

JP extended meet

Stalwarts urged to bury discord

By Nurul Kabir

The two-day extended meeting of the Jatiya Party (JP) Central Committee ended yesterday with the district level leaders urging 'four senior stalwarts' to work unitedly.

The four JP stalwarts include Acting Chairman of the party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, General Secretary Shah Moazzem Hossain, Acting Leader of Parliamentary Party Moudud Ahmed and President Member Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

All the four leaders while addressing the extended meeting assured the district level leaders of 'total non-existence of any conflict' among themselves and expressed their will to put efforts to get the party stronger.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed, according to sources, moved a proposal at the meeting that the party should immediately go for initiating a dialogue with the opposition parties aimed at achieving 'certain objectives' on the one hand and paving the way to the release of party chief H M Ershad from jail on the other.

Kazi Zafar in his speech yesterday, observed that JP alone was not capable enough to 'free' Ershad right at the moment.

Other leaders, however, did not make any comment on Zafar's proposal at the meeting, sources said.

Moudud Ahmed is learnt to have told the meeting yesterday that the JP needed to become a democratic organisation in the coming days.

'A party incapable of practising democracy at its different tiers can not contribute to the establishment of democracy in the country', Moudud observed.

In a proposal moved yesterday Moudud said that the JP constitution must be rewritten in a democratic fashion, sources said.

Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, the former Speaker of Parliament and JP president member, in his speech spoke for developing a single command in the party. Referring to the 'Quit India Movement' in the forties Huda said, Mahatma Gandhi had not consulted all the Congress leaders before announcing the programme. 'But nobody in the Congress leadership opposed the decision on the plea that they were not consulted earlier.'

Huda Chowdhury, according to sources, defended Shah Moazzem Hossain who had been accused by a section of

leaders of taking party decisions without consulting others.

Chowdhury, referring to the public trial of Golam Azam and Jamaat's reaction to it, said, 'Nobody knows what the nation is going to witness on and around March 26.'

March 26 is the date set for the 'public trial' of Jamaat chief Golam Azam.

A leader of the women front of JP was very critical of some former JP ministers who 'fled deserting the JP workers during December 1990.' She warned them against their fresh attempts to be front benchers in the party again.

She observed that the JP leaders, during the days in power, were not at liberty to freely think for the party's betterment in the real sense of the term.

Being out of the power, the party has now the scope to develop itself as a real political party, she added.

All the leaders addressing the meeting were unanimous in commenting that the ruling BNP was getting unpopular day by day while the JP was being popular.

Golam Mostafa, General Secretary of the Rangpur unit of JP, however, warned everybody against any 'complacency'. He also demanded an immediate call for movement to free Ershad.

HBFC rebate facilities to benefit few, say borrowers

By Staff Correspondent

The rebate facilities recently announced by the government for borrowers of House Building Finance Corporation loans will only benefit a 'handful' of borrowers as most of them are not able to fulfil the conditions to qualify for the rebate.

This was disclosed by Fazlul Huq, general secretary of the HBFC Borrowers' Association on Wednesday at a press conference at the National Press Club.

Huq pointed out that a borrower with a minimum of Taka 3 lakh loan would have to pay a monthly installment of about Taka 15,000 for two years in addition to Taka 30,000 as a 10 per cent down payment to qualify for the rebate.

The second condition stipulating the payment of twelve monthly instalments at one time and paying the remaining portion of the loan in eight instalments in two years, he added, was more difficult for the borrowers to meet.

He also noted the absence of any mention of some 'important' aspects in the government announcement like the cases against defaulters and auctioning of properties. He mentioned that during an earlier meeting in October last between the representatives of the borrowers and the Finance Minister, the minister agreed to cancel the penalty interest system, withdraw penalty interests, reduce lumpsum interests by 50 per cent.

GCO strike

From Page 1 Col 5

Students at Rajshahi University. The rally addressed by GCO leaders Belal Chowdhury and Abdus Sattar Khan blamed the Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury for the recent incidents of killings and demanded his resignation.

The leaders said the government has taken the stand of favouring the anti-liberation elements at such a time when the whole nation was united to prosecute Golam Azam and all war criminals.

The leaders also blamed the government of conducting indiscriminate attacks on the progressive forces in collaboration with the 'Jamaat-Shibir Chakra' and called upon all to embark on a united movement against the government.

The GCO leaders also demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers of Moin Hossain Raju and Yasser Arafat Pitu.

The GCO, however, decided to hold countrywide demonstrations today protesting the killings. It will also observe mourning day on March 21 for the death of Pitu.



Bangladesh nationals greeting Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on her arrival at Dallas airport in the US Wednesday. —PID photo



Attack on Shibir activist, tendon cut off

By DU Correspondent

A group of unidentified students of Salmullah Muslim Hall of the Dhaka University on Wednesday cut the tendon of a Shibir activist at about 11 am in front of the British Council at Fuller Road.

Campus sources said Hafiz Maulana Md Masum Billah was a 'Sathe' of ICS Magura district unit who came to visit his relative at the SM hall.

He was watching the Pakistan-New Zealand World Cup cricket match on Television when his fellow TV watchers, on suspicion, questioned him and found out his Shibir identity.

The students searched his body and allegedly found a barber's razor.

The infuriated students reportedly dragged him out of the hall common room and cut the tendon of his right leg. Another attempt to cut the tendon of his left leg was obstructed by the nearby police who fired shots to disperse the crowd.

The students left the place immediately after firing several rounds of gunshots.

The police later, rescued him and sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

Meanwhile, another Shibir worker was reportedly beaten up at the Jasimuddin Hall of the university Wednesday noon.

He could not, however, be identified.

GCO, Shibir call hartal

From Page 1 Col 4

The University authorities today formed a 7-member probe committee headed by Professor AM Shamsul Huq.

In a related development, the Bangladesh Institute of Technology, located adjacent to the University, was also closed for an indefinite period today.

Police said that a group of youngmen were arrested when they attempted to ransack some rooms at the Amir Ali Hall. However, the situation remained calm throughout the day and students vacated the residential halls by afternoon, police added.

The Rajshahi University Teachers Association (RUTA) today condoned the death of Pitu and demanded punishment to those involved. In a statement, the RUTA also slated the role of police during the incidents.

Hospital sources said today that 39 students remained admitted at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital but that their condition was improving.

Meanwhile, a procession was brought out by the GCO to mourn the death of Pitu and later in the day a protest meeting was held at the Shaheb Bazaar Square.

JSD leader Hasanul Huq Inu, BSD leader Khalequzzaman, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon,

MP, and Awami League leader Mia Mohsin attended the protest meeting.

Speakers at the meeting, while condemning the killing of Pitu, said that the killing was linked to the recent killing of Dhaka University student leader Raju.

They added that the Jamaat-Shibir coterie was involved in the incidents and conspiring to foil the upcoming 'public trial' of Golam Azam March 26.

They demanded a complete investigation into and punishment to those involved in the incidents.

They said that the Vice Chancellor of the University had also visited the injured students in the hospital and it indicated that the government had a hand behind the incident.

Earlier they visited the four residential halls of the University where at least 218 rooms were set afire or ransacked allegedly by the Shibirites.

Meanwhile, the Additional District and Sessions Judge today suspended the final hearing of the case having 14 accused for an indefinite period stating insecurity of the court. He suggested that the High Court Division of the Supreme Court transfer the case out of Rajshahi.

Editorial on page 4

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 5

GCO. Sheikh Hasina said that the government instigated the Jamaat-Shibir clique against the pro-liberation forces to obstruct the 'public trial' of war criminal Golam Azam on March 26 and to remain in power undisturbed.

The armed Shibir activists also unleashed a reign of terror in different halls of the Rajshahi University and brutally injured GCO supporters, she added.

The AL chief said the attackers ransacked the hostels and 'cut the leg and hand veins of the inmates there.'

They also attacked the female students 'in a naked way', she alleged.

She said that their brutality made us recall that of the Pakistan army and their collaborators, the Rajakars Albadars in 1971.

All for cricket

From Rahat Fahmida in Calcutta

They came, they smiled upon their rather strange stroke of luck and they walked off with a handsome booty. Sounds fictitious, but true. A merry band of dacoits did exactly that in a Calcutta bank. To their surprise, the dacoits found the entire staff so engrossed in a cricket match on TV that their presence was only felt after they had sneaked away leaving the lockers open.

That's one of the things that happen in Calcutta when cricket is being played anywhere in the world. Only Calcutta, the city of born fanatics, can boast of such an atrocious history of crime.

Well into the British Raj, when this bat-ball-and-wicket game was more of a nawabi sport, residents of this sleepy city beside the Ganges were bitten by this mysterious bug called over-enthusiasm.

The Britishers departed, but Calcutta, ever since, has always been reeling under a heavy hangover. Fights, black eyes, mass movements and one can expect the floodgates of innumerable debates and counter-debates to open whenever the cricketing season gets under way.

The greatest of them all 'Sunil Manohar Gavaskar' faced the wrath of the crowd when he chanced to slip it in to some column that they were 'rowdy'. The most feared a

loved Pakistani captain, Imran Khan, won praise after praise when the home team was reduced to a pack of jumping jacks in the face of his fiery spell. Such are the manifold contradictions that one has to live with in this cricket ga-ga city.

So what if Calcutta's own little band of cricketers seldom find a place in the national squad, so what if the Indian team barely manages to limp in to the second stage of major competitions? Calcuttans have a habit of chucking these little bits of 'statistical non-entities' out of the window. What's more important, sometimes more than life itself (refer to the lad who hung himself after India went down to the Aussies by a single run in the ongoing World Cup), is the game. And in this department, the average Calcuttan can boast to be some sort of a gargantuan. Ask the average teenager on the streets who's playing and don't be surprised if he tells you names of all the 112 players participating in the World Cup, and if one is a bit more lucky, he might just pip in with his batting and bowling averages too.

That's how easy cricket is in this city. Easy, like breathing. It's an inborn interest that makes one forget, for the moment, the hardships of life waiting outside the window.

Khaleda-Bush

From Page 1 Col 7

He said CNN would take up measures to projecting the Third World countries' socio-economic and political issues.

Both of them enquired about the damage caused by the last years cyclone and the rehabilitation work afterwards. They also congratulated Begum Zia for her being elected as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Begum Zia invited them to visit Bangladesh to witness the on-going development activities.

The Prime Ministries also expected to discuss matters of mutual interests with other US officials including the Defence Secretary Dick Cheney, joint chief of staff Collin Powell and chief of US Task Force in Bangladesh during the last year's cyclone General Stackpole.

Begum Zia will also hold separate talks with members of Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, besides officials of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington.

The Bangladesh leader is also expected to give interviews to leading US media, including Associated Press (AP), Cable News Network (CNN), New York Times, Washington Post and the Christian Science Monitor.

The Prime Minister is accompanied by Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Begum Selima Rahman, MP, Principal secretary to the Prime Minister Syed Haasan Ahmed and Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman.

Begum Zia is scheduled to meet the UNCA president Samir Shihab and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in New York.

Border talks begin

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 18: Border coordination conference between Bangladesh and India began here Wednesday at a local hotel.

The Bangladesh side at the 4-day talks was led by the Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Rifles Brigadier T U M Iftekharul Bashar while the Indian side was represented by Shankar Sen Additional Director General of Border Security Force (BSF) for South Bengal and the TCM Frontier areas.

According to an official source, the meeting, which started at 10 am at the Royal Hotel and ended at 2 pm, discussed the issues of cross-border trespassing, women trafficking, drug smuggling and cattle-lifting.

The second days session also discussed the issues of cross-border firing and reinstatement of boundary border pillars, the source added.

The next two days of the session will be held in Dhaka starting today (Thursday) at the BDR Headquarters at Pilkhana.

Public trial

From Page 1 Col 4

Constitution speaks of the exclusive rights of the Bangladeshi citizens to be involved in the country's politics or head any political organisation, said Gaztul Huq, eminent lawyer.

Giving the highlights of the Home Ministry meeting, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury said that the objective of the 'public trial' of Golam Azam would be to convey the resentment of the people against the killers and collaborators and to inform the world conscience of the activities of the war criminals during the 1971 Liberation War of the country.

Brushing aside the allegation of the lack of adequate constitutional support behind such trial, he said 'such allegation is unrealistic. The conception of public trial is not new and one such trial initiated by Bertrand Russel took place in London in 1966 after the Vietnam War.'

'The peoples' verdict is the final, Bangladesh's War of Independence did not take place following the then constitution. Even the ruling party which was voted to power after a mass upheaval did not take place constitutionally.'

Elaborating, Prof Chowdhury said: 'The joint declaration of the three alliances do not have any constitutional base, even though it has political and social value.'

The leaders of the committee told the press that the 'public trial' would provide the Government the moral support necessary to take steps against a foreign citizen Golam Azam. 'Our movement is not against the government', they added.

Gaztul Huq said that 'fresh citizenship' to Golam Azam would amount to giving rights to foreign citizens to become the head of the state.

The leaders of the National Coordination Committee, however, gave no indication of the Government proposal regarding the trial.

The Midnight File

Sikh militants kill 18 more Hindus in Ludhiana

LUDHIANA, Mar 18: Sikh militants killed 18 Hindus when they sprayed a busy bazaar with gunfire today night in Ludhiana, the second such attack in the Punjab industrial city in four days, police said. Raj Kishan Bedi, the city's senior police superintendent, said four or five militants attacked Hindu shopkeepers as they were closing their stalls, reports Reuter.

100 Myanmar students freed from Thai detention centre

BANGKOK, Mar 18: More than 100 Myanmar students were released today from a Thai detention centre where they had been held for seven months pending resettlement in a refugee camp. 'We are free, we are free,' shouted the students, most in their 20s. Rounded up as illegal immigrants last year, the 99 men and three women were released and told they would eventually have to move to a special camp being built by Thai authorities. The camp is expected to open in May, reports Reuter.

Akram Point

From Page 1 Col 7

Swatch of No-Land and Swach of No Ground at the entrance of Mongla port are helping the Passur-Shibsha system to let in and let out huge tidal discharge and is acting as an unlimited storage basin for transported sediments. The advantage of the approach channel of Mongla Port is that the Swatch of No-Land is still 400 feet deep. It can receive siltation for another one hundred years while the Swatch of No Ground is virtually fathomless. Very few countries in the world like Sri Lanka and ports like Singapore are the lucky in having such natural physical facility.

According to experts the Swatch of No Ground is responsible for tidal boom of undercurrent. The mangrove forest of the Sundarbans in acting as breakwater to prevent tidal surges during the depression at the Bay of Bengal. The deep forest also helps the Passur River in preventing bank erosion and helping all the ocean going vessels to safely anchor even at the time of great cyclonic storm.

The Chairman of the Mongla Port Authority, Mr Nazrul Hussain, said that creation of a deep-draught anchorage facility at Akram point would require dredging of the shallow patches of the Outer Bar upto a maximum depth of 22 feet. This would bring in ships of upto 45 feet draught with 50,000 tons capacity which is comparable to any major international port.

The port is now facing siltation problem. The Passur Channel which connects the port, with the Outer Bar remained stable for 30 years till 1968. The channel deteriorated till 1978 and since then it again remained stable.

In order to find out the causes a study was carried out by DPR Furligh, a reputed World Bank consultant. Furligh submitted his report in two phases where he pointed out that five main causes were responsible for the siltation.

There were: 1) coastal embankment and empolderment of the Passur-Shibsha basin; 2) opening of Mongla Ghasakhali canal in 1974 for Rocket service only; 3) presence of eight ship wrecks in the channel; 4) withdrawal of water in the upstream through Farakka Barrage and 5) deflection of upstream flow due to situation of Maddhumati, Goral, and Ataharabanki system.

The chairman further said with the completion of capital dredging which is going on the port would be ready for any operation. But a dredger fleet is required for maintenance of the port. The government has agreed to procure a dredger very shortly, he said.

The secretary of the ports, and shipping, IU Malik in his recent visit, also expressed satisfaction over the development work now going on in the port and said that the government was also contemplating to making this port as one of the finest ports in the world.

But for this to succeed a multipurpose jetty, a dredger fleet and a rail-cum-road bridge over river Rupsha are needed, the experts say.

AL announces economic policy today

Opposition Awami League will announce its new economic policy today (Thursday), a party spokesman said, reports UNB.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will present the policy at an Iftar party at her Minto Road official residence.

In last few days, Awami League central working committee held hectic discussions with country's leading economists, industrialists and trade unionists before finalising the policy suiting the needs of people and of the changed global economic situation.

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