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Shop-owners' sit-in renews tension at Bangabazar

DCC served an ultimatum

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of four market associations of Bangabazar and shop owners have issued an ultimatum to the Dhaka City Corporation to return the shops at one of the markets to their 'dispossessed' owners by Sunday.

The ultimatum was given yesterday during a sit-in staged by the shop owners in front of the Nagar Bhaban demanding return of the shops 'forcibly occupied by armed goons' about 25 months ago.

If the shops are not returned by Sunday, the shop owners of Bangabazar and those in the capital would hold a public meeting on Tuesday and demonstrate on the city streets, the leaders said.

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 market for garments in the country. It is located within 100 yards of the Police Headquarters.

Association leaders said they have started fresh agitation demanding return of shops at Ideal Market because those were not returned despite 'assurance' from Mayor Mohammad Hanif.

Shops at Mahanagar Market, occupied by the same group on Friday night, were returned on Monday.

Shop owners of Bangabazar brought out a procession yesterday noon and staged a two-hour sit-in near the Nagar Bhaban.

Police in riot gear were seen deployed at the entrance of the Nagar Bhaban at that time.

Many people in possession of shops at Ideal Market told this correspondent yesterday that they were now facing uncertainty.

There are about 500 shops at

the market. More than half of the shops were being run by people renting those from the owners before the market was occupied by the goons, sources concerned said.

A section of shopkeepers who rented the shops from owners connived with ruling party activist Zakir Morol when the market was occupied by his men. The shop owners doing business there were then driven out, the sources alleged.

The goons backed by some ruling party leaders had lured the shopkeepers, promising allotment of the shops to them.

Morol allegedly collected a minimum of Tk 100,000 from each shopkeeper on the plea of 'sale of possession of the shops' to them. The goons also allowed

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Tk 10 lakh snatched in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 18: A businessman was stabbed and Taka ten lakh snatched away in two separate incidents of mugging in the city today, police and witnesses said.

Police said a group of muggers snatched Tk 9,62,000 from an employee of Abul Sawdagor of Reazuddin Bazar while he was going to deposit the money with a private bank at Station Road at 1:30 pm today.

The muggers exploded cocktails in front of the bank, snatched a bag containing the money and fled the scene by an autorickshaw, police said.

In another incident, muggers stabbed a businessman at Sirajuddaulah Road at 9 am today and took away Tk 38 thousand from him, witnesses said.

Police confirmed the incident but could not give details.



Salvage operations on after a passenger bus plunged into a road-side water body along the Dhaka-Narsinghdi highway yesterday. One person was killed and several injured in the mishap. —Star photo

Khaleda asks public servants to be neutral

PANGSHA, Rajbari, May 18: BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia today asked all public servants to discharge their duties and responsibilities honestly, sincerely and neutrally and assured the victims of the present government of rewards if her party was voted to power, reports BSS.

She was addressing a big public meeting at Pangsha George High School maidan here. BNP leaders Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Prof Jahannara Begum, Syed Mehdi

Ahmed Rumi, Amanullah Aman, SM Nuruzzaman also addressed the meeting presided over by local BNP leader Nasirul Haque Sabu.

"Serve the people in your best possible manner. Be neutral and non-partisan. Don't worry. Those who have been victimised for their honesty, neutrality and non-partisanship, shall be rewarded if BNP is voted to power," she told thousands of people who were waiting for hours to hear from the Leader of the Opposition.

The government has lost all its credibility and public support because of its repressive, autocratic, inefficient and corrupt rule, she said.

She said the national economy has already been ruined, industries are being shut down, workers are being entrenched and unemployed, farmers are being denied of fair prices of their produce, and above all no electoral promises of the AL have been fulfilled in the four years of its tenure.

The BNP Chairperson in her 41-minute speech sharply criticised the government and said it only gives lip service to the liberation war and does not respect the millions of people who had fought for the independence of the country in 1971.

"We the people of this country fought the war of liberation, Inshaallah, we will protect the sovereignty and independence of the country. None can establish one-party BAKSAL in Bangladesh," she told the cheering people.

The call was made at a press conference organised by Dhaka City Fruit-Vegetable Wholesalers Unity Council at the Jatiya Press Club, which was addressed among others by the Council's advisor A.K Azad and Enam Master, Vice President

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2 decoits beaten to death in Gazipur

By Staff Correspondent

A mob beat two alleged robbers to death at Gazipur yesterday.

The incident occurred in the morning after the gang of eight looted Tk 9.60 lakh from the cashier of Nishat Jute Mills, who drew the money from Gazipur Sonali Bank branch, Farukh Ahmed Chowdhury, SP of Gazipur said. The robbers exploded cocktails before fleeing with the money.

On hearing the sound of explosions, local people rushed to the spot and chased the robbers. Later police joined the chase. Five people were injured when the gang fired on them while trying to escape. The mob finally caught the robbers at

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Rejoinders

Member of the Parliament Syed Abul Hossain in a rejoinder to a news item published in The Daily Star on May 15 headlined 'New Twist in AES-PDB rift' denied having any connection with Mott MacDonald, a consultant of PDB in the Meghnath Power Project.

He said in the rejoinder, "I would like to say that my firm SAHCO International Ltd. was never involved in any consultancy business in the power sector."

He further added that Mott MacDonald was represented in Bangladesh by Progressive Consultants Ltd for over a decade.

The Detective Branch of DMP in a rejoinder to a news item titled "DB men allegedly misbehave with Evidence staff" published in The Daily Star on Thursday said that "the news was baseless, false and fabricated and it was published to tarnish the image of DB police."

It denied that any team of DB police went to the Evidence office at 2 pm on May 16.

Reporter's note: The news item was prepared absolutely on the basis of a press release issued by the weekly Evidence authorities.

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Fruit, vegetable wholesalers seek protection from extortionists

By Staff Correspondent

Fruit and vegetable wholesalers of the city yesterday urged the government to take necessary steps to remove problems prevailing in the sector and save the business from the grip of illegal toll-collectors and extortionists.

The call was made at a press conference organised by Dhaka City Fruit-Vegetable Wholesalers Unity Council at the Jatiya Press Club, which was addressed among others by the Council's advisor A.K Azad and Enam Master, Vice President

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New twist in Sajal murder case

By Staff Correspondent

Shahidur Rahman Chowdhury, whose son Sajal Chowdhury was shot dead during hartal in February last year, has received a legal notice from a lawyer of ruling party MP Alhaj Makbul Hossain, asking him to reply within fifteen days why criminal case and defamation suit will not be filed against him.

He received the legal notice on Wednesday.

According to earlier newspaper reports and witnesses, gunmen from the rear of a motorcade of Awami League workers shot dead Sajal Chowdhury from a point blank range at the intersection of Mirpur Road and Green Road in the city at about 11:30 am during hartal on February 9 last year. The motorcade was led by AL MP Makbul Hossain.

Police submitted the final report in Sajal murder case in December last year. Final report, which normally leads to disposal of a case, is submitted

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Indians abduct 4 Bangladeshis, set fire to houses in Bhurungamari

KURIGRAM, May 18: Backed by BSF, several hundred Indians entered Mashaldanga enclave in Bhurungamari upazilla of the district today and abducted four people, set fire to 55 houses and looted over 100 cattle, reports UNB.

The Indian nationals beat up the residents, and drove them out of their houses and kidnapped four.

About 10 women and children received injuries in the attack. Identity of the abducted four, however, could not be known immediately.

Residents of Mashaldanga enclave said they remained insecure since May 11 when In-

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BNP assures EC of full support on electoral roll

By Staff Correspondent

A BNP delegation, headed by M K Anwar MP, called on the Election Commission yesterday afternoon to assure it of full cooperation for preparing a flawless national electoral roll, EC sources said.

The BNP leaders also put forward certain suggestions, including effective steps to include non-resident Bangladeshis into the voters' list.

"We have assured the Commission of our all-out support for preparing a flawless electoral role and told them that the BNP believes that the Commission is aware of its responsibilities in this regard," said M K Anwar. "We also requested the EC to take steps to include the non-resident Bangladeshis into the fresh

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BNP won't get majority in next election: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said BNP would not get majority seats in next general elections regardless of their calculations at home, as people threw them out of power "for corrupt and nightmarish rule," reports UNB.

"Awami League got majority seats in '96 election, but BNP didn't get. And it won't get it in future as well even if their alliances of four parties, seven parties or 14 parties," she told a special extended meeting of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Ganobhaban in the afternoon.

She reminded that BNP wanted to prolong its rule by staging a voterless election on February 15, 1996, and had claimed that people gave them mandate for five years.

"The irony is that people pulled them down from power after that election on charge of vote dacoity," she said.

People is the owners of vote and they'll decide who will rule the country," she said.

Hasina asked her student workers to help prepare a flawless voter list with enlistment of genuine voters for free and fair election. "Guard against inclusion of fake voters in the list and see that genuine voters are not dropped from it," she said.

Protesting BNP chairperson's allegation of corruption against the government, Hasina questioned how Begum Zia, who is accused in a corruption case and now on bail, could utter tall talks against corruption.

The Prime Minister said Khaleda's partner Ershad was also jailed for corruption and later enlarged on bail.

About the purchase of Mig-29, she said original price of eight Mig-29s was USD 289 million, but the government bought those at USD 124 million after state-to-state negotiation, saving huge money for the country.

But during Begum Zia's rule, two Air Buses were purchased at USD 150 million against the actual price of USD 130 million, receiving kickbacks from foreign company.

"Before talking about corruption, you must look at your face in the mirror," the Prime Minister said, adding that her government does not believe in corruption and corrupt people must be punished.

Responding to Begum Zia's remarks that Awami League would be washed away in next election, the Prime Minister said, "Awami League will not be washed away, it had successfully tackled floods and saved people."

"It was Begum Zia who was washed away from power in a mass upsurge. Take care so that you are not washed away by flood water, while trying to wash away Awami League," said Hasina in a counter attack.

Amidst cheers, the Prime Minister said Awami League was born through people's movement and would stay for ever with the support of the people.

Analysing the composition of the alliance of Begum Zia, Ershad and Ghulam Azam, the Prime Minister said the trio did not support the country's Liberation War.

She alleged that during the

Liberation War, Begum Zia turned down Zia's request, decided to stay with Pakistani army in Dhaka Cantonment and advised her husband to go to Pakistan by quitting the war.

General Ershad did not join the war, rather he was a member of a tributory officers who had joined the war. And Ghulam Azam, a think tank of Pakistani occupation army, helped them stage genocide, rape, arson and looting during the war.

Hasina asked the Chhatra League activists to expose those anti-liberation parties that got united to oust the government. She also instructed her student activists to guard against any sabotage of the opposition to create artificial issue in the country.

The Prime Minister asked the Chhatra League activists to devote themselves to studies to build an educated leadership for the country.

BCL president Bahadur Bepari and general secretary Ajoy Kar Khokan also spoke at the meeting.

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One beaten to death by extortionists in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 18: One person was beaten to death allegedly by illegal toll collectors at Devarpar near Lalkhan Bazar last night, police said.

The victim Kalu, 20, came under attack when a group of extortionists attacked a tea shop at Devarpar at around 10 pm, police said.

Kalu was taking tea inside the shop during the attack by toll collectors belonging to MES College based terrorists group, police said.

A case was filed with Doublumoring thana, but none was arrested till filing of this report at 9 pm today.

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Pakistan 90 for five

Sports Reporter

Pakistan were 90 for five at lunch on the first day of the second Test in Bridgetown yesterday.

Pakistan won the toss but were never allowed to settle at the crease after opening spells from veterans Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose reduced the visitors to only seven for three.

Walsh, the highest wicket-taker in Tests, added to more scalps to his collection that now stands at 439.

They were well-supported by Reon King and Nixon McLean. King got rid of in-form Inzamam-ul-Haq.

Only a lighting stand of 53 for the sixth wicket between Yousuf Youhana and skipper Moin Khan gave respectability to the total.

Youhana was undefeated on 44 off 55 balls and Moin was batting on 27 from 39 balls.

'Five Star' group banned from bidding

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the Five Stars Group were black-listed from participating in any kind of business including tender dropping, awarded by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Mayor Mohammed Hanif of DCC made the announcement at a press briefing at his office in the city yesterday.

The DCC officials present at the briefing identified the members of the gang as Apu, Kala Sentu, Anwar, Shahabuddin and Mosharrif Hossain Raja.

The gangsters of the group which allegedly enjoy blessings of political high-ups occupied the office of DCC Executive Engineer at Nagar Bhaban on Tuesday allegedly to prevent contractors from dropping tenders.

The gangsters tried to intimidate the press reporters who had rushed to the spot soon after

getting the initial information in this regard.

Hanif said that the incident took place when he was away from his office.

One of the members of the gang reportedly called the journalists, saying a dead body was lying on the thirteenth floor of the building, the Mayor said. When reporters went to the DCC premises then the gang threatened to kill them, he added.

Serious action will be taken against people trying to create trouble in matters of dropping or buying tender schedules, warned the Mayor.

"I do not think that the members of five stars group belonged to Awami League," the Mayor said in reply to a question. Some people might have used their names to exact illegal benefits, he added.

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Another accomplice of Ershad Shikdar held in Madaripur

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 18: Another accomplice of Ershad Shikdar was arrested early this morning from his village home at Palong thana in Madaripur district. He will be taken to Khulna thana tomorrow.

Wanted in several criminal cases, Eskander Ali, 40, a first class contractor of KCC and PWD, was the custodian of Shikdar's maximum wealth earned through illegal means. He also used to supply call girls to Shikdar. The call girls were brought from red light area of Calcutta. Shikdar's chief bodyguard Noor-e-Alam said this during his confessional statement.

Eskander Ali made attempts several times to release Shikdar from police custody with the help of two former police commissioners who are now serving in Dhaka with the rank and status of Additional IG, police said.

He also financed the alleged conspirators who tried twice last year to snatch Shikdar from police custody during his appearance in the special court either from Jessore Central Jail or Khulna District Jail, sources said.

7 women, girl rescued while being trafficked to India: 4 held

SATKHIRA, May 18: Police rescued seven women and a minor girl from village Gobindapur Chowmohini under Kaliganj upazilla of the district on Tuesday, reports BSS.

Acting on a tip off, Kaliganj police raided the house of one Mohor Ali and rescued them while they were being trafficked to India, police said.

They were identified as Salma Khatun, 26, with her six months old daughter, Runa Jasmin, 20, Fatema Khatun, 30, Jonaki Khatun, 20, Fatma Begum, 25, Parvin Akter, 23 and Romesa Khatun, 30, they were from different villages of Myemensingh, Dhaka, Gazipur and Patuakhali.

Police arrested four people in this connection. They are Abdul Mannan, son of Shamsul Haque of village Hasampur Saiful Islam, son of Ayub Ali of village Noyakandi, Yusif Ali, son of Dorbesh Ali of village Motlob under Motlob upazilla of Chandpur district and Syed Alam, son of Abul Hossain of village Nikokhali under Teknaf Upazilla of Cox's Bazar district.

A case was filed with Kaliganj thana in this connection.

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