

Holiday mood

FROM PAGE 1
of Hazrat Ibrahim's sacrifice for Allah, and this sacrifice adds a special joy to the celebration. Office-goers in the city mostly take extra few days' leave to go to their ancestral or village homes for celebrating Eid with their near and dear ones ignoring the heavy rush of people for any mode of transport.

With the majority of the population leaving, the city roads get a relief for a few days.

"I came to Moghbazar from Motiheel by bus which took only five minutes and I had a pleasant stroll on my way to office," said Biplob, an employee of a private firm in the city's Karwan Bazar.

"I wish Dhaka was always like this," he sighed to voice many of the office-goers' yearning yesterday.

Meanwhile, the secretariat also observed a relaxed day yesterday with a very few

officials attending the office since ministers are busy celebrating the festival with their family members and party men in their constituencies.

"Today (yesterday) was almost a day of exchanging greetings with a thin presence of officers," said an official of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

"This time two days of the three-day vacation fell in weekly holidays—Friday and Saturday," moaned an official of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

The secretariat would be active in a day or two, and those who went home on vacation already started arriving in the capital, he said.

Gias Uddin Ahmed, a banker, said he took two days extra leave to spend some more time with his family in Begumganj, Noakhali.

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 16
In Jamalpur, a policeman and two others died when a passenger bus skidded off the road and flipped on Friday. At least 20 people were injured in the accident.

A UNB report says two passenger buses collided head-on at Ashukandi in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj killing three persons and injuring 40.

In Comilla, three persons were killed and 10 injured when a Dhaka-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch at Purnamati Bazar under Burichang upazila in Comilla on Sunday.

Police said the bus was carrying returnees to the capital after the Eid. The injured were admitted to Comilla Medical College Hospital.

Two people were killed and 10 injured as a speeding microbus hit a truck standing at Chaklamor on Dhaka-Pabna highway in Santhia upazila of the district in the early hours of Friday.

Police and locals said some 12 people were coming

to Pabna in the microbus for celebrating the Eid.

In Dinajpur, at least two persons were killed and one was injured critically as a bus hit a motorcycle carrying the three. The accident occurred near Gorea Bazar in Biraganj upazila Friday morning, according to police sources.

Two persons including a woman were killed in two road accidents on the Eid day in Patuakhali.

One person was killed and 10 were injured in two accidents on Natore-Dhaka highway in Natore on Friday.

Police and witnesses said in one incident a truck fell into a roadside ditch near Mahishbanga village, and in the other a 'bhotbhoti' (shallow engine-driven vehicle) collided with a motorcycle.

In Gopalganj, an elderly person died on the spot when a bus crushed him under its wheel at Pona bus stand in Kashiani upazila.

A boy was killed in an accident on Magura-Jessore highway at Bhitasayer on Saturday.

Canada to deport

FROM PAGE 1
fugitive killer of Bangabandhu, had gone to Canada

some days ago and left that country after staying there for a few days.

Nur Chowdhury is one of the 12 convicted killers of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

For the brutal killing of Bangabandhu along with most of his family members and relatives, including women and minors, the trial court awarded Nur death sentence in 1998. The High Court also upheld the judgement in 2001 that was also upheld by the Supreme Court on November 19.

It has been evident in the HC verdict that Nur Chowdhury and Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda shot the then president Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his Dhanmondi residence on August 15, 1975.

Maj Huda, who is facing death penalty in this case, is now in the condemn cell of Dhaka Central Jail.

Nur who was a major in 1975 received some rewards including promotion to lieutenant colonel by the post-Mujib governments.

He is one of those who were given diplomatic jobs as rewards for the August 15 and the killings of four national leaders on November 3, 1975.

Nur was appointed in different times as a councillor to Brazil, Tehran, and Algiers.

The law minister said he had a discussion with his Canadian counterpart about bringing Nur back.

He said Nur Chowdhury earlier appealed to the Canadian government for permission to stay there as a citizen or a refugee but was rejected.

"Now he is trying to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada against the government's rejecting his appeal and for allowing him to remain in that country," he said.

The minister added if the Canadian court rejects his appeal, there will be no bar in bringing him back.

"Nur Chowdhury stated in his appeal that he was con-

victed in the Bangabandhu murder case and if he is deported to Bangladesh, he would be executed," he said.

On the government move to bring back other fugitive convicts of the case, the minister said the foreign ministry has taken steps to that end.

Asked whether the government will make any extradition treaty with Libya and Pakistan where some of the convicts are hiding, the minister said the foreign ministry will deal with this matter.

In reply to another question on whether the absconding convicts can appeal to the SC against the death penalty, Shaifque said they cannot file any appeal since they have no legal reason for making long delay in filing the appeal.

The Appellate Division on November 19 upheld the death penalties of 12 convicted ex-army officers for the August 15, 1975 assassination of Bangabandhu along with most of his family members.

If extradited, Nur Chowdhury would be the third condemned convict to return home to face justice in the case after Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda and Maj (ret'd) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Thailand returned Huda in 1998 after Dhaka and Bangkok signed an extradition treaty, while the United States returned Mohiuddin during the past military-backed caretaker government in June 2007 after he failed to obtain a federal court order to stay there.

Only five of the condemned convicts are now in death row in jail awaiting exhaustion of the legal procedures ahead of their execution.

They are Lt Col (sacked) Syed Farooq Rahman, Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Maj (ret'd) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, Lt Col (ret'd) Mohiuddin Ahmed and Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda.

Besides Nur and Dalim, the four other fugitive ex-army officials are Lt Col Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col Rashid Chowdhury, Capt MA Mazed and Risaldar Moslehuddin Khan.

Lamy warns 'time running out' for WTO Doha deal

AFP, Geneva

World Trade Organization chief Pascal Lamy warned yesterday that time was running out for the conclusion of a global trade liberalisation pact, saying that concrete action was vital to seal the Doha deal.

"Time is running out, and it is not credible at this stage to see issues in isolation from the work and the achievements of the past eight years," he said in opening remarks to ministers from more than 100 countries attending a key WTO meeting in Geneva.

Launched in the Qatari capital in 2001, the Doha Round of talks have foundered amid disagreements between developed and developing countries over the level of cuts to agriculture subsidies and industrial products tariffs.

World leaders have pledged on several occasions this year to conclude the negotiations by 2010, but progress has been slow.

Lamy had warned that next year's deadline would be missed if talks were not accelerated.

"The moment of truth is fast approaching when you will have to decide whether the 2010 target can be met. Political leaders are practically unanimous that they want to meet it, but reaffirmation is not enough," he said Monday.

"Now we need action, concrete and practical action, to close the remaining gaps," he stressed.

Reflecting the Doha stalemate, the WTO's 153 member-states did not want negotiations officially on the agenda at the meeting, the first of the WTO's top decision-making body in four years.

In previous ministerials, member states made offers and counter-offers relating to the Doha deal.

Boy killed

FROM PAGE 16
Police said they had fired 10 teargas canisters before firing more than 50 rubber bullets to disperse the people, estimated at 20,000, who engaged in the clash. At least 20 people, including police, were wounded in the clash. Both sides used locally made weapons.

Acting Police Super Anisur Rahman confirmed the death of Abul Hossain in police firing. The body was sent to Sherpur Hospital for autopsy.

Witnesses said residents of Puthalia, Guabari and Naobhanga villages of Jamalpur and adjacent areas of Char Pakhkhimari union of Sherpur claiming ownership of the char of about 4,000 acres of land engaged in the clash in the afternoon.

Sherpur sadar upazila chairman Ilias Uddin said police came from Jamalpur and opened indiscriminate fire without any provocation. He alleged that police were influenced in taking such drastic action that took away the life of a young boy.

PM to visit

FROM PAGE 1
Bharati and Bangladesh because a large number of students from that country study in Visva Bharati.

Hasina was awarded 'Desi Kottama', the highest award by the university, some years back.

Road accidents

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Worst victims

FROM PAGE 1
"Climate change is affecting agriculture, food production and thus affecting the initiatives for attaining the food security," she said.

Sheikh Hasina pointed out that Bangladesh and other developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) need financial assistance from the international community, particularly from the developed countries, for tackling the challenges emerging from the global warming.

She further laid emphasis on mitigation process for safeguarding the existence of the globe from disastrous consequences of excessive carbon emissions.

In this context, the PM called for transfer of environment-friendly technology to the developing and least developed countries from the developed nations in order to protect the environment and climate of these countries from pollution and warming.

She also made a strong plea for taking special care of women and children in facing the climate-change challenges as she said these members of the global community are the worst sufferers of the

changing climate.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen after the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Sheikh Hasina attended the opening ceremony of the CHOGM 2009 with other heads of state and government and official representatives attending the three-day Commonwealth meet from its 53 member-countries.

On her arrival at the CHOGM venue at 9:45 am, Sheikh Hasina was received by the Prime Minister of Trinidad Patric Manning.

Sheikh Hasina, with the world leaders, including Queen Elizabeth II, also took part in the official photo session as part of the opening ceremonies of the CHOGM.

She then attended a joint reception hosted by the host Premier and Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Ambassador-at-Large M Ziauddin, Bangladesh High Commissioner to the United Kingdom M Sayeedur Rahman Khan and Sheikh Hasina's niece Tulip Siddique were present at the summit during the opening ceremony.

WTO meet begins

FROM PAGE 16
The United States will be in the spotlight as some developing countries say it holds the key for pushing the talks forward.

In an apparent reference to the world's largest economy, Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim said "one country... is stopping us from moving forward."

Another Latin American diplomat said: "We clearly lack an explicit position from one of the most important members of the negotiations. We are of course talking about the United States."

He added that the WTO ministerial meeting "should pressure" President Barack Obama's administration to make a deeper engagement on trade.

Dogged by domestic problems such as health care and the war in Afghanistan as well as a Democratic-led Congress largely hostile to trade liberalisation, the United States has not put concrete reforms on the table, analysts say.

Reflecting the Doha stalemate, the WTO's 153 member-states decided that negotiations are not officially on the agenda at the first gathering of its top decision-making body in four years, unlike previous ministerials when offers and counter-offers were made.

Ministers from the Cairns Group of 19 agricultural exporting countries said they were dismayed by the lack of progress in ending the Doha stalemate.

"We are disappointed with the limited progress in resolving or narrowing differences on the outstanding agriculture modal-

ities," the ministers said in a statement, after a meeting on the sidelines of the WTO conference.

Modalities refer to broad formulas or approaches for tariff cuts, under the the Doha talks.

"We have a strong message—conclude the Doha Round in 2010," Australian Trade Minister Simon Crean said after chairing discussions of the Cairns Group, which account for more than 25 percent of the world's agricultural exports.

More than 100 developing countries also called Sunday for an "urgent" conclusion of WTO negotiations.

The call first came from the Group of 20, a coalition of countries led by India and Brazil pushing for a reduction of trade-distorting farm subsidies and for greater access to industrialised markets.

It was endorsed by other groups representing African, Caribbean and Pacific countries as well as least developed states.

Ministers at the three-day WTO talks are expected to stress their commitment to completing the round, even though such pledges have been made over the years and deadlines repeatedly missed.

While Swiss police fired tear gas and rubber bullets on Saturday at hooded protesters who broke windows and set cars alight during an anti-globalisation demonstration, there was no fresh violence on Monday, even though some campaigners holding placards stood outside the conference centre.

Red tape stalls

FROM PAGE 16
project has done much to alleviate the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS.

However for almost a year, NGOs have had difficulty distributing medicines and contraceptives due to a lack of decision-making on the part of the government.

Since June, services have reportedly stopped altogether.

Nazrul Islam said, "The achievements of the last five years can be wiped out if the programme is halted for even a few days."

The Programme Manager of the National AIDS and STD Programme (NASP) Abdur Rahman acknowledged that delays have occurred and said that the operational plan needs revising.

Abdur Rahman added that once the programme receives clearance from the World Bank it will restart within a month, though under a new name.

NGO sources said that they have written to NASP at least five times asking for an improvement in logistics, but their requests have not been taken up by the authorities.

The NGO VARD, which provides health care to sex workers in approximately 1800 hotels and residences, now has 10 lakh condoms and medicines worth one lakh taka sitting idle in storage.

"It is very unfortunate that a huge number of high risk people are not getting any services and the medicines are going to waste," said Belayet Hossain Mia, assistant director of VARD.

The Population Services and Training Centre of Bangladesh (PSTC), which works with approximately 3,800 brothel-based sex work-

Probe finds

FROM PAGE 1
launch authorities for failing to manage the passengers when the launch arrived at Nazirhat ghat in Lalmohon upazila. The launch sank in about 10 minutes losing balance," he added.

The seven-member committee that was formed to probe the launch disaster was reconstituted yesterday and asked to submit a report in seven workdays.

Joint Secretary of the shipping ministry Joyanta Kumar Nandi is the convenor of the reconstituted body, says a press release of the ministry.

The other members are Deputy Secretary of the shipping ministry Md Baitul Amin Bhuiyan, General Manager (Marine) of BIWTA captain Showkat Sarder, its Joint Director Md Abdul Hai, Executive Engineer Rabiul Islam, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Lalmohon upazila Babar Ali Mir and Inspector of shipping department Shafiqur Rahman.

"The committee will submit a report to the government describing reasons behind the accident and the loss of lives and properties," says the press release.

The passenger launch MV Koko-4 capsized in river Tetulia while trying to anchor at Nazirpur terminal in Lalmohon upazila. Rescuers so far recovered 70 bodies.

Obama warns

FROM PAGE 16
cannot deliver.

In his letter to Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, Obama called for Islamabad's closer collaboration against all extremist groups, including al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Pakistani Taliban organization known as Tehrik-e-Taliban, and warned that its use of insurgent groups to pursue policy goals "cannot continue."

Obama's letter to Zardari, delivered through national security adviser Gen James L. Jones, also included an offer to help reduce tensions between Pakistan and India.

During his Islamabad visit, Jones told Pakistani officials that no matter how many more troops the Obama sends to Afghanistan, the effort would fail unless Pakistan increases strikes against not only al-Qaeda's leadership but also Mullah Muhammad Omar and the leadership of the Afghan Taliban.

Meanwhile, senior US officials cautioned that moves to put too many demands before Islamabad may backfire.

"We agree that no matter how many troops you send, if the safe haven in Pakistan isn't cracked, the whole mission is compromised. But if you make too many demands on the Pakistanis in public, it can backfire," The New York Times quoted the official, as saying.

Pointing out the complexity of the US-Pakistan relationship, another Obama administration official said that no success could be hoped against the Taliban unless the nature of the relationship with Islamabad is changed.

"Everyone understands this is a complex, nuanced, critical relationship. Everyone has their eyes open, and there are genuine concerns. But one focus now is on trying to expand cooperation," he said.

"The long-term consequences of failure there (in Pakistan) far outweigh those in Afghanistan. We can't succeed without Pakistan," he added.

LeT member

FROM PAGE 16
should be remanded again to find out the victim's whereabouts and their accomplices.

Azizur Rahman, a resident of Mazar Road under Mirpur area of the capital, was kidnapped on September 4, 2003.

His wife Farhana Reza Jui filed a case against five people without naming anyone on September 23 same year with Mirpur police station.

Yusuf Butt was shown arrested in the case on November 26 after information gleaned from Harkatul Jihad chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and Islamic Democratic Party Convener Maulana Sheikh Abdus Salam.

Mufti Hannan, Abdus Salam and several others were also shown arrested in the case and were remanded for several times.

Yusuf Butt was arrested on January 6 this year from Uttara for possessing firearms and later he was shown arrested in the August 21, 2004 grenade attack case and was remanded for several times.

Defiant Iran vows

FROM PAGE 16
Earlier on Sunday the conservative-dominated parliament urged the government to reduce ties with the International Atomic Energy Agency for condemning the building of Iran's second uranium enrichment plant near the holy city of Qom.

Friday's IAEA resolution saw China and Russia, which have close links with Tehran, join Britain, France, Germany and the United States in condemning Iran over the Qom plant, being built inside a mountain.

"Ten new enrichment sites will be built. We are as much committed to our rights as we are to our international obligations," Salehi said.

"From now on our enrichment sites will not be built in the open air but in the hearts of mountains... They will not be concentrated in one area... taking into consideration all safety measures from any attacks."

Neither of Tehran's arch-enemies, Washington and Israel, has ruled out air strikes against Iranian nuclear sites.

After the cabinet announcement, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said that time is running out for Iran.

"If true, this would be yet another serious violation of Iran's clear obligations under multiple UN security council resolutions, and another example of Iran choosing to isolate itself," he said in a statement.

"The international community has made clear that Iran has rights, but with those rights come responsibilities," he said.

"Time is running out for Iran to address the international community's growing concerns about its nuclear programme."

Western powers have long suspected that Iran, despite its fierce denials, is trying to build a nuclear bomb.

They object to Tehran's uranium enrichment work, which can be used to power nuclear reactors, but in highly purified form it can make the fissile core of an atom bomb.

Iran, already under three sets of UN sanctions for defiantly enriching uranium at its Natanz facility, further infuriated world powers in September when it disclosed it was building the Qom plant.

World powers are also irked

at Tehran for refusing a high-profile nuclear fuel deal brokered by the IAEA, which envisages shipping abroad Iran's low-enriched uranium (LEU) for conversion into 20 percent enriched uranium to fuel a medical research reactor in Tehran.

Iran insists it is ready to send its LEU abroad only if there is a simultaneous exchange of fuel inside the country.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government said on Sunday the government would study a plan to process uranium to 20 percent purity inside the country, state media reported.

The report said Iran wants a nuclear power capacity of 20,000 megawatts, with fuel to be supplied by another 10 uranium enrichment plants the size of the facility in the central city of Natanz.

"We have to reach the level to be able to produce between 250 and 300 tonnes of fuel per year in the country, and for this we need newer centrifuges with a higher speed," Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying.

"Each of these sites will have the capacity to produce fuel for a nuclear plant the size of Bushehr," Salehi said of the nearly complete 1,000-megawatt plant being finished by the Russians in southern Iran.

"The supreme leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) has repeatedly said that we are not seeking nuclear weapons, we have forbidden it and it is 'haram'," he added, using the Islamic term for something forbidden by God.

Ahmadinejad said: "We will study producing enriched uranium up to the 20 percent purity at Wednesday's meeting of the cabinet. We have a cordial approach to the world but we will not allow an inch of our nation's right to be wasted."

In Britain a Foreign Office spokeswoman called the Iranian government's plans for new enrichment plants a "matter of serious concern" that would breach UN Security Council resolutions.

In Berlin, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said Germany urged Tehran to "fulfil its obligations towards the international community and to cooperate entirely with the IAEA."

Zardari hands nuke

FROM PAGE 16
in protecting the arsenal.

Analysts say Zardari can only hope to survive increasing unpopularity within his party and a reportedly strained relationship with the powerful military by making good on electoral promises to devolve greater power to parliament.

Zardari's predecessor, military ruler Pervez Musharraf enforced a state of emergency in 2007, introducing a 17th amendment to the constitution that gives the president the power to dissolve parliament and sack the prime minister.

"We are going in the right direction. There is no threat to democracy and to the present government," said Gilani, a member of Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) but who is said to enjoy closer relations with the military.

"He believes in the balance of power between the presidency and the parliament and he is committed to undo the 17th amendment," he added.

Zardari's approval ratings are rock bottom as Pakistan struggles with Taliban violence, a recession and stalled efforts on reform.

He spent several years in jail for corruption and is still referred to as "Mr Ten Percent" because of his reputation for taking kickbacks on deals.

Presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar hailed the transfer of the National Command Authority as "a giant leap forward to empower the elected parliament and the prime minister".

But senior lawyers said the nuclear move was window dressing.

"The president wants to give the impression that he is empowering his prime minister. This transfer is basically cosmetic," said lawyer Akram Sheikh.

The president was quoted by state media as saying he would revoke the amendment in December.

The corruption amnesty passed by Musharraf in 2007 and known as the National Reconciliation Ordinance, or NRO, expired as Pakistan celebrated the first day of the Muslim festival of sacrifice, Eid-ul-Azha.

It had quashed charges against Zardari, his wife and ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated two months later, and other politi-

cians in an apparent gesture of political reconciliation.

The PPP went on to win elections in 2008, restoring civilian rule in a country governed for most of its existence by army.