

Political parties hail

FROM PAGE 1
Al President Sheikh Hasina hailed the army chief, who said the nation has failed to recognise father of the nation even after 36 years of independence.

"Truth shall prevail and the entire Bangladeshi nation heard these words from Gen Moeen," she told her party leaders and workers on her arrival in Florida from Washington DC on Tuesday evening, as reported by a Washington-based news agency.

Admitting failure on the politicians' part, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil welcomed the army chief's speech, saying that it will inspire the nation.

"This speech will generate hopes in the nation when we have failed to show due respect to father of the nation and national leaders," he said.

Jalil thinks implementation of the army chief's suggestions in his speech can move forward the nation and build a hunger-free, prosperous Bangladesh.

Al presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim said the army chief's speech will uphold the spirit of the Liberation War and strengthen democracy.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon thanked the army chief for his truthful and courageous speech that reminded the people of their duties.

"Distortion of the glorious history of our Liberation War has caused divisions among political

parties and destroyed our achievements," he said, adding that the nation has stepped back from non-communal and democratic process only for this split.

About corruption in politics, Menon said his party has raised its voice against the criminalisation of politics.

He noted that the nation would have to fight against corruption and to remain cautious so this vice does not stage a comeback.

The renowned student leader of the 60s, however, termed "sweeping criticisms" against politicians unfortunate. He said that political activities had been absent for 15 years when corruption and criminalisation got institutional structure. "We all have to fight to get rid of this situation."

ISD president Hasanul Huq Iru also welcomed the army chief's speech, saying that it is self-realisation to honour the great leader, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Iru hoped that the prolonged debate on the glorious history of the Liberation War would end after the army chief's remark, as he paid due respect to all the leaders who had led the nation in the struggle for independence.

He deplored that the history was changed at different times with the changes in power. "For this reason, our young generation has been deprived of knowing the true history," the ISD president said.

Bird flu continues

FROM PAGE 16
said they got instructions from the head office to carry out a survey of birds and chickens within a kilometer radius of the infected farms.

"Our manpower is too limited. We need two more days to complete the survey," he said. After completion of the survey, they will take necessary measures in line with the directions their central office in Dhaka gave them, he added. He however said all the farms around the infected ones are underwatch.

Our correspondent from Gazipur reported that district livestock officials so far carried out surveillance in 434 farms where the number of chickens is 7,20,024. The surveillance team found 25 dead chickens so far.

Bangladesh Poultry Industries Association conducted a workshop on Avian influenza there.

Meanwhile, prices of eggs and chickens are showing signs of normalisation there, the report said adding that the price of a hundred eggs was Tk 340 and a broiler chicken was Tk 75 per kilogram there yesterday.

Our Tanguil correspondent reported that the livestock department of the district kept the poultry farms in 12 upazilas there under close supervision after detection of Bird Flu virus in a farm under Bhupur upazila on Tuesday.

Medical teams led by livestock officials are visiting poultry farms of the district and examining the fowls. But they could not find any more Bird Flu affected poultry farm till filing of this report at 6:30pm.

DLO of Tanguil Dr Abdur Rashid told The Daily Star yesterday that they already opened control rooms in upazilas and in the district head-quarters to prevent an epidemic.

"We have taken measures to prevent spread of the virus," he said.

According to the district livestock department, there are 2,476 poultry farms in 12 upazilas of the district and there is a poultry hatchery under Ghatiai upazila.

Dr Akhil Chandra, upazila livestock officer in Bhupur, told The Daily Star yesterday that they have

kept the Bird Flu affected poultry farms in Routbari village quarantined. "We have taken necessary measures and held motivational programmes among the poultry farm owners in the upazila," he said.

On information, about 2,000 fowls and over 4,000 eggs were buried in presence of representatives from the upazila administration and livestock officials in Routbari village on Tuesday night after Bird Flu Virus had been detected there.

The Narayanganj correspondent reported that about 600 chickens of a poultry farm in Malivita village under Bandar upazila were culled yesterday after being confirmed of Avian Flu infection.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Veterinary Association submitted to the government a six-point charter of preventive measures for consideration including implementation of strict quarantine in affected areas, launching of a massive awareness campaign to ameliorate panic among the people, and providing protective gear to field level workers who are handling poultry. It also sought steps from the government instructing poultry farm owners to use disposable trays for carrying eggs instead of reusable plastic trays.

Under a controversial de-Baathification law, tens of thousands of members of Iraq's former ruling Baath party were stripped of their posts in government, at universities and in business after the 2003 US-led invasion.

The law has been a major source of grievance for the minority Sunnis, who have waged a deadly insurgency against US troops and the Shiite-led American-backed government in Baghdad.

Suicide attack

FROM PAGE 16
road. Parts of what appeared to be the attacker's body were wrapped in a plastic bag, an AFP reporter witnessed.

In the attack, four innocent civilians were martyred and another 12 civilians were wounded. The intelligence director survived the attack," said an intelligence service press statement read over the phone to AFP.

The bomber targeted Kamaludin Khan Achikzay, an intelligence director who was driving to work. Achikzay and his guards escaped the attack, the statement said.

Kabul criminal investigation police chief General Ali Shah Pakhtiwal, speaking from the scene of the attack, blamed the bombing on "enemies of the people."

Afghan officials often use the phrase to refer to Taliban militants who were ousted from power in late 2001 by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and have since waged a bloody insurgency.

Achikzay, a director with the National Directorate of Security -- the Afghan secret service -- was the former intelligence chief of insurgency-hit southern Kandahar province, where the Taliban were spawned.

He is an influential tribal leader in Kandahar and was a former anti-Taliban fighter during the 1980s.

The intelligence service statement said he had recently been following "enemy activities" in Quetta, a southwestern Pakistani city near the Afghan border.

Afghan authorities accuse Pakistan of turning a blind eye to Taliban training and recruitment facilities on its soil. Pakistan has strongly rejected the claims.

On Tuesday, an immigration enforcement spokeswoman said the deportation order remains in force. The spokeswoman refused to say when Mohiuddin, who is being held in Los Angeles, would be forced to leave.

Daily Star

FROM PAGE 16
want to give any money, he gave Tk 10,000 to Ayon. He also added that he informed Rab when Ayon demanded more money from him.

Ayon was in Rab custody until 12:00am and was later handed over to Gulshan police.

WB, UN bodies

FROM PAGE 1
bird flu virus," Dr Duangvadee Sungkholob, representative of the World Health Organisation (WHO), said. "We are also ready to provide support for training health workers so that they can care for the patients, if the flu spreads among human," she added.

The WHO official, the UN resident director, the WB country director and the representatives of other three UN bodies -- Unicef, World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) -- were talking to the reporters after a meeting with the advisers of health and family planning with the Bangladeshi government, she told the press.

United representative Louis Georges Arsenault stressed the role of media in risk communication and urged it not to sensationalise the bird flu issue. "If possible, the television channels should give free airtime for broadcasting correct information to aware the people," he said.

World Bank Country Director Xian Zhu and FAO representative Adriano Spijkers were also present.

Saudi king slams 'illegitimate foreign occupation' of Iraq

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi King Abdullah, whose country is a close US ally, yesterday slammed the "illegitimate foreign occupation" of Iraq in an opening speech to the annual Arab summit in Riyadh.

About corruption in politics, Menon said his party has raised its voice against the criminalisation of politics.

He noted that the nation would have to fight against corruption and to remain cautious so this vice does not stage a comeback.

The army chief reminded the officials of the situation under which emergency was declared on January 11. Hartals and blockades had paralysed the nation.

Economy was jeopardised. Political chaos and disturbances affected normal life and endangered the security.

He also said that Arab nations,

which are planning to revive a five-year-old Middle East peace plan at the summit, would not allow any foreign force to decide the future of the region.

In the past, Saudi leaders

including Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal have often criticised US policy in Iraq but have never

described its presence there as "illegitimate."

If Arab leaders recover trust in each other and regain their credibility, "the winds of hope will blow on the nation, and then, we will not allow forces from outside the region to determine the future of the region, and only the flag of Arabism will be raised on Arab soil," Abdullah said.

Arab foreign ministers meeting

ahead of the summit agreed on

Monday to call for an amendment of Iraq's 2005 constitution to give

Sunni Arabs a greater share of

power in the war-ravaged country and prevent its

subsidy goes to the rich.

The PDB is set to lose over Tk 1,200 crore in the current fiscal because the PDB's average power purchase rate stands at Tk 2.6 per kilowatt-hour while it sells in its final overall to attempted bidders.

The WB notes that there are

1,000 MW of over-priced and under

performing public sector power

plants, another 2,500 MW of plants

remained incomplete due to bad

procurement practices, \$ 1 billion

in un-serviced power sector debt,

at least \$ 150 million are annually

leaked through corruption.

Alan Townsend added that to bail out the power sector from this

situation, the government needs

overall financial restructuring.

The balance sheets should be

restructured to clean up debts that

will never be paid," Townsend

pointed out, "efficiency will have to be improved to ensure 100 percent

collection and zero theft."

Admin working

FROM PAGE 1

He compared present Bangladesh with a derailed train and said the nation needs an efficient administrator to bring it to the right track for ensuring progress and prosperity.

The army chief reminded the officials of the situation under which emergency was declared on January 11. Hartals and blockades had paralysed the nation. Economy was jeopardised. Political chaos and disturbances affected normal life and endangered the security.

He told the officials that the opportunity provided by the emergency should be fully availed of to build a sound base for the posterity. "You must carry out your responsibilities with honesty and sincerity."

Political influence and bribe in recruitment in government offices should be stopped once for all. Hartal and blockades that retarded progress should be totally discarded, he added.

Senior army officers, deputy commissioners, police superintendents and senior officials of various departments were present at the meetings. Senior officials apprised General Moeen the situation prevailing in the districts and also exchanged views.

The army chief had also separate meetings with army personnel deployed in the districts.

Australia surge

FROM PAGE 16

Marlon Samuels (four), also trying to hit McGrath of his renowned accurate length, skied a wild slog high in the air and Andrew Symonds, one of Australia's best fielders, made no mistake with the catch at cover.

Lane pressed on to a 62-ball fifty with seven fours before lofting Hogg for six overlong-off.

Away in Georgetown, South Africa were thriving on 115 for 2 in 22 overs after Charl Langeveldt claimed five wickets to restrict Sri Lanka to 209 all out in their match against South Africa at the Guyana National Stadium.

Captain Greame Smith struck a belligerent 59 off 62 balls that included seven fours and a six, before being stumped by wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara off Muttiah Muralidaran.

Earlier, AB de Villiers was out in the first over off a beauty from left-arm seamer Chaminda Vaas for a duck. Herschelle Gibbs joined one down Jacques Kallis at the crease. Kallis was unbeaten on 39 off 43 balls while Gibbs also raced to 11 off 14 balls.

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Life reeking of toxic

Dhaka residents, and in the upstream not that from the capital, its water is still crystal clear. Many people living in this city still recall with pride that considering the strategic location of this river the Mughals had made Dhaka the capital of the then Bengal in 1610.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), more than 21,000 tonnes of tannery waste flows into the Buriganga alone daily. Illegal structures and encroachments along the banks have narrowed the Buriganga and Turag, adding to the dirt while various watercraft release burnt oil into their waters.

A Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) report on "Study on Waste Management in Dhaka City", there are 6,919 factories around the city, many of those situated just by the rivers around it. These include textile, leather, wood product, chemical, paper, metal and other factories. Many of these discharge their liquid waste directly into the rivers. Moreover, hospitals and private clinics also dump their waste into the rivers.

The level of pollution of their water is so high that aquatic species cannot survive in it. And the situation is getting worse day by day.

A recent World Bank (WB) report contained results of a study by the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) which says dissolved oxygen (DO) level in these rivers fall far below the accepted level during the seven dry months.

The DoE in a report in January said there was no oxygen in the Buriganga water at many points.

It conducted tests at nine points of the river and found level of oxygen 1.8 percent at five points and zero at the other points. The level of oxygen should be at least more than six percent for the survival of aquatics.

At the three points of the Buriganga, the level of oxygen was 3.8 to 4.1 percent.

Moreover, Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), that means acidity, was much higher than the accepted level, the report mentioned.

When contacted, a high official from the DoE said they could not take necessary measures in this regard due to shortage of staffs. Only three of the 207 staffs are entitled to inspect polluter industries.

Back in November 2003, the government had formed a task force to recommend steps to save the rivers around the capital as part of a Tk 4,000 crore project. The task force, comprising officials from four ministries, two directorates and civil society representatives submitted a report. But the matter seems to have ended there.

The Buriganga once was the main source of drinking water for

Poll campaign

FROM PAGE 1

union under Shaghata upazila of

Gaibandha district.

Halima, 40, wife of Azizar Rahman of the same village, also told a similar story.