

Normalcy yet to return at SUST

All-party Students' Action Committee continues agitation demanding VC's resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Normalcy is yet to return at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) here after 10 days of its reopening on August 9.

The general students are still frustrated as the academic activities could not be started fully as most of the opposition backed teachers abstained from classes following their support to an indefinite strike called by the All-party Students' Action Committee since the very day of reopening of the university. Even, some pro-government teachers are not taking their classes allegedly.

The action committee had been demanding withdrawal of the incumbent vice chancellor (VC) and immediate appointment of a new one for ensuring a congenial atmosphere on the campus.

Pro-Awami League (AL) including the left leaning teachers will announce a fresh 'Oust the VC Agitation Programme' at a meeting

scheduled to be held tomorrow. The All-party Students' Action Committee will also strengthen its ongoing agitation. The committee will bring out a procession from Madina Market to the campus tomorrow.

The SUST authorities have declared resumption of bus service from campus to the city tomorrow.

But the students' action committee has declared to resist buses from plying at the university gate.

Meanwhile, police had stopped a students' procession on Thursday which was proceeding towards the university gate.

Some pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers joined their duties. Classes started partially in seven out of 23 departments with poor attendance of students.

Police personnel are preventing the agitating students from bringing out processions from BDR Gate No-3 on the Sylhet-Sunamganj Road, half a kilometre off the university

gate every day.

The university was closed since die amid a tense situation following killing of a student in police firing on May 14.

VC Prof Muslehuddin Ahmed had to resign in face of the All-party Students' Action Committee agitation on the same Day.

However, he returned to campus under police protection on July 5. Since then, the opposition backed teachers and students had been demanding his withdrawal.

AL and left leaning teachers had been pressing for realisation of their various demands.

The demands included immediate withdrawal of the VC and appointment of a new one, judicial probe into the incidents happened from May 12 to 14 including killing of student Mosharraf Hossain Shamim.

10 AL activists hurt in attack by BNP men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

At least 10 Awami League (AL) activists were injured, five of them critically, in an attack by BNP activists in Matiranga upazila on Friday afternoon, police and local people said.

BNP activists allegedly attacked them with sticks and sharp knives.

The injured are Dr Ali Azgor, 47, Zamir Ali, 46, Shahazan Member, 46, Akter Hossain, 22, Abdul Halim, 24, M Rafiqul Islam, 28, Mohammad Shahzad, 26, Mohammad Joyal Abedin, 48, Mohammad Zahangir Alam, 26, and Jewel Chakma, 25.

The injured have claimed that Matiranga upazila BNP president Abdul Mannan Munnaf, its secretary Belayet Hossen alias Bitali Huzur and Paura BNP president Abu Yusuf jointly lead the attack.

District Awami League secretary Mohammad Zahedul Alam has demanded of the administration to take steps to stop attack on their men and arrest of culprits.

Matiranga BNP president Abdul Mannan refuted the allegations. AL in an attack injured 10 BNP activists in the upazila on August 15.

Youth held with fake currency notes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

People caught red-handed a youth with fake currency notes at Shamerkuna Bazar in Sadar upazila.

On suspicion Shamim Ahmed, 25, was caught by a grocer named Helal Ahmed as he gave him a Tk 100 currency note after purchasing a packet of cigarette from his shop on Thursday evening.

On challenge, he recovered 29 currency notes of Tk 100 from Shamim's possession. Later, he was handed over to police.

Shamim hails from Jagatshi village in Sadar upazila, police said. A case was filed under Speedy Trial Act.

Workshop

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A workshop on 'English Reading and Writing' was held at Sayed Ator Ali Public Library Auditorium here under the auspices of The Daily Star Readers Club on Thursday.

Veteran educationist Khan Ziaul Haque inaugurated the workshop while The Daily Star Readers Club coordinator Rafi Hossain moderated the programme. The Star Insight advisory editor Shaheen Kabir attended the workshop as a resource person.

Club members and students of different educational institutions took part in the workshop.



PHOTO: STAR

The western part of Shahpir island in Cox's Bazar which was once a locality has turned into a boat terminal due to unabated erosion by the Bay of Bengal.

Rail line project stalled at Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Dohazari-Cox's Bazar Rail Line Project has been stalled because of fund constraint.

At present, the fate of the project is uncertain although this was one of the election promises of the ruling four-party alliance leaders.

Because of this, Bangladesh was not included in the Second Trans Asian Railway Route funded by Germany. Former Awami League Government had conducted a feasibility study to set up rail line from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar and Cox's Bazar to Ghumdhens of Ukhyia. Following empowerment of the 4-party Alliance Government, its leaders became eager to construct a friendship road from Myanmar to China (Bangladesh-Myanmar Friendship Road).

The government took an initiative to build a 120-kilometre road to Myanmar at a cost of several crores of taka from own resources. But it is unfortunate that the government failed to manage fund to construct the rail line.

It has been learnt that the provincial government of the then East Pakistan had asked the erstwhile East Bengal Railway (EBR) authorities to extend the railway line from Dohazari of Chittagong to the resort town of Cox's Bazar in 1953.

A resolution was adopted at an important meeting of the East Bengal Railway advisory committee on February 17, 1953 for conducting a feasibility study of the project. The study had estimated that about 2 crore 22 lakh taka would be required for the purpose while its probable earning would be 4 per cent. A

proposal was also taken to extend the line from Ramu to Ukhyia via Baipai.

During the British period, surveys were conducted on several occasions to establish rail communication from Chittagong to Myanmar to carry passengers and goods. Following detection of some flaws at the survey of 1957, another survey was conducted anew spending Tk 2.25 crore on September 25, 1957.

However, the project did not progress due to lack of required official initiative and fund.

Later, a Tk 200-crore project proposal was taken. But the project went to obscurity during the period from 1957 to '71. After independence, the then government of Bangabandhu promised realisation of the project. But after the '75 political upheaval it was stalled again.

In 1989, the communication ministry asked the Cox's Bazar sub-divisional administration to submit a report on the resources and population in the project area. Accordingly, the then administration had submitted a report. In the report, the population of Cox's Bazar district comprising seven upazilas of Cox's Bazar Sadar, Ukhyia, Teknaf, Maheskhal, Kutubdia, Ramu and Chakoria upazilas was shown as 16 lakh while that of Bandarban Hill district was shown as 1.50 lakh, four upazilas of Chittagong district was shown as 10.5 lakh. The total population was 27 lakh which now increased to 37 lakh.

The then government formed a 11-member high powered committee to develop tourism industry as well as to set up the railway line. But the committee did not come into effect.

During the tenure of Awami

League Government, Bangladesh Railway invited an international tender. Canarail, a Canadian organisation, got the work. Bangladesh Railway signed a contract with the organisation to set up the line at an expenditure of Tk 2 crore 95 lakh 24 thousand. Canarail started their feasibility study on March 9, 2001. In its report, Canarail said, on average, about 24 lakh 25 thousand passengers including 10 lakh local and foreign tourists and 8 lakh 70 thousand metric tons of salt, timber, fish, paddy, rice, cement and other commodities can be carried through the route annually.

An additional 30 lakh 70 thou-

sand metric tons of goods would be ready for transport following industrial growth in the area. The entire amount of the expenditure cost will be recovered within 10 years, the report said. An amount of 19 crore three lakh US dollars (about 1,500 crore taka in Bangladesh currency) will be spent approximately to set up the rail line which included Tk 12 crore 94 lakh in foreign exchange. An additional 4 crore 24 lakh US dollars will be required if the line is extended further upto Ghumdhur, the report said further.



PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star Readers' Club mourns the death of poet Shamsur Rahman by bringing out a procession in Magura town yesterday. Kanthabithi, a recital organisation, Lekhok Jote, a writers' forum and various socio-cultural organisations including Samakal Suhreed Somabesh also brought out mourning processions in the district town.

Jessore villagers change lifestyle thru' community learning

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A pioneering style of literacy learning has changed lifestyle of many disadvantaged people, specially women at a remote village in Jessore.

Kohinoor Akhter, Nasima Sultana and Parveen Begum are three of them who transformed their lives and those of their families within a few years by being active members of a community learning centre at Bolepur village in Noapara union of Sadar upazila, Jessore.

Previously, they used to live along with their family members in a pitiable condition at simple thatched huts. They could not afford much of it on meagre income of their share-cropper husbands.

At present their husbands still earn the same meagre amount working the land but the three women earn, on average, 4,000 taka a month by using skills they picked up in a new style of literacy programme innovated by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), that is making inroads where traditional adult learning programmes have failed.

The women built up a steady pile of savings from their work they developed at the Ganokendra and with the help of loans were able to replace their mud huts.

DAM literacy programme coordinator Shahidul Islam said initially classes started with 70 learners at the Bolepur centre calling it Hashimukh Ganokendra, a people's centre, at a tin-shed room in 2001.

The classes concentrated on literacy and subjects relevant to the learners' lives, he said. Those include how to: reduce sewage pollution of water supplies by using latrines, stave off deforestation by planting useful trees and make fuel-efficient ovens to use less wood and reduce smoke in the house. There is training in skills that could bring in an income such as needlework, gender development education to secure for women a say in the running of the village and leadership training to make community action more effective.

Education has transformed lives of the women which is not only important to them but also important to their

children, because they will send them to schools.

There is also a strong emphasis on social mobilisation on issues such as education rights, fighting child trafficking and child marriages, anti-drugs awareness and support work. Other activities include continuous learning programme, micro credit, cow rearing, distribution of books and medicine to poor but meritorious students free of cost, giving legal aid, help admit children of 6 years of age to school and registration of birth, death and marriage. The Ganokendra members are doing the work voluntarily.

Members make regular savings and from the central fund created they give loans to members to help them rear poultry, do tailoring or other small business activities.

During a visit to the Hashimukh Ganokendra, it was found that the walls are covered with awareness posters and charts related to local issues. Many women were seen practising reading exercises while

local facilitators supervising the activities. Even some of the women brought children with them.

The real attraction of the Ganokendra is the range of literature it gives its members access to, including different types of books and newspapers.

A crucial factor in the success of the centres is that each one is run by a committee of members and comes together to discuss issues concerning the whole village. The Bolepur centre of Hashimukh Ganokendra is being run by a 5-man advisory council and 11-member executive committee. The committee consists of 100 members.

This is perhaps the unique contribution of the Dhaka Ahsania Mission's Ganokendra work, which is based on a Community Learning Centre concept promoted by UNESCO throughout Asia and the Pacific over the past decade.

On contact, Dhaka Ahsania Mission president Kazi Rafiqul Islam said many organisations are

conducting literacy programmes, but on completion of the programme the learners stop exercising their lessons. As a result, they are not benefited by the education imparted to them, he said. Ganokendra was set up to help learners continue 'the never ending process,' he said further. Ultimately, the literacy centres turned into people's centres resulting in their fast growth, he added.

Across Bangladesh more than 50,000 of the poorest people will this year be using Dhaka Ahsania Mission self-learning guides to learn how to read and write. After a five-month course and one month reinforcement learning at one of 800 Ganokendras, they will reach out for the books, skills training and small-scale credit that will help them improve life in their community.



PHOTO: STAR

Disadvantaged women practise reading exercises while facilitators help them with the text at a literacy centre of Dhaka Ahsania Mission at a Jessore village.

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