

# Hasina, Rehana thank BBC listeners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, two surviving daughters of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have expressed profound gratitude to the nation and millions of BBC listeners for recognising their father as the greatest Bengali ever.

Sheikh Hasina while addressing a *Pahela Baishak* gathering and Sheikh Rehana in her reaction to the UNB gratefully acknowledged the way people saluted Bangabandhu.

A grand procession observing the *Pahela Baishak*, the Bengali New Year, brought out on Wednesday by the main opposition Awami League (AL) and its front organisations eventually turned into a celebrating parade to rejoice the recognition of Bangabandhu as the greatest Bengali of all-time. The gorgeously decorated procession marched through the city streets, from Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka to Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.

When the procession reached Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Sheikh Hasina, AL Chief and also the Opposition Leader, in an emotion-choked voice said, "Sheikh Mujib is the name of a history, an ideal, a noble sacrifice, an independent Bangladesh and a proud nation,"adding that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib earned Bengali the long-cherished independence and thus established it as the proudest

## Stray bullets kill youth, hurt two

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was killed and a woman and a boy were injured as stray bullets hit them when two gangs locked in a gunfight near Gopibagh rail gate yesterday.

Tofazzal, 35, and Parveen, 30, a drug carrier, suffered bullet injuries in their head, while Chand Miah, 8, was bullet-hit in his throat.

The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared Tofazzal dead. Parveen's condition was critical.

"Chand was playing cricket with his friends when a stray bullet hit him and he collapsed on the ground," said Chand's grandfather Abdul Khalek.

Locals said two groups -- one from Balurmath and the other from Gopibagh -- took position near Gopibagh railway line and traded gunshots at about 5:30pm to establish supremacy in the area.

## 53 killed

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adds: Three idyllic villages in Sadar upazila stood in matchwood as one of the giant tornadoes with wind speeds of 120km an hour tore through the area for 20 minutes from 7:45pm, killing 35 people.

The twister, accompanied by hails, flattened about 7,000 houses, levelled trees, knocked down electric poles and rained debris on people running for cover after house collapse.

The dead, largely fatally hit by flying corrugated iron roofs, included Golam Hossain, 30, Sathi, 5, Mukta, 40, Haji Akhtaruddin, 60, Rupchand, 16, Bakul, 25, Faruq, 8, Nur Jahan, 40, Asia, 75, Harun, 10, Alpana, 25, Jaheda, 14, Kajal, 20, Jubed Ali, 22, Noor Jahan, 40, and Adam Khan, 65.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds: At least 18 people, including nine women and three children, were killed and 400 others injured when the tornado ripped through four villages in Haluaghat upazila.

The dead included Aklima, 12, Jinat Ali, 42, his daughter Tahera Khatun, 5, Anju Ara Khatun, Selina Khatun, 30, Mansura, 2, Shila, 4, Banesa, 20, Julmat Ali, 40, Abeng Deo, 35, Selina Azim, 20, Mohila Azim, 40, Pahela Patra, 20, Dr Gazi Shamsul Huda, 30, and Zhiti Kuda, 45.

Police said the violent twister, unheard of in the living memory in the area, razed over 300 houses to the ground in Gazir Bhita, Boalmara, Sumergulia Para and Surjopur villages.

"RUSH RELIEF"

"I have never ever seen such a monster twister rumble through our village," said 60-year-old Abdur Rahim of village Sumergulia.

"Most villagers are living in the open in the wake of the disaster. They are in dire need of food, shelter and medicine. The authorities should rush relief in the flattened villages," a villager said.

Russell Ahmed, a college student of the neighbourhood, said the death count could have climbed higher if people from neighbouring villages did not come to the rescue of the injured.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent adds: A norwester lashed four villages in Rajnagar upazila in the district, leaving 60 people injured and 450 houses damaged.

Over 300 people, injured in the tornadoes, are undergoing treatment in Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and 400 others in Netrakona Sadar Hospital

nation on earth.

"Today history once again established the truth... and proved that history speaks--and speaks the truth," she said.

"Bangabandhu is a name engraved so deep on the heart of every Bengali that it can never be erased as long as independence is there, as long as the Bengali nation is there," Hasina continued.

Yet, she alleged, for the last 29 years anti-liberation elements made futile efforts to blot out the name of Bangabandhu.

Sheikh Rehana, the younger daughter of Bangabandhu, in her reaction to the UNB on Wednesday from London extended her grateful thanks to the BBC listeners for honouring Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the greatest Bengali of all time.

"I am extremely happy... It has proved again that history determines one's place, as one deserves," she said.

Carrying portraits of Bangabandhu and the opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and waving scores of miniature national flags, people in a jubilant mood chanted slogans for Bangabandhu and Sheikh Hasina while elephants, horse-carts decorated in vibrant colours, and vans made the procession look splendid. Wearing paper-caps, many of them exchanged colour to celebrate the BBC listeners' selection.

## 4 of a family drown in Kushiyara river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four members of a family drowned in a boat capsized in the river Kushiyara yesterday.

A motorised boat with about 40 passengers overturned in the river in stormy weather at around 4:00pm when it was sailing towards Hossainpur and Tahipur villages from Balaganj, locals said.

Bashanti Rani Sutradhar, 35, wife of Prabindra Sutradhar of Zahipur village under Rajnagar upazila of Moulvibazar, her daughters Jolly Sutradhar, 7, and seven-month-old Bashanti and their distant relative Prafullabala Sutradhar, 90, drowned in the water. However, other passengers swam ashore, they added.

Locals recovered the bodies of Bashanti, Jolly and Prafullabala, but the seven-month-old girl's body was yet to be traced till 6:00pm, police said.

The family went to Balaganj upazila headquarters to consult a physician there, police added.

## Bagerhat UP chairmen seek security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Some union parishad (UP) chairmen of Bagerhat district yesterday asked the government to ensure security for their lives in the face of recent threats from underground operatives.

Addressing a press briefing in Khulna, Fakir Tarikul Islam, chairman of Shatgambuj UP and president of Bagerhat chapter of National Union Parishad Forum, said development works at 75 unions of the district are being hampered as the chairmen are working under constant threat from local outlaws.

He also criticised the government move to amend the constitution for appointment of civil servants at the UP body after the present chairmen expire their term in office. He also urged the members of parliament to stop interfering into UP affairs.

Fakir also placed their 13-point suggestion for strengthening the local government body. The suggestions include firearms issuing licence for the UP heads, providing them power to lease out local markets, water bodies, ferry ghat to generate more income and amending the UP Ordinance 1983.

Khan Zahid Hasan, chairman of Fakirhat Sadar UP, was also present in the press conference.

## High costs

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The Jetro, which has 76 overseas offices including one in Dhaka, is an organisation of the Japanese government established for promoting trade and investment. It is the 14th survey of Jetro on 'Investment-Related Cost Comparison' in 26 cities of 16 major Asian countries.

According to the results of the survey, Bangladesh is in an advantageous position in respect of cost of gas and office rent. The wage of workers in Dhaka is also the second cheapest after Yangon. But, the salary of the mid-level managers is higher than that not only of Yangon

but also of Shenyang and Chongqing of central China. And the cost of electricity in Dhaka is almost similar to that in Beijing, Seoul and Hanoi.

Analysing the survey findings, Nishikawa says, "The wage of workers in Bangladesh is the second cheapest in Asia. But, a foreign investors considers not only the wage of workers but also the cost of electricity, water, transport, telecommunication, taxation, etc for an overall evaluation before he can make the decision."

Stating that foreign investment is definitely essential for economic development of Bangladesh, Nishikawa prescribes, "For attracting foreign investors to come to Bangladesh without going to China, Vietnam or the Asean countries, it is essential to make the investment climate much more attractive than that prevailing in those countries."

The Jetro representative recommends for the Bangladesh government to take up the following four measures "to make the [country's] investment climate attractive."

Firstly, he suggests to lower those costs found in the survey as comparatively higher than other countries, as "an enterprise will always invest in a country where the return of investment is high."

The second suggestion is for continuity of policy matters. "An investment is always made on long-term considerations and, therefore, it is never desirable that a policy is changed thoughtlessly or a project in progress is suddenly cancelled due to policy change, especially due to the change of power from one political party to another."

The third one is improvement of infrastructural facilities. For example, ensuring a steady supply of electricity at a reduced cost.

The fourth recommendation is for instituting fairness and speed in approvals given by different government departments.

Nishikawa concludes by saying, "We should also remember that attracting foreign investment will involve competition with other Asian countries. The competitors are always earnestly trying among themselves to secure a bigger chunk of the foreign investment by providing special incentives to the potential investors. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh should, of course, study about the investment-related costs and the incentives prevailing in other Asian countries and then create a very attractive investment climate in this country."

## PM

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Khaleda said the members of the armed forces received appreciation from all quarters for their role in relief and rehabilitation work, implementing housing projects, ensuring security of important installations, assisting the civil administration in curbing criminal acts and in the UN peacekeeping missions.

She wished continued success of the 21st Infantry Brigade and hoped that it would be turned into a strong pillar of Bangladesh Armed Forces through hard work, continuous training, patriotism and discipline.

Information Minister Tarikul Islam, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Mosaddak Ali, Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba and Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Fakhru Azam were present.

# Dravid's double ton

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final Test. Imran Farhat was caught in the slips off Laxminpathy Balaji for three, while Taufeeq Umer was given out leg-before to Irfan Pathan after making 13.

Yasir Hameed was unbeaten on eight and nightwatchman Kamran Akmal was on 10 as the hosts faced an uphill task to prevent India from winning their first overseas series since Sri Lanka in 1993 and their maiden one on Pakistan soil.

The arch rivals are locked 1-1 in the three-match rubber, the first between the two countries in Pakistan since 1989.

Dravid, who came to bat on Tuesday evening after opener Virender Sehwag was dismissed off the first ball of the innings, ground the Pakistani attack into the dust for two consecutive days.

He had battled through Wednesday to remain unconquered on 134 and continued in the same vein till an hour before stumps on Thursday to put India in control of the make-or-break Test.

Dravid held vigil for 12 hours and 20 minutes under the hot sun, hitting 34 boundaries and a six, before he was ninth out, bowled by part-timer Imran Farhat attempting an uncharacteristic

## Ex-BDR chief

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profound optimism about assuming power by 2006.While asked about the grounds for such optimism, he said, "I am hopeful because I have seen spontaneous response from the people while visiting 56 districts and around 80 upazilas in the country. I have realised people desperately want a change."

He said his organisation would start functioning straight from a village committee that would step by step lead to the central governing council, directly elected by the people.

Among others, his wife and a younger brother attended the conference.

# BTTB mobile project

FROM PAGE 1

directed, sources said.

Six of the nine members of the CCPP however skipped yesterday's meeting, chaired by Saifur, despite being in the capital, sources said, fuelling controversy and making the project uncertain.

According to yesterday's approval, Siemens of Germany (\$40,887,106) and Huawei of China (\$35,174,291) would jointly complete the project by the year-end. Only last month, the BTTB detected forged documents in Huawei's other telecoms bids. The law stipulates the BTTB revoke all dealings with Huawei.

The BTTB, instead, mysteriously recommended Huawei as its preferred vendor for the multi-million-dollar cellular phone project.

The BTTB did not inform me of any fraudulent act of Huawei," said Post and Telecommunications Minister M Aminul Haque. Secretary Faruk Ahmed Siddiqui also expressed his ignorance about Huawei's fraudulent practice with the BTTB.

The BTTB gave Huawei the go-ahead under pressure from an influential minister's son who unofficially represents the Chinese company, sources pointed out.

The BTTB received bids on April 19, 2003 to add 48,000 phone lines to its existing exchanges at Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. It also received offers to install fresh 62,000 phones in Dhaka and Bogra.

French Alcatel, Swedish Ericsson, Turkish Netas, German Siemens, Indian TCIL and three Chinese vendors Ningbo, Huawei and CNTIC were in the race to seal a deal on these self-financed turnkey projects.

Two separate committees evaluated these vendors' technical bids and unearthed evidences of forgery by Huawei.

This Chinese vendor had provided a certificate in its bids claiming to have supplied 900,000 phones to Telecom Company of Iran (TCI). The certificate has been issued by one Arash Fatourehchi, claiming to be the manager of Design and Planning Department of the TCI.

The BTTB however was told by the TCI's director of Planning and Engineering Affairs that Fatourehchi does not hold any office in the organisation. Later, the BTTB found that Fatourehchi works with Opal Trading Company that deals with decorative stones and mineral powders.

Huawei's another certificate, claiming the supply of telephone exchange to the CTBC of Brazil, was also found fabricated. The BTTB had discovered that Huawei's Brazilian distributor, not

## Bin Laden

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wants war, we are its (war's) sons and whoever wants this truce, here we bring it."

It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the tape broadcast by Dubai-based Al Arabiya and Qatar-based Al Jazeera channels. The CIA has said some previous tapes allegedly by bin Laden were likely to be genuine.

"President (George W.) Bush and leaders in his sphere, big media institutions and the United Nations...all of them are a fatal danger to the world, and the Zionist lobby is their most dangerous and difficult member, and we insist, God willing, on continuing to fight them," the man on the tape said.

He vowed revenge on Israel and the United States for the death of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin, killed last month in Gaza.

reverse sweep.

It was the 31-year-old's third major knock in nine Tests this season following his 222 against New Zealand at Ahmedabad in October and 233 against Australia at Adelaide in December.

## 4 JCD leaders freed after their 'arrest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Motijheel police yesterday allegedly released four Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders of Habibullah Bahar College, two and half hours after they were held on charge of kidnapping and beating a bus driver.

According to sources, led by Al Masum, organising secretary of the college unit JCD, a group of ruling BNP's student wing activists stopped a route No. 10 passenger bus before HR Building in Shantinagar at about 12:00pm.

Forcing passengers down from the vehicle, they took driver Abdur Rashid to their college campus and bashed him, sources added.

Being informed of the incident, a sub-inspector of Motijheel Police Station went to the spot and nabbed JCD leaders Al Masum, Azad, Adnan Rahman and Raihan and later put them behind bars.

Receiving a phone call at about 2:30pm, police freed the four JCD leaders, another source said.

Masum told law enforcers that they confined the driver as the bus hit him Wednesday when he (Masum) was crossing the road in front of the college and the driver sped away with the vehicle.

Rashid was not driving the bus during the incident, but they confined him only to learn who drove it on that day, he added.

Meanwhile, police said they are looking for the driver who hit the JCD leader.

However, the duty officer of Motijheel Police Station said both parties settled the matter within themselves.

the CTBC, had issued the certificate.

The flabbergasted BTTB officials stumbled into further forgery in Huawei's certificates from Russia. For instance, it claims to have supplied more than 480,000 phone lines to Russian operator Svyzinvest. But the BTTB's evaluation committee visited Huawei's website and found it had supplied only 160,000 lines to Svyzinvest.

Huawei also failed to defend such false submissions, prompting both technical evaluation committees to unanimously disqualify Huawei's bids. They also sent reports to higher authorities for further action on February 28, 2004.

The Public Procurement Regulations (PPR) of 2003 prohibits the BTTB from further dealing with a company such as Huawei because of the proof of forgery, sources said.

"So, Huawei does not qualify as BTTB's mobile equipment supplier," observed a source, referring to Regulation 15 of the PPR.

Huawei's forgery however was not discussed in BTTB's April 4 board meeting that endorsed and forwarded the mobile project's purchase proposal to the telecoms ministry.

Sources said the 'higher authorities' had asked the BTTB to revise and resubmit the mobile purchase proposal to the CCPP. Later, the telecoms ministry obtained additional funding from the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) for BTTB's controversial mobile equipment purchase.

Sources said the son of a highly powerful minister has been backing Huawei. He has been reportedly influencing the BTTB management to suppress Huawei's official forgeries in the 48,000- and 62,000- phone line projects to get its mobile deal through.

The authenticity of Huawei's certificate in its mobile bid has also been under question, as BTTB's mobile bid evaluation report says Huawei's certificates are 'deemed fabricated'.

Sources are sceptic about the completion of BTTB's mobile project in time mainly due to interference of the said minister's son.

## Rab

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Tommy Gun, semi-automatic spot rifle and others. Police and coastguard seized 10 truckloads of weapons in over 1,000 wooden boxes during unloading from two vessels at Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited jetty.

Equipped with modern arms now, the Rab members however find it hard to operate with their present mode of communication.

"We are left to operate with our personal mobile phones only. We don't have any exclusive communication system yet," said a Rab official, seeking anonymity. "We are also waiting for a proper office set-up."

Sporting black shirt, trouser and black scarf on the head, around 200 Rab members guarded different venues during Pahela Boishakh in the city.

Earlier on March 26, 40 plain clothed teams of Rab were deployed in 18 police stations in Dhaka. Plain clothed Rab members will operate alongside their colleagues in uniform in different strategic places.

A total of 5,521 members will form seven Rab battalions, of which four will be based in the capital and the rest in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna.

## Desh issue banned

UNB, Dhaka

The government has confiscated April 2 issue of Indian magazine 'Desh' for using indecent words about Hazrat Adam and Eve (peace be on them).

"Import, sale, distribution, republication and preservation of April 2 issue of the Bengali magazine published from India are prohibited," said a government handout yesterday.

It said the government took the decision apprehending that such indecent words about Hazrat Adam and Eve (peace be on them) might create adverse reaction among the Muslim community of the country.

## Probe report

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submit their reports in time.

"If they fail again, I will be compelled to initiate other ways to probe the allegations," Manjur said.

Nadim Mostafa, convenor of the subcommittee on import and distribution of CNG-fuelled vehicles, said he was busy in his constituency in the wake of heightened outlaw violence.

The subcommittee was formed on January 7 after allegations of corruption were raised against Communications Minister Nazmul Huda. The communication minister rejected the allegations.

The subcommittee on illegal resorts near the Jamuna Bridge under Ataur Rahman Khan was formed in December and the subcommittee on allocation of land for setting up CNG-gas stations was constituted on February 14.

Mahmudul Haque Rubel, convenor of the gas station subcommittee that is yet to sit for a meeting, said he received the gazette notification from the parliament secretariat three to four days ago.

He committed to submitting the probe report by the new deadline.

The committee also discussed the activities of Bangladesh Railway asked its authorities to realise over Tk 12,000 crore long outstanding with different organisations.

## 3 Japanese hostages

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their release."

A Japanese Foreign Ministry official confirmed that three hostages had been freed and were safe.

The three Japanese taken hostage last week are Noriaki Imai, 18, who wanted to look into the effects of depleted uranium weapons, freelance journalist Soichiro Koriyama, 32, and aid worker Nahoko Takato, 34. Their captors had threatened to kill them if Japan did not withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Meanwhile, the first secretary of the Iranian embassy in Iraq was gunned down in central Baghdad yesterday by unknown assailants, an Iranian diplomat at the scene told AFP.

"It is the first secretary who was killed. I don't know how it happened, but I know he was on his way to the embassy," said the diplomat who did not wish to be identified.

## Outlaws

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Mahabub said the security of his children, especially on their way to school and back home, was beefed up deploying armed police guards.

The police superintendent, who received death threats from the operatives of the leftist extremists soon after his joining Bagerhat police, seemed undaunted by the threats and said he was determined to continue the special drives in the district.

Bagerhat district has emerged as a hotbed of outlaw violence in recent years where numbers of political leaders and law-enforcers have been killed in the past two years.

## Eight killed

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upazila of Manikganj. The injured were admitted to Uthali Health Complex.

In Saktikira, three people, including a schoolteacher, were killed and 32 injured, 14 of them seriously, in a road accident on Kaliganj-Jijpur road in Kaliganj upazila on Wednesday, according to our correspondent.

The dead are Sristi Dhar, 50, an assistant teacher of Mazhar High School in Kaliganj, Saddam, 14, son of Abdul Kader Gazi of village Narayanpur and Shahida Khatun, 30, of village Batnadanga in Kaliganj.

The seriously injured passengers are undergoing treatment at Kaliganj, Sakhipur, Nalta and Sathkira Sadar hospitals. They are Tayeb gazi, Rabeya Khatun, Monowara Khatun, Samrat Sarkar, Chhanda Sarkar, Sarathi Rani, Rafiqui Islam, Siddique, Liakat Ali, Mahbub, Zakhir Hossain, Laxman Biswas, Ziad Gazi, Saiful, Zahanara and Abdur Rahman.

Police and eyewitnesses said the accident took place at Hazi's intersection when a Kaliganj bound bus from Jijpur skidded off the road and fell into a ditch at about 4:00pm.

BSS adds: a student of Chittagong Government Commerce College was killed and three others were injured in a road mishap at Isphahani railgate near Foy's Lake.

The dead is Tuhin Chowdhury, a student of first year honours in accounting. Police said the mishap took place when a truck hit an autorickshaw in which Tuhin and three others were travelling. The injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

# Pahela Boishakh

FROM PAGE 1

irrespective of religion and age, attired in traditional dresses, thronged *Boishakhi* Melas (fairs) -- showcasing various handicrafts and artefacts of Bengali culture -- in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Colourful rallies, musical programmes, fairs and cake festivals added colour to the day.

Chhayanaut's trademark cultural programme at daybreak at Ramna Park and Mongol *Shovajatra* (rally) with a white pigeon as the symbol of peace brought out by students of Dhaka University's Institute of Fine Arts were the main attraction in the capital.

Law enforcers, aided by the newly raised Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), maintained vigilance to avoid any untoward situation.

From the early morning, thousands of revellers thronged Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Udyan, Central Shaheed Minar, Dhaka University, Shahbag, Dhanmondi Lake and other open spaces. Roads stretching from Matshya Bhavan to Shahbagh to Doel Chattr were made off-limit for all modes of vehicles.

Crowds of people in and around Dhaka University, Ramna and Dhanmondi Lake virtually made the city traffic network collapse. Youths painting their cheeks with Bangladesh's map and emblem lent a special tone to the celebrations.

## 49 outlaws in Natore surrender