



PHOTO: STAR

A children's painting competition organised by Bangla Academy on its premises yesterday as part of Ekushey programme.

Khaleda patronising fundamentalists: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Top Awami League leaders yesterday blamed opposition leader Khaleda Zia for patronising fundamentalists.

"The killer Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Haq addressed a rally from the same podium Khaleda Zia did in Rangpur in Sunday," Home Minister Mohammad Nasim said. "The killers and patrons of them are equally guilty as per the law," he added.

Addressing a party rally at Paltan Maidan yesterday afternoon in protest against the killing of police constable Badshah Mia, Nasim said when police were looking for Azizul Haq, the main accused in the case, he was accompanying Khaleda Zia. "Khaleda is protecting and patronising the killers and trying to shift the responsibility on Awami League. This is the politics of Khaleda," he said. He urged the people to resist the fatwabaz and their patrons in each and every corner of the country.

Referring to the arrest of Azizul Haq and others, he said legal action has been taken against the killers at the directive of the Prime Minister and they would be tried under the laws of the land. "If we don't try them, Allah and the Muslims will not pardon us."

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'It's a rehearsal to manipulate bigger polls'

Angry CEC smells organised rigging in by-polls, orders investigation

NAZMUL ASHRAF, back from Pabna

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) M. A. Syed surprisingly made a lot of efforts in overseeing yesterday's parliamentary by-election in Pabna that virtually lacked any contest and the usual state of voting.

In his frantic move to scrutinise the process of voting, the CEC visited eight polling centres under the Pabna-5 constituency and revisited two of them. He flayed the election officials and the security personnel after he foiled an attempt of rigging.

At those centres, Syed meticulously examined the voting process by talking to election officials, candidates and their agents, voters and members of the law enforcing agencies and going through relevant papers in the presence of a group of journalists who accompanied him to the constituency.

The CEC blasted the election officials at the Kolchari Government Primary School centre where one Ilias Mandol queued up for casting the vote of Hiron Pramanik after casting his own. This made the CEC furious and prompted him to order an arrest of the culprit immediately.

Syed himself questioned Ilias for quite sometime to discover whether the latter was asked by one Arif to cast the second vote. He then assigned the on-duty SP to nab Arif as well as to investigate if there was any organised gang behind such malpractice.

"I guess that an organised gang is out there to manipulate the by-election as a rehearsal for such malpractice in the general election. Maybe, more incidents of rigging have resulted in higher turnout at this centre," he said referring to much lower turnout at other centres he visited earlier.

"I think rigging is going unchecked here. Maybe, you would have made a larger turnout had I not been here," said the almost flabbergasted CEC.

However, the CEC did not cancel voting at the centre where he deployed the joint secretary (law) of the Election Commission to guard for sometime.

Recalling the outcome of the last by-election in Khulna-5 constituency, the CEC said a 40 per cent turnout was shown in that election while others

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Judgement in Anup Chetia Case now on Feb 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Judgement in the case against ULFA leader Anup Chetia and his two associates on charges of possessing foreign currencies of 16 countries was adjourned yesterday.

The Fifth Assistant Metropolitan Sessions Judge of Dhaka, Mohammad Humayun Kabir, fixed February 13 for the judgement.

The court could not deliver the judgement yesterday as it was not prepared, court sources said.

Both the prosecution and the defence sides completed hearing arguments in the case on January 29.

The court recorded statements of 8 out of 10 prosecution witnesses.

Chetia and his two associates Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prasad Goswami were arrested from a residence of Adabar under Mohammadpur thana on December 21, 1997, for possessing foreign currencies of 16 countries and a satellite telephone set.

Three separate cases were filed with Mohammadpur thana against them.

Chetia was awarded six years rigorous imprisonment and fined Tk 6,000 by the CMM's Court, Dhaka on October 25, 1998 for his illegal stay in Bangladesh.

Islamic activists did not bring out procession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to unknown reasons, Ulema-Mashaikh (Islamic scholars) suspended their procession scheduled to be brought out from the Paltan Mosque after Asr prayers yesterday.

Earlier they announced the procession on Sunday evening to protest police attack on their procession near Purana Paltan in the afternoon the same day.

At least 30 activists of Ulema-Mashaikh were injured when police baton-charged the zealots at near Purana Paltan crossing on Sunday afternoon. Police picked up 40 activists from the spot.

When contacted, a zealot at the Paltan Mosque said yesterday that the procession was suspended. He, however, failed to mention reasons behind the suspension.

Replying to a question, he said the procession might have been suspended in fear of police action.

Hundreds of policemen were also seen guarding the Paltan crossing and its adjacent areas yesterday.

Meanwhile, 40 activists of Ulema-Mashaikh arrested under the Public Safety Act (PSA) during the police operation on Sunday were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday afternoon.

18 out of 58 also arrested under PSA during Saturday's hartal were produced before the CMM's court yesterday after a one-day remand on Sunday.

Later, they were sent to the central jail yesterday



PHOTO: STAR

Oikkyabaddha Nagorik Andolon (United Civil Society Movement) took out a procession in the city yesterday, urging people to unite against destructive and anti-state activities.

Punish killers of the cop

Oikkyabaddha Nagorik Andolon demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday condemned the killing of a police constable inside a mosque at Mohammadpur in the city on Saturday and demanded exemplary punishment to the persons responsible.

They urged the government to take stern actions against those spreading religious fanaticism in the society.

The speakers said that a section of religious leaders were involved in terrorist activities in the name of Islam. They also called upon the people to maintain sanctity of mosques and madrassahs.

"We should not blame all of those

in madrassahs for fanaticism or terrorist activities. Only a section of them are involved in such activities," said a speaker.

The rally organised by Oikkyabaddha Nagorik Andolon (United Civil Society Movement) also demanded compensation for the family members of constable Badsha Mian killed by zealots.

The speakers also vowed to resist the religious fanatics and fatwabaz. They urged the people to be united against them.

They expressed satisfaction over the arrest of Islami Oikkyote Jote leaders and activists on charge of killing constable Badsha Mia.

Now the government will have to remain alert so that they cannot get bail from court, they said.

Prof Shahadat Ali of Dhaka University, Shahrir Kabir, Shaymoli Nasrin Chowdhury, Ajoy Roy, Prof Akhtaruzzaman, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Rokeya Kabir, Nurul Islam, Nazmul Haq Prodhan addressed the rally.

Shahrir Kabir demanded formation of a special tribunal to try war criminals.

He said none would be allowed to turn Bangladesh into Pakistan. "Those who dream of this, should leave the country for Pakistan or Afghanistan," he said.

Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury said the religious fanatics are taking shelter in the mainstream opposition party. "They would take revenge against the pro-liberation forces,"

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PHOTO: STAR

Police guarding a JCD procession towards Shikha Bhaban in the city yesterday. The procession was brought out from Mukhtangan demanding immediate supply of textbooks for school students.

Gujarat devastation prompts New Delhi to change bldg by-laws

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The massive devastation caused by the January 26 earthquake in Gujarat state has made the Indian government to the threat posed by the natural calamity to other parts of India.

The focus is now on three main aspects: condition of the soil, identification and categorisation of places keeping in mind the degree of their vulnerability to quakes and structure and designing of foundation of buildings.

The Federal Ministry of Urban Development has notified to all states of India its draft amendment in building by-laws incorporating earthquake-resistant provisions. The proposed changes in the rules make it compulsory for all new constructions to strictly adhere to quake-safety standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) or the National Building Code and seek to pinpoint responsibility on the owner and architect of a building for its architectural safety.

Experts say the Gujarat quake has demonstrated that the extent of loss of human lives and property could have been contained had quake-safety measures been incorporated in the buildings that fell like nine pins.

Secretary to Federal government's Science and Technology Department Prof V S Ramamurthy said microzoning, a process which categorises land zones according to their vulnerability to earthquakes, will be carried out across the country. Microzoning comprises data relating to soil condition, type of construction, water tables and construction of fault lines.

He said seismic zones were earlier confined to Himalayas, the northeastern India and Kutch area of Gujarat, which was worst hit by the recent quake. But they are now spreading to other parts of the country.

Delhi, the national capital, has been particularly pointed out for the quake preparedness measures because it is located in the high-intensity earthquake zone IV. The collapse of high-rise buildings in Gujarat towns has

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Stevedores resume work at Ctg port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Stevedores at the Chittagong port resumed delivery of foodgrains yesterday afternoon after more than 24 hours of work abstention.

They stopped delivery of wheat from French flag carrier MV Miranda at the silo jetty of Chittagong Port on Sunday afternoon to press their demands.

The trouble began when Food Department floated a tender for delivery of foodgrains three days back without resolving demands of the stevedores.

The tenure of the 19 stevedoring firms enlisted by Food Department for delivery of government foodgrains for two years expired on June 30 in 1999. But the Food Department reportedly failed to appoint new stevedoring firms as they did not accept a condition for filling 78 kg of foodgrains per sack set by the government.

Cabinet endorses two acts

UNB, Dhaka

The Cabinet at a meeting yesterday endorsed in principle a number of proposals, including the drafts of Livestock Disease Act 2001 and Livestock Quarantine Act 2001.

The approval was given at the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers at the PM's Office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The Cabinet approved the proposal of formation of Municipal

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The stevedoring workers and Food Department locked in a row over loading of sacks. Loading of over 75 kgs in per sack was quite impossible, stevedoring workers said.

The workers stopped work on Sunday demanding resolution of loading capacity and several other points.

The work resumed yesterday when the government assured the stevedores of resolving the issues.

2 Killed in city as train hits auto-rickshaw

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed in the city yesterday when an auto-rickshaw was hit by a train at Mohakhali rail crossing.

The deceased were identified as Mahfuzur Rahman, 30, the driver of the auto-rickshaw and Bazlur Rahman, 33, of Manikganj, an employee of a garment buying house.

The accident occurred at about 8:40am when the Dhaka bound train Jamuna Express hit the auto-rickshaw as it tried to go across the level crossing at Mohakhali.

The auto-rickshaw driver Mahfuz died on the spot. Passenger Bazlur died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The bodies were sent to DMCH after inquest report, police said.

Railway police seized the wreckage of the vehicle. A case was filed with Railway police in this regard.