

Ekushey observed on no man's land

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi and Indian nationals yesterday observed the International Mother Language Day jointly by holding programmes at zero line along the borders of Hili in Dinajpur and Benapole in Jessore.

They 'ignored' the international land boundary for the day and observed the occasion by holding different events including cultural events and blood donation programmes with the participation from both countries.

They also paid tribute to the Language Movement martyrs by offering floral wreaths at temporarily erected Shaheed Minars.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman attended the event at Hili in Dinajpur arranged by Hakimpur upazila Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

The minister welcomed the Indian nationals at the programme where among others local lawmaker Shibli

Sadiq was present.

Goutam Kumar Chakraborty, editor of a weekly in Kolkata, said India is a country of 300 different languages.

"We are celebrating the day with due respect to Bangladeshi people who saved their mother tongue Bangla through a movement," he said.

In Benapole several hundred people from Bangladesh and India carried banners, festoons and placards and gathered at No Man's Land yesterday.

Officials of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Border Security Force (BSF) of India paid homage to the Language Movement martyrs at a temporary Shaheed Minar erected there.

BGB officials also handed flowers to the BSF on the occasion. The event was held amidst highest security on both sides of the border.

Attending the event, West Bengal Food Minister Jyotipriya Mallick said he was overwhelmed to see friendly people from both countries observing the day together.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



Members of Indian Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh pose for a photograph while observing the International Mother Language Day at Zero Line of Hili border in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Indian foreign secy arrives tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar arrives in Dhaka tomorrow to firm up deliverables ahead of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's state visit to India likely in April.

Jaishankar, who will land in Dhaka from China around 1:45pm after attending the first India-China Strategic Dialogue today, will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and hold a bilateral meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart.

"This is a very brief but significant visit by the Indian foreign secretary since he would come to finalise the dates for the prime minister's visit to India, and discuss a wide range of bilateral and regional issues and review the implementation of the 60-point joint statement issued during the Dhaka visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 6-7 in 2015," said a diplomatic source in Dhaka.

As per the programme schedule, Jaishankar will call on Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali tomorrow afternoon and then will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Later, he will hold a bilateral meeting with the Bangladesh foreign secretary.

The Indian foreign secretary will depart Dhaka on Friday morning for New Delhi by a Jet Airways aircraft.

Diplomatic sources said Jaishankar, during his call on with Hasina, is expected to brief her about the Indian government's plan on the visit.

"The Indian foreign secretary will convey Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to her about New Delhi's readiness to welcome her," said a diplomatic source, adding that this time she would be given a huge reception by the Indian government.

An Indian diplomat in Dhaka told The Daily Star that this would be a very important visit for them and Jaishankar would convey the Bangladesh PM that she will be given a ceremonial welcome.

Earlier, Hasina's trip was deferred twice as both the countries reportedly failed to find a mutually agreeable date over the last couple of months.

The two countries are expected to ink at least two dozen agreements, including those for using Chittagong and Mongla ports by India.

Thank you readers

FROM PAGE 1

The technological challenge we will adapt to and overcome. But the ideological challenge we must fight with every bit of strength we are capable of mustering. For the challenge is not only to journalism but also to our freedoms and to all the fundamental rights that we have learned to take as given.

The most vicious and abrasive challenge to independent media is coming from the elected leader of the land that we look upon as the fountainhead of free and independent media, namely the United States. Nowhere else has the media been termed the "enemy" and journalists called the "most corrupt people anywhere". Sadly the attack on free media is far wider and is almost a global phenomenon. It is also gaining ground in our own region and in our own country.

The irony of the attack is that it emanates both from our failures but more so from our successes. Let me explain.

Part of the reason for the attack on the independent media is our own fault. We have become sloppy, easily persuadable, sometimes purchasable, and are unwilling to do the due diligence that our stories require. Too often we take the easy way out and are willing

to compromise our ethics for personal or institutional gains.

But a bigger reason for the attack is our success -- we are now more able to expose corruption, abuse of power, misuse of public resource, etc and more effective in preventing denial of rights, formulation of black laws, exploitation of the uninformed and the underprivileged, etc.

Hence the media must be discredited, derided, denigrated, abused, its effectiveness curtailed with anti-free media laws and, where possible, media institutions closed down, like it has been done in several countries of the world, including in the US, the Philippines, Egypt and some countries of South Asia, including ours.

The role of the free media is crucial for humanity to survive the era of "post-truth", "alternative facts" and "false news". In countries like ours, a false debate of "Development versus Democracy" is being deliberately generated as if we need to choose one over the other. The experience of all successful developing countries has been that sustained growth only occurs in countries that practise democracy and nurture a free media.

This newspaper is very proud of the great strides that our people have made.

In fact, we take immense satisfaction in our own humble contribution to this phenomenon over the last 26 years made through a pro-people, pro-democracy, pro-accountability and anti-establishment brand of journalism that is usually practised in every democratic society and as we have practised in Bangladesh. We have rejoiced at our every achievement just as we cried out loud in protest at our failures, especially the ones that were so easily avoidable. We support the vision of a "Digital Bangladesh" and would spare no effort to fight corruption.

On the occasion of our 26th anniversary we renew our commitment to valued readers and assure them they will always find us beside them in their attempt to strengthen democracy, defend fundamental rights, make parliament more effective, fight cronyism, establish a progressive and fair business environment and make institutions of accountability effective, and in every other struggle that they may find it necessary to wage. All this the media can and will do, only and only if it remains independent and free.

The writer is the editor and publisher of this newspaper

Ex-MP held as suspect

FROM PAGE 1

Liton was killed after unknown assailants opened fire on him inside his home in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha on December 31 last year.

Later, Liton's sister Tahmida Akhter Kakoli filed the case with Sundarganj Police Station against four to five unknown people.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kader's family members said they suspected that the former MP would be arrested anytime as police members had been deployed around their house since Thursday evening.

The deployment came after Kader collected his nomination for the Gaibandha-1 by-polls scheduled for March 22. He was elected as the MP from the parliamentary seat in the 2008 general elections.

Most of the law enforcers, however, left the area after Kader announced that he would not submit his nomination.

Asked, SP Ashrafur said police were deployed there to provide security to Kader as he had collected his nomination for the by-polls.

Yesterday, police raided the house where Kader and his wife Nasima Akhtar, who is also a doctor, had been practicing for long, said the family

members.

"Police could not show me any arrest warrant while arresting my husband," Nasima told The Daily Star, adding that Kader was taken away in a microbus later.

On Thursday, Kader's driver Hannan and caretaker Shamim were detained from the house for interrogation in connection with the case, said police.

Contacted, Liton's sister Kakoli told this newspaper that she was not aware of Kader's arrest. "He [Kader] should be punished, if he is really involved in the murder."

On Monday, IGP Shahidul Hoque told journalists that the investigation in the case made significant progress. The three attackers of Liton who came on motorbikes were on watch and would be arrested soon.

Liton was elected uncontested as the Gaibandha-1 MP in the 2014 elections. After his death, the constituency fell vacant. The by-polls would be held there on March 22.

Immediately after the murder, law enforcers and several AL leaders said extremists and Jamaat-e-Islami men might have a hand in it. On January 4, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina too blamed Jamaat for the killing.

"Liton was brutally killed due to his

anti-Jamaat-Shibir role and we won't tolerate this murder in anyway," she said.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Rangpur range) Khandker Golam Faruq said, "We are looking into all possible sides but involvement of militants or Jamaat is on top of them".

LITON SISTER'S CAR DAMAGED
Some unidentified people yesterday threw brick chips at the jeep of Liton's elder sister Afroza Bari when she was coming back after paying tributes to the Shaheed Minar in Sundarganj upazila, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Afroza along with some leaders and activists of AL and its associate bodies went to the Shaheed Minar around 9:00am on the International Mother Language Day.

Some of the brick chips hit the rear of the jeep after it reached near Shishu Niketon KG School in the upazila, said local AL leaders.

No one was hurt.

On information, police went to the spot but the criminals had already fled.

Contacted, Officer-in-charge of Sundarganj Police Station Atiar Rahman said he heard about the incident.

74 bodies of migrants wash ashore in Libya

AFP, Tripoli

The bodies of 74 migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe have washed up on a beach west of the Libyan capital, the Red Crescent said yesterday.

Residents of the village of Harcha, outside Zawiya, 45 kilometres from Tripoli, alerted the emergency services after finding a wrecked boat on the beach with bodies inside.

More were discovered elsewhere on the beach and still more were feared to be in the sea.

Photographs posted by the Zawiya Red Crescent on Facebook showed a long row of black and white body bags lined up near the water's edge.

"We don't have an appropriate vehicle to transport the bodies or a cemetery for unidentified bodies to bury them in," the group said.

"Some bodies are still on the beach and others that we can't reach are still floating in the water."

The International Organization for Migration said the boat was reported to have floundered on Sunday, leaving as many as 100 people dead.

"Traffickers reportedly stole the engine and left it to drift," the agency said. "A survivor, reportedly in a coma, was transferred to hospital."

The agency said that if confirmed, the deaths would bring the total number of migrants killed trying to cross the Mediterranean so far this year to more than 365.

It said that 187 migrants were rescued off Zawiya on Saturday, and were currently being held in a detention centre.

The agency said migrant arrivals in Italy had risen sharply this year compared with the same period of 2016.

Book supply

FROM PAGE 16

Of the 5,121 pre-primary students, 4,048 are Marmas, 865 Tripuras and 208 are Chakmas.

Tripura students still did not get any books yet, said Riton Kumar Barua, district primary education officer.

In Bandarban, 83,521 students are studying in 343 schools and around 60 percent of them are from different ethnic minorities, he added.

Contacted, NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha said, "There was a delay in starting the printing procedure of the books for the ethnic minorities, but I think the books have already reached the schools by now."

He added apart from the books, the NCTB was also providing study materials like flipcharts, but there might be delay in sending those to children.

There are also Tangchangya, Mro, Khumi, Pankhua, Lusai, Khyang, Bawm and Chak communities in the hills and each of them has their own language.

Teachers of different schools said the languages of these communities represent a special culture, but their children have no opportunities to

learn in their mother tongue.

Those children are forced to learn a second language and therefore their self-confidence as learners and their interest in what they are learning gradually decline, leading to early dropout, they observed.

"Dialects are like mother and should not be disregarded. It will be a great loss if dialects and mother tongues die out," said Dow My U Marma, headteacher of Kolackong Government Primary School.

U Shwe Mong Marma, a guardian, said, "We dream our children will study in their own languages, raise question without any hesitation and overcome language barriers to seek knowledge."

"We hope the government will take necessary initiatives to that end in future," he said.

Both the guardians and teachers stressed the need for providing training to teachers in necessary language skills and teaching guide.

"Success of the initiative largely depends on the teachers in the classrooms. If the teacher cannot speak the language, students who speak the particular language may fail to understand the lessons," another guardian observed.

7 killed in suicide bomb attack at Pakistan court

FROM PAGE 16

Earlier this month the group vowed a fresh offensive on targets in Pakistan including the judiciary.

"So far seven people have been killed and 15 wounded," Suhail Khalid, district police chief, told AFP, adding that a lawyer was among the dead.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office condemned the latest assault.

"We are a steadfast nation and will not be deterred by such attacks. Our government will continue to fight against terrorist elements and we will succeed," a statement said.

The three attackers had opened fire on police and thrown grenades as they tried to battle their way into the complex, Khalid said.

"Bomb disposal experts told us that each bomber was wearing seven to eight kilograms of explosives," he

told reporters.

Hundreds of people including lawyers, judges and citizens normally attend the court complex.

An AFP reporter at the scene said the area was littered with human remains, while a pile of law books stained with blood and riddled with bullets lay strewn outside an office.

Police scoured the area for evidence as military helicopters whirred overhead. An old man whose four-year-old grandson died in the attack wept.

Another man who witnessed the attack, Muhammad Hussain, said he was about to enter the complex when he heard the blast.

"When I looked up I saw three armed men, hurling grenades and opening fire," said the 35-year-old civil servant, adding he sought shelter in a nearby police barracks from where he

heard the gunbattle.

"This continued for some minutes and then I heard another big bang. Some minutes after a policeman told me that it's all over."

Lawyers and the judiciary are frequent targets in Pakistan. Among last week's assaults was a bomb blast targeting a van carrying judges in Peshawar, which killed their driver.

Last August JuA along with the Islamic State group claimed a suicide bombing in Quetta that killed 73 people, including many of the southwestern city's legal community.

Police and troops had been on high alert in Pakistan after last week's wave of attacks, which killed more than 100 people.

Most, including the Lahore bomb, were claimed by JuA, a faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or

Pakistani Taliban) group.

But the Islamic State group claimed the deadliest of last week's assaults, a suicide bomb at a Sufi shrine in Sindh province on Thursday which killed 90 people and wounded hundreds.

The emergence of IS and a TTP resurgence would be a major blow to Pakistan, which had enjoyed a dramatic improvement in security over the past two years after a military-led crackdown begun in 2014.

Islamabad launched a violent crackdown in the wake of the recent attacks, saying it killed dozens of "terrorists" and carried out strikes on militant hideouts along the border with Afghanistan. Hundreds of families have been displaced by the firing on both sides of the border, according to officials.

UN envoy visits

FROM PAGE 16

how they entered Bangladesh, said Nuruddin Shibli Noman, Ukhaia upazila assistant commissioner (land).

In reply, the refugees told her horrific stories of torture, killing, rape and arson by the Myanmar army. Around 7,000 Rohingyas are living in the slum built on the forest land, he added.

Baki Billah, joint secretary of Bangladesh foreign ministry, Shibli, and officials of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) were with the UN envoy.

She is also scheduled to visit other Rohingya slums today.

Shibli said Lee left for Cox's Bazar town after visiting the slum. She would submit a report to the UN on this visit.

Lee reached Dhaka on Monday on

a three-day visit. The UN special envoy earlier visited Myanmar on January 9 to 21. At that time, she visited Rakhine and Kachin states. During the visit, Lee also met Myanmar State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi and other top government officials.

Later, in a statement issued from Geneva, the UN special envoy said that what was happening in Myanmar could be described in one word "revengeful". Rohingyas were victims of a planned and institutionalised discrimination.

After her visit in Bangladesh, Lee will issue a statement on her experience. She will present a report on Myanmar at the UN Human Rights Council on March 13 with her opinion on the situation of human rights and recommendations to the Myanmar government.