

Try war criminals

FROM PAGE 1
The deputy speaker, advisers to the caretaker government, secretaries to the ministries, freedom fighters, and high civil and military officials accompanied the president and the chief adviser.

Thousands of people including leaders of different political parties and members of social and cultural groups, as well as the family members of the martyred intellectuals also visited the memorials in Mirpur and Rayerbazar, and placed wreaths there with due respect.

They also hoisted black flags and kept the national flag at half-mast to commemorate the martyrs.

Major political parties including BNP, AL, Jatiya Party, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, the Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), JSD, and organisations like Bangla Academy, Sammilita Sangkritik Jote and other socio-cultural entities organised various programmes marking the day.

AL demanded immediate setting up of a special tribunal for trial of the war criminals. The demand came from a discussion at its central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital yesterday.

"If the present government does not try the war criminals, then we will try the war criminals after reinstating the Collaborators Act voted to power," said Acting AL President Zillur Rahman. The present government has been apathetic towards the demand for trials of the war criminals, he said asking if there is 'any barrier in trying the war criminals'.

Sector Commanders Forum organised a human chain at Rayerbazar demanding immediate trial of the war criminals, where a rather large number of people joined.

Dhaka University Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz and Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider along with other teachers and students of the university placed wreaths at the memorial in Mirpur.

Muhammad Selim, deputy leader of CPM's parliamentary party in Indian Congress also a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), who has been in Bangladesh for the last few days, also placed wreaths at both memorials in Mirpur and Rayerbazar paying tributes to the martyred intellectuals.

Talking to reporters after placing a floral wreath at the Memorial for Martyred Intellectuals in Mirpur, AL Presidium Member Abdul Razzak said successive governments run or backed by the military facilitated the rehabilitation of war criminals in Bangladesh. He also demanded immediate trial of the war criminals.

BDB president AQM

Badruddoza Chowdhury said the state must take the initiative for trying the war criminals. No government until now took any initiative to try the war criminals, he said adding, previous governments rather made the war criminals ministers and gave them a chance to adorn their cars with the national flag.

Dhaka Reporters' Unity, the Dhaka Union of Journalists, Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangshad, Shaheed Shahidullah Kaiser Srity Sangshad, Amra Muktiyoddhar Santan, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Left Democratic Front, Bangladesh Krishak Samik Mukti Andolon, Bangladesh Juba Moitri, Bangabandhu Sangkritik Jote, Bangabandhu Sainik League, Samajtantrik Mohila Forum, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangladesh Mohila AL, Sromojibi Mukti Andolon, and NAP-Communist Party-Chhatra Union Guerrilla Bahini O Muktiyoddha Punarmiloni Prosti Committee also placed wreaths at both memorials.

Newspapers brought out special supplements highlighting the significance of the day while Bangladesh Radio, Bangladesh Television and different private television channels broadcasted special programmes.

Fire fighters

FROM PAGE 1
of our teams, however, will stay here."

An engineer of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) said, "Over 200 workers have been removing the debris from inside the collapsed building. If any more body is found, we will recover it."

Surviving labourers and relatives of the missing ones, who have been staying around the Rangs building since its collapse, expressed anger over the delay in recovery work being conducted by the Rajuk, the contractor companies hired by Rajuk for the demolition work and the government.

The labourers alleged that the Rajuk and its contractor companies have not yet fully paid them. They said they will stage a demonstration in their locality in protest against the delay. Md Alauddin, son of Ruhul Amin who died in the accident, said, "None of the authorities are talking to us regarding the recovery of the seven other missing bodies and they are insisting us to take the recovered bodies home."

Mokaddes Hossain, an old man from Madhukhali of Faridpur, came to Dhaka to take the bodies of the ill-fated labourers who were his neighbours. He said, "As all of them died in the same accident, we want to take the bodies of all of them together and bury them."

Today's talks

FROM PAGE 1
extent that simple administrative processes are not happening."

"Slowing down is also a problem," he told The Daily Star in an interview, where he said the WB will stress the matter in today's discussions with the government high officials, including his meeting with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

Patel mentioned reports of donors having to carry files and documents from one ministry to another in order to get things done quickly.

In his meeting with the government officials, which will focus largely on rehabilitation projects in the flood and cyclone aftermath and strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, Patel will also discuss WB's support plans.

The WB feels that the government's massive southern coast rehabilitation and protection project will require public support in the long run, as the project is likely to run beyond the expected election by 2008-end.

"The national consensus can put pressure for a more time-bound action plan that would not be deflected by the current administration's concerns with holding elections later this year," said WB Country Director Xian Zhu, who was also present during the interview.

With WB already providing above \$300 million for post-flood budget support and rehabilitation programs, it plans to work closely with the government to jointly assess the damages caused by cyclone Sidr.

He said WB has already pledged \$100 million for short- and medium-term relief and rehabilitation programmes, including cash grants for severely affected households and for food inputs.

"This will be followed by another \$250 million for post-cyclone recovery, especially livelihood rehabilitation," he said.

But, Patel added, more funds will come in for medium- and long-term rehabilitation in the Sidr-affected areas, focusing on mitigation, repairs and coastal protection.

SSKOP welcomes

FROM PAGE 16
through forming a review committee by December 16.

SSKOP leaders Mozammel Haque, Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Fazle Islam, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Md Motiur Rahman Talukder, Abul Hashem, Md Khairul Islam, Altaf Mahmud, Omar Farukh, Azizul Haque Banna and Sardar Farid Ahmad issued the statement.

The government in a hand out on Thursday said it would actively consider forming a review committee on the Sixth Wage Board Award if any appeal comes from journalists, press workers and employees of the newspaper industry.

Bali talks

FROM PAGE 16
"We are at a very interesting moment and we are sure we are able to reach an agreement, not only to launch a process but also to show that all parties are ambitious to tackle climate change," Gabriel told reporters.

The 12-day conference on the Indonesian resort island of Bali is scheduled to officially close at 6:00 pm but the annual climate meets typically over-run by hours, and sometimes a day or more.

Delegates said that Indonesia, the host of the talks which is eager for some sort of agreement, offered a compromise that would remove the 25-40 percent figure but call on all nations to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

"Do not force everything to be settled in Bali," Indonesian delegation head Heli Salim said, noting that the negotiations launched by Bali would give two years in which to agree on sticking points.

"Most of the issues are on track." The draft text was welcomed by Japan, which is the host nation of the Kyoto Protocol but is struggling to meet its own commitments as its economy recovers from recession.

"This is a proposal we can compromise on," Japanese Environment Minister Ichiro Kamoshita said.

James Leape, head of the WWF conservation group, said he was hopeful that Japan and other nations were drawing a distance with the Bush administration, which would pressure the US delegation to compromise.

"The United States does not want to be seen as the one that is stopping the world from an agreement," Leape said.

Haji flights

FROM PAGE 1
At the beginning of haji flights, private haj agencies could not provide adequate number of pilgrims to Biman, which led Biman to cancel 13 of its haji flights that could have taken a total of 5,000 people to Jeddah.

The cancelling of the haji flights brought uncertainty to about 3,000 pilgrims' making it to Makkah.

Biman, however, managed to get six extra slots from the Civil Aviation Authority of Saudi Arabia that resolved the issue.

Meanwhile, an eight-member haji delegation led by Religious Affairs Adviser Maj Gen (ret) ASM Matir Rahman left Dhaka for Jeddah Thursday.

Earlier, a 60-member medical team went to Jeddah to look after the pilgrims.

The haji will be performed on December 18 this year.

Democracy a must

FROM PAGE 1
freedom of the press and autonomy of state-run radio and television only when they are in opposition. But as soon as they assume power they start acting the way their predecessor had acted, they noted.

Asked if there is any pressure from the present government, The Daily Star Editor Mahtuz Anam said, "There is some pressure on the media. But I think it is temporary."

"Besides, we are waiting for an election by the end of 2008 and you could say hopes for a free and fair election are the reason why we are tolerating the pressure and not complaining about the situation."

Queried why the news of Betar and Bangladesh Television (BTV) lacks objectivity, the panel discussants said the government use the state-run media to its advantage and so objective news cannot be expected as long as the organisations remain under government control.

Former secretary Asaf-Ud-Daula, who headed a commission set up by the last Awami League (AL) government for autonomy of BTV and Betar, said he had told the then prime minister that he did not want to lead a commission doomed to fail.

"She then promised that the commission's recommendations would be implemented to the letter. But later as the govern-

Hizbut Tawhid

FROM PAGE 1
Habibur Rahman, 39, of Betagi village under Patuakhali Sadar upazila. Sirajul Islam Mintu, 24, of Rajapur village under Rupsha upazila of Khulna. Nasir Uddin Ahmad, 29, of Kumarkhali, Kushtia.

Nahid Khan, 38, of Adua Para village under Kushtia Sadar upazila, Md Sajjad Hossain, 27, of Korerbagh village under Lauhajang upazila, Munshiganj, and Aminul Islam, 28, of Srinagar upazila of Munshiganj.

Of them, three were arrested from Kochua Paurasava area, three from Tetoiya village and the rest from Ghaghra village.

It was learnt that the arrestees are the disciples of Bayezid Khan Pannoi of Tangail.

Paharpur terracota

FROM PAGE 1
Pala Dynasty, the Paharpur Bihar, one of the most important archaeological sites in the country, still remains neglected and uncared for, leaving it to the mercy of vandals and thieves who are prying terracotta plaques off the walls or stealing other priceless relics from the site.

High salinity coupled with absence of proper maintenance has already ruined a large number of the terracotta plaques, said Shafiqul Alam, director of the Department of Archaeology.

Consultants are currently working to protect the structure from salinity, Alam said adding that a project proposal, submitted a year ago to the authorities concerned, to protect the antiques and the ancient monument is still pending for approval.

A large number of beautiful terracotta plaques, not less than 500, have been destroyed or stolen, said an archaeology department official. Although over 1,800 terracotta plaques are still in place, most of them are in dilapidated condition, he added.

Mahabub-Ul-Alam, former custodian of the site, said at least 500 terracotta plaques were pre-

served in a storage area to save them from salinity.

However, high salinity and water-logging inside the central area of the structure have caused parts of the major walls of the structure to collapse, said a high official at the Department of Archaeology.

A publication of the archaeology department mentioned that there used to be a network of 22 channels that drained the surface or rainwater out of the site. In course of time, these channels had been clogged up or do not exist any longer.

The drainage system has gone out of order and the higher elevation of surrounding areas is adding to the water-logging problem, said another archaeology department official.

Thieves have stolen many of the ornamental terracotta plaques from the walls and some of those have been damaged due to high salinity, heavy rainfall and damp climate during the last few years, said the director of the archaeology department.

Bricks in the walls are also disappearing or decaying over time due to the same reasons, according to the officials.

contributed from South Korea for the Sidr victims.

The WFP will use the South Korean funds to distribute rice in combination with other food items resourced by donors for poor people devastated in the cyclone, a press release said.

Suk-Bum Park, the ambassador of South Korea, recently stated: "The Republic of Korea as a major donor nation hopes that this contribution to WFP's Emergency Operations will help to alleviate the food insecurity situation and help to restore livelihoods for 2.2 million people in the cyclone-stricken areas."

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation signed on December 13 the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation will provide \$1.72 million to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for early recovery of the cyclone victims.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation signed another agreement with Food and Agriculture Organisation to provide assistance worth \$1.88 million for post-flood rehabilitation programmes.

Both the projects will be implemented in close cooperation with food and disaster management, agriculture and fisheries and livestock ministries.

With these donations, the total amount of aid from Switzerland stands at \$5.5 million. "More Swiss assistance for recovery and rehabilitation is expected to be provided in 2008 in the cyclone-affected areas," the embassy release said.

Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) yesterday welcomed a \$300,000

Hundreds crowd freed Brac man's house

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Hundreds of villagers thronged the home of Brac official Noor Islam in Jessore on Thursday night as he returned home after being released by his Afghan abductors after 82 days.

As Noor arrived at his home in Jamdia village under Bagharpara upazila, his mother Zohura Begum hugged her beloved son and cried out of joy for getting him back.

Noor's wife Anwara Parvin Rani and son Arian were with him.

Noor Islam, 37, said, "Even after my release, I could not bear the burden of waiting before I was onboard a plane to my country."

The Brac official was abducted while on duty in Afghanistan on September 15. He was released on December 7 and brought back to Bangladesh under an arrangement of the Brac.

LDCs should

FROM PAGE 16
for development is not an option, but a necessity."

He was delivering his opening plenary speech at the daylong WIPO High-Level Forum held in Geneva on Wednesday.

He called upon the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to dedicate more financial and human resources in assisting LDCs constitute a central pillar of the body's activity, according to a press release received from Geneva.

WIPO Director General Kamil Idris inaugurated the Forum.

Ministers from Cambodia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lesotho, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda attended the Forum.

As the Global Coordinator of the LDCs, Bangladesh highlighted the potential of intellectual property for accelerating economic development.

At the forum, Debapriya placed a suggestion for a "one country, one product" scheme be initiated where WIPO and the private sector would come together to identify and develop one distinct product from each of the LDCs and would bring it to the international market.

Fear of loan

FROM PAGE 16
at least 50 cyclone shelters on the islands. They also emphasised the need for early signalling technology for natural calamities like cyclones.

Around 30,000 fishermen from different districts, who live in these chars for their trade, now want the interests against their loans from different NGOs to be written off. Many fishermen told The Daily Star that it will be very tough for them to pay their loans with the interests this year.

Abdur Razzak Gazi, 60, took Tk 30,000 loan from a local trader in Khulna on condition that he will pay Tk 15,000 interest after the five-month fishing season from October to March. Razzak is now worried about how he will pay the loan and the interest as he lost a large amount of fish in the cyclone.

But Razzak, like many others, is hopeful about catching more fish and overcoming the loss.

At least 90 percent fishermen come to these islands for fishing with money loaned from traders.

Fish traders in these chars, however, anticipated that they will face a loss of Tk 35-50 crore this year as Sidr washed away fish worth several crore taka.

Several thousand fishermen have still remained missing since the cyclone hit the coastal regions while many have not come for fishing after witnessing the devastation of Sidr, they said.

There are 200-250 holdings on these chars that control the fishing business and each holding has suffered a loss of Tk 10-20 lakh.

Maj (ret) Ziauddin Ahmed, one of the rich fish traders in Char Meher Ali, told The Daily Star that it will be very tough for them to overcome the loss as fewer fishermen will ultimately net a small amount of fish.

2-minute silence

FROM PAGE 1
Shaifulah, Maj Gen (ret) C R Datta, former army chief Lt Gen (ret) M Harun-or-Rashid were, among others, who joined the human chain.

Expressing solidarity with the programme of the Sector Commandants' Forum, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) observed a two-minute silence from 4:30pm in the capital.

JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu, General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad, Executive President Mainuddin Khan Badal and other leaders of the party took part in the programme.

Workers Party leaders, including its President Rashed Khan Menon, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Azizur Rahman also observed a two-minute silence at the killing field at Mirpur-10.

Our Manikganj correspondent reported that people from all walks of life formed a human chain and observed a two-minute silence from 4:30pm on Garpara Arjabanu High School premises demanding trial of the war criminals.

Around two hundred people including, freedom fighters, teachers, students, lawyers, journalists and farmers joined the human chain on the school premises where martyred Chand Mia was laid to rest.

Meanwhile, Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee and South Asia People's Union against Fundamentalism and Communism have expressed solidarity with the programme of the Sector Commandants' Forum.

Fraud claims cloud

FROM PAGE 16
emergency last month as he faced a raft of legal challenges to his October re-election, a move that saw thousands of people rounded up and put in jail.

He also suspended the constitution, banned public rallies, shut down all private television channels and threw out judges who refused to swear an oath of office under the emergency order - including the country's Chief Justice.

Musharraf will lift the order on Saturday but critics say that with only three weeks left to campaign for parliamentary elections, and dozens of those arrested still in detention, the move will make little practical difference.

His attorney general Malik Qayyum, however, insisted Friday the lifting will ensure freedom of speech and assembly are again guaranteed and that people will again be able to appeal to the courts for violations of basic rights.

Critics say Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, has used emergency powers to tilt the field in favour of his supporters. He has used the state of emergency to purge the courts, raising doubts that judges will be inclined to consider legal challenges to the results.

"There is no level playing field," said Sarwar Bari, head of the Free and Fair Election Network, a Pakistani nongovernment group, which has more than 270 people monitoring the run-up to the vote.

A senior member of Benazir's party said removing the mayors, who hold sway because they hand out jobs and funds, so close to the elections was just a gesture to appease the international community.

"Everything this regime wanted to do has already been done for its rigging plan," Senator Raza Rabbani

Release teachers

FROM PAGE 16
to include life and works of the martyred intellectuals in the school and college textbooks to project their contributions to the nation before the next generations.

Besides, the Duta requested the government to take necessary steps for preservation of the memories of the martyred teachers and students.

Chaired by Acting Duta President Dr Tajmeri S Islam, Acting General Secretary of the Duta Dr Mamun Ahmed, professors AAMS Arefin Siddique, Abdus satar, Abul Kashem Fazul Huq, Badrul Alam, Akhter Hossain, Dr Md Akhteruzzaman, Dr Sukomal Barua and Dr Wahiduzzaman Chan, among others, took part in the discussion.

Chairman of the Bangladesh Teachers' Union, Dr Md Akhteruzzaman, said the government should take necessary steps for preservation of the memories of the martyred teachers and students.

Earlier on August 24, president of the BNP student wing was arrested under the Emergency Power Acts in connection with the campus violence between August 18 and 22.

Helal also stands accused in several other cases, police said.

Trial possible

FROM PAGE 1
destruction of the Bangladeshes as a nation. And Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir had actively collaborated with them in mass killings, said the paper titled "Mass killing, a crime against humanity, and trial"

Momena Khatun, sister of martyred poet Meherun Nesa and their two brothers, narrated in writing her nightmarish experience of the brutality of Razzaks, Al-Badrs and Al-Shams raised by Jamaat during the Liberation war. A number of other family members of the martyrs and other people, mostly young boys and girls, thronged the Liberation War Museum where the programme was held.

Her written account, read by the moderator of the programme, said, at 10:00 in the morning of March 27, 1971, about 40 to 50 'Biharis' (non-Bangalees) carrying lethal weapons gheraoed their residence in Mirpur.

Some members of the group entered their house and one of them named Shahzada beheaded Meherun Nesa. Her body fell to the ground shaking violently and her head was hung by the killers with a ceiling fan.

"The beasts went on and also slaughtered her brothers Rafiqul Islam and Shahidul Islam in front of their mother. The also played

said. Benazir Bhutto's party, the largest opposition group, has accused the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q of distributing thousands of ballot papers marked in its favor to ensure victory in Punjab province, Pakistan's largest and the key to national power.

It also claims that polling stations in opposition strongholds will be shifted at the last moment to effectively disenfranchise legions of voters.

Musharraf has dismissed the claims, accusing the opposition of girding against defeat.

"We haven't even gone for elections and they are talking of rigging and everything," Musharraf told CNN last weekend. "This is a clear indication of their preparation for defeat. Now when they lose, they'll have a good rationale, that it is all rigged, it's all fraud."

But Musharraf has failed to dispel widespread concern that some of the steps already taken in the run-up to the vote will undermine its credibility.

Under a state of emergency imposed on Nov. 3, Musharraf switched off all of Pakistan's private television news networks. Several channels have returned, after closing their main political talk shows, but the most popular one, Geo, remains off the air.

Western governments, dismayed at Musharraf's authoritarian turn, are demanding that freedom of speech and assembly be restored. Western diplomats in Islamabad concede that the election will be flawed, but still hope it will be more credible than the 2002 polls that installed a parliament largely subservient to Musharraf.

JCD president

freed on bail,

held again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Azizul Bari Helal was arrested soon after he came out of the Dhaka Central Jail on bail yesterday.

Sub-Inspector Nawab Ali of Lalbagh Police Station said they held him for violating the emergency rules.

Earlier on August 24, president of the BNP student wing was arrested under the Emergency Power Acts in connection with the campus violence between August 18 and 22.

Helal also stands accused in several other cases, police said.

Cylinder blast

FROM PAGE 1
bring down the cost to anything between Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000. This of course comes at the expense of safety of thousands of commuters.

Conversion rules say, a CNG cylinder has to have the capacity to withstand 3,000 pound-force per square inch (PSI). But the ones provided by unscrupulous traders at a lower cost can endure only 1,000 PSI.

Substandard or non-CNG cylinders have grown popular for their low prices and easy availability. Crooked conversion works have been using those taking advantage of slack inspection.

Kabir Hossain, engineer in charge of the retesting section of Navana CNG, told The Daily Star that he visited several sites of cylinder explosions and what he saw there convinced him that use of cylinders not designed to hold CNG was the reason for most of the blasts.

He said the unauthorised conversion centres use faulty cylinders including those meant to contain oxygen, gas for the purposes of ship breaking, household work and light industries.

Kabir said there is no manufacturer of standard CNG cylinders in the country. Most of the cylinders are imported from countries like Argentina, Brazil, Dubai, South Korea and India.

SM Sahabuddin, assistant inspector of the explosives department under the energy ministry, said the cylinders that exploded were locally made and they all were of quality below the desired standard.

He said the RPGL is responsible for monitoring and supervising the use of proper cylinders in CNG conversion.

Asked why they do not do anything to check the use of substandard cylinders in vehicles, Deputy Manager of RPGL Shafiqul Islam said though they are authorised to monitor CNG-conversion they do not have specific directives on how to go about monitoring.

Lack of manpower is another drawback, he added.

Sirajul Islam, proprietor of the Wazi CNG and Hydrogen Conversion Works, said there are specific instructions for conversion. And not following the instructions meticulously could

result in blasts.

He added that longevity of a cylinder is between 15 and 20 years and every cylinder has to be checked for fitness in every five years. Besides, the air filter in a CNG-run vehicle has to be cleaned once in every three months for safety.

Compressed Natural Gas, commonly referred to as CNG, is a comparatively cheaper fuel and so it has become a popular source of power for vehicles due to skyrocketing prices of diesel and petrol.

Currently, the country has 192 CNG conversion centres and over 200 CNG filling stations.