

'Demarcate maritime boundary to protect natural resources'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over the exploration of oil and gas by neighbouring countries within the Bangladesh maritime boundary, the environmentalists yesterday demanded of the government to initiate formal discussions with those countries immediately to stop the exploration.

The demand was made from a human chain and rally organised by Save the Environment Movement in front of the Mazar Gate of High Court in the city.

Speakers at the rally demanded formation of an action team for demarcating maritime boundary of the country as per the Territorial

Waters and Maritime Act 1978.

They also demanded formal negotiations with India and Myanmar to halt their exploration within the Bangladesh maritime boundary.

Their other demands included preparation of a list of resources available within the maritime boundary, formation of a high level monitoring cell at the Prime Minister's Office and a discussion on the issue at the budget session of parliament.

Presided over by Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah, convener of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Port, the speakers also demanded formation of a negotiating team comprising representa-

tives from the ministries of energy and mineral resources, defence and foreign affairs for bargaining at bilateral, regional and international levels.

Convener of Save Environment Movement Abu Naser Khan, Khondoker Reaz Hossain, President of Gorki Welfare Foundation Dr Jesmine Ara Sathi, President of Dhaka Bar Association Abul Kalam Azad, President of Sylhet Bibhag Ummayyeh Parshad Abed Reza, Jahangir Juboraj of Greenforce, Advocate Abul Kalam Azad, Ruhul Amin, Haji Ansar Ali and Nazim Uddin also spoke on the occasion.

PROGRESS IN KEY AREAS

Graft, political polarisation pose threat to society

Says US Congressman

UNB, Dhaka

Chairman of the US House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Congressman James Leach has said Bangladesh has made impressive strides in some key areas, including agricultural production, literacy rates, basic social services, and empowering women, despite many handicaps.

"As the fourth most populous Muslim country in the world, Bangladesh's voice of moderation in regional and world affairs is widely acknowledged," he said in an opening statement at a hearing at the International Relations Subcommittee on May 17.

Congressman Leach, however, said, "Endemic political polarisation, corruption and related governance concerns, and the rise of violent extremists all pose substantial challenges for Bangladeshi society."

Recalling that Bangladesh and the United States have been close friends since 1971, he said the subcommittee is interested in learning how the US intends to work with Bangladesh to advance human rights and democracy objectives.

He particularly expects free and fair national elections in Bangladesh in 2007.



Two boys dive into Buriganga river to cool off as a heatwave sweeps the country. The photo was taken from Sawarighat area in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Save the Environment Movement forms a human chain in front of the High Court in the city yesterday demanding steps to protect national resources.

PHOTO: STAR

MURDER OF JUBO LEAGUE ACTIVIST

Protest processions in Sylhet

Half-day hartal today, tomorrow in South Surma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Agitating traders and locals of South Surma brought out a mourning procession in the area after Juma prayers yesterday protesting killing of a young trader by JCD cadres.

Ayub Ali, 30, also a Jubo League activist and owner of an engineering workshop in the city's South Surma area, who was attacked by JCD cadres on Wednesday night, succumbed to injuries at a private clinic at about 9:00pm on Thursday.

Carrying the body of Ayub, the protesters chanted slogans demand-

ing immediate arrest of the killers. They also held a protest rally at the Lawai area with Liakot Miah, president of Habib Market Bayboshayee Samity, in the chair.

Bangabir Road Bayboshayee Samity called a half-day hartal in South Surma area today.

On the other hand, Sylhet district and city Jubo League also brought out a mourning procession as part of their 3-day programme. City Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed, who is also city AL chief, as well as other leaders, joined the procession.

The three-day programme of Jubo

League includes protest rally today and half-day hartal in South Surma tomorrow.

Meanwhile, a group of Jubo League men ransacked four rooms of JCD and Shibir men at Protiva Chhatrabash, a dormitory of Sylhet Polytechnic Institute. The rooms include one of Swapon, an accused in the killing case.

Besides, the agitators damaged 'Alor Polhey', a private healing centre for drug addicts at Chandipul area, which is owned by District JCD vice president Tazrul Islam.

JUDGES' KILLING CASE

Eyewitness succumbs to injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT

One of the eyewitnesses in judges' killing case succumbed to his injuries at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (SBMCH) yesterday.

The victim, Abdul Mannan, 55, was a peon of Jhalakathi Judge Court.

He was injured by a police protocol van for Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary general of BNP, during his visit to Bakerganj on May 14.

Victim's family sources said Mannan, a resident of Kandapasha village under Nalchity upazila in Jhalakathi district, was going to Dapdapia from Rupatali by tempo on that day.

The police van hit the tempo, injuring five passengers, including Mannan, near the Anchor Cement Factory.

With other injured, Mannan was rushed to SBMCH where he died yesterday morning.

POWER CRISIS IN KHULNA

Security stepped up as mass agitation feared

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Security measures have been stepped up at Goalpara Power Plant and Khulna Power Supply Office since Thursday night fearing attack from angry people who are seething with discontentment owing to frequent power outages.

Similar security measures have been taken at all Palli Bidyut offices in the district where different action committees formed earlier this month have threatened mass agitation.

The situation further aggravated when the national grid stopped supplying electricity during peak hours from Thursday morning.

The 110-megawatt power plant in Khulna had been closed since last few days due to major mechanical breakdown. An expert is expected to reach Khulna today to sort out faults of the plant, said sources at Western Zone Power Distribution Company Limited (WZPDCL).

They however said the situation is unlikely to improve in near future as the total demand of electricity in 21 districts is 580 megawatt a day, but the company supplied only 166 megawatt on Thursday.

Over 10,000 small, medium and big mills and factories in Khulna and Barisal divisions including greater

Faridpur are sustaining heavy losses due to power outages.

Action committees of nine Palli Bidyut Samity have already threatened WZPDCL authorities to remain prepared for any eventuality.

Leaders of Khulna Jubo Sangram Parishad asked the company high-ups to improve power supply before the situation goes out of control.

The threat was given in a statement issued to the press on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, officials and employ-

ees of Dumuria, Paikgachha, Batiaghata and Koiria Palli Bidyut Samities met officers-in-charge (OCs) of their respective police stations yesterday to seek their security in case of any attack.

The discontentment of people is brewing up and it might burst into agitation any time, said President of Paikgachha Upazila Small Traders' Association Shaikh Fakhrul Alam.

150 shanties, six shops gutted in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

A fire yesterday gutted at least 150 shanties, six shops and damaged properties worth over Tk 5 lakh at Hajipara of Agrabad in the port city leaving around 1,000 people homeless.

Fire service sources said the fire broke out from an oven at a shanty in Hajipara slum around 12:25pm and spread out quickly.

Ten fire fighting units were dispatched to the spot and they managed to extinguish the fire after a two-hour effort.

Witnesses and locals however claimed over 200 shanties were reduced to ashes and the losses due to the fire would exceed Tk 10 lakh.



Local people and fire fighters make frantic efforts to put out a blaze that broke out at Hajipara in Chittagong yesterday. Some 150 shanties were gutted in the fire.

PHOTO: STAR



Karmojibi Nari stage a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding steps to ensure women workers' security and an end to all forms of violence against women.

PHOTO: STAR

DHAKA TODAY

Press show

Nazrul Institute organises a press show of a documentary titled 'Nazrul in Comilla' made by the Institute. Venue: Institute auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Meeting

Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association will hold a meeting to discuss their demands including stopping anti-adulteration drive. Venue: Bangladesh Photojournalist Association. Time: 3:30pm.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.

Robbery at Savar Bank Colony

JU CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted gold and valuables worth Tk 2 lakh from a house at Bank Colony in Savar on Thursday night.

As soon as the wife of Yousuf Uddin, resident of house no E-9 in Bank Colony, opened the door responding to a knocking, a gang of five robbers entered the house at 9:00pm and looted three cell phones, 10-12 vari of gold ornaments and Tk 12,000 in cash.

The gang also beat the family members when Yousuf Uddin, manager of Fair Knitting and Dyeing, reached home during the looting.

A case has been filed with Savar Police Station in this connection.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.3 degree Celsius was recorded at Chuadanga and the lowest of 24 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:36pm today and rises at 5:13am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	36.8	27.3	63	58
Chittagong	36.2	25.7	73	77
Rajshahi	36.7	26.4	67	76
Khulna	37.0	26.3	74	48
Barisal	36.2	26.3	70	58
Sylhet	36.9	25.5	61	55
Cox's Bazar	34.0	--	--	76