

Hills remain tense

FROM PAGE 1
8-10km away from the places of occurrence. At present, they are living under open sky without food as they could not save anything when they fled their homes.

A number of the injured indigenous people alleged that the settlers set fire to about 40 houses on Friday night. The next morning at about 10:00am, the settlers along with the army again went to their villages and set fire to their houses. The army cordoned their villages and fired at them, leaving two people including a female dead on the spot, they said.

Army Sergeant Rezaul, who was injured when an indigenous person chopped him with a machete, was sent to Chittagong Military Combined Hospital, sources said.

Baghaihat zone Commander Lt Col Wasim yesterday denied the allegations and said the land dispute between the indigenous people and Bangalees has been there since long.

He said he along with the UNO, the UP chairmen and leaders of Bangalee and indigenous communities tried to settle the matter, but all initiatives went in vain as both Bangalee and indigenous people did not pay heed to the solutions.

Wasim said a vested interest group might have been behind the recent incidents.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Baghaichhari UNO Humayun Kabir also refused the allegations of his involvement with the incident.

State Minister for CHT affairs Dipankar Talukder, CHT affairs Taskforce Chairman Jyotindra Lal Tripura, Rangamati and Khagrachhari Hill District Council chairmen Nikhil Kumar Chakma and Ruhity Karbari, Rangamati DC Sourendra Nath Chakrabarty and police super Masud-ul-Hassan visited the villages yesterday.

Dipankar talked to the villagers and family members of the victims and assured them of impartial judicial investigation into the incident.

He also assured both Bangalees and indigenous people of proper compensations.

Local indigenous people demanded withdrawal of the army from Baghaihat.

They told the state minister that Bangalee settlers are constructing structures on their land in some areas, which triggered the dispute

Portugal floods kill 42

AP, Funchal, Madeira Islands

Rescue workers dug through heaps of mud, boulders and debris yesterday in Madeira, searching for victims buried by flash floods and mudslides that already killed at least 42 people on the popular Portuguese island.

More than 120 others were injured and an unknown number were missing, possibly swept away or smothered, authorities said, adding that the death toll still rise. Another 250 people were forced to flee their homes and go to shelters.

The worst storm to hit the Atlantic Ocean island since 1993 lashed the capital of Funchal on Saturday, turning some streets into raging torrents of liquid brown mud, water and debris.

"We heard a very loud noise, like rolling thunder, the ground shook and then we realised it was water coming down," said Simon Burchage, of Britain.

Madreia is the main island of a Portuguese archipelago of the same name, in the Atlantic Ocean off the northwest coast of Africa.

The flash floods were so powerful they carved their own paths down mountains and through the city, churning under bridges and even tearing some down. Residents had to cling to railings to make sure they weren't swept away. Cars were consumed by the force of the water, and the battered shells of overturned vehicles that had been swept downstream littered the streets.

"It was horrible, there were cars on rooftops, there were vans and trucks that had fallen and been totally crushed," said German tourist Andreas Hoisser.

The water swept even a heavy fire truck downstream, slamming it into a tree.

The death toll "will likely increase, given the circumstances of this flood," regional social services spokesman Francisco Ramos said, adding there were still "great difficulties" with communications on the island, since phone lines were ripped out by the deluge.

over the ownership of the land.

Meanwhile, the United People's Democratic Front yesterday shifted its protest programme to block roads and waterways to February 23 because of the ongoing SSC examinations in Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts.

Zardari didn't ask for Swiss case reopening

Says Pak spokesman

ANI, Lahore

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's spokesman Farhatullah Babar has rejected reports that he (Zardari) has asked the law ministry to reopen the cases against him that are pending in Swiss courts.

Babar said the issue was not discussed during the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) core committee meeting, which was held on Saturday.

Earlier, a private television channel had claimed that Zardari has given a green signal to the Law Ministry and the Attorney General (AG) to proceed with process of reopening of the cases.

The channel also claimed that the government would formally request the Swiss government to allow Pakistani officials start the procedure for reopening of the cases on Monday, The Daily Times reported.

It said that Zardari has told his close associates that he is ready to face the Swiss courts and has directed the concerned authorities not to create hurdles in the implementation of the Supreme Court's verdict.

It may be noted that in November last year the apex court had rendered the controversial amnesty law the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) as 'unconstitutional' following which speculations regarding Zardari being tried in the court of law on corruption charges increased manifold.

However, some legal experts argue that Zardari can not be prosecuted as he enjoys special immunity according to the Constitution.

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif has said he would continue his struggle to bring back the looted money from the national exchequer.

During a meeting with Member National Assembly (MNA) Abdul Qadir Baluch, Sharif said he would continue to fight to ensure that the money, which is currently stocked in Swiss banks, comes back to the country.

4 prayer
FROM PAGE 16
afternoon.

The monk said the youths set fire to the temple and its religious leaders and disciples fled after a feud between indigenous people and security personnel. Local administration had been backing the attackers, he alleged.

Jyotsna Chakma, an indigenous woman from Gangaram Mukh area, said not only the church and the Buddha Bihar, but also a mosque was set on fire.

The gang also looted valuables from the temple and the church, said Jyotsna.

"Bangalee people without any investigation torched the three prayer houses. The settlers wanted a fight in order to grab the land, orchard and movable properties owned by indigenous families," she added.

Rahima Begum, 45, a Bangalee woman of Gangaram Mukh, however, said indigenous people first set fire to the mosque. But she declined to comment whether the church and the Buddha Bihar had been burnt by the settlers.

Najim Uddin, a settler leader, denied the allegation of their involvement in those arson attacks. He said indigenous cadres had torched all the four prayer houses including the mosque.

Bangalee settlers reportedly burned 200 houses of indigenous families during a series of clashes on Friday and Saturday.

Baghaichhari Upazila Chairman Sudarson Chakma said it is an inhuman act and no religious-minded person could perform such a heinous deed.

Lawmaker from Khagrachhari constituency, Jatindra Lal Tripura condemned such criminal activities and urged people to keep peace and communal harmony.

CHT affairs Minister Dipankar Talukder said the government would reconstruct the prayer houses within the shortest possible time.

Police broke the lock of the van in the presence of the factory owner and found 16,000 pieces of the item missing which costs around Tk23 lakh.

Chief coordinator of the factory Mohammad Abdullah Didar filed the case against the driver Nurul Islam Babul and others.



A recent photo shows an open level crossing just beside the Bangabandhu Bridge approach road at Kalihati upazila in Tangail. There are about 75 level crossings, with no gates, on Bangabandhu Bridge-Joydevpur rail line.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1
said that it is customary for the leader of the opposition to pay tribute after the president, prime minister and speaker.

On Saturday night Khaleda placed a wreath at the Shaheed Minar after a number of Awami League members paid their respects.

She was scheduled to place a wreath at 12.07am but was prevented from doing so until 12.19am.

The vice chancellor of Dhaka University broke long-observed tradition by failing to welcome the leader of the opposition at the Shaheed Minar premises.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique defended the authorities by saying that Khaleda Zia was received as per university protocols, and that a lack of time was the reason for the delay.

Law enforcers intercepted Khaleda's motorcade at Abdul Gani Road at 11:45pm and then again at midnight when she was close to Doel Chatter.

Maruf said that police officials told the chairperson that she was not permitted to enter the Shaheed Minar premises until the president and prime minister had first placed their wreaths.

Maruf said, "The government did not show her [Khaleda] due respect and that is nothing but indecorous."

"The BNP chairperson placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar amid a serious lack of security -- it was a chaotic situation."

SC bar polls

FROM PAGE 16
fix the schedule for its polls.

Sources said the main contest in the election would take place between the panel of ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (BSASP) and main opposition BNP-backed Bangladesh Jatayatbadi Ainjibi Forum (BJAF).

Sources also said both the forums of lawyers would finalise their panels after the election of Dhaka Bar Association on February 24 and 25.

BSASP's aspirant candidates for the post of president are senior lawyers Shahidul Karim Siddiqui, Mansurul Huq Chowdhury and Abdul Baset Majumder while Azharullah Bhuiyan, Momtaj Uddin Ahmed Mehedi, incumbent secretary SM Rezaul Karim, Rabiul Alam Budu, Ruhul Quddus Babu, Sheikh Awasafur Rahman Bulu, Jahangir Hossain Salim, Syed Mamun Mahub, Abdur Rashid and Abul Hossain will compete for the post of secretary.

BJAF's aspirant candidates for the post of president are senior lawyers Khandaker Mahub Hossain and Golam Arshad while Abdullah Al Mamun, Helal Uddin Mollah, ABM Waliur Rahman, Badruddoza Badal, Shihab Uddin Mahmud, Firoz Shah and Amir Hossain Chowdhury will compete for the post of secretary.

Sources said the candidates have already started their campaigns for votes.

Covered van

FROM PAGE 16
Patenga seaport to export. The driver and helper of the van disappeared at around 5:00am on Saturday keeping the van near a petrol pump in Narayanganj Bandar thana.

Police broke the lock of the van in the presence of the factory owner and found 16,000 pieces of the item missing which costs around Tk23 lakh.

Chief coordinator of the factory Mohammad Abdullah Didar filed the case against the driver Nurul Islam Babul and others.

75 out of 97 level

FROM PAGE 1
construction.

Some 17 cloth-traders were killed when a speedy train hit a minibus carrying the traders at Rajabari level crossing under Kalihati upazila in Tangail on April 17, 2008. After investigation, it was found that the lone gateman at the crossing was asleep during the time of incident.

On February 9 last, four tempo passengers, including a mother and her four-year-old son, were killed and one minor girl injured when a speedy train struck the vehicle at Dapnagar crossing under Basail upazila in the district.

Nine days later, one woman was killed and another was critically injured when a train rammmed a private car at Kumulli level crossing under Tangail district headquarters on February 18 last.

Railway officials said the Bangabandhu Bridge-Joydevpur rail line was constructed after inauguration of the Bangabandhu Bridge in 1998. Trains started plying the line from August 14, 2003.

The number of level crossings on the 98-kilometre rail line was then 81. After 2008, 16 more level crossings were built.

Meanwhile, 47 gatemen were recruited for 17 level crossings till 2008. Among them, only one is a permanent employee of the Railway department while the rest of them are master roll workers. A master roll gateman gets only Tk80 a day.

Nurul Islam Ansari, assistant engineer of Bangladesh Railway (Joydevpur), told The Daily Star that seven of those gatemen, who were recruited on temporary basis, were made

permanent. The rest 40 are getting that Tk80 a day.

"We know the salary is poor compared to their responsibilities," he said.

Local administrations have been managing five of the 97 level crossings with the financial help from some non-governmental sponsors since July 18, 2009.

Three locals were appointed as gatemen for each of the level crossings at Tenguria and Habla in Basail upazila, Bahontoli and Kolimajani in Mirzapur, and Salla in Kalihati upazila in the district.

Asim Talukder, divisional engineer for signal and telecom of Bangladesh Railway (Pakshi), told The Daily Star that the Railway department alone has not the ability to recruit so many gatemen at the unprotected level crossings.

Locals will have to come forward for it, he said adding that especially those, who have built roads through the level crossing, should appoint the gatemen.

"If they do so, the Railway department will provide training and other necessary supports to the gatemen," he said.

The Railway Police Station (Dhaka), when contacted, could not specify how many accidents occurred on the Bangabandhu Bridge-Joydevpur rail line and how many people died in those accidents since the rail line was constructed.

They, however, said a total of 283 people died in different accidents in the police station area last year.

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Lawmaker Latif does it again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Awami League lawmaker MA Latif from Chittagong-10 (Patenga) constituency allegedly misbehaved again with an on duty policeman early hours yesterday while placing floral wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar in Chittagong.

Sources said Latif along with some party activists arrived at the Shaheed Minar around 12:30am and entered through the exit. The law enforcement agencies ignored it.

When Sergeant Hafiz of Kotwali Police Station forced some of Latif's party activists to leave the altar shortly after placing the wreath, Latif became angry, rushed towards him and misbehaved, said witnesses.

Later, senior police officials intervened and brought the situation under control.

Latif, however, regretted the incident terming it a misunderstanding. He also met the police sergeant personally and pacified him, said witnesses.

Assistant Commissioner of Kotwali zone Helal Uddin confirmed the incident. There was huge crowd at that moment and some misunderstandings might have happened, he added.

Latif beat up a police constable of Bandar Police Station at Patenga area on January 12 last year. He also misbehaved with Additional Inspector General of Police Nobo Bikram Kishore Tripura February last year while travelling on a flight to Dhaka from Chittagong. Besides, he had been criticised for misbehaving with a senior official of Chittagong Port.

Noor-e-Alam

FROM PAGE 16
premises yesterday after Johr prayers. His body has been kept at the Birdem mortuary. A second namaz-e-janaza will be held at Baitul Mukarram after Johr prayers today.

Ziku, a former member of parliament, will be laid to rest with full state honours at Mirpur Freedom Fighters Graveyard in the city after a third namaz-e-janaza at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad at 3:00pm today.

He led an eventful political life during his lifetime. He served as the vice president of East Pakistan Chhatra League central committee in 1960-1962 and played a pioneer's role in the movement for independence.

Ziku also played an effective role in organising students' movement after deserting Chhatra League in 1962. He actively participated in 1969 mass movement and 1970 election.

Ziku was a deputy leader of the Mujib Bahini southern command during the Liberation War and fought against occupying Pakistan forces in Khulna, Barishal, Faridpur, Pabna areas.

After independence, he got involved in forming the first opposition political party JSD and served as its organisational secretary, general secretary, executive president, and president at different times.

During his lifetime, Ziku was involved in cultural activities including producing and directing a number of films. He also founded Rabindra Smriti Rakkha Parishad and Lalok Lok Sahitya Sangsad in Kushtia.

In separate condolence messages, JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu, Jatio Shromik Jote-Bangladesh President Abdul Kader Hawladar prayed for peace and salvation of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Different political and social organisations expressed deep shock at his death.

PM

FROM PAGE 1
the construction.

"Questions can be asked if those people, who do not pay respect to their mother tongue and culture, are real Bangladeshis or do they believe in the country's independence, art, culture and heritage. If they are Bangladeshis, why had they stopped the construction?" the premier said.

She said the government wants to formulate a policy to prevent any wrongdoings centring the institute in the future.

The first phase of the institute has been completed and soon the government will start the work of the second phase.

Hasina announced the government will continue its efforts to obtain Bangla as one of the official languages of the United Nations.

She also announced her government's plan to turn the entire area including Dhaka University, Shilpakala Academy, Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Uddyana into a culture zone.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid presided over the function while Vice-Chancellor of University of Liberal Arts Prof Rafiqul Islam and Education Secretary Syed Ataur Rahman, among others, spoke on the occasion.

There are approximately 250 people with plots allotted to them.

1952 revisited

FROM PAGE 1
the language movement activists from the start of the curfew, leading to the martyrdom of Salam, Barkat, Rafique and Jabbar.

Overwhelming majority of the demonstrators were young students who were protesting the then Pakistan government's evil design for forcing Urdu on the Bangalee people of East Pakistan as their state language.

They were breaking the curfew to advance towards what was the State Assembly Building back then near where the Central Shaheed Minar is now, to place their demand for Bangla as a state language, to the then assembly members. But police bullets stopped their advance killing the language martyrs.

The stopping of the advance however proved to be only temporary as the killings pushed the movement into a higher gear, which ultimately forced the Pakistani government to accept Bangla as a state language in 1956. In 2000, Unesco declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

Yesterday, actors recreated the historic 30 minutes at equally historic Amtala on a well made stage, depicting the build up of the historic struggle and its crescendo, through nicely choreographed physical acting with accompanying music, for several thousand emotion gripped audience.

The event started at 3:20pm and ended at 3:50pm, just like it had happened on the historic day in 1952.

Language movement veterans Abdul Matin, Ahmad Rafique, Anisuzzaman, Sayeed Haider, Sharfuddin Ahmed, Murtaza Bashir, Rawshan Ara, Halima Khatun, and Sufia Ahmed came out on the stage by the end of the show, eliciting cheers of respect from the crowd. The crowd then retraced the historic bold journey towards the Shaheed Minar led by the language movement veterans.

The nation yesterday paid rich tribute to the Language Movement martyrs at other venues as well.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar three minutes past midnight and stood in silence for a few moments in remembrance of the martyrs.

They were followed by the deputy speaker and chief whip of the parliament, ruling Awami League leaders, cabinet members, Dhaka city mayor, chiefs of the three armed forces, the dean of diplomatic corps, the attorney general, and leaders of Awami Swechhasabak League, Sector Commanders' Forum, Samyabadi Dal, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, and National Awami Party.

Opposition Leader also BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia placed a wreath at 12:19am.

Different socio-cultural

groups also participated in the event.

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and professional organisations, and people of all walks of life thronged the Central Shaheed Minar throughout the day to pay homage. The day was a public holiday. The national flag was at half-mast all over the country.

Areas adjacent to the Central Shaheed Minar on Dhaka University campus had a facelift on the occasion, while roadsides and dividers were adorned with Bangla alphabets and the national flag.

B'day crackers scare people at night in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in different areas of the capital got scared late last night hearing sound like bomb explosions.

A number of residents of Kalabagan, Dhanmendi, Kanthabagan, East Rajabazar, Farmgate, Mohammadpur and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar repeatedly contacted The Daily Star to enquire if there was any bomb blast around 11:30pm.

When contacted, Sub-Inspector Nurul Haque of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station told The Daily Star that a tenant of ward-40 Councillor Anwar Hossain was exploding crackers during a birthday celebration ceremony at his residence in East Rajabazar.

The SI said he immediately rushed to the spot and stopped using of crackers.

Other police stations concerned also confirmed that the sounds were of crackers, not bombs.

Businessman

FROM PAGE 1
looting and setting ablaze several shops at Amishapara Bazar, eyewitnesses said.

They hit Shah Alam with iron rod as he resisted the angry mob from ransacking his shop, said sources.

Critically injured Alam was rushed to a local hospital where the doctor on duty declared him dead.

Talking to reporters, BNP Joint-convenor Mohammad Selim and AL General Secretary AFM Babu of Sonaimuri upazila claimed that Shah Alam was their party activist.

Sonaimuri police recovered the dead body of Shah Alam yesterday morning and sent it to Noakhali Hospital for autopsy.

No case was filed till filing of this report at 8:30pm yesterday. A tensed situation was prevailing in the area over the incident.

Besides, AL activists interfered the BNP activists in placing wreaths at Kabirhat Shaheed Minar leading to a scuffle that injured BNP men Liton, 32, Dulal, 35, Selim, 27, Tafazzal, 32, Shamim, 35, and Nur Uddin, 22.

In another incident, AL activists assaulted Anwa Hossain, Convenor of BNP Chatkhil Upazila and a local BNP leader Shamsul Arefin Shamim while they went to place wreaths at the local Shaheed Minar in Chatkhil early yesterday.

Jubo Dal leader Noman of Hatia upazila was also assaulted while he went to place wreaths at Sag