

Nato

FROM PAGE 20
Meanwhile, Nato summit, gathering more than 50 world leaders, opened in Chicago yesterday with a minute's silence for all those who have fallen in combat around the world.

Led by Nato chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen and US President Barack Obama, the summit leaders stood and bowed their heads as a uniformed US bugler played the taps.

It is the first summit of the 28-member North Atlantic Treaty Organisation on US soil in more than a decade, and comes as the 63-year-old organisation confronts shifting 21st-century realities and shrinking defence budgets.

Earlier, Nato chief vowed: "There will be no rush for the exits. We will stay committed to our operation in Afghanistan and see it through to a successful end."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday, "Germany supports Nato's idea: We went into Afghanistan together and we want to withdraw from Afghanistan together."

Karzai comes armed with a firm demand for \$4.1 billion a year to fund his security forces after the pullout.

Washington is also hoping that Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari will agree to reopen key Nato supply routes into Afghanistan closed in November after US air strikes killed 26 Pakistani troops.

But the US-Pakistani talks on reopening vital supply routes for Nato forces in Afghanistan have stumbled over Islamabad demand to charge steep fees for trucks crossing the border, a senior US official told AFP.

14 injured

FROM PAGE 20
Bhuban Chakma, Ronel Chakma, Kushol Chakma and Belal were undergoing treatment at Rangamati General Hospital while Mongma Marma, Chainu Mong and Athuiching Marma were released after first aid.

"The chest and legs of Jibon Chakma are almost smashed. Condition of another is very serious. They may succumb to their injuries if they do not get proper treatment," said Dr Kayamelia Chakma of Rangamati General Hospital.

The PCP is backed by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

Quoting locals and eyewitnesses, police said assailants on three CNG-run auto-rickshaws hurled the bomb around 4:00pm at Kalyanpur Petrol Pump where the PCP activists with many others were waiting for transport.

"We have documents. Trial for this corruption will be held internationally, if not in the country. As far as the documents are concerned, you [the prime minister] have no chance to prove yourself and your family innocent," she said, referring to her archrival Sheikh Hasina, who is also president of the ruling Awami League.

Khaleda demanded the release of the detained opposition leaders, including the BNP's acting secretary general, and urged people to make the June 11 rally a success.

"The arrests could not weaken the BNP. We have enough leaders and workers. If a group lands in jail, another takes its place. People are the strength of the BNP."

The leader of the opposition broke the seven-hour fast by accepting a glass of juice from Saiara Nawal, the daughter of BNP leader M Ilias Ali, who has been missing since April 17 from the capital.

Khaleda reached the venue nearly an hour after the hunger strike began at 10:40am and sat on the podium with other opposition leaders.

She slammed the government for its "absolute failure to run the country" and blamed it for Ilias' disappearance and the murders of journalist couple Sagor and Rumi.

"Members of the intelligence agency, Rab and Chhatra League picked up Ilias. Government men killed Sagor and Rumi as they got hold of some confidential government documents."

A PCJSS leader was shot dead in Laxmichhari upazila of Khagrachhari early Saturday.



Ashura Majumder and Abdul Mannan Majumder, the proud parents of Nishat, at their Green Road home in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Everest dream

FROM PAGE 1
mother of Nishat, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nishat and her fellow mountaineer MA Muhit were descending from Everest and were expected to reach the base camp today (Monday) and Kathmandu in five days. Nishat began her Everest expedition on April 9 from Kathmandu. She reached the summit on Saturday.

They are expected to arrive in Dhaka next Saturday or Sunday, said Enam Ul Haque, president of Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club (BMTK), which organised the expedition. He said, "Pemba Dorje Sherpa has informed me over the phone around 1:00 pm today (Sunday) that Nishat and Muhit were physically well and that they were on the way to the base camp."

Nishat's father Abdul Mannan said, "It was one of the happiest moments in my life, when I heard that Nishat had succeeded in reaching the summit."

Mannan said Nishat had set another example that women could do everything, given a favourable environment. "Her success will urge all Bangladeshi women to come out of religious and social bigotries and prove their skills," he said.

"We, from our family, always encouraged and supported Nishat, which may be the key factor for her success," said mother Ashura. Bangladesh Astronomical Association had arranged the programme at the peak of Keokradong, Bandarban, to encourage Bangladeshi youths in climbing Mount Everest. The programme was held on 29 May, 2003, and

exactly 50 years ago to that day Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay had conquered Mount Everest.

Nishat as a member of the association had joined the programme. "Many youths were inspired by that event," said association member Mir Shamsul Alam Baboo, who was also there. Joining BMTK in December 2003, Nishat continued trekking and taking part in expeditions with fellow members of the club.

In 2007, Nishat took part in a training programme in Darjeeling Mountaineering Club, said Baboo. She climbed Singu Chuli peak of the Himalayas in 2008. She took part in Makalu Expedition-2009 jointly launched by Bangladesh and India. Nishat conquered Nepal-Bangladesh Friendship Peak in 2010 and took part in the Manaslu peak expedition in 2011.

Musa Ibrahim was the first Bangladeshi to conquer the Everest on May 23, 2010, while MA Muhit, now accompanying Nishat, is the first Bangladeshi who scaled Everest twice.

Felicitations have started pouring in for Nishat.

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus in a statement said, "Bangladeshis all over the world are proud of you [Nishat] for setting your sights high, and making the effort to achieve that goal. You have proved yourself and to everyone what Bangladeshi women are capable of."

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Workers' Party of Bangladesh and Karmajibi Nari also congratulated Nishat.

Propose caretaker

FROM PAGE 1
government or the incumbent president.

Khaleda alleged that the prime minister, her family and relatives had indulged in corruption, and claimed that the opposition had proof of it.

"We have documents. Trial for this corruption will be held internationally, if not in the country. As far as the documents are concerned, you [the prime minister] have no chance to prove yourself and your family innocent," she said, referring to her archrival Sheikh Hasina, who is also president of the ruling Awami League.

Khaleda demanded the release of the detained opposition leaders, including the BNP's acting secretary general, and urged people to make the June 11 rally a success.

"The arrests could not weaken the BNP. We have enough leaders and workers. If a group lands in jail, another takes its place. People are the strength of the BNP."

The leader of the opposition broke the seven-hour fast by accepting a glass of juice from Saiara Nawal, the daughter of BNP leader M Ilias Ali, who has been missing since April 17 from the capital.

Khaleda reached the venue nearly an hour after the hunger strike began at 10:40am and sat on the podium with other opposition leaders.

She slammed the government for its "absolute failure to run the country" and blamed it for Ilias' disappearance and the murders of journalist couple Sagor and Rumi.

"Members of the intelligence agency, Rab and Chhatra League picked up Ilias. Government men killed Sagor and Rumi as they got hold of some confidential government documents."

A PCJSS leader was shot dead in Laxmichhari upazila of Khagrachhari early Saturday.

Sultana Zaman

FROM PAGE 20
complications at the age of 76, says a press release.

She left behind a daughter, a son and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Sultana Zaman, who was born in Natore, launched her career in the film industry with the movie Matir Pahar.

She also acted in several other movies, notably Notun Diganta, Anek Diner Chena, Jowar Elo and Janajani. At a time when Urdu movies began to be produced in the then East Pakistan, Sultana Zaman played a pivotal role beside Shabnam and Rahman in the film Chanda, which created waves in both wings of erstwhile Pakistan. At a later stage, she played the leading lady in the movie Mala, where she was cast opposite leading man Azim.

The late actress was given an award for lifetime achievement at the National Film Awards in 2009.

Sultana Zaman was buried after Zohr prayers at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard yesterday.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad condoled the death of the one-time leading actress of the country.

HC on Ilias

FROM PAGE 1
government to produce BNP leader M Ilias Ali before it.

Deputy Attorney General Rashed S Jahangir said that the hearing on the rule would now be held on May 27.

Following a writ petition filed by Tahsina Rushdir Luna, wife of Ilias, the HC on April 19 issued the rule upon the government authorities concerned to explain why they should not be directed to produce Ilias before it or prove that he was not illegally detained by them.

The HC bench of Justice Abdul Awal and Justice M Ashraful Kamal yesterday deferred the hearing on the matter after Mahbubul Haque Pipul, a lawyer for the petitioner, sought time for giving a reply to the government reports in this regard.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon, another lawyer for the petitioner, told The Daily Star that different law enforcement agencies, including Rapid Action Battalion, have submitted separate reports to the HC, claiming that Ilias Ali is not in their custody since they have not picked up or detained him.

"We will give a reply to the High Court against those reports," he said.

Ilias Ali, former lawmaker and BNP organising secretary (Sylhet Division), along with his driver has been missing since the night of April 17 this year.

Padma bridge

FROM PAGE 1
at the communications ministry.

He said the Malaysian government will submit a final proposal to Bangladesh at the end of this month on financing the bridge's construction work.

"The government will reach a decision in this respect to ensure the interest of the country," said Quader, also in-charge of the railways ministry.

He reiterated that the construction works of the much-talked about bridge will begin within the tenure of the present government.

"The government is committed to building the bridge," he said, hoping that the construction works will start in 10 months.

Replying to a question, Quader said 90 percent preparatory works of the project have been completed. Rehabilitation centres, service areas and yards are also ready for use, he added.

Construction of the Padma bridge became uncertain when the World Bank suspended its funding in the \$2.97 billion project in September last year alleging corruption in the pre-bidding process.

Since then, the government has been looking for alternative funding. On April 10, Bangladesh and Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) as Kuala Lumpur showed its interest to finance the bridge construction.

During yesterday's meeting, the communications minister and the ADB executive director also discussed the progress of implementation of ADB-funded projects in Bangladesh.

Padakhep rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1
good reputation, and claimed that there was no evidence of graft or any financial irregularities in the organisation.

The NGO said Save the Children abruptly terminated a contract with it without giving any reasons. It said Padakhep failed to know the reasons despite frantic efforts and blamed Save the Children and The Global Fund for not showing or sharing any reason for the termination.

The rejoinder, signed by executive director of Padakhep, Iqbal Ahammed, said Padakhep did not accept the termination and took the matter to court.

It said Padakhep did not submit any fake documents; it rather provided all relevant documents, necessary papers and bank information. "As an 'A' category performer and reputed organisation in Bangladesh, Padakhep gave access to all information," says the rejoinder.

The NGO said Bangladesh Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) meeting endorsed its termination from a project subject to the submission of a report on legal process and status of Save the Children to the CCM.

It termed one-sided the sharing of evidence of financial irregularities of Padakhep by Save the Children Country Director Michael McGrath at the CCM meeting and McGrath's claim that Padakhep denied Save the Children and The Global Fund access to relevant information. McGrath's claims should have been validated, said the rejoinder.

Padakhep also contradicted the report that the issue of their corruption dominated the CCM meeting and that the health minister was well aware of it.

The NGO said there was no evidence that Brac and the United Nations Office for Drug and Crime Control (UNODCC) also stopped funding it and termed the information reported in The Daily Star false and motivated, adding that Brac had phased out its activities while the UNODCC project was completed as per contract.

Padakhep is now implementing a project of ICDDR,B, which is also funded by The Global Fund, the rejoinder says.

It rejected the charge of influencing the tender evaluation committee members or government officials for

being qualified for the project. It also denied that its Executive Director Iqbal Ahammed avoided talking to The Daily Star and said the reporter called him once, but did not make any contact later.

Finally, the rejoinder ridiculed the comment of Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International, Bangladesh, saying the matter of corruption of Padakhep is pending in the arbitration tribunal and any early comment on it is a contempt of court.

Any person or organisation hostile to Padakhep should not be a news provider, it added.

OUR REPLY
The Daily Star report was based on official documents of the health ministry and Save the Children, which said that the health ministry recommended Padakhep for a World Bank funded project, though Save the Children terminated the NGO from another project funded by The Global Fund on charges of corruption and fraud. The Daily Star also talked to some health ministry officials who confirmed those allegations.

The Daily Star obtained some documents that show the financial documents Padakhep submitted to bank and Save the Children were not the same.

During an investigation last year, a team from the Office of the Inspector General, an independent unit of The Global Fund, found in Padakhep financial irregularities done through forgery of documents.

The team sought the intervention of the health secretary as Padakhep denied access to their bank documents. They found gross irregularities when they got the genuine bank documents from National Credit and Commerce Bank.

The Global Fund informed Save the Children about it which led to the termination of Padakhep. The Global Fund did not inform Padakhep of it as it was a highly confidential matter. Save the Children issued a termination letter to Padakhep on September 25, 2011, saying the NGO had failed to meet one or more terms and conditions of a sub-grant agreement.

The CCM meeting held at the health ministry on February 2 this year had an extensive discussion on Padakhep where the country director of Save the Children shared some evidence regarding financial irregular-

ities by the NGO. He informed the meeting that Save the Children had the right to terminate the contract within 60 days and ceasing of all activities of the project.

Inquired by the health secretary, Michael McGrath explained that the termination had not been arbitrary and it was legally valid. The CCM suggested all to be more vigilant in monitoring financial issues and develop a system of transparency and accountability to prevent irregularities.

"The CCM endorsed the phased out plan of Save the Children and terminating all agreement with Padakhep. The CCM also asked for a formal written communication from Save the Children on their legal process and status," the minutes of the meetings show.

The health minister and the health secretary were well aware of Padakhep's corruption. Fund Portfolio Manager Artashes Mirzoyan of The Global Fund wrote a letter to the minister informing him about Padakhep's irregularities and misconduct.

McGrath also shared concrete evidence of the irregularities with the minister and the secretary.

The Daily Star talked to officials concerned of Brac and UNODCC who confirmed discontinuing project with Padakhep after Save the Children had terminated Padakhep on finding corruption.

The Daily Star reporter called Iqbal Ahammed who took the reporter's cell phone number so that he could call back. He did not call back. The reporter called Iqbal over his cell phone several times, but he did not pick up the call.

VERSION OF SAVE THE CHILDREN

"We have substantial evidence that the NGO misappropriated the Global Fund money through creating fake bank documents and invoices," Michael McGrath, Save the Children country director, told The Daily Star last week.

He said The Global Fund would release a report soon revealing how Padakhep had misappropriated its funds.

"As per sub-grant contract, Save the Children can terminate the NGO for any reason through giving a 60 days' notice," said McGrath.

The Daily Star stands by its story.

Prof Anwar

FROM PAGE 1
The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Dhaka University, was appointed VC of JU by President Zillur Rahman, who is also JU chancellor under the 1973 act.

"In a bid to restore a peaceful and progressive climate at the university I will hold dialogues with teachers, students and employees' representatives gradually," Prof Anwar said while addressing a press conference at the Senate Hall of JU around 3:00pm, shortly after taking over as VC.

Termining the university as an area of democracy, he said it would be possible to hold elections in various sections if teachers and students of JU cooperated with him.

Several groups of the university community greeted the new VC with floral wreaths. Registrar Abu Bakar Siddique presided over the programme. JU Pro-vice-chancellor Farhad Hossain and Treasurer Nasir Uddin, among others, were present there.

Later, the newly-appointed VC placed floral wreaths at the JU Shaheed Minar and the National Martyrs Memorial.

Prof Shariff resigned as JU VC last Thursday in the face of months-long teachers' and students' protests which weakened the very foundations of the institution.

Fatal ride

FROM PAGE 20
Long tailbacks are an everyday scene on Pragati Sarani as repair and maintenance works on the west side of the road have been going on for a long time, locals told this correspondent.

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station, told The Daily Star that police with the help of locals had seized the covered van and detained its driver Ershadur Rahman.

Dr Kamal

FROM PAGE 20
situation, especially the standoff between the two major parties over several key issues including the caretaker government system.

The Gono Forum chief observed that the country was struck by turmoil, including violence, clash and conflict which are increasing day by day and reaching an alarming level.

The unstable situation which is prevailing in the country would plunge it into deeper crisis "from where comeback to normality will be difficult," he cautioned.

"The standoff may lead the country to a disaster," he warned. People want the problem to be solved peacefully through dialogues, he said.

He also expressed concern over 'forced disappearance', killings and soaring prices of essentials.

Facebook

FROM PAGE 20
groom, reports AFP.

All smiles, Chan, 27, was in sleeveless white dress with lace overlay and 28-year-old Zuckerberg -- famous for his attachment to casual clothes -- in a dark blue suit and tie in a small, verdant outdoor setting with a string of lights behind them.

Tens of thousands of people "liked" Zuckerberg's status change, says AFP.

First met at Harvard over nine years ago, the couple adopted a Hungarian sheepdog named Beast a year ago, and live together in Palo Alto, Zuckerberg's home. They had planned the exchange of vows for four months, says Telegraph.

A company spokeswoman said Zuckerberg designed the ring -- featuring "a very simple ruby" -- himself, according to People magazine.

The ceremony took place in Zuckerberg's backyard in Palo Alto before fewer than 100 guests, including Facebook's Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg.

The guests all thought they were coming to celebrate Chan's graduation but were told after they arrived that the event was in fact a wedding. "Everybody was shocked," said a guest who was authorised to speak for the couple, only on the condition of anonymity, says AP.

Chan graduated from medical school at the University of California, San Francisco, Monday, the same day Zuckerberg turned 28.

Guests dined on food from the couple's favourite restaurants, and nibbled on mouse-shaped chocolates that the pair ate on their first date nine years ago at Harvard, adds Telegraph.

Zuckerberg's sister, Arielle Zuckerberg, posted, "Balls. Now I'm the only unmarried Zuckerberg..." on her Facebook page. She is listed by Chan as a family member on the site, the UK daily says.

Time magazine's Person of the Year in 2010, Zuckerberg started Facebook in his Harvard University dorm room eight years ago. Now the site boasts over 900 million global users.

Facebook's emergence as a cultural phenomenon was depicted in the fictionalised 2010 film "The Social Network."

AFP adds: With its current market value, Facebook is now among the most valuable US companies, ahead of sector giants Amazon (\$96 billion) and Cisco (\$89 billion), and more than twice the value of Ford Motor Co. (\$38 billion).

But it remains behind Google (\$196 billion) and Apple (\$496 billion).

Facebook posted \$3.7 billion in revenue in 2011 and \$1 billion in profit.