

2nd generation British Bangladeshis keen to uphold cultural heritage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Their forefathers once migrated to a foreign land far from their home in search of better opportunities. They struggled relentlessly working in factories, restaurants and doing odd jobs, but their children are now in much better positions in every aspect of their life.

They are the second generation British Bangladeshis, who migrated in their early age or born and brought up in the UK and are now holding important posts in public and private services there. They do not want to be treated as the ethnic minorities any more. Rather, they identify themselves as the mainstream people of the land. But this does not mean that

these young people, who had a very little knowledge about their ancestral land, will forget their cultural heritage, which is deeply rooted in their blood.

This observation came from British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury as well as a group of young British Bangladeshis who are now on a three-week visit to Bangladesh. The delegation met the high commissioner at his residence in Dhaka yesterday.

The group comprises a football squad of 17, including a dentist and a teacher. During their stay here, they will play football matches with the local teams, provide training on football to schoolchildren, hold workshops on oral cancer, install a tubewell at a remote village and

visit Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong under a project 'Re-connect'.

"Our objective is to re-connect a group of young British Bangladeshis with their cultural heritage," said the British high commissioner.

The British Bangladeshis must think they are mainstreamed, but at the same time they should not forget their cultural heritage, he said. "We want that they feel more comfortable about who they are and what is their identity," he added.

People-to-people contact is very important alongside the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the UK, Anwar Choudhury said. "We may be British but are very emotional and proud of our

cultural heritage," he added.

Aftab Rahman, a British civil servant, said Bangla culture is one of the most dominant cultures in the UK. "We feel very proud of it."

"We want to establish a sustainable link after discovering more about our ancestral land. Launching a collaborative programme with a village school and donating a tubewell are just the beginning," he added.

About the culture clashes between the first generation and second generation British Bangladeshis, he said culture clashes between the parents and the children are a natural thing and would continue to exist. "What we need is a compromise," he said.

"We don't need white skin to become English," he said, adding that the attitude of the British Bangladeshis is now changing and they are now becoming mainstreamed.

Ruhel Alam, a dental surgeon of National Health Services of the UK, said Bangladeshis are now achieving better results in the UK schools and holding very important posts.

He said two of his brothers are studying information technology and dentistry and another is a taxi driver.

"Our whole family is quite highly educated and doing good jobs," he said, refuting the notion that most British Bangladeshis do odd jobs in the UK.

There are many restaurants owned and managed by Bangladeshis and dishes are very delicious, which attract the British people as well, he said. "We are proud that our forefathers laid foundations of those and today we are enjoying its fruits."

"Bangladeshis are among the most friendly people in the UK," said Ian James Angus, a British delegation member.



PHOTO: STAR

A delegation of second generation British Bangladeshis, who are now on a three-week visit to Bangladesh, pose with British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury at his residence in the city yesterday.

Major parties should show flexible attitude: UK envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major political parties should show compromising and flexible attitude in order to resolve the current political deadlock and hold a fair election, said British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury yesterday.

They should not stick to their earlier stances, he told reporters after a meeting with a 17-member delegation of second generation British Bangladeshis at his residence.

Political parties must reach a consensus on the elections, he said and hoped that concrete solution would be found soon. "Bangladeshis can do amazing things as they did in the past if they work unitedly."

"Time is running out very fast. But I still believe that a timely election is not impossible," said the envoy. Efforts should be doubled to hold a successful election in time, he observed.

Participation of all the political parties is a must, he said. Otherwise, the election will not be meaningful as it will not be acceptable at home and abroad, he added.

Asked whether a fair election is possible in time as the political parties have so many demands, he said a perfect election is not possible anywhere in the world, but it must be at least satisfactory.

Gastright for flexibility

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the finance ministry office. The political parties should come forward and work together "in a spirit of cooperation" for the benefit of Bangladesh, said the US government functionary, who is scheduled to meet other government officials and political leaders in a bid to broker a rapprochement among the squabbling parties.

He appreciated the efforts of the chief adviser and other advisers to the caretaker government in the prevailing situation, saying that they are carrying out a "superb job." The Bangladeshis are "fortunate that they have got some good people" to carry out the important job.

About the package proposals moved by the three advisers in a last-ditch effort towards a breakthrough, the US junior minister hoped that the advisers' proposal and solution would move the country towards the national elections.

In reply to a question, Gastright said he has come here not to decide what is right for Bangladesh, but "I am here to urge the parties to work together. I am confident the advisers and the parties will come to a solution."

After nearly 45-minute meet-

ing with Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin at the foreign ministry, the US deputy assistant secretary said his country strongly supports the efforts of the caretaker government to hold free, fair, credible and non-violent elections in Bangladesh.

"We've discussed our strong support for the caretaker government in its efforts to move forward with the free, fair, credible and non-violent election in the days ahead and we look forward to supporting that process as well," he told reporters.

Termining the Dhaka-Washington bilateral relations excellent, Gastright said they also discussed different aspects of the bilateral issues during the meeting.

Hemayetuddin said Gastright's visit is a follow up of US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's visit to Dhaka in November.

Describing the outcome of the meeting as constructive, he hoped that the cooperation between Bangladesh and the United States in political, economic areas and other potential areas would be expanded in future.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Patricia Butenis was present during the meeting.

BCL ACTIVIST KILLING Strike at all edn instts Thursday

RU CORRESPONDENT

Chhata Sangram Parishad (CSP) will observe a daylong strike at all educational institutions in Rajshahi on Thursday protesting the killing of BCL leader Ahsan Habib Babu.

The declaration came at a demonstration staged by CSP, an organisation led by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), at Shaheb Bazar Zero Point in protest against the killing. Babu, a leader of BCL Tahirpur Municipality and a third year student at the History department of Rajshahi Government College, was killed in a Rab encounter when he was gossiping with his friends at a shop.

They also announced that they will lay a siege to the office of deputy commissioner (DC) and submit a memorandum to the DC on Wednesday.

Parishad leaders alleged that Rab are now implementing the blueprint of BNP-Jamaat alliance and the killing of Babu was its sequel.

They also demanded exemplary punishment to the people responsible. The rally was addressed by city BCL President Abdul Momin, General Secretary Zed Sarkar, BCL RU unit President Ibrahim Hossain Moon and General Secretary Ayeen Uddin.

Meanwhile, BCL RU and Rajshahi University Engineering and Technology (Ruet) units yesterday demanded proper investigation into the case and exemplary punishment to the culprits.

3 die in AL-BNP gunfight

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ensued after a BNP procession came under attack by their rivals at Kalamarchora Bazar of Moheshkhali upazila at about 1:00pm, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent referring to the police and locals.

In separate rallies in Cox's Bazar town yesterday evening, BNP and AL blamed each other for the clash.

The transport blockade yesterday hampered normal life and businesses in Dhaka and elsewhere.

The AL-led 14-party combine began the indefinite blockade to realise their demand for the resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser of the caretaker government, and electoral reforms including updating the voter list, removal of controversial persons from the Election Commission and cancellation of the polls schedule.

The transport blockade virtually cut off capital Dhaka from the rest of the country and hampered normal life and businesses for the second consecutive day yesterday. Activities in the country's premier Chittagong seaport and land ports in Benapole and Sonamasjid remained suspended while Mongla seaport operated partially.

In the capital, the pro-blockade leaders and activists took to the streets in different areas including Paltan, Muktangan, Gangabandhu Avenue, Noor Hossain Square, Russell Square, Mirpur-10, Gabtoli bus terminal, Kuril rail crossing,

Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Jurain rail gate, Jatrabari crossing, Dayaganj bus stand, Sadarghat, Babu Bazar bridge, Motijheel Shapla Chattar, Nawabpur and North-South Road.

As on the previous day, the 14-party leaders addressed the gatherings from temporary podiums on open trucks while agitators and artists sang parodies and danced to inspire the activists and participants.

The speakers demanded immediate resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser.

Iajuddin is working in favour of BNP and Jamaat, they said. Different professional groups like the Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, Supreme Court Bar Association and Swadhinata Chikitsa Parishad also joined the rallies in the capital.

Former president HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party yesterday staged demonstrations in the city supporting the blockade. Activists of the Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Bangladesh also took to the streets.

As the examinations at all the educational institutions and movement of the Hajj pilgrims were kept out of the purview of the blockade, vehicular movement was much higher compared to that of the earlier blockades.

A large number of rickshaws and CNG-run vehicles dominated the roads.

However, the number of heavy motorised vehicles was low.

Most of the city's business centres remained closed due to the

blockade.

There was partial work in private and autonomous offices and attendance in the government offices was thin.

Our staff correspondent reports from Chittagong: Chittagong Divisional Coordinator of Awami League-led 14-party combine ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury vowed to keep the country's premier seaport standstill until the ongoing political crisis ends.

"All operations barring the loading and unloading inside Chittagong Port and delivery to and from it will remain suspended until the 14-party combine's demands are met," Mohiuddin Chowdhury, who is also the Chittagong city mayor, said while addressing rallies at different places.

At the pro-blockade rallies held at AK Khan Gate, Nimtala, Barik Building Intersection and Anderkilla, AL Presidium Member Aatur Rahman Khan Kaiser and other 14-party leaders addressed.

The city mayor threatened to besiege the office of National Grid of Power Development Board (PDB) at the city's Khulshi area and force suspension of its operation for indefinite period from tomorrow if the PDB authorities there fail to ensure uninterrupted supply of power to the city and its dwellers by today.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led four-party alliance held a rally at Kazir Dewri Intersection yesterday afternoon where former minister and BNP Joint Secretary General Abdullah Al Noman and other lead-

ers spoke.

Noman denounced Mohiuddin Chowdhury for speaking in 'provocative language' on a regular basis and trying to disrupt the port activities.

"His [mayor] role now goes against the people and the greater interest of the country," Noman said.

Our Dinajpur correspondent adds: At least 15 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal - student fronts of Awami League and BNP - at Thakurgaon Government College yesterday noon, police said.

The clashes erupted when JCD activists hurled bricks at a procession of BCL that was passing by the Arts Building of the college at 1:30pm, sources said, adding that earlier a BCL leader came under attack by JCD activists.

Shortly afterwards, the activists of JCD and BCL gathered at Chowrasta Moar of Thakurgaon town and engaged in clashes again.

Panic spread among people as chase and counter-chase between the two groups continued for about an hour, witnesses said.

Some 15 people were injured during the clashes as leaders and activists of the rival groups used hockey sticks and traded bricks and stones.

Later riot police and Rapid Action Battalion brought the situation under control. Police patrol has been increased as a tense situation is prevailing on the college campus and in Thakurgaon town.



US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs John Gastright, middle, calls on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Hawa Bhaban in the city yesterday. On his right is US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 28.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 08.8 degree Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5.11pm today and rises at 6:28am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in percentage		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.8	15.8	70	71
Chittagong	27.6	14.4	79	54
Rajshahi	26.5	11.0	66	83
Khulna	26.0	13.4	71	80
Barisal	27.0	12.6	84	88
Sylhet	27.7	15.2	79	62
Cox's Bazar	28.2	14.6	60	63

Sirajul Hossain's 'Vanishing Ape' goes Cambridge

Thirty photographs of hoolock gibbons by Sirajul Hossain have been selected for the exhibition at the Primate Society of Great Britain (PSGB) and Cambridge audiences starting from today, says a press release.

The western hoolock gibbon (Hoolock hoolock hoolock) has received the national IUCN classification 'critically endangered' and it will be added to the IUCN/SSC list over the world's 25 most endangered primates 2006-2008. In the fragmented forests that remain in Bangladesh, 200-300 hoolock gibbons are spread out in 22 small, separated populations. The largest continuous population exists in West-Bhanugach reserve forest in Sylhet in north-eastern Bangladesh. Fifty-nine hoolock gibbons in 16 families are found in a continuous population stretching slightly outside the boundaries of Lawachara National Park.

British Council Dhaka is supporting the event.

AL leaning lawyers to probe SC vandalism

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organisation, continued demonstrations for contempt proceedings against the culprits in the November 30 vandalism which they said has tarnished the image of the top court.

Blaming the pro-AL lawyers for the incident, they called on the chief justice not to open the court until the persons responsible are dealt out punishment.

On the other hand, the lawyers with allegiance to the 14-party combine were agitating for resignation of the chief justice and attorney general for what they said was unjustly staying the proceedings of three writ petitions on November 30. The petitions were filed challenging the legality of the president's taking over as the chief adviser to the caretaker government.

They declared that they will boycott the court of chief justice until he resigns.

Meanwhile, an SC lawyer yesterday filed a case against Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-Chairman barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud and three others for what he said was causing disruption to the court proceedings.

In another development, Ramna police yesterday picked up a youth from the city's Paribagh slums, following up the photographs and video footage of Thursday's incident.

Raju, the arrestee, has had his hair cut to avert capture, said a police press release.

He has admitted to having a role in the vandalism incident, it added.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) at an emergency meeting at Abdul Ahad Hall demanded immediate withdrawal of the 'false case' filed against Rakanuddin, former SCBA general secretary Enayetur Rahim and others.

It also formed an eight-member committee with barrister Shafique Ahmed at the helm to investigate the ransacking of the offices of chief justice and attorney general.

AM Amin Uddin is the member-secretary of the committee while the other members are Abdul Baset Mamber, Ozair Farooq, Mahbub Alam, Rafiqul Islam Mian, Yusuf Hossain Humayun, and Ziaur Rahman Khan.

The committee will seek to find out the motives and the persons responsible for the incident, and submit its report to the SCBA within two weeks, M Amin Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

The SCBA meeting also observed that some of the newspapers, widely considered as mouthpiece of the BNP, have published false reports and superimposed photographs of lawyers.

ROKAN, OTHER LAWYERS SUE

Our Court Correspondent add: A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a criminal case against Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council barrister Rakanuddin

Mahmud and other lawyers for vandalising the offices of attorney general and chief justice and also for creating disturbance in court proceedings last Thursday.

Barrister Omar Sadat, son-in-law of former minister and BNP leader Shajahan Siraj, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fatah recorded statement of the complainant and directed officer-in-charge of Shahbagh police station to conduct investigation into the allegations and register it as an FIR (first information report), if found true.

The other accused are former secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association Enayetur Rahim, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Sheikh Awsafur Rahman, a few lawyers and outsiders.

In his complaint, Sadat said Rakan directed the accused lawyers and outsiders to vandalise the chief justice's chamber, courtrooms and other public properties and also to threaten the attorney general.

When contacted, Rakan told The Daily Star that the charges brought in the complaints against him and others are false, fabricated and concocted.

"The case was filed on 'political ground,' said Rakan adding that he was not present at the place of occurrence during the vandalism.

ARMS CASE AGAINST 3 AT KERANIGANJ

Family members demand impartial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members of two accused in an arms case yesterday alleged that the case filed by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) with South Keraniganj Police Station on November 19 was false.

They said some of their relatives, who are trying to grab their property, are behind this stage-managed incident.

They also demanded an impartial investigation into the case.

The case was filed against two brothers, Gazi Pear Bux and Gazi Hasan Rony, who run a telecom shop, and a shop employee Alal Uddin. They are now under police custody.

Speaking at a press conference, Mahmuda Akhter, sister of Pear and Rony, said four of their relatives have been harassing their family members for the last few years by lodging false cases.

On November 19, a group of unidentified people forced Pear, Rony and Alal into an ambulance and sped away, she said, adding that the group left behind a mobile phone on the scene.

Local people protested the incident, but the group members threatened to open fire, Mahmuda said. The incident took place at Abdullahpur Korergaon area in broad daylight.

She also said her family later came to know that the mobile phone belongs to a member of Rab-2 and the number plate of the ambulance was fake.

Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

BIHR Executive Director BIHR Nazmul Huq Shah Chowdhury said his organisation would provide legal support to the accused who were falsely charged with possessing arms.

Peara Begum, mother of Mahmuda, and Advocate Shahanoor Islam Shawkat were also present at the press conference.

Obituary

Mohammad Azharul Islam Khan, a retired government official, passed away at a city hospital on Sunday at the age of 70, says

a press release.

Azharul, also father of BBC Bangla Service senior producer Masud Hasan Khan, left behind his wife, three sons and two daughters to mourn his death.

His kulkhwani will be held at 17/3 Reazbagh, Taltala at Khilgaon after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the kulkhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Certificate giving ceremony of Bar Council deferred

BSS, Dhaka

The function for distributing certificate among the advocates, who were listed in the Bangladesh Bar Council on October 29, 2005, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances.

The function was scheduled to be held on December 7 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre here, a press release said yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Launching ceremony

Surgery Department of Birdev hospital will launch a booklet to create mass awareness about colorectal diseases and its prevention. Venue: Birdev auditorium. Time: 12:30pm.

Discussion

Jatiya Party will hold a discussion to mark the 43rd death anniversary of Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardi. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Human chain

Campaign for Good Governance will form a human chain demanding democratic reforms. Venue: Shahbagh intersection. Time: 3:00pm.

Workshop

A two-day 'start-up workshop' on 'Market Infrastructure Development Project in Charland Regions (MIDPCR)', jointly organised by Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), will begin. Venue: LGED auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Bangladesh Biman has already flown 2,505 pilgrims under direct supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.