of Gazipur district MK Anwar in the chair.

All departments, including Roads and Highways, Public Works, Information, Power, Health and Fire Service, took all possible preparations for smooth holding of the three-day congregation.

analysts narrowed their list of potential sites where Saddam could be hiding, the official said. Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, said U.S. forces questioned "five to 10 members" of a branch of the extended family.

On Saturday, "we got the ultimate information from one of these individuals," Odierno said.

### TOP-SECRET TARGET

The soldiers waited for darkness Saturday, and at about 6 p.m., the forces launched what they called Operation Red Dawn, Sanchez said.

Commanders knew their target "We thought it was Saddam," Odierno said but the soldiers did not.

"We were told that we would be looking for some really big fish nothing more," a soldier who participated in the raid said on condition of anonymity.

At 8 p.m., the soldiers attacked their two objectives but came up empty. Troops spotted two men fleeing from another house nearby, the soldier said, about 200 yards from the original target. The men were arrested.

The troops cordoned off an area of 1½ square miles around the house and began a careful search, Odierno said.

What they found was a small walled compound with a metal lean-to and a mud hut, Sanchez said. Pulling back a rug, they dug down, finding a Styrofoam panel that covered a tiny tunnel, Odierno said. Sanchez called it a "spider hole."

"The spider hole is about 6 to 8 feet deep and allows enough space for a person to lie down inside of it," Sanchez said. He showed video images of an air duct and a ventilation fan.

Insidely Saddam, wearing a long salt-and-pepper beard and disheveled hair. He had a pistol on his lap, Odierno said, but he did not move to use it. When asked about his identity, the former dictator confirmed that he was Saddam, Odierno said.

Soldiers searched the hut, which was made up of a bedroom and a kitchen. The soldier who participated in the raid described it as "just two rooms and a sink, there was one bed and one chair and some clothes and that's about it." Soldiers seized two rifles, a pistol, a taxi and \$750,000 in U.S. currency in a suitcase.

"We didn't stay there long. It smelled really bad," the soldier said. "It looked more like a garage than a proper house."

## HC asks govt not to evict Noakhali char landless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court Division bench yesterday directed the government not to harass or evict for the next two weeks the landless people from the government or khas land of char areas in Noakhali.

The Division bench comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Syed Refat Ahmed gave the directive against a letter issued by the Ministry of Land declaring 11955.59 acres of khas char land in Noakhali as shrimp mahals (hatcheries).

The court also issued a rule nisi calling upon the respondents to show cause as to why the impugned declaration of shrimp mahals by the letter issued on May 5 would not be declared illegal and why the respondents should not be directed to allot the area as listed in favour of landless people.

Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, a non-governmental organisation, filed a petition in this connection yesterday before the High Court.

## PM

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tury towards humanity. They lack sympathy and services for the distressed. And that's why a resurgence of humanity has become imperative in today's world," she told the function.

Later, she handed over the wheelchairs among some of the physically challenged and talked with them. She also donated money to some of them.

## Maid tortured

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recruited.

The sufferings of Liza scared Rashida into leaving the job the same day, but made her decide to rescue the girl, her daughter's age.

Rashida informed police who rescued the girl Sunday night and kept her in custody of Abul Hossain, a neighbour.

Liza was running temperature all night and rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday morning, Abul said.

Later in the day, he was taken to Kotwali Police Station where she told law enforcers and journalists about her life and tribulations in dread-inspiring confines.

A case was filed, but Shilpi and her husband fled home before police could arrest them.

The neighbours accused Baker and Shilpi of torturing some other maids in similar fashion and demanded punishment to them.

## Badruddoza

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floor of KC Memorial Clinic at 35 Surahwardy Avenue and "will start functioning" following a Victory Day milad mahfil there after Asr prayers, said a press release yesterday.

Other than B Chowdhury's family members and well-wishers, only journalists were invited to the opening ceremony, it said.

The office is aimed at helping cross-sections of people exchange opinions with the former president, it added.

At an iftar party on November 22, B Chowdhury formally announced his plan to mobilise people of all shades of opinion on a single platform to work out a solution to national problems.

However, some close aides to the former president said setting up of the new office was part of the groundwork for the launching of a political party.

## Nepalese PM

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announcement said yesterday.

This will be the first high-level visit from Nepal to Bangladesh since the assumption of office by the four-party coalition government in October 2001.

## Whereabouts

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The US-based CNN, monitored in London, said "Saddam Hussein is being held in a US installation in Qatar."

"There is no truth to this news. Saddam is still in Iraq. Saddam will be put on trial in Baghdad in an Iraqi court that will be fair," Muwafiq al-Rubaiey, a member of Iraq's Governing Council, told Dubai-based Al Arabiya television.

A senior Qatari official said: "It is very unlikely that Saddam would be brought to Qatar...I am not aware of any developments on this front."

The US commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, declined comment on Saddam's whereabouts.

"He's being held at an undisclosed location where we've made all the provisions to ensure his health is maintained, we keep him safe and we make sure we are getting from him the information that will be necessary for us to continue the mission we've been assigned here," Sanchez told CNN.

## Saddam interrogated

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Saddam replied, "If I drink water I will have to go to the bathroom and how can I use the bathroom when my people are in bondage?"

The interrogators also asked Saddam if he knew about the location of Captain Scott Speicher, a US pilot who went missing during the first Gulf War. "No," replied the former Iraqi president, "we have never kept any prisoners. I have never known what happened."

Saddam was also asked whether Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. "No, of course not," he replied, according to the official, "the US dreamed them up itself to have a reason to go to war with us."

The interrogator continued along this line, said the official, asking: "If you had no weapons of mass destruction then why not let the UN inspectors into your facilities?" Saddam's reply: "We didn't want them to go into the presidential areas and intrude on our privacy."

"The world is crazy," said Mowaffak al-Rubaie, a Governing Council member in the room.

"I was in his torture chamber in 1979, and now he was sitting there, powerless in front of me without anybody stopping me from doing anything to him. Just imagine. We were arguing, and he was using very foul language."

The carefully managed event gave the four men who had spent decades opposing the ruler they regard as an oppressor of their country a rare chance to confront him.

Ahmad Chalabi, a council member and head of the Iraqi National Congress who was also in the room, said: "He was quite lucid. He had command of his faculties. He would not apologise to the Iraqi people. He did not deny any of the crimes he was confronted with having done. He tried to justify them."

After Saddam's capture in an eight-foot-deep hole that one council member said was filled with "rats and mice," the four leaders were taken by helicopter to a military base, at a location they would not disclose.

In addition to Rubaie and Chalabi, two others were aboard: Adnan Pachachi, a council member who was the foreign minister before Saddam came to power, and Adel Abdel Mahdi, who represents the Shiite religious body, the

Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

Two American leaders in Iraq were there too: L. Paul Bremer III, the American civilian administrator of Iraq; and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top military commander in Iraq.

In the small room, Saddam turned to Pachachi and said: "You were the foreign minister of Iraq. What are you doing with these people?"

Rubaie said he had asked the first question which, he said, was met with a brutal and dismissive joke. He had asked why Saddam had killed two leading Shiite clerics, Ayatollah Muhammad Bakr al-Sadr in 1980 and Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr in 1999.

Saddam replied, "As sidr or ar rijl?" That translates as: "The chest or the foot?" The word "sidr" means "chest" in Arabic.

The men then asked Saddam about events in his nearly 35 years in power that officials in the US and elsewhere cite in accusing the former ruler.

They cited these examples:

About the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in the northern Iraqi town of Halabja in 1988, in which an estimated 5,000 people were killed, Saddam said that was the work of Iran -- at war with Iraq at the time.

On the mass graves of tens of thousands of Iraqis uncovered since Saddam was toppled from power in the American-led offensive this spring, Rubaie quoted Saddam as answering: "Ask their relatives. They were thieves, and they ran away from the battlefields with Iran and from the battlefields of Kuwait."

Asked why he invaded Kuwait in 1990, provoking the American-led assault on Iraq the next year, he said Kuwait was rightfully a part of Iraq.

"He was not remorseful at all," Chalabi said, adding: "It was clear he was a complete narcissist who was incapable of showing remorse or sympathy to other human beings."

Chalabi said Saddam had also suggested that he was behind the recent wave of attacks against American soldiers in Iraq since his defeat.

"I gave a speech, and I said the Americans can come to Iraq but they can't occupy it and rule it,"

## A Dane's own war

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founding a platform, 'Action Bangladesh', in Denmark, during the war to stop the foreign aid to Pakistan. They also wanted the Danish government to recognise Bangladesh after its independence by writing to all members of their parliament.

Westergaard sat for the interview with The Daily Star in off-white block print cotton sari at Ambrosia, a guesthouse in Dhanmondi, Tuesday last.

A group of foreign citizens of different professions were stranded at the Intercontinental Hotel (now Dhaka Sheraton Hotel) in the early days of the war. The Pakistani army forced the foreign journalists to leave the country during the curfew after the March 25 massacre. Only three journalists were able to stay there. As Westergaard was not a journalist, she got more opportunities to observe the first days of the war for freedom.

"I came to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) for the second time in February 1971 to start the field-work for my PhD. I went to a village in Comilla for the study. Then came the Historical March 7. After the speech of Sheikh Mujib (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman), we came back to Dhaka. My foreign colleagues I was working with were back then too."

"I was a researcher in political science. I knew that was an important moment for me."

"On the ninth or 10th (March) I checked in the Intercontinental. Almost every evening, some journalists and I used to go to Dhanmondi 32 to listen to Sheikh Mujib. He used to come to the terrace to tell something. We had talks and tried to find out what was going on. I walked with Bangalee demonstrators to watch out."

"On the evening of March 25, we went to the house of Sheikh Mujib but he did not come onto the veranda. Somebody handed out some pamphlets and things seemed very strange. I went back to the hotel with some friends. That evening we thought it would not be a good idea being out and we went back to the hotel."

"We were sitting in the hotel. Suddenly, the lobby was full of soldiers ... Pakistani soldiers. We were a little scared seeing them in the lobby. The soldiers were also all over the city. But we did not expect the city to burn in a couple of hours," said Westergaard, who can speak Bangla a little.

"Toward midnight, we went to the rooftop of the hotel. We heard all sorts of fire. We could see some buildings -- one of them housing a newspaper office -- burning. We could also see down on Old Dhaka. It was burning too. That was the place where the Hindus were living. Lots of flames shot out into the dark sky."

"Many journalists with me had been to Vietnam before and covered the war. From Time

Magazine, Le Monde and Newsweek -- I cannot remember them all. They could say how far the shooting took place. The journalists wanted to file reports, but all phone lines were snapped. Nothing worked," she said.

"At the Intercontinental, I got to know what a bar means! Because all journalists would stay there, talking and exchanging what they had heard all day. I as a researcher was sitting there, with my long ears!"

The Pakistani army imposed a 48-hour curfew after the March 25 massacre. Before the curfew was lifted, the foreign journalists were asked to leave the country, but two or three, including a photographer, stayed back, Westergaard said.

Soon after the curfew was lifted, the photographer escaped and crossed into India. The cook at the Intercontinental had baked bread for him and stashed film rolls inside the loaves of bread to get them out of Bangladesh, she recalled.

"Every night I went to my room and wrote my diary for hours. I still have the diary (in Danish) in Copenhagen. Those days in the hotel, we could listen to radio. One of the foreigners had a radio. For a week, Bangladesh had always been the first issue in news. Almost all foreigners staying in the hotel were for the Bangladeshis at the time."

"I came out of the hotel on March 28 and went to Dhaka University. We knew the Pakistani occupation forces had killed many students, many intellectuals. I saw many lying dead on the lawn of the Iqbal Hall. I also went to the Newmarket and saw lots of things bombarded."

"All of us knew the Pakistani army was killing Bangladeshis overnight, but there was nothing I could do. None of my friends would come anywhere to the hotel to visit me, because they were scared. I could not move alone in the city. There was no scope for staying."

"On April 4, I decided to leave. I packed up and went to the airport on my own. We did not have an embassy of Denmark I could go to. But I knew there would be flights leaving for Karachi every day. Then I met a UN group, which was being evacuated. They took me along. Rumours trickled in that there would not be enough space aboard. I made sure that I was the first to the flight."

"I collected all newspapers of March and I was carrying them with me. But at the Karachi airport, the Pakistani troops were making sure that nobody carried any document or notes, newspaper and film while leaving Pakistan. I told them I was a UN official and could manage to take my luggage without check," said Westergaard with a smile.

Back in Copenhagen, she came to know Bangladesh became independent.

Chalabi again quoted Saddam as saying.

"I said I would fight them with pistols, and I have," Saddam told the interrogator.

At a news conference on Sunday evening, Pachachi said Saddam had tried to justify himself by saying Iraqis needed a tough ruler.

He tried to justify his crimes by saying that he was a just but firm ruler, Pachachi said, adding: "Of course our answer was he was an unjust ruler responsible for the deaths of thousands of people."

Throughout the meeting, Saddam was calm but often used foul language. Pachachi said he looked "tired and haggard."

Bremer and General Sanchez, the interrogators said, did not speak, although Chalabi said Saddam was "deferential and respectful to the Americans."

"You can conclude from that some aspect that he was reconciled to his situation," he said.

"The most important fact: Had the roles been reversed, he would have torn us apart and cut us into small pieces after torture," Chalabi said. "This contrast was paramount in my mind, how we treated him and how he would have treated us."

Rubaie said: "One thing which is very important is that this man had with him underground when they arrested him two AK-47s and did not shoot one bullet."

"You keep on saying that you are a brave man and a proud Arab. When they arrested you why didn't you shoot one bullet? You are a coward," Rubaie told Saddam.

"And he started to use very colourful language," he said. "Basically he used all his French."

"I was so angry because this guy has caused so much damage," Rubaie added. "He has ruined the whole country. He has ruined 25 million people."

"And I have to confess that the last word was for me," he continued.

"I was the last to leave the room and I said, 'May God curse you. Tell me, when are you going to be accountable to God and the day of judgement? What are you going to tell him about Halabja and the mass graves, the Iran-Iraq war, thousands and thousands executed? What are you going to tell God? He was exercising his French language.'"

## Saddam's status

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partners after thorough legal analysis of the situation.

"Those are judgements that will be made by lawyers as we go along," Rumsfeld said on CBS's "60 Minutes" programme.

He assured that the former president's "treatment will be governed by the Geneva Conventions," adding that "he will be accorded the privileges as if he were a prisoner of war."

The protections demanded by the Geneva Conventions are summed up in Article 13 of the Third Convention:

"Prisoners must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence and intimidation and against insults and public curiosity."

The last prohibition is often taken to mean that no television pictures of prisoners should be taken. This provision is not clear, however, and the US presumably did not consider it relevant when Saddam was pictured having his medical examination after capture.

Rumsfeld's comments raised questions about whether US intelligence agencies will be able to mine Saddam Hussein for information because under the Geneva Conventions, he is obligated to give his captors only his name, date of birth, rank and regimental serial number.

Under the accords, every captured fighter is entitled to humane treatment, including shelter, clothing, food and medical attention.

Actions that could be seen as "humiliating and degrading" to a prisoner are not allowed.

Even those suspected of war crimes cannot be subjected to torture or corporal punishment.

The Americans will also try to question their prisoner. Saddam has already been seen by members of the Governing Council whom he called "thieves" so his attitude may be stubborn. The Geneva Convention would not permit pressure to be put upon him.

## 8 Iraqi cops

**FROM PAGE 1**

Earlier yesterday, seven officers were wounded when another car bomb exploded in the western Ameriyah neighborhood just after 8:00 am.

That attack was partially foiled by Iraqi police and US Military Police who fired on a second explosives-packed vehicle and prevented it from ramming the police station and detonating, said US Army Brig. Gen. Mark Hertling, of the 1st Armored Division.

A would-be suicide bomber in the second run off, abandoning the vehicle without detonating it, Hertling said. The man was later captured, said US Army Capt. Brad Loudon.

The car's 250 kilograms (550