

Kashmir rebel alliance declares 3-day truce

APP, Srinagar

An alliance of rebel groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir yesterday declared a three-day truce for the upcoming Eid festival, the biggest holiday on the Muslim calendar at the end of Ramadan.

"The unilateral ceasefire by all the militant groups will come into effect from October 12 and last for three days," said the United Jihad Council, an alliance of more than a dozen militant groups based in Pakistani Kashmir.

Id-ul-Fitr, which marks the end of the fasting month, will be celebrated in the divided region on October 13 or 14, depending on when the new moon is

sighted.

"All militants are ordered to respect the collective decision and strictly implement the truce for three days," the council said in a statement to Current News Service.

The statement said the truce was aimed at providing a respite to war-weary residents of Indian Kashmir, where tens of thousands of people have died in nearly two decades of insurgency-related violence.

"We don't want to provide an excuse to Indian troops to create problems for ordinary people in the name of fighting the Mujahedeen (holy warriors)," the council said.



As a part of relief operations of Prime Bank Limited, Wing Commander (Retd) Md Tabarak Hossain Bhuiyan, Senior Vice President and Head of Human Resources Division, hands over a pay order of Tk 20 lakh on behalf of the bank to Major General Syed Fatemey Ahmed Roomy, General Officer Commanding, 66 Infantry Division and Area Commander, Rangpur Area, at his office recently.

Iraq vows to punish Blackwater

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq has vowed to punish US security firm Blackwater after a probe found that its guards were not provoked when they opened "deliberate" fire in Baghdad three weeks ago, killing 17 civilians.

The US embassy was tight-lipped on Monday on whether those involved in the September 16 killings would be handed over for prosecution in a case that has thrown the spotlight on the often controversial work of private security operators in Iraq.

"This and other matters will be discussed by the joint commission as they proceed with their work, (so it is) best not to pre-judge the outcome of their discussions at this point," embassy spokesman Mirembe Nantongo told AFP, referring to a joint Iraq-US inquiry into the shootings.

The Iraqi government said in its report into the killings in Nisour Square released on Sunday that the Blackwater guards were unprovoked when they opened fire and that they should face legal punishment.

"The investigation committee appointed by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki ... has finished its inquiry and has found that there was no evidence that the convoy of Blackwater came under fire directly or indirectly," a government statement said.

"It was not touched even by a stone," it said.

Nantongo said on Monday that another two members of Kennedy's team are expected in Iraq this week and it was not clear when they would complete their task.

"It is still too early to talk about timelines," she said.

Based on Kennedy's initial findings, Rice on Friday tightened control of Blackwater's operations in Iraq, ordering security agents from the State Department to accompany every convoy.

The State Department said on Thursday it had ceded the lead role in the investigation of Blackwater, which is accused of involvement in nearly 200 shootings in Iraq, to the FBI.

Nantongo said a team of FBI investigators had arrived in Baghdad last Thursday and was involved in the investigations.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has also launched a review on his department's use of private security contractors.

Sunday's meeting of the joint commission was co-chaired by Iraqi Defence Minister Abdel Qader Mohammed Jassim and the US embassy's Patricia Butenis.

The commission comprises five embassy representatives, three from the US military and eight Iraqis.

"The two sides agreed to continue their coordination and to complete the process of inquiry in order to prevent the recurrence of any incidents in the future," said a statement from the committee heads.

Employees of the company violated the rules governing use of force by security companies, it said. "They have committed a deliberate crime and should be punished under the law."

It gave the number of dead from the shootings as 17, considerably higher than the previous toll according to which at least 10 people had been killed. The statement said 22 people had been wounded.

The Iraqi government would now take "judicial measures to punish the company," the statement said.

Blackwater, employed to protect US government personnel in Iraq, maintains its men were legitimately responding to an ambush while escorting a US State Department convoy.

The State Department said on Thursday it had ceded the lead role in the investigation of Blackwater, which is accused of involvement in nearly 200 shootings in Iraq, to the FBI.

Nantongo said a team of FBI investigators had arrived in Baghdad last Thursday and was involved in the investigations.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has also launched a review on his department's use of private security contractors.

Sunday's meeting of the joint commission was co-chaired by Iraqi Defence Minister Abdel Qader Mohammed Jassim and the US embassy's Patricia Butenis.

The commission comprises five embassy representatives, three from the US military and eight Iraqis.

"The two sides agreed to continue their coordination and to complete the process of inquiry in order to prevent the recurrence of any incidents in the future," said a statement from the committee heads.

The commission comprises five embassy representatives, three from the US military and eight Iraqis.

"The two sides agreed to continue their coordination and to complete the process of inquiry in order to prevent the recurrence of any incidents in the future," said a statement from the committee heads.

"They speak of alternating power; what does that signify? It shows that they take people for donkeys!" he said.

Scorning at elections, Gaddafi charged that the United States and its regional ally Israel wages wars and "commit crimes against humanity for the sake of elections".

"If the (US) president wants to be re-elected, he has to look for something to do abroad. He may destroy a country in order to win presidential elections. Is this democracy?" he asked.

Gaddafi, in power since September 1969, has no official title in running Libya but is the linchpin of the north African nation's political system based on regional "people's committees".

VOTER ID PROJECT UCBL donates 50 laptop computers

United Commercial Bank Ltd recently donated 50 laptop computers worth about Tk 44 lakh for the Election Commission's Voter ID Programme.

Haji Yunus Ahmed, chairman, Board of Directors, along with Md Jahangir Alam Khan, EC chairman, MA Sabur, director and Hamidul Huq, managing director, handed over the laptop computers to the Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed at Army Headquarters.

UCBL also donated Tk 25 lakh to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund for the flood victims.

Earlier, UCBL also donated Tk 25 lakh for the landslides victims following torrential rain in Chittagong.

Declarations of 8 weeklies, a newspaper cancelled

BSS, Madaripur

The district administration has cancelled declarations of eight weeklies and a daily newspaper for violating the Press and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act of 1973.

The publications are: the daily Maksud, weekly Arial Kha, weekly Madaripur Bani, weekly Madaripur Barta, weekly Shahmadr, weekly Nawroz, weekly Atandra Prohori, weekly Moinakata and weekly Protibha.

At present, a daily newspaper and two weeklies and a monthly are being published from Madaripur. They are: daily Shubono Gram, weekly Bartaman Ishara, weekly Sharifullah and monthly Nobochetona.

Smuggled powdered milk seized, 2 held in Jessore

BSS, Jessore

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized 50 packets of smuggled Indian powdered milk, Tk one lakh and arrested two persons from in front of Akij Filling Station on Jessore-Banapole highway on Sunday.

The arrestees were identified as Ashraful Islam, 35, son of Nurul Islam of Panchbaria village of Sadar upazila and Azizul Islam, 26, son of Ismail Hossain, of Abad Kachua village of the same upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the border guards took position at Lajuni point on Jessore-Banapole highway and at one stage they identified the pick-up van, which was carrying smuggled goods, BDR sources said.

The BDR men gave signal to stop the van but ignoring the signal the driver tried to escape. BDR jawans chased the van and intercepted it in front of Akij Filling Station.

After searching the van, BDR recovered 50 packets of Indian powdered milk and Tk one lakh. They arrested two persons including the driver of the van and also seized the van.

Western democracy a sham for 'donkeys' Gaddafi derides

AFP, Tripoli

Libyan leader Muammer Al Gaddafi derided Western democracy as a "mascarade" during a meeting with officers with whom he overthrew King Idriss in a bloodless coup in 1969.

Criticising Western pluralist democracy and its electoral system, he said "the world is disgusted with parties and elections" which he termed a "mascarade".

"They speak of alternating power; what does that signify? It shows that they take people for donkeys!" he said.

Scorning at elections, Gaddafi charged that the United States and its regional ally Israel wages wars and "commit crimes against humanity for the sake of elections".

"If the (US) president wants to be re-elected, he has to look for something to do abroad. He may destroy a country in order to win presidential elections. Is this democracy?" he asked.

Gaddafi, in power since September 1969, has no official title in running Libya but is the linchpin of the north African nation's political system based on regional "people's committees".



Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed receives one of the 50 laptop computers the United Commercial Bank Ltd donated for the Election Commission's Voter ID Programme at Army Headquarters recently.

Britain to cut Iraq troops to 2,500 by next year: Brown

AFP, London

Britain is to cut its number of troops in Iraq by more than half to 2,500 by next spring, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said yesterday in a long-expected statement to lawmakers.

"We plan for next spring to reduce force numbers in southern Iraq to a figure of 2,500," he said, a week after saying in Baghdad that there would be 1,000 fewer troops in Iraq by the end of the year, down to 4,500.

KASHMIR PROSTITUTION RING Indian court orders new probe

AFP, Srinagar

Indian Kashmir's High Court yesterday asked police to investigate the involvement of top officials, including a state minister, in an alleged prostitution racket.

Authorities uncovered the racket in April last year involving over 40 women and young girls whose clients allegedly included politicians, bureaucrats, security men and businessmen in the conservative Muslim-majority state.

"The high court has asked the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) to further investigate the role of over a dozen top officials, policemen and some civilians in the infamous sex scandal," a High Court official told AFP.

He said the names of these people -- including a state minister, two legislators and three senior police officers -- had figured during earlier investigations but they were never questioned.

The CBI had earlier arrested some 18 people, including two former ministers, top bureaucrats and several security officials. All of them have been granted bail by various courts.

The case came to light when amateur sex films began circulating, and religious and separatist leaders in the state have clamoured for the list of clients and prostitutes to be made public.

In response to the case, the state government said it would introduce legislation making prostitution punishable by life in prison.

Prostitution currently carries a jail term of up to three years for the first offence and up to five years for a second offence under the state's Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act.

Singapore returns to Unesco

AFP, Paris

Singapore returned to Unesco yesterday, 22 years after it walked out with Britain and the United States to protest alleged mismanagement at the UN agency and its political agenda.

Singapore became the 193rd member of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation during a ceremony in London, said a Unesco statement.

Singapore and Britain walked out in 1985, a year after the United States, amid controversy over mismanagement and disagreement over policies pushed by Third World countries that were seen as anti-American.

Britain and the United States rejoined Unesco respectfully in 1997 and 2003. Ipt/cml/boc

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director (passport & accounts), Immigration and Passport Department signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Signing Ceremony

Trust Bank and Immigration and Passport Department signed an agreement regarding passport application processing on October 7 at the conference room of passport directorate. Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, DMD of Trust Bank and Dr Parvin Banu, Deputy Director