

# Grabbers eye Jalalabad Park

## Protesters stage human chain, rally in Sylhet

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

People, joined by former city fathers held a rally and formed a human chain in Sylhet protesting a move to grab the historic Jalalabad Park by influential including some ward commissioners belonging to political parties.

Sylhet unit of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) organised the programmes, held in front of the park.

BELA on November 2 last year served a legal notice on Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor and some others, holding them responsible for allowing the land grabbing. But the legal notice was not even relied, BELA sources said yesterday.

Speakers at the rally include former chairman of Sylhet

Pourashava AFM Kamal, its former vice-chairman Prof Mohammad Shafique, former MPA Muhammad Ashraf Ali, former secretary of Sylhet District Bar Association EU Shahidul Islam.

They called upon the government to take immediate steps to save the park. Sources said some powerful groups are preparing to build a commercial complex and a multi-storied shopping mall there, ignoring protests by people.

Some ward commissioners belonging to ruling BNP and opposition Awami League are involved in the move to grab the parkland, the sources claimed.

Jalalabad Park, located near Keane Bridge, was the lone venue in the city for holding public meeting

during movement against British rule.

The sources claimed that ward commissioners at a meeting on March 24 decided to construct a market on the 2.5 acre of land of the park.

The grabbers have managed a 'verbal approval' from the SCC Mayor and obtained permission for lease of the lands from LGRD ministry, in which an influential leader of Sylhet City BNP played a vital role, they claimed.

They had taken their first initiative in May last year to grab the land and build a market there but kept the process suspended following protests by different organisations including BELA.

"Now, things are moving fast but

secretly" a source in BELA told this correspondent yesterday.

When contacted, Sylhet city BNP President Ariful Haque Chowdhury declined to make any comment, but claimed that the Mayor as well as some ward commissioners were in favour of construction of the shopping mall at the park. "What can I do alone", he said.

However, when asked, SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran expressed innocence about the land grabbing move.

Jalalabad Park was once an attractive place for recreation. It started losing its glory with rapid urbanisation and commercialisation of the area. Located at the heart of the city, part of it was leased temporarily to a private nursery years ago.

## Speedy Trial Tribunal goes without case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal has no case for trial after the delivery of its last verdict by judge Abdus Samad on Thursday.

The tribunal may resume work if the Home Ministry monitoring cell sends any case for trial, the judge told this correspondent on Saturday. Tribunal sources said it delivered verdicts in 83 sensational cases in last three years. Ninety-eight convicts were sentenced to suffer life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) each, 16 to suffer 10 years RI each and 41 others were acquitted of charges. None was given death penalty in any case out of 105 cases.

Verdict of 98 out of 105 cases were delivered during the entire period since it began work from December 9, 2002. Accused in 41 cases were acquitted due to lack of evidence.



PHOTO: STAR  
Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) doing rehearsal in DC Hill area in Chittagong yesterday to ensure security during Pabela Baishakh celebrations in the city tomorrow.

## Anti-crime drive in SW region sees little success

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The ongoing special drive being conducted jointly by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police in the southwestern (SW) region is yet to see any major success.

The drive, launched on March 28, was aimed at arresting 42 most wanted criminals and 3,000 operatives of five underground parties.

The most wanted criminals include 15 of PBCP-Janajuddho, 10 of New Biplobi Communist Party, 11 of PBCP-M-L faction, two of PBCP Lal Pataka and four Chhinomul Communist Party.

According to sources in different intelligence agencies, 42 most wanted criminals include Janajuddho founder Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan and operation commander in Khulna division Abir Hasan, PBCP (M-L) chief Sajjad Hossain and its operation commander Jamal Ahmed.

## 15-POINT DEMAND

# Rangpur Nagorik Committee gives Apr 21 deadline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rangpur Nagorik Committee has given the government a deadline till April 21 to meet its 15-point demand and threatened to launch tougher agitation for non-compliance.

The deadline was given at a meeting of the committee held at the auditorium of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industries (RCCI).

The demands include declaration of Rangpur division, setting up a university, an engineering college and an education board, pipeline gas supply and construction of a bridge over Teesta river.

The meeting was presided over by Nagorik Committee President Mohammad Afzal.

The meeting decided that

programmes for demonstration, human chain, public meeting and hartal will be announced after April 21.

Prime Minister Begum Khalada Zia may visit Rangpur on April 21, sources said.

Speakers at the meeting said the ruling party had pledged before 2001 election that an education board would be set up in Rangpur, but that has not been fulfilled.

The former government had decided to set up a science and technology university in Rangpur but the present government cancelled the plan, they claimed.



Ablown away CI sheet atop a tree (left) and a tore down house in Karli village in Netrakona Sadar upazila after Tuesday's nor'wester.



PHOTO: STAR

## Traders, activists of BNP front bodies clash in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Three persons including a policeman were injured in clashes between traders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal (JJD) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), youth and student fronts of ruling BNP at Kalaroa yesterday.

The traders later barricaded the Satkhira-Jessore road in front of Kalaroa Pilot High School fort about an hour.

The injured persons are Kalaroa upazila BNP organising secretary and general secretary Kalaroa

upazila Traders Association Sirajul Islam, 50, association leader Pintu and Sub-inspector Anisur Rahman. The policeman was injured when a team tried to quell the violence.

Traders and activists of JJD and JCD brought out separate processions at the upazila headquarters, blaming each other for the violence.

Activists of JJD and JCD also attacked and damaged some of the business establishments.

Quoting eyewitnesses, police said, a group JJD and JCD activists led by Kalaroa upazila JJD general secretary Abdul Kader Bachchu,

JJD leader and Koila Union Parishad chairman Abdur Rakib and Kalaroa pourasava JCD president Merin yesterday beat Chanchal and Billal, sons of two traders, suspecting them to be robbers and handed them over to police.

To retaliate, some traders beat Merin when he was returning home.

Soon after, activists of JJD and JCD attacked some shops in the area, which triggered the clashes.

## Baby killed, 75 hurt as nor'westers lash two districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A baby was killed and at least 75 people were injured as nor'westers hit two unions in Netrakona in Tuesday and six villages in Gaibandha Monday night.

Our Netrakona Correspondent reports: One-year-old Anuarul Islam, son of Rafiqul Islam of Karli village in Sadar upazila was killed and at least 50 people were injured when a nor'wester battered 11 villages, making over 300 families homeless, administration sources said.

Three seriously injured persons were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and the rest were taken to Netrakona Sadar Hospital.

The affected villages are Challisa Bazar, Rajendrapur, Nagua, Barshikura, Amla in Challish union and Charpara, Bahadurpur, Kachuduary, Balijuri, Karli, Gopalpur and Baragara in Rouha union.

IRRI-Boro paddy on over 200 acres were damaged by the nor'wester. Deputy Commissioner Hossain Jamil and Police Superintendent Ali Hossen Fakir visited the affected areas.

No relief material reached the affected people till yesterday, the victims said.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: At least 25 people were injured when a nor'wester swept over six villages in Fulchari and Shaghata upazilas Monday night.

Over 600 houses and seven educational institutions were razed to the ground and IRRI-Boro paddy on vast tracts of land, almost ready for harvest, were damaged by hails during the storm.

Power supply in the areas remained snapped for over 12 hours as many of the poles were uprooted.



PHOTO: STAR  
Angry people digging the road to create barricade after their buses on way to Miladunnai function were stuck up near the ramshackle Karnaphuli bridge in Chittagong yesterday.

3.5X3

4.5X3

6x2

6X3