

Police, polytech instt students clash in Bogra: Seven injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least seven people, including a police official, were injured in a clash between the police and students of Bogra Polytechnic Institute yesterday.

The clash erupted after the students barricaded Bogra-Sherpur road in protest against extortion by local hoodlums.

The students also vandalised Islamia Hospital, two shops, several vehicles and the residence of the principal of the institute during the clash.

Police said a gang of local hoodlums, led by one Babu, beat two students -- Jakir and Anwar -- at around 9:00pm as they refused to pay toll.

Later, the two along with several hundred students of North and South dormitories chased the gang who took fled away.

Assuming that the extortionists took shelter in the Islamia Hospital nearby, the students laid siege to the hospital and vandalised the vehicles and shops and barricaded the road.

Meantime, the police rushed to the spot and chased the students who also chased the law enforcers. Seven people, including the OC of Bogra Sadar Police Station, were injured in the melee.

The students then retreated from the road and attacked the house of the principal.

Additional police forces have been deployed outside the institute.

54 injured in clash over land dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Fifty-four people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at 8:30am yesterday at Hatbari village under Batiaghata upazila of Khulna district.

The injured were admitted to different clinics and Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Former BCL leader killed

BDNEWS, Lakshmpur

A former Chhatra League leader was killed by a group of alleged BNP cadres at Ramganj in Lakshmpur on Thursday night failing to realise toll money.

The dead was identified as Md Manik, 25, son of Mir Harun, a local Awami League leader.

Sources said the miscreants claiming themselves as BNP cadres demanded Tk one lakh as toll from Manik after he returned from Kuwait recently.

As Manik rejected their demand, they picked him up from a tea stall near his house at about 1:00pm on Thursday.

They chopped Manik indiscriminately and left him at Karpara in Ramganj in a critical condition.

Later, he was admitted to a local health complex where he succumbed to his injuries at about 10:00pm on Thursday.

DEMRA-SHYAMPUR AREA

'Solve water, power crises immediately'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demra-Shyampur Pani-Bidyut Sangram Committee yesterday demanded immediate solution to prevailing water and power crises in the area.

The committee also threatened to go for tougher agitation if their 10-point demand are not met immediately.

The demands included permanent solution to water and power crises, repairing of Shanir Akhra water pumps, construction of a

foot over-bridge, demolishing illegal establishments, compensation of the injured and assurance that no case would be filed against those who took part in the agitation.

Addressing a rally to press home the demands, committee Convener Mosleh Uddin Masud said if anyone tries to foil their agitation through torture and repression they will be given befitting reply.

"Until our demands are fulfilled, we will be on the streets," he said

while addressing the rally on the premises of Barnamala Adarsha High School at Shanir Akhra.

Masud announced a 20-day agitation programme that includes distribution of leaflets, formation of volunteers' committee, exchange of views with the seniors and ensuring water to those who are facing serious water problem.

He alleged that many people could not join the rally due to threats by the cadres of Salauddin Ahmed MP.

Outlaws kill three in Meherpur, Rajbari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals allegedly belonging to an outlawed party killed three people in three different incidents in Meherpur and Rajbari on Thursday night.

Meherpur police said members of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddha faction stormed the house of Asher Ali at Barabamundi of Gangni upazila and kidnapped him at gunpoint.

Taking him to a nearby field the gang slaughtered him and hung his body upside down from a tree.

Police recovered the body yesterday and sent it to Meherpur General Hospital for an autopsy.

In another incident at Harbhanga in the same upazila, a member of an outlawed party shot his own brother dead.

The incident happened following a feud between them over share of their ancestral properties.

Manun around 12:00midnight shot his elder brother Monirul as he was sleeping in his room and fled the scene.

Family members tried to take Monirul to Gangni Upazila Health Complex but he succumbed to his injuries on the way.

Police sent the body to Meherpur General Hospital yesterday morning for an autopsy.

Meanwhile, Rajbari police said armed cadres of New Biplobi

Communist Party (NBCP) shot dead Atiur Rahman, general secretary of Khet Mujur Samity, Rajbari district unit, when he was returning home at Radhakantapur in Sadar upazila around 10:30pm.

Police quoting some witnesses said a gang ambushed Atiur as he reached Binodpur. They shot him five times in the head, chest and abdomen point-blank leaving him dead on the spot. Police arrested two people on suspicion of their involvement in the killing.

Husband beats wife to death

UNB, Sirajganj

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband at Dhangara Pramanikpara village in Raiganj yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Selina Khatun, 24, wife of Raushan Ali.

Police and local sources said Raushan had an altercation with Selina at about 11:00am over a family feud. At one stage, he started beating Selina with a stick, leaving her dead on the spot.

Raushan went into hiding soon after the incident.

Two more credit card racketeers arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested two more members of an international racketeers' syndicate, along with seven credit cards of a local bank, during a raid on Motijheel, Sutrapur and Pallabi areas in the city on Thursday.

The arrestees are Yusuf Kabir and Abdus Sattar who admitted that they used to buy products from different shops in the city and swindle the shopkeepers out of money with these credit cards, said a press release of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

An investigation by the Detective Branch (DB) police revealed that an international racketeers' syndicate have been cheating people out of a huge amount of money with the credit cards issued by a section of corrupt officials of the bank.

On May 15, DB police also arrested two members of the gang, along with three credit cards, two passports, two sets of spectacles worth Tk 26,000, and a receipt for credit card payment.

Hunt is going on to arrest other members of the syndicate, said the press release.

88 appointed against 53 positions in Islamic University

BDNEWS, Kushtia

A syndicate meeting of Islamic University, Kushtia, yesterday finalised appointments of 88 people in different wings of the university including administration against a vacancy of 53 positions.

This news surprised many, as number of people appointed is more than the need of the university.

University sources said, of the 88 appointed, 48 were vice-chancellor's candidates, 20 were referred by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and 10 by Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Besides, 10 were appointed under freedom fighters' quota.

Concerned quarters believe that already with a deficient budget, the large-scale appointment beyond necessity will only worsen the financial crisis of the university.

Dowry claims yet another life

UNB, Mymensingh

A housewife was strangled allegedly by her husband and in-laws over dowry at Hbabki village in Muktagachha Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Sahera, 20, wife of Harun.

Police and local sources said Harun married Sahera, daughter of Musa Haq, two years ago. But Sahera's family failed to give dowry money, which was fixed before the marriage.

As Sahera's father did not meet Harun's demand, he used to torture his wife and asked her to bring the money.

On Thursday night, Harun and other family members tortured and strangled Sahera, sources said.

Police recovered the body early yesterday and arrested Harun and three of his family members in connection with the killing.

Debate festival held in Mymensingh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day debate festival and workshop ended at Mymensingh on Thursday where sixty students from ten different educational institutions were trained in different techniques of debate specially language exercise, pronunciation and public speaking.

Youth Ending Hunger, Shishu Sangbadik Forum and National Debate Federation jointly organised the festival at the auditorium of Khamarbari in Mymensingh.

Anonda Mohan College Debating Society and National Debate Federation organised another daylong debate festival at the auditorium of Anonda Mohan College on Thursday.

National Debate Federation Moderator and National Television Debate Competition Director Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron inaugurated the festival.

Death anniversary



On the occasion of the first death anniversary of ARM Harun ur Rashid, managing director of Madonna Group, a doa mahfil will be held at his residence at 3/6 Lalmatia, Block # C, after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers have been requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Mia Fazlur Rahman



Today is the 78th death anniversary of Pandit Mia Fazlur Rahman, an educationist and social worker, says a press release.

He was the founder of Ghorashal High School.

To mark the day, different programmes will be held at his village home at Ghorashal and at Ghorashal Poursava.

Adv Md Altaf Hossain



The first death anniversary of Advocate Md Altaf Hossain of Jessore will be observed today, says a press release.

Qurankh-wani and a milad and doa mahfil will be held at 'Sardar Bari' mosque at Kashimpur village in Monirampur after Asr prayers.



Road digging at Swamibagh in the city has been going on for about a month, causing inconvenience to the commuters. Situation will get worse as monsoon looms.

Bangladeshi restaurant wins Tiffin Cup in London

UNB, London

The Taj Mahal, a Bangladeshi restaurant in Pembrokeshire, won the Tiffin Cup 2006 at the first-ever culinary event held on Tuesday at The House of Commons where over 70 MPs celebrated South Asian cuisine for charity.

Over 40 South Asian restaurants throughout Britain were nominated for the Tiffin Cup 2006 by their local MPs, which were whittled down to a shortlist of 14.

These lucky 14 then took part in a landmark cook-in at the House of Commons, preparing their signature dishes for a judging panel of celebrity chefs such as Lloyd Grossman and Ainsley Harriott and

television foodies, including Nina Wadia from TV's 'Goodness Gracious Me!'

Restaurants acknowledged as highly commended by the judges were Bombay Dreams from the Brent South constituency headed by Dawn Butler MP, Aagrah based in Shipley, Mirch Masala in Tooting with Sadiq Khan MP and Sukhi's Indian Cuisine in Darwen.

Lloyd Grossman commented, "We have experienced some high art and creativity this evening and British cuisine is certainly enriched by Asian cooking and is by no means seen as a cheap alternative anymore."

With more South Asian restaurants in London than in Mumbai

and Delhi put together, they all make a colourful culinary contribution to the multicultural British Food industry and also raise a greater awareness and understanding of Britain's Asian culture.

The Tiffin Cup 2006 was organised by Michael Fabricant MP, John Barrett MP and Leicester East MP, Keith Vaz, who also jointly head up The Tiffin Club, formed in 2005.

All MPs in attendance and guests raised over £2,000 for the Roko Cancer Appeal, which aims to create India's first mobile breast cancer unit and TB Alert, the only charity to fight TB both in the UK and India, including proceeds from the Tiffin auction.

Some apes, birds can think ahead, studies show

REUTERS, Washington

Apes that remember to carry the right tools to retrieve treats and jays that hide food a second time when they think a rival is watching prove animals can think ahead -- a trait once believed to be uniquely human, scientists have found.

Two carefully planned sets of experiments published yesterday in the journal Science show intelligent birds and great apes can plan into the future in a way that transcends simple food caching, as squirrels, foxes and other animals do.

"Planning for future needs is not uniquely human," Thomas Suddendorf of the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, wrote in a commentary.

"Apes and jays can also anticipate future needs by remembering past events, contradicting the notion that such cognitive behaviour only emerged in hominids."

In one experiment, Nicholas Mulcahy and Josep Call of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, tested bonobos, close relatives of chimpanzees, and orangutans at the local zoo.

They set up several experiments that required the apes to remember a complex way to retrieve a treat and offered them the opportunity to use tools to do so.

So far, observations of tool use and planning have involved only immediate hunger on the part of the animals, which does not involve long-term thinking, Mulcahy and Call argued.

"Thus, when chimpanzees transport stones to use them to crack open nuts, or New Caledonian crows make hook-shaped tools to fish for insects, they do so in an attempt to satisfy their current hunger state, not some future one," they wrote.

In one experiment, they rigged up a metal cylinder with a piece of uncooked spaghetti holding two bunches of grapes.

"To obtain the reward subjects had to break the spaghetti by inserting a plastic tube through the top hole over the cylinder. That caused the grapes to fall down and hang in front of the bottom holes thus allowing subjects access to them," the researchers wrote.

In another test, the apes had to use a metal hook to fish out a bottle of grape juice.

To pass the tests, the apes had to remember to bring the right tool out of the room with them, and bring it back with them some time later. Both orangutans and bonobos passed the tests several times, the researchers said.

"Together with recent evidence from scrub jays, our results suggest

that future planning is not a uniquely human ability, thus contradicting the notion that it emerged in hominids only within the past 2.5 to 1.6 million years," Mulcahy and Call wrote.

Joanna Dally of the University of Cambridge in Britain and colleagues tested captive scrub jays, and saw the birds could remember which other birds were watching them when they first hid some treats.

If a bird dominant to the jays saw them store their food, the jays would move the cache later when the dominant bird was not watching.

But if the bird allowed to watch the treat being hidden was subordinate, or a mate, the jays did not later re-cache their food -- presumably because they could fight off subordinates that try to steal their food, the researchers wrote.

"These results suggest scrub-jays remember who observed them make specific caches," Dally's team wrote.

Jays are members of a group of birds called corvids, which include crows, jays and ravens and which biologists consider to be the most intelligent species of bird.

Right to information left in the cold

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But Information Minister M Shamsul Islam expressed his ignorance about the draft law sent by the law ministry. "I am not yet aware of it," he told The Daily Star.

In absence of people's right to information, the constitutional guarantee of freedoms of speech and expression of every citizen becomes futile, the law commission observed and lamented that Transparency International has been ranking the country as the most corrupt in the world since 2001.

Justice Naimuddin also emphasised the need for such a law to ensure open flow of information to facilitate the fight against corruption, as he said, "Right to information is very essential to combat corruption." In his opinion, people have the right to know any information, except some classified ones.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan echoed Naimuddin, saying, "Of course, right to information is very urgent to combat graft."

"The Official Secrets Act should be repealed, as it is a major obstacle to transparency and accountability [of the government]," the ACC chair told The Daily Star Wednesday.

Corruption takes root in societies due to lack of government accountability and transparency, and the habit of secrecy eats away at the economic vitality of nations, experts in the field observed.

They pointed out that Bangladesh does not have any law specifically recognising people's right to information, rather several laws have been existing for a couple of hundred years prohibiting that right.

Although the country ratified the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 on September 6, 2000, no one knows for certain whether and when a law will be enacted providing the people with access to information.

As a signatory to the convention, Bangladesh is obliged to make available to its citizens all kinds of information except those that are necessary to protect national security and to avoid interference with privacy of citizens.

"For the sake of transparency in the democratic process and good governance in our country, public access to information is essential. Again, freedom of information is indispensable for a citizen to bring his grievance before administrative authorities or the court of law for redress," Bangladesh Law Commission said in its working

paper.

"If the general public remain ignorant about the affairs of the state touching on their fate and welfare, it will amount to travesty of democracy," it maintained.

A 2003 report of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives (CHRI) pointed out that Bangladesh is one of the 12 Commonwealth countries without a freedom of information law. It also elaborated on "habits of secrecy" that contribute to corruption and leeches away economic lifeblood.

The report said the remaining 42 of the 54-member Commonwealth either have specific laws guaranteeing access to information or explicit constitutional guarantees.

Giving backgrounds to the culture of secrecy, the CHRI report said, "Colonial authorities, which owed no duty to subject populations, purposefully used secrecy to signal their power and distance. A culture of secrecy permeated government, and systems to keep information from the public became embedded."

Although the constitution guarantees freedoms of speech and expression for every citizen, no government of Bangladesh has enacted a law recognising people's right to information, albeit subject to certain reasonable restrictions

imposed by law. The constitution also guarantees freedom of press.

In absence of people's right to information the constitutional guarantees have become void. "It has been said that the notion of freedom of thought and conscience and of speech, and also the notion of rule of law become nugatory if the public, for the sake of which the state exists, is deprived of access to information," the law commission observed.

There is no statute in force in Bangladesh specifically recognising people's right to information and providing procedure for its implementation. But there are certain prohibitory laws namely -- Section 5(1) of Official Secrets Act, 1923, Sections 123 and 124 of Evidence Act, 1872, Rules 28(1) of the Rules of Business, 1996, Rule 19 of Government Servants (Conduct) Rules 1979 and the Oath (affirmation) of Secrecy under the constitution.

Considering the existing laws that restrict free flow of information, Bangladesh Law Commission proposed enacting right to information act, empowering the people with access to information. It also proposed punitive actions if any official refuses to provide any individual with required information.