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Ctg Steel Mills Workers call hartal in Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, May 12: The workers of Chittagong Steel Mills (CSM) observed today hunger strike at Shaheed Minar in the city today protesting the 'pay-off decision' of the government.

They also called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city tomorrow to press home their demands including reopening of mills and payment of outstanding salaries.

The protesters at a meeting during the hunger strike called upon the people to make tomorrow's hartal against the government move a success.

The meeting was addressed by city BNP president Meer Nasiruddin, City JP president Jahangir Alam, city Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Shah Alam, Sraniik Dal president Nazimuddin and Sraniik League general secretary Nurul Islam.

Speakers at the meeting said the mill could make profits if the government had provided Tk 40 crore as running capital, but it turned into a losing concern due to its wrong policy.

Chittagong Education Board Chairman Enayetur Rahman informed UNB that the HSC examinations scheduled for tomorrow would be kept out of the ambit of hartal.

58 Bangladeshis held in India

CALCUTTA, May 12: Police arrested 58 illegal migrants from Bangladesh from a train that would have taken them to India's financial capital, a police officer said today, reports AP.

The Bangladeshis boarded the train at the border Indian village of Maslandpur after crossing over the India-Bangladesh land border Tuesday undetected. They included 18 men, 20 women and 20 children, police said.

They didn't carry any travel documents. Their Indian co-passengers on the train became suspicious and called police at Barasat, a town 35 kilometers north of Calcutta, said SP Das, deputy inspector-general of police.

The Indian escort also was arrested, Das said.

TODAY IN Rising Stars



Meet The Three Young

ANIMATORS

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to run on humanitarian
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Prayer Timings

May 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-20
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-45	4-55
Maghrib	6-30	6-33
Esha	7-55	8-10

Source: Islamic Foundation

13 more lose bank directorship

By M Shamsur Rahman

Thirteen more directors of nine commercial banks, including the chairman of City Bank, lost their directorship after the High Court yesterday discharged their petitions challenging notices of their removal.

Those who lost their seats are Chairman M A Hashem of City Bank, M N Amin, Dr Z H Gazi and Anul Huq of Social Investment Bank, Md Abdul Awal of National Bank Ltd, Aminul Huq Chowdhury of IFIC, Khushi Akhtar and M A Khaleq of Prime Bank, Ramjul Siraj of Arab Bangladesh Bank Ltd, Abdullah Al Ahsan and Rashedur Rahman of Dhaka Bank, Bahauddin Mohammad Yussuf of Al Arafah Bank and Naser Kader of NCCBL.

Around 50 directors of different commercial banks were served with notices under section 17 of Bank Companies Act as they defaulted on repaying their bank loans. They were asked to repay their due loans within two months from receipt of the notices or vacate their offices as directors.

Some of the directors vacated their offices and some repaid their outstanding loans within the stipulated time. Thirty-six directors went to the High Court and obtained a stay order against the bank notices and continued to enjoy their positions as directors.

The cases had been stayed for over one year by the High Court. In February, these cases came to the Division Bench

comprising Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq and Moazzam Hossain and are now being disposed of.

With the latest ones, as many as 29 cases have been disposed of with the removal of these 13 directors. Earlier this week, 12 defaulting directors of five banks lost their directorship after the same court discharged their petitions.

Petitions of four United Commercial Banks Ltd directors were declared infructuous as the bank had withdrawn its notices.

Stay order

UNB adds: The Supreme Court yesterday stayed operation of the High Court verdict that costs four persons, including Page 12 Col 6

Step down, sack OC, demands Opposition

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of opposition activists yesterday staged demonstrations to protest police assault on pickets, MPs, female activists and supporters and journalists in the capital during Tuesday's half-day hartal.

Witnesses said the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote held separate rallies and brought out processions in different parts of the city chanting anti-government slogans. BNP held rally at Muktagong, JP at Kalabagan, Jamaat at Paltan and IOJ at Purana Paltan Mosque.

Leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations started gathering at Muktagong from 4 pm and held a big rally chaired by city BNP convenor

See Page 12 Col 4

Assault on MPs and journalists not on police probe terms

By Staff Correspondent

The terms of reference for the one-man committee to probe the police excesses at Bijoy Nagar in the city during Tuesday's hartal do not include two of the three specific offences - beating up of MPs and threatening journalists.

The government formed the committee on Tuesday to probe the incident in which police were seen beating up opposition MPs, humiliating a female BNP activist by trying to strip off her saree and threatening even to shoot on-duty journalists.

The committee comprising Abul Kashem Hawlader, DGP of Special Branch of Police, was formed on Tuesday. It is supposed to submit report to the Inspector General of Police by May 19.

"The terms of reference include the specific incident in which a woman was reportedly assaulted in Bijoy Nagar area at 10:30 am on Tuesday. The terms of reference neither mentioned the issue of alleged police beating up of MPs, nor journalists getting injured in the incident," Hawlader told The Daily Star last night.

But, he said in response to a Daily Star query, "I have the scope to see everything that had happened at that time, although the issue of the journalists is not specifically mentioned in the TOR."

OC of Motijheel Thana Mohammad Hanif reportedly led the entire attack on the opposition activists and the journalists. See Page 12 Col 1

Opposition plans hartal the day Larma takes over

The BNP-led opposition plans a countrywide hartal the day when installation of interim CHT Regional Council Chairman Shantit Larma will take place.

Larma, who took charge of the council in the capital yesterday to give the December 2, 1997 CHT peace agreement an institutional shape, is scheduled to take office in Rangamati in the last week of May.

The liaison body of the alliance, who are opposing the peace accord of the government with the insurgent leaders, discussed the hartal at a meeting yesterday.

"Final decision about hartal will be taken when we will meet again on Friday," a liaison leader emerging from the meeting told UNB.

The liaison committee agreed on principle to make a much-talked-about joint declaration of the alliance fixing the final objective of their movement.

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BNP brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting police action on its activists and journalists during hartal on Tuesday.

— Star photo

Commentary

"We have orders to shoot at pickets and journalists...."

By Mahfuz Anam

How dare a police officer says that he has orders from high ups to shoot at pickets and journalists? How dare the police attack and manhandle elected members of parliament? How can it happen at a time when a party, which itself had been a victim of such police brutality for years, is in power? Has home minister Mohammad Nasim forgotten the police attack on Matia Chowdhury, which rendered her unconscious during Khaleda Zia's days as the Prime Minister? But then such is the nature of our politics and of our political parties that they all become brutal and fascist when they go to power. They do the very things they have condemned others for doing.

There are three issues here that we feel compelled to raise. One, that of the freedom of the press, of journalists, and especially photojournalists to do their work. Two, that of the

right of political parties and of their supporters to stage street demonstrations. How can police beat demonstrators and pull at the sari of a woman who was participating in it? The third concerns the status of elected members of parliament vis a vis police. All these issues are fundamental to any functioning democracy.

Why did the police attack photojournalists? Why were rubber bullets fired at them? When photo journalists protested the police attack, the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Motijheel police station boastfully declared "You are protesting the beating, you have seen nothing yet. We have permission from high ups to shoot at pickets and journalists."

We have confirmed from several sources that the above words, or something very similar, were actually uttered by the OC. Now the question is where does he get the guts to do so?

What sort of hatred is being inculcated in the mind of our police that they should dare to say so? Is this the police force of a democratic country? Didn't the AL condemn the BNP in power when police entered the National Press Club and beat up journalists? How can it be right now, when it was wrong then? How can a free and independent press function if police are let loose against them while performing their professional duties? We condemn this with all the force and vehemence at our command. We also demand that the home minister apologise to the photojournalists and takes exemplary action against the police officer and the whole contingent that was involved in this act. We appreciate his expressing regret but it far from enough.

Freedom of the press and of journalists must be protected at all cost. They are the society's

See Page 12 Col 4

Cases against BNP leaders, workers

The police have filed cases against BNP central leaders and activists accusing them of violent activities during Tuesday's hartal in the city, reports UNB.

Three separate cases were filed with the Motijheel thana accusing Sadeq Hossain Khoka MP, Jaijal Abedin Farooq MP, Abdullah Al Noman, JCD president Habibunnabi Sohel, Advocate Sanaulah, Chowdhury Alam, Dudu Mia, Iman Ali, Mohammad Hanif, Abdul Qudus, Shamrat, Bijoy, Wasim, Wadud, Abdul Hakim, Badiul Alam, Tofazzal Hossain, Mainuddin, Manir, Rizvi, Liton, Zemim, Kamal and about 300 others who were not unidentified.

Erratum

The caption of lead pictures and the story on the front page yesterday mistakenly mentioned the name of Motijheel Thana Officer-in-Charge as Rafiqul Islam. The Motijheel OC is Mohammad Hanif who was seen in the picture assaulting Joyal Abedin Faruq MP. We regret the mistake. However, it was Ramna OC Rafiqul Islam who had roughed up Sadeq Hossain Khoka MP during a previous hartal.

Larma takes charge, meets PM today

By Special Correspondent

Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma took charge of the interim Regional Council (RC) for the Chittagong Hill Tracts yesterday.

He is expected to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today, according to sources.

JB Larma, Chairman of Parbatta Chhatragram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), signed a letter issued by the CHT Affairs Ministry appointing him Chairman of the RC at the state guest house Meghna yesterday morning.

The letter was carried back to CHT Affairs Minister Kalpanaraj Chakma by Larma's close aides, Gautam Chakma and Rupayan Dewan.

The RC Chairman will enjoy the status of a state minister. Taking over charge by JB Larma ends nearly eight months of impasse after the government appointed him Chairman of the 22-member interim RC on September 6 last year following signing of the peace agreement with PCJSS on December 2, 1997. He had refused to take charge saying that some important issues in the

hills remained unresolved.

A grand ceremony at Rangamati on May 27 will mark installation of the RC. It will be attended by tribal headmen and elders, Union Parishad members, political leaders and guests from Dhaka, the sources said.

JB Larma, who arrived in the capital on Monday, is expected to leave for Khagrachhari sometime next week, the sources added.

BSS adds: "I am very delighted, a much desired process has been accomplished today.... It has commenced a new era of development in the hills," a beaming Kalpanaraj Chakma told reporters after accepting

See Page 12 Col 3

WDB contradicts

The Water Development Board has contradicted parts of our story titled 'Armed terrorists attack Rajshahi WDB office.' The following is the WDB version.

Attention of Bangladesh Water Development Board has been drawn to a double column news item published in the front page of your esteemed daily on Wednesday captioned 'Armed terrorists attack Rajshahi WDB office.'

A portion of the news item is not based on facts and is likely to create confusion in the

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Huge quantity of ethanol sold thru' homeopathy shops across country

By Staff Correspondent

More than 1,000 homeopathy shops in the country receive between five to 500 gallons of rectified spirit or ethanol each annually on the basis of licence issued by the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), sources concerned said.

The licence for ethanol is issued for use in medicines but officials fear most of this huge quantity goes to an increasing number of consumers in remote areas of the country.

To increase their profit, the sellers seldom mix the rectified spirit (ethanol) with methanol which looks and smells almost the same as ethanol but sells at one sixth price of ethanol and is deadly. Officials suspect that the 'spirit' that killed 118 consumers in Narsinghdi constituted methanol in 'greater proportion.'

Even when the mixture is tolerable to human body, it has a serious effect on health. The

person concerned unknowingly develops various kidney complications and in such a case death is a matter of years," said physician at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The sources said that throughout the country, the rectified spirit costing Tk 600 per gallon is mixed with methanol which costs only Tk 100 per gallon. If the mixture is disproportionate, its consumer is sure to die. Methanol is used in furniture varnish, nail polish, cosmetics, paints and for various other purposes and it is imported under licence from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, they added.

Failing to curb the illegal business, DNC requested the commerce ministry to increase import duty on methanol. But the ministry did not show much interest considering that prices of furniture and paints would

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