

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 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 6:30am.

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

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 '75."

On December 16, 1971, chief of 93,000-men strong Pakistani occupation forces General AK Nizam surrendered to a Bangladeshi-Indian 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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was -- '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 raty 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. Noshots were ever-fired.

'Caught like a rat'

He was just caught like a rat," said Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierro, 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 Sohayb Abdul-Rahman said Sunday.

U.S. forces had been watching the area for months. Odierro 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

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.

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

PM

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duty 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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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.

A meeting to review progress of arrangements was held at the Jitmaa 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.

Badruddoza

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floor of KC Memorial Clinic at 35 Surhawary 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.

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

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

"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," Sanchez said. He showed video images of an air duct and a ventilation fan.

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

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?"

Rubaei 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 side or ar ri?" That translates as: "The chest or the foot?" The word "sidi" 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 of Kuwait and from the battlefields of Iraq at the time."

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,"

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."

Rubaei 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 judgments 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:

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 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.

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