

FREE AND FAIR POLLS
Mayor threatens to paralyse Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday threatened to paralyse the Chittagong port and to snap power, fuel, oil and gas supply unless an atmosphere conducive to a free and fair election is created.

the "Operation Clean Heart", he said how could a man hold a free and fair election who could not protect his own house.

Mohiuddin, divisional coordinator of 14-party combine, presided over the rally.

Former minister MA Mannan, Awami League Chittagong (south) district President Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury, JASAD Executive President Moynuddin Khan Badal, AL Chittagong (north) district General Secretary MA Salam, Gono Forum Chittagong city unit President M Kafil Uddin and Workers' Party leader ATM

Nizamuddin also spoke at the rally. UNB from Chittagong adds: The four-party alliance held its rally at Kazir Deuri.

BNP leader Abdullah Al Noman, former MP Rosy Kabir, Jamaat city Ameer Shamsul Islam and Maulana Abdur Rahman of Islami Oikya Jote, among others, addressed the rally.

Noman said the 14-party leaders have lost public support because of their destructive politics in the name of blockade. "So, they're now looking for new issues. They should understand that ballot is more powerful than stick and car."

DAB leader's suggestion to Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leader of Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB), a pro-BNP organisation, told the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday that if she expresses regrets about the price spiral of essentials, the nation would welcome it.

The suggestion came from a party supporter a day after the BNP chief told a press conference that the prices of essentials did not increase at all, only the journalists had witnessed the price hike.

"In the last five years, your government has done a lot of development work in every sector across the country, but only the power sector and price hike of essentials had created some problems," Wasim Hossain, president of Rajshahi DAB, said at a conference of DAB at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city where Khaleda was present as the chief guest.

"However, we know that electricity line was extended to rural areas and now what is needed is connection to power grids," he added.

"People have faced some problems due to price hike of essentials although we know that the income and purchasing capacity of people have increased during your regime," Wasim said.

Hundreds of doctors welcomed his speech with applause, but Khaleda did not make any comment.

FACTIONAL FEUD
BNP men set fire to platform, microbus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A faction of BNP activists last night vandalised and burnt the platform of its rival group and drove off the followers of former BNP lawmaker Salauddin Ahmed at Jatrabari in the city.

They also set fire to a microbus of a Judo Dal leader during the rampage in presence of policemen.

The followers of Salauddin Ahmed erected the platform on Shahid Faruq Road at North Jatrabari for a rally scheduled for today.

Police and witnesses said several hundred followers of BNP leader Nabuillah Nabi, equipped with sticks, came to the rally venue in a procession and

set fire to the platform at about 7:30pm.

The attackers also beat up the passengers of the microbus of Judo Dal leader.

Police tried to restrain the attackers and extinguish the fire but failed, said duty officer of Jatrabari Police Station.

Ex-BNP lawmaker Khokon declared 'unwanted' in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi

A section of BNP activists declared former party lawmaker Khairul Kabir Khokon 'unwanted' in Sadar Upazila of the district.

They declaration came from a public meeting at Kauria Para Eidgah ground on Thursday afternoon.

They accused Khokon, also former general secretary of Ducuso and central organising secretary of Judo Dal, of harbouring criminals and oppressing local people after being elected MP in by-polls in 2005.

Ex-MP Rokeya Ahmed Lucky, senior vice-president of Judo Dal Mia Mohammad Selim, joint general secretary of district BNP BG Rashid Nausher, upazila BNP general secretary Abu Saleh Chowdhury addressed the meeting held with Sadar upazila BNP president MA Hannan in the chair.



No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 32.3 degree Celsius was recorded at Mongla and the lowest of 15.5 degrees at Ishwardi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 6:21am tomorrow.

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

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature, Humidity in percentage, Max, Min, Morning, Evening.

Resignation of RU VC demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Four syndicate members of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday submitted a memorandum to the vice chancellor demanding his (VC) resignation and cancellation of 'mass recruitment'.

Advocate Ziilur Rahman, Professor Rustam Uddin Ahmed, Professor Abdus Sobhan and Saiful Islam were the signatories to the memorandum.

On the same ground, pro-Awami League and leftist teachers under the banner of Rajshahi University Progressive Teachers' Society will stage a sit-in in front of the Senate Bhawan today.

The teachers' body also announced to besiege the scheduled Syndicate meeting tomorrow to press their demand for ending 'mass recruitment' on political consideration.

Following the controversial recruitment, anarchy spread in the campus area and the university authorities have been facing severe financial crisis, the memo said.

Acknowledging receipt of the memo, VC Professor Altaf Hossain refrained from making any comment before the press.

Obituary

Suraiya Begum, wife of late Nazirul Islam, founding chairman of Navana Group, passed away due to kidney-related complications yesterday at Apollo Hospitals in the city at the age of 68, says a press release.

She left behind two sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held on Baitul Mokarram National Mosque premises after Zohr prayers today.

All have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



PHOTO: STAR

BNP-led four-party alliance stages a demonstration at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday demanding immediate announcement of election schedule.

Jamaat's 'Islamisation' of village names

FROM PAGE 1

In 2001, former Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam became the chairman of the school's governing body, and the name of the school was changed soon after.

While talking to this correspondent, District Education Officer (Secondary) Md Kamruzzaman said he knew nothing about the change of name of the school as no one had taken his permission to do so.

"The school authorities in collusion with a section of officials of Jessore Board might have had changed the name of the school which is over a century old," he said.

On contact, Shyamnagar Upazila Awami League (AL) President also Sadar Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Jagul Haidar expressed his grave concern and said, he got his own child admitted to nearby Shyamnagar Model High School instead of the school with the newly 'Islamised' name.

Local Jamaat leaders also 'Islamised' the name of Joshoreswaripur under the upazila by changing its name to Islampur during the immediate past four-party alliance government.

King Pratapaditya of Jessore, one of the Twelve Bhuiyans who put up a fierce resistance against the Mughal conquest of the delta,

established his capital at Joshoreswaripur during his rule.

The name of the village Haripur under Noornagar union was also changed to Habibpur.

Nurul Islam, a teacher of Habibpur (originally Haripur) Dakhil Madrasa, said he along with Ahmed Ali, Abdur Rashid, Nur Ali Gazi and others of the area changed the name of the village to give it an 'Islamic' name as the area is now dominated by the Muslims.

Harinagari, a neighbouring village of Haripur was also 'Islamised' by changing its name to Rahmat Nagar.

When contacted, local Jamaat leader Maulana Nazrul Islam, who is also the president of Rahmat Nagar (originally Harinagari) Nurani Hafizia Madrasa's governing body, and Maulana Hafiz Md Liakat Ali, super of the madrasa, said a large number of people belonging to the Hindu community lived there in the past who had named the village Harinagari, which smacks of 'Hinduism'.

Now, most of the people living there are Muslims, so they gave an 'Islamic' name to the village, they bluntly justified.

Local Jamaat supporters also changed the name of Jyotindranagar to Zahinagar.

Local people alleged that a group of local Jamaat supporters put up a signboard on

Jyotindranagar Madrasa, built adjacent to Jyotindranagar Cyclone Centre, advertising the new 'Islamic' name.

Local Jamaat leaders Mosharrar Billah, Sultan Gazi and Mozammel Haque said they 'Islamised' the name of village Jyotindranagar in accordance with the decision of some local people.

Another erstwhile Hindu Zamindar Jyotindra Nath Sarkar set up the village and named it after his own name, they said. As Jyotindra is a traditional Hindu name and 'it is not suitable as a madrasa's name', they changed it, the Jamaat leaders added with glee.

Local Jamaat leaders also changed the names of some other villages in the area, the name of village Napitkhali was changed to Niamatkhali, Mendlnagar to Mehedinagar, Gopalpur to Golap Pur, Gangramari to Muslimnagar, Gouripur to Garibpur, Kashipur to Kashimpur, Ramchandrapur to Rahmatpur, Ramjibanpur to Ramjanpur, and Shyamnagar to Rupnagar.

When contacted, former Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam said it is not true that Jamaat-e-Islami changed the names of those villages and institutions.

"We have not taken any decision in the party regarding changing the names. Those who have changed those names locally, have done so

in pursuit of their own interests. We have nothing to do with it," he said.

While talking to this correspondent, Shyamnagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Zahidul Islam said, the names of the villages and institutions were not changed officially.

Civil society members of Shyamnagar at an exchange of views meeting held in Shyamnagar Upazila Auditorium on October 12 protested Jamaat's move to change the names of the villages and institutions.

They alleged that Jamaat leaders are proceeding with a planned conspiracy to change the names in a bid to erase the Hindu heritage of the area.

Local leaders of the Islamist party are also trying to popularise the new 'Islamic' names by using them on their official party pads when calling for meetings and other organisational activities, speakers at the meeting alleged. The speakers also vowed to resist the Jamaat move.

The meeting was addressed by upazila BNP Convener Abdul Wahed, Upazila AL President also a UP Chairman Jagul Haidar, local JP Vice-president Azibar Rahman, Atarjan Mahila College Principal Ashik E Elahi, former UP chairman Bishwa Nath Das, Atiar Rahman, Joydev Biswas, and another UP Chairman Alamgir Haidar.



PHOTO: STAR

Jubo League stages a demonstration at Zero Point in the city yesterday demanding reconstitution of the Election Commission.

14th National Immunisation Day inaugurated

BSS, Dhaka

Adviser for health and family welfare Prof. Sufia Rahman formally inaugurated the 14th National Immunisation Day (NID) by administering polio vaccine to a number of children at a function held at the EPI Bhaban at Mohakhali yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, she hoped that 100 percent success would be achieved during the 14th NID through giving polio vaccines to 24 million children under 5 years.

The adviser also asked the officials to visit the houses in four days to check whether any children have been left out.

With Director General of Health Department Dr Mohammad Shahjahan Biswas in the chair, the function was addressed by Joint Secretary to Health Ministry Mohammad Shaiful Islam, Director General of Family Planning Department Mohammad Abdul Mannan, WHO Country Representative Dr Duangvedee Sangkhabool and Unicef Representative Louis George Arsenaull.

The first round of polio vaccine will be held today and the second round on December 23.

1,043 arrested, 11 firearms recovered

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,043 people, including an alleged listed criminal, from across the country on various charges in the last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

During the drive, the law-enforcers also seized 11 firearms, 100 rounds of bullet, one bomb and five cocktails, said a police headquarters release.

House of Lords airs doubt about free, fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House of Lords yesterday expressed its doubt whether the next general election in Bangladesh under self-appointed acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman would be free and fair.

"With this man [Mahfuzur Rahman] in charge, it is doubtful whether free and fair elections can be held," said a press release issued by Lord Avebury.

The House of Lords will hold a debate on November 30 on the role of the international community in the forthcoming elections in Bangladesh, the release added.

The participants in the debate will discuss what action the international community might take to persuade the President and Head of the Caretaker government to listen to the people's demand for a level playing field.

The debate is taking place following a conference on 'The Rise of Political Islam in Bangladesh: What's At Stake in the 2007 Elections?' held in London on the November 14, which was jointly chaired by Lord Avebury and Dean Godson of the Policy Exchange.

"Following the resignation of the former Chief Election Commissioner, the controversial MA Aziz, it was hoped that his successor would be a person acceptable to all parties. It was surprising that Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, who is also not seen as neutral, has appointed himself without consultation," the press release said.

"It is the President who should make this appointment, after hearing from his advisers, and unfortunately the irregular proceedings by

the Election Commission will prolong the uncertainty about the conduct of the election," it added.

"Justice Mahfuz had already said he will take no action over the 14 million spurious names in the electoral register, to say nothing of the millions of people whose names have been omitted," said the Lord.

"British Bangladeshis are not alone in their anxiety that the January elections should be properly conducted. The number of observers who will be converging on Bangladesh from the EU, the Commonwealth and neighbouring states is an indication of the international community's concern that free and fair elections are in the balance," the release added.

BBC Bangladesh Sanglap today

BSS, Dhaka

The recording of the 11th edition of BBC Bengali Service's Bangladesh Sanglap will take place at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre at 5:45pm today.

Former agriculture minister and senior BNP leader MK Anwar, Awami League presidium member and former MP Kazi Zafarullah, former comptroller and auditor general M Hafizuddin Khan and cultural personality Subarna Mustafa will feature in the panel, said a press release.

The Sanglap programme will be aired on BBC Bangla radio at 7:30pm tomorrow and on Channel i at 8:00pm on Monday.

2,500 tonnes water wasted an hour

FROM PAGE 1

contains poisonous coal dust [carbon], rock dust, sulphur [S], phosphorus [P], arsenic [Ar] and magnesium [Mg].

The mine authorities however claim that there are no poisonous chemicals like sulphur, arsenic, phosphorus and magnesium in the waste water.

The coal mine and the 250 megawatt coal-fired power plant are separately pumping out an unbelievable 2,500 tonnes of water per hour round the clock.

This water is being fully wasted while 15 villages around the project area have gone completely dry in the last 10 months. Almost all the hand-pumped tube-wells in these villages have gone dry, and ground water table has gone down to 150-200 feet from 50-60 feet previously.

Of the 2,500 tonnes of water, the power plant pumps out 1,300 tonnes, uses it for power generation and then wastes it through a discharge channel.

The coal mine pumps out another 1,200 tonnes of water just to keep the mine dry.

The mine is only 500 metres off the power plant. Despite such proximity, the two projects' designer and builder Chinese CMC-led consortium opted for two separate sets of deep tube-wells because it added hundreds of crores of taka as extra costs.

During a visit to the mining site, The Daily Star correspondent found that most croplands in the affected villages have turned black and are covered with layers of coal dust and rock dust.

Irregularities overlooked About two years ago, Barapukuria power plant authorities installed at least 24 deep tube-well pumps with 35 to 40 KW horsepower to meet the huge requirement of water for the plant, sinking 350 to 420 feet long pipes at West Sherpur village near the plant, according to the project

outline. When they were doing this, Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) authorities told them that the mine already has its own pumping system, and water extracted by the mine could easily be used by the power plant, situated only 500 metres away. But the plant builder ignored the suggestion and went on with installation of the pumps.

"The power plant could at least install their pumps on the east of the rail line (near the mine's water pump site). This would reduce the quantum of water pumped out by the mine," said a mining engineer.

Both the mine and power plant are among the costliest and least cost effective projects ever in Bangladesh. Economic analysis forecasts perennial losses for the mine although it has billions of dollars worth of coal.

The coal mine charges the national exchequer Tk 1,600 crore and the power plant 260 million dollars. Both the projects are funded under Chinese Supplier's Credit that was pushed by the Hosaf group during the rule of the BNP as well as of the Awami League. Besides, neither the mine nor the plant is operating satisfactorily.

Sufferings ignored Despite a few rounds of in-depth reports on the ecological disasters in Barapukuria, published in The Daily Star, the government is yet to take any steps, and people continue to suffer.

About 70 croplands in Kalupara and other areas around Barapukuria mine in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur are now vulnerable to subsidence, according to mining sources. Earlier in May, about 1.2 square km area of four affected villages subsided.

Locals and mining officials say the worst affected villages are Kalupara, Gopalpara, Baidynathpur, Balarampur,

Chowhati, Dhulauzal, Patigram, Mou Pukur, Ziagari, Banish Pukur, Shak Gram, Durgapur, Rasulpur and Hamidpur.

On exchange of opinions with farmers of the affected villages, The Daily Star got the impression that 30 to 40 per cent croplands of these villages use polluted water from the projects.

Operating without any pollution treatment facility, the mine and the plant are pumping out untreated waste and chemicals to the adjacent areas through a sluice gate and a seven-km-long canal. As a result, water bodies in the areas have become polluted and fertility of topsoil of four villages is being greatly harmed.

Most of the affected villagers said ground water level has fallen by 80 to 120 feet in different places. Instead of pumping out water by sinking 50 to 65 feet long pipes, now they must sink up to 200 feet long pipe to get water, they say.

"Ground water situation would continue to worsen until February," said Md Zamshed Ali, an elderly person from Chowhati village.

"We are being forced to irrigate our farm lands with polluted water now. We get no water from our own deep tube-wells," said Md Ekramul Haque, a farmer from Dhulauzal village.

Chairman of Hamidpur-2 Union Parishad Md Anwar Ali also expressed similar views.

"People are being forced to use polluted and unfiltered water for drinking, cooking and other purposes while the authorities are yet to take any remedial measures," he regretted.

District Agriculture and Livestock Department officials also agree that water drained out by the projects is too polluted for use in farming and also for consumption by human and livestock.

Experts versions BCMCL expert Md Kamruzzaman

NATORE VIOLENCE
AL files case against Tarique, Dulu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An Awami League leader filed a case with a Natore court yesterday against 95 BNP leaders and activists, including Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and Natore BNP President Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu in connection with the November 20 violence that left 150 people injured.

Plaintiff Hanif Ali Sheikh, district AL secretary, alleged that Tarique and Dulu ordered their cadres over cellphones to shoot at AL activists.

The district BNP in a press conference condemned the filing of the case, terming it a 'false' one.

"Neither any BNP activists nor Tarique or Dulu was involved in the violence. It was a sequel to Awami League's intra-party feud," said District BNP Secretary Shahidul Islam Bachhu.

He also said that the filing of the case was an example of 'Awami League's habit of fabricating things'.

Motiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Natore Sadar Police Station, said BNP activist Musa, prime accused in the case, has already been arrested.



Human chain

Partnership of Women in Action (PaWa) will form a human chain to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Day. Venue: In front of High Court. Time: 3:00pm.

Conference

The Ninth Educational Researchers' Conference will be held. Venue: Meeting Room-1, IDB Bhaban. Time: 9:45am.

Monthly general meeting

The 10th monthly general meeting of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Society seminar room. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable

Bangabandhu Parishad will hold a roundtable on 'Prevailing political reality: Free and fair election'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Chirantan Bangladesh Kendra Sangsad will organise a discussion on 'Conflicting politics: Necessity of national unity'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Human chain

Shadhinata Ainibi Parishad will form a human chain demanding resumption of ETV telecast. Venue: In front of Supreme Court. Time: 11:00am.