

JCD-ICS clashes on as pact makes no impact

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

Clashes between two pro-government student organisations -- the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) -- are raging across Bangladesh despite last month's pact between them for peace at educational institutions.

Over 70 activists of JCD, student front of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and ICS, backed by the Jamaat-e-Islami, were injured last week in three clashes in Dhaka, Rangpur and Khulna stemming apparently from turf war at educational institutions.

The BNP and Jamaat are the two key constituents of the four-party alliance that took office winning the October, 2001 ballot.

Since December 2001, at least two activists of the JCD and ICS, one from each organisation, have been killed and about 200 injured in such clashes.

After a spate of violence, top leaders of both student fronts at a meeting at the ICS office in Dhaka on October 26 agreed 'not to fight anymore'.

But recent clashes in which at least 50 were injured at Rangpur Medical College on November 11, 10 at Alia Madrasa in Dhaka and 21 at Khulna

MM City College on November 9 shattered the peace.

Shahabuddin Laltu, president of the JCD, pegged the clashes between his front and ICS as misunderstanding between local-level leaders and said: "We have asked leaders of respective educational institutions to resolve the disputes through discussions."

Mujibur Rahman Manju, president of the ICS, said: "Although we had no formal talks with the JCD leaders after recent clashes, we brought the violence to the notice of the prime minister at an iftar party hosted by the Jamaat-e-Islami on Tuesday."

Manju believes the clashes are part of a conspiracy by a section to destroy the four-party alliance.

"The prime minister asked us to mend the discord with the JCD through discussions and we will sit across tables after Ramadan."

The first major gunfight between the JCD and ICS took place at Kushtia Polytechnic Institute on October 6, leaving Shafiqur Rahman, an ICS activist, dead and 25 others injured. Authorities were forced to close the institute indefinitely in the wake of the violence.

Armed activists of the ICS allegedly

killed Hamid Ahmed Khan Doyel, an activist of the JCD, and injured 10 others on Madan Mohan College premises in Sylhet on September 9, 2002.

Ten activists were injured in a clash at Chittagong Polytechnic Institute on September 3 and another 50 in another clash at Rajshahi University on March 27.

On December 31, 2001, eight were injured in a gunfight at Sylhet Government College.

A senior JCD leader, speaking on condition anonymity, said although there were 'good relations' at the top level between the two student organisations, most of the JCD men were unhappy with ICS's presence at educational institutions.

"We have no choice but to maintain friendly ties with our former foe because of BNP's alliance with the Jamaat," he said.

After the last general elections, the JCD and ICS took over the educational institutions as Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of Bangladesh Awami League which was voted out in the polls, vacated their bases.

Injured AL leader dies, Bagerhat tense

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bagerhat district Sramik League President and Chairman of Teligati UP of Morrelganj upazila Sadekul Islam, who was injured in a gun attack on Thursday evening near Gabtala bus stand under Kachua upazila died in the early hours of Friday in the operation theatre of the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

One of the bullets that pierced his lungs could not be dislodged, as the surgeons considered it too risky. His death, however, occurred when preparation was being made to send him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

His body was taken to Bagerhat town after autopsy at the KMCH morgue. The first namaj-e-janaza was held after Juma prayers at the Swadhinata Square, which was attended by a large number of people including leaders of all political parties. However, no leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami was seen attending the janaza. Notable among those present were Bagerhat district AL President and former state minister

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NOT SEEN BEFORE: A woman scythes grass in the dried-out lake of Zia Udyan. Constructors dismantled the bridge over the lake and pumped water out of it to build a tunnel, but the pace of the work has slowed to a crawl.

Declare monga-hit pockets of north disaster areas: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Main opposition party Awami League yesterday asked the government to declare monga-affected pockets in the northern region as 'disaster areas' and open gruel kitchens to save lives.

After conducting relief work in four upazilas of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur and Nilphamari districts on November 12, the AL leaders held a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office here yesterday, asking the government to take immediate steps for the *Monga*-hit areas.

Monga is a famine-like situation during the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik every year due to lack of farm work.

"To tackle the devastating *monga* crisis, programmes like VGF, TR and *Kabikha* must be initiated soon to accelerate food supply," AL Joint Secretary Mukul Bose told reporters.

"We saw many people suffering from various diseases as they are eating inedible foods," he said urging the government to immediately send medical teams to the

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AL turns down invitation to join parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Coalition leader Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday called upon the main opposition Awami League (AL) to attend the parliament session that opens tomorrow ending its prolonged boycott to the immediate dismissal of the AL.

In a statement last night, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan pegged the opposition boycott as unfortunate and claimed that the AL had not responded to the government's repeated efforts to break the stalemate over 'trivial issues'.

He advised the AL not to dream of 'anything else other than democracy' and return to the Jatiya Sangsad.

But talking to The Daily Star AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil dismissed the offer, saying it was not possible for the party to join the November 16 session as all three preconditions to the government for attending parliament went unmet.

The AL has been boycotting the Jatiya Sangsad since the budget

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Low-cost arsenic tracking device awaits lavish fund

CHARLOTTE JACQUEMART

Two Swiss institutions have jointly developed a test to instantly detect arsenic contamination in the water from tube wells.

The Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (EAWAG) and the Department of Microbiology at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, which developed the test, are now looking for laboratories in South Asian countries to develop the test on a larger scale.

The developers estimate that the test, Biosensor which is available in the shape of a paper strap, could find its way into the market at a price between Tk 1-2 if produced on a large scale.

"It is an easy way by which local people can test their water wells on the spot to find out whether or not the water is safe," explains Professor Jan Roelof van der Meer from the

University of Lausanne, responsible for the project. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and EAWAG are jointly funding the project.

Biosensor is made of a paper strap containing bacteria and arsenic in water causes the paper strap to change colour. When held in the water for about an hour, the intensity of colour change will show people immediately how high the concentration of arsenic is.

"It is an alternative for people in the remote areas where there are no laboratories available to test water safety," Meer adds.

The International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) in Dhaka estimates that almost 30 million people in Bangladesh are exposed to dangerous levels of arsenic in their drinking water.

Over the last two decades, tube

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Khaleda in Madina

UNB, Madina

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday arrived in Madina en-route to Makkah to perform Umrah.

Senior Saudi government officials received her at Prince Mohammad Bin Abdul Aziz International Airport.

A large number of Bangladeshis living in Madina welcomed the prime minister on her arrival at Hotel Oberoi in the holy city.

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PHOTO: STAR

A training aircraft of Bangladesh Flying Academy sits in the hangar of Zia International Airport with its left propeller damaged after mechanical glitches forced it to crash-land.

DOWN TO EARTH

Flower trade in city booming

ASM NURRUNABI

By and large, love for flowers is ingrained in us. But in recent years, it seemed that a revolution had taken place in Dhaka citizen's attitude towards flowers. A new outlook is evidenced in the widespread interest shown by them, so much so that such interest seems to have become institutionalised. On the occasions of marriage, birth and wedding anniversaries or, in fact, on any big functions, presentation of flowers has become an established practice.

There are several areas in the city which bear witness to our new interest in flowers. More conspicuous among them are the Shahbagh

and Katabon areas. These are regarded as the hub of the city's flower market where business worth thousands of taka is conducted every day.

It is understood that sales of flowers as per orders of customers are more profitable than the retail type. And such sales on orders are said to be very considerable. For the paraphernalia of wedding arrangements, such as decoration of the bridegroom's car, flower arrangements for the bride and decoration of the nuptial chamber, flowers are indispensable. For such purposes, transactions in the flower market are greater in volume.

Previously the space in front

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