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Bangabazar men to stage sit-in today in front of Nagar Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of four market associations of Bangabazar in the city will stage a sit-in today in front of the Nagar Bhaban demanding return of one of the markets occupied by armed elements about 25 months ago.

Protesting the 'forcible occupation', traders at Bangabazar brought out a procession and announced the sit-in programme from a rally near the Jatiya Press Club yesterday evening.

Leaders of the Associations blamed Mayor Mohammad Hanif for his 'failure' to help the 'dispossessed owners' of shops at Ideal Hawker's market get back the shops.

The cluster of four markets — Gulistan Hawkers Market, Mahanagar Hawkers Market, Bangabazar Hawkers Market and Ideal Hawkers Market — known as Bangabazar, is one of the biggest wholesale and retail

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Transport strike on: 16 buses damaged, 7 held in Bogra

By Staff Correspondent

The second day of non-stop transport strike across the country passed off peacefully yesterday barring an incident in Bogra town.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent reports: At least 16 buses were damaged by the striking transport workers in Bogra town at around 10 am yesterday.

Police arrested seven transport leaders and workers, including Truck Sramik Union secretary Mintoo Khan from Bogra Bus Terminal.

Protesting the arrest, transport workers put up a barricade on road. Police later removed the barricade.

Sources said the strike enforcers are a bit frustrated as the government side did not show any interest to discuss their demands. They also criticised the Home Minister for his comments against the transport workers.

Sources in transport sector said road communications between the capital and Chittagong region was almost normal while it was hampered in southern and northern regions as the operators suspended luxury bus services in long routes.

Road Transport Workers' Federation enforced the strike

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Our new numbers

19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215
Phones: 8124944, 8124955
& 8124966
Fax: 8125155

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May	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
18		6:36 pm
19	5:14 am	

Prayer Timings

May 18	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:15	4:45
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:35	6:38
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Sinking vessel threatens Sangu gas pipeline

The Sangu gas pipeline is at high risk as a sinking vessel was beached some 70 metres south of the 20-inch pipeline at Chittagong, reports UNB.

This was a high-risk decision... every effort should be made to remove the vessels from its present position," a field officer of Sangu said.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) said it was not possible to remove the 3531-ton vessel from its present position, as it had already leaned by 25 degree, and was likely to lean by 50 degree more soon. It said the problem could have been averted had Sangu authority marked their pipeline route earlier.

The CPA admitted that it did neither have the logistics and expertise, nor the court's permission to salvage the vessel,

which is now under the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Division of the High Court.

The port authority, however, overruled the possibility of the vessel moving closer to the pipeline, saying it is unlikely that the vessel would move from its present position.

But the Sangu field authority was not convinced with the observation and has made further appeal for measures to remove the vessel from its present position before the onset of monsoon.

About 25 per cent of Bangladesh's current gas production is being produced at Chittagong Gas Processing Plant.

The port authority removed the Romanian flag-carrier MV Revenge, abandoned by its owners and crew following a legal suit, to the outer anchorage by

tugs when the vessel faced sinking at the entry of the port channel.

It was beached at the Chittagong riverbed on April 3, close to the pipeline that links offshore Sangu Gas Field with Chittagong Gas Processing Plant.

The vessel faces a legal claim suit with the Admiralty Court and has been seized since August 19 last year.

Scraping the vessels remains the only option for the port authority, but they are unable to go for it unless the Court clears it.

The vessel entails a number of outstanding liabilities and it has been learnt that its owners have abandoned any claim on it. Port sources said the current liabilities exceed the scrap value of the vessel.



City dwellers heaved a sigh of relief after a brief shower yesterday. Gusty wind accompanied the rain. — Star photo

Brief shower brings relief

By Staff Correspondent

The city experienced a brief shower yesterday afternoon much to the relief of its residents.

A heat wave for the last six days coupled with frequent power disruption made life miserable in the capital. Besides, at least seven people died of heat stroke during this period in different areas of the country.

Cool wind started blowing at around 12:30 pm and there was cloud in the sky. Rain started at around 2:30 pm.

Meteorological Office sources said the city had 7 mm rainfall yesterday.

Besides, there was rain in Dinajpur, Bogra, Rangpur, Madaripur, Syedpur, Khepupara, Barisal and Srimangal. The maximum rainfall on the day — 43 mm — was recorded in Dinajpur.

The highest temperature in the capital yesterday was 33.1 degree Celsius while that in the country was 36.5 in Khulna.

Temperature will remain nearly unchanged in the capital

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PM asks BCL to avoid terrorist activities

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked her party's student activists not to get involved in terrorist activities and advised them to devote themselves to studies.

"You must attend classes regularly and abide by the advice of your teachers and guardians. No agitation to stop or shift examinations and attempts to force closure of any educational institution will be tolerated," she told a huge gathering of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) workers at a reception accorded to her in the city yesterday.

While warning against violent activities on the campuses, the Prime Minister promised speedy steps to resolve any problem there.

"The duty of Chhatra League workers is to keep the educational institutions functional and not to make those non-functional," the ruling Awami League chief said, directing the students to suspend all political activities three months before their examinations.

Referring to her plan to free the society from terrorism and extortion, the PM said, "There is no room for masts, extortionists and terrorists in Chhatra League. They are not assets but liabilities to a party."

The BCL gave the reception to Hasina for her contribution to economic development, empowerment of women, improvement of the country's image in the world and for her efforts.

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Hand over power to caretaker govt: Khaleda

NAGARKANDA, Faridpur, May 17: Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia today asked the Awami League government to hand over power immediately to a caretaker administration to free the country from the stigma of corruption, reports UNB.

"Widespread corruption plagued entire society during the four-year rule of Awami League. This failed and corrupt government cannot be allowed to continue in power anymore," she told a big meeting here in the afternoon.

She said the countrymen would feel relieved as soon as the government abdicates to caretaker government.

The former Prime Minister said the people have the account of all corruption that includes even stealing of trees.

Asking the Awami League ministers and leaders for taking

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Opposition to join dialogue if President takes initiative

The four-party opposition alliance is ready to join dialogue with the government for choosing a CEC if the President takes the initiative, reports UNB.

A decision in this regard was taken by the central liaison committee of the alliance at a meeting held at 29 Minto Road yesterday. The committee was discussing the outcome of Begum Khaleda Zia's meeting with the President Tuesday night.

Chaired by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the meeting was attended by three other secretaries general — of JP, Jamaat and IOJ — Nazim Rahman Manjur, Moulana Ma-tur Rahman Nizami and Mufti Fazlul Huq Amince respectively.

"We have decided to join discussion with the government on appointment of Chief Election Commissioner if the President takes the initiative," an alliance leader told the news agency.

If the discussion took place, he further said, they would

place some conditions, including one that no other elections should be held before general election under the new CEC.

Shamsul Islam of BNP, ABM Golan Mostafa of JP, Ali Akbar Mohammad Mujahidee of Jamaat and ARM Abdul Matin of IOJ also attended the meeting.

Another report says, possibility of any direct offer from the government side to the opposition for fresh dialogue on the CEC issue appears bleak as the standoff intensified.

When contacted, Finance Minister Shah Kibria told UNB that question of fresh communication with the opposition from the government side does not arise as there is no move from the opposition camp.

He said BNP had contacted him since BNP leader Saifur Rahman had talks with him after the move for a dialogue bogged down with the unexpected remarks of Begum Zia at public meeting in Kurigram on May 14.

"The Prime Minister will have to run the Election Commission, and now she will have to appoint someone to fill the vacancy," Kibria said, adding BNP does not want any consensus or discussion. "They just want to create chaos."

However, a top Awami League and a BNP leader said a move was on behind the scene to create conditions favourable for a dialogue on CEC issue.

At the CEC issue continues to shake national politics, acting Chief Election Commissioner Mustaque Ahmed Chowdhury says a quick decision should be taken to fill up the vacant post.

"The sooner is the better for us, better for the Election Commission and its activities. We are eagerly waiting for a new CEC," Mustaque told UNB yesterday.

He said the normal activities of the EC, including preparing a fresh voters' list, are going on. But a quick decision is a must

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Another 'Hundi Bank' vanishes with Tk 1 cr in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, May 17: An underground bank known as 'Syndicate Bank or Hundi Bank' at Harinarayanpur Bazar, 14 miles off here, has just vanished with about Tk 1 crore deposit, local investors alleged, reports UNB.

The owners, identified as Shahjahan and his father-in-law Mohiuddin, very popular and trusted by the investors, have so far been missing since April 10, the date for payment of interest.

Panicky investors, including traders of the area, said transactions of the bank were done secretly through agents paying 12 per cent interest per month. No record was kept nor any document used to be exchanged. Some of the investors did receive Tk 12,000 monthly interest for Tk one lakh deposited by them.

With huge deposit pouring in or collected by agents, Shahjahan purchased a shop at Harinarayanpur Bazar that deals in MS rod and cement.

The bank was initially started at Kotchandpur, where notorious 'hundi' trader Faruq Ahmed alias Kajo was also involved before shifting to the Harinarayanpur Bazar.

Faruq and his accomplices also fled Kotchandpur leaving their investors in frustration. A tense situation has been prevailing at Harinarayanpur Bazar.

Shikdar's men rebuilding strongholds at Skid Ghat

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 17: KMP has again lost control of the Skid Ghat where hardened criminals and Ershad Shikdar's armed cadres have started rebuilding their strongholds since last two months allegedly with the backing of a section ruling party men.

Unauthorised structures demolished during police drives last year are being reconstructed here and there at Skid Ghat and also on railway land.

Both the rival groups of the ruling AL are allegedly harbouring the armed cadres and accomplices of Ershad Shikdar to retake Railway land.

The armed cadres are threatening genuine businessmen. They also asked some of them to leave Skid Ghat. As a result, normal trade activities are being seriously hampered as

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3 alleged dacoits lynched in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 17: Four people including three alleged dacoits were killed in two separate incidents here last night, police said.

Mob lynched three alleged dacoits when they attempted to commit a dacoity at Halishahar at 10 pm last night, police said. Two other alleged dacoits were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The mob surrounded the gang of seven but two of them managed to escape, police said. Police later recovered the bodies.

Meanwhile, a slum dweller identified as Jamal, 20, died when a big chunk of hill collapsed on his house at Motijama near Lalkhan Bazar at 2 am last night, police said.

Jamal's body was recovered after removing the mud, police said.

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The poor have little scope for free treatment at hospitals

By Naimul Haq

The poor have apparently little scope for medical treatment, at least in big city hospitals, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH).

The incredibly small number of designated free beds for the poor in the city hospitals only demonstrate the lack of sincerity of the government.

It was with a view to helping the destitute that the Prime Minister had given Tk five crore last year to the hospital. But in reality, the poor virtually do not get the 'free treatment' they are supposed to.

During a recent day-long investigation regarding free beds in different wards in BSMMUH, the poor patients complained to this correspondent that they had to buy all sorts of drugs and even common vitamins.

At the hematology department twelve-year-old Shanto Hasina, in bed 16, stares in the ceiling unaware of what is happening around her. Sitting by her is her parents. The forehead

fold in both of them show anxiety.

On inquiry, Hasina's father, a tea stall owner whispers to this correspondent, "My daughter has blood cancer. Ever since her admission a month ago we spent more than Tk 45,000 borrowing and selling property just to buy chemotherapy. The last we can do now is begging but what good would it do?"

Hasina's father, Tota Mia, from a Jatrahari slum in the city appealed for help to the hospital authorities several times but he is yet to get any response.

The concerned doctor has recommended a number of vitamins to keep Hasina's system from collapsing but even the simplest ones of the vitamins are not in the hospital pharmacy, claimed a sister of the department.

"We expected my daughter will get free treatment but except for the bed nothing is free. Even the four units of blood Hasina needed were bought from outside," said Tota Mia.

On the third floor in the same building in Urology ward Kabir Hossain echoed similar complaints. "I spent over Tk 2,300 for drugs before my surgery on last Sunday and additional Tk 5000 for surgery accessories," said Hossain.

Hossain, lying in bed number 15 (4/B), went on, "In fact since operation my doctor has prescribed medicines almost every day but none of them are supplied from the hospital."

Seventeen year old Tanjira Akhtar Banesa lying paralysed in neurology department in bed - 6 also complained, "My doctor prescribed me lot of vitamins but the sister said that the hospital has no supply of them."

Like many other patients, mostly destitutes, Banesa relies on donation and borrowings to buy simple drugs and vitamins like e-cap, supravit, provit, beovit.

Some department heads also acknowledged that drugs were not being supplied for poor patients.



Buddhists brought out a barefoot procession in the city yesterday morning to celebrate the Buddha Purnima. — Star photo