

14-party road march in districts



PHOTOS: STAR

The fourth day of Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine's road march passed yesterday. Pictures show (left-right) former lawmaker Abdul Latif Mirza leading the march in Sirajganj, while the opposition activists participating in march in Dinajpur, Nilphamari and Muktagachha in Mymensinga.

WORK ABSTENTION BY TEACHERS FOR 9 DAYS

No step yet to resolve IU deadlock

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The stalemate at Islamic University (IU) is continuing even after nine days of work abstention enforced by the Islamic University Teachers Association (IUTA).

The association started their work abstention demanding fulfillment of their three-point demand which include appointment of a new vice-chancellor from among the teachers, removal of Prof Anwarul Karim from the post of acting vice-chancellor and a judicial probe into various allegations of corrupt practices by the past VC and other officials and mass appointment in the university.

The IUTA is also observing a non-cooperation programme with acting vice-chancellor Prof

Anwarul Karim.

No classes and examinations are held although the university is open. No teacher is staying now on the campus. The students are passing idle time.

Meanwhile, the IUTA leaders who are now in staying Dhaka have met two ministers including some high government officials and discussed the latest university situation. They met Education Minister Dr Osman Faruk on Thursday.

Earlier on Sunday they met State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haq Milon and University Grants Commission (UGC) chairman Prof Asaduzzaman on Saturday.

The teachers were demanding a new VC following resignation of Prof Rafiqul Islam who resigned

on June 22 in face of Jatyiatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) agitation.

But the present crisis started when the government appointed Prof Anwarul Karim, incumbent Treasurer of the university the acting VC of the university on July 18.

The IUTA started non-cooperation with the acting VC from July 19 after holding an emergency general meeting attended by 250 teachers of different political ideologies.

Instability started in the university on May 18 when the then VC Prof Rafiqul Islam recruited 89 officers and staff against 53 circulated vacant posts violating the University Grants Commission (UGC) rules. Most of the recruits were activists or supporters of ruling BNP and Jamaat.

BNP and its front organisations started agitation for at least 200 jobs for their party men, campus sources said.

Meanwhile, the High Court issued a rule on the university authorities on July 20 to explain within two weeks why recruitment of 89 employees will not be declared illegal.

However, the university was closed amid violence by JCD. The VC left the campus on May 19 in the face of the agitation.

The university was opened after 20 days on June 11 with deadlock in its activities.

On contact, IUTA president Prof Faez Md Serazul Hoque told The Daily Star he hoped a solution to the university crisis soon.

'Activate CHT Land Commission'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The Land Commission is yet to be activated in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) although a bill was passed in Jatiya Sangsad by the then Awami League (AL) government on July 12 in 2001.

A fund of Tk 107 crore was also allocated for the purpose.

Following launching of the Karnaphuli hydro-electric project at Kaptai in Rangamati in 1962, more than 340 square miles of land went under water. As a result, 50,000 tribal families were displaced from

their lands. At that time many families were deprived of settlement facilities. Ultimately, they became floating people.

Many Bangla speaking people were also withdrawn from their lands in CHT where they were settled by the government. In name of security they were sheltered in 81 cluster villages in 1980. After 25 years, they faced various difficulties in the cluster villages because of increased family members. They faced crisis of food and water and health related problems including in pursuing education for their chil-

dren.

Meanwhile, three chairmen of the Land Commission were appointed by the subsequent governments.

The latest chairman is A M Mahmudur Rahman, a retired justice of the Supreme Court. Only one meeting was held during the last four years. At that meeting he assured to activate the Land Commission but in vain.

The suffering people wanted to activate the Land Commission without further delay.

Bogra-Jamtoil rly track project yet to begin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The 65-kilometre Bogra-Jamtoil railway track project is yet to be started although the prime minister promised it at a meeting held at Rajshahi three years ago.

Prime Minister Begum Khalada Zia announced this while inaugurating the Rajshahi-Dhaka inter-city train 'Silk City' at Rajshahi on August 14 in 2003.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) officials said a Tk 600 crore project proposal (PP) was submitted to the concerned ministry in 2003. But the ministry did not yet take any initiative to implement the project of railway track towards Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB).

However, the BR officials said the project could not be initiated for lack of fund.

Concerned sources said if the project could be completed, at least 65 km distance would be reduced from Bogra to Dhaka. The journey period would also be reduced by at least three hours, they said. Now it takes at least 8 hours for the 210-km journey, BR sources said.

Electric transformers being stolen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Indiscriminate pilferage of electric transformers is causing severe power outage resulting in immense sufferings to the Rural Electrification Board (REB) subscribers here for the last few months.

Officials said, at least 50 transformers were stolen in Rajnagar, Srimangal, Kulaura and Moulvibazar Sadar upazilas from January to June this year. Of those 46 transformers worth 17 lakh 67 thousand 708 were stolen in Moulvibazar Sadar and Rajnagar upazilas, they said.

Local people said, skilled people are involved in the bad practice because no accident occurred while stealing transformer. The thieves are allegedly selling transformers to different steel mills and other places.

REB sending letters to all the Union Parishad (UP) chairmen throughout the district seeking their help to contain the criminal act.

Moulvibazar REB zonal office deputy general manager (DGM) said steps have been taken to create awareness among the subscribers to combat the crime. He sought consumers' cooperation in this regard because both the consumers and REB become losers, he said. The issue was already put up in the district law and order committee's meeting, he informed.

Polythene bags still used to produce saplings

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Polythene bags are being used instead of environment friendly small gunny bags to produce saplings in the Forest Department nurseries here.

Although there is an official instruction in this respect, but it is being ignored most often.

The practice is going on for the last two years although it is shown in pen and papers that gunny bags are being used for the purpose.

A few years ago when the concerned ministry prohibited use of polythene to produce saplings, the Forest Department directed all its nurseries to use gunny bags.

During a visit to different government nurseries on Thursday, this correspondent found that not a single gunny bag was used for the purpose. Not only polythene bags, but also plastic and earthen pots were used.

Forest Department sources said, this year a programme has been undertaken to produce 4.25 lakh saplings in all nurseries of the district. Of them, two lakh saplings would be grown for normal forests in Domar and Dimla upazilas, 1.5 lakh in two social forestry nurseries and training centres and about 75,000 saplings in six upazila forestry plantation centres.

Additional 20 per cent saplings would be produced because 10 per cent bags are damaged during their growing stage. So, the demand for bags is about 6 lakh.

When contacted, Forest Ranger Khorshed Alam said that he had supplied gunny bags from his office in Rangpur for producing saplings in two years (2004 and 2005). But it was a fraction of the total demand, he said.

Khorshed Alam further said this year he is using plastic pots of 160 microns, polythene bags below 100

microns and earthen pots instead of gunny bags.

he is using pole these bags below 100 microns, plastic pots of 160 microns (Hi-density plastic) and even earthen pots. He said that it has official recommendation for using them. He also said that the divisional officer in Rangpur usually ask for tender for supplying gunny or poly bags and plastic and earthen pots.

On contact, Divisional Forest Officer Abu Yusuf said, gunny bags did

not last for more than three months while those were used in producing saplings in 2004 and 2005.

Because, he said, the bags, when came in contact with soil, fertiliser and rainwater, began to decompose rapidly. Moreover, it is not mandatory to use gunny bags for the purpose, he said. He also said this year plastic pots, earthen pots and polythene bags are being used as per directives of the authorities concerned. He also admit-



PHOTO: STAR

Banned polythene bag are still being used at a nursery in Nilphamari to produce saplings.

and plastic and earthen pots are used for producing saplings. This is done allegedly in connivance with a section of officials, the source said.

Abdul Latif, a teacher of Nilphamari Government College Botany Department said polythene bags do not decompose. If the bags remain under soil, roots of saplings cannot spread freely resulting in untimely death.

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