

Attacks on minorities Call for half-day hartal in greater Ctg on Nov 15

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad has called an eight-hour hartal in greater Chittagong on November 15 protesting attacks on the religious minority across the country.

The Parishad announced the programme at a press conference at the local press club Thursday afternoon.

The Parishad leaders blamed the home minister for 'instigating' attacks on religious minorities and demanded his removal from the cabinet.

They also condemned the attack on Hindu-majority Daspara village in Mirersarai upazila of the district on Monday night. A local leader of the Parishad, Sunil Das Sadhu, 28, was killed in the attack.

The other programmes of the Parishad include mass contact on November 9, 10 and 11, submission of memorandum to UNOs at upazila headquarters on November 12 and 13 and token hunger strike on November 14.

Wife murdered allegedly by husband

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young woman was murdered allegedly by her husband at Mirpur in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

Nasima Akhter Shikha, 20, a garment worker and wife of Mostafa Khokon Nizam, was found dead at her house at 77, South Bishil at about 2:30am yesterday.

Victim's parents claimed that Nizam, also a garment worker, strangled their daughter over a family feud.

Nizam did not return till last night and police suspected that he had fled after murdering Nasima. The couple was married only three months ago.

Sources said Nizam had a dispute with his wife over his extramarital relationship with a fellow worker and the couple frequently quarrelled over the matter.

In another incident in the city yesterday, a Nepalese national died after drinking an excessive amount of alcohol.

Sanu Kazi Saikia, 55, was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, sources said.

The man who took the victim to the hospital identified himself as a boarder of Madhumoti Hotel and left in a hurry as soon as he came to know about the victim's death.

Police searched the hotel for the man but could not find him.

A piece of paper found in the victim's pocket read: Road no. 51, House no. 10, Block-H, Gulshan-2.

The body was kept in the DMCH morgue.

7 missing as boat capsizes in Rupsha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An engine boat carrying 26 passengers capsized in Rupsha river on Thursday night.

Nineteen passengers were rescued, while seven others remained missing till 5:30pm yesterday.

According to witnesses, the overloaded boat capsized in the middle of the river when it collided head-on with a ferry of the Roads and Highways Department at about 10 pm.

The RHD ferry had no signal light, they said.

Search for the missing passengers was going on till filing of this report yesterday evening.

BCL leader abducted in Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Terrorists abducted a BCL leader at gunpoint from his house here in East Selonia village in the early hours of yesterday.

According to local people, Badal, 24, son of Abdur Rouf of village East Selonia and joint secretary of Somua union BCL, was kidnapped by 8 to 10 men at about 2am yesterday and was taken to an unknown place.

The victim's family feared Badal's abductors might have killed him. Police is investigating the matter.

Influx of Bangladeshis

Buddhadev terms media reports exaggerated

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani has expressed concern over the recent influx of Bangladeshis into India. However, the Chief Minister of West Bengal Buddhadev Bhattacharya says that the situation is nothing to be worried about.

Talking to reporters at the Writers Building Thursday, the West Bengal Chief Minister said, "These intrusions take place regularly. A section of the media is only blowing them out of proportion. You cannot make an issue if 1000 people from the other side cross over illegally. Even then, I have alerted the state police department and the intelligence sources at the nine districts of West Bengal that have borders with Bangladesh. The intrusions will be checked." The Chairman of the Left Front, Biman Bose had earlier stated that the situation would be discussed in the next meeting of the Front but Bhattacharya feels that one

should not attach too much importance to it.

"If it comes up, I will tell everybody that the migration is temporary", he said. "There is nothing to be worried about. The West Bengal Government is not ready to attach too much importance to the issue as they are aware that everyday thousands illegally cross the border between Bangladesh and West Bengal."

"It is more important to prevent the regular illegal cross-overs. I have repeatedly asked the Central Government to do something about it but they have not done anything so far," Bhattacharya said.

A section of the CPIM feels that the present situation has occurred simply because of the change in government in Bangladesh.

A senior party leader said, "We have information t h a

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Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan took out a procession in the city yesterday to create public awareness about air pollution and growing civic hazards.

Unite to rid city of pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society leaders yesterday called upon people to unite to rid the city of all types of pollution and build a movement to ensure a better living for the future generation.

The leaders were addressing a citizen's rally organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan in front of the National Museum in the city. The rally was organised to create public awareness about air pollution and growing civic hazards.

Eminent educationist Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed in his speech underscored the need for a social movement to eliminate all sorts of pollution and said, "People from all walks of life should come forward to build up a movement against all kind of social atrocity side by side strengthening the efforts by the government and social organisations."

Noted educationist and litterateur Professor Abdullah Abu

Sayed urged the city dwellers to make united effort to get rid of all sorts of pollution and said the movement to drive away pollution from the country would continue until the problem has been resolved.

Prof. Sayeed expressed grave concern over the deteriorating air quality in the capital and said "we the city dwellers are inhaling the most polluted air in the world."

Emission of black smoke from two stroke auto-rickshaws, tempos, old vehicles, mills and factories and traffic jam has created a suffocating environment, he said.

Economist Dr. Atiur Rahman in his speech said people should be aware of not only air pollution but also of the deterioration of social norms and values.

He expressed concern over the degradation of social values and said we would not be able to prevent the erosion of different social values if steps are not taken immediately.

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Annan assures all possible support to Dhaka in its dev efforts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of United Nations Kofi Annan has assured Bangladesh of every possible support in its development efforts.

He made the observation to Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, the newly appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, who presented his credentials to Annan on Tuesday morning, according to a fax message received here.

The Ambassador spoke of Bangladesh's intellectual resources, which had led to the flowering of such ideas as micro-credit and informal education, that later emulated in other parts of the world.

While appreciating this Annan said that in his view this was something that could be pressed into the

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Gunfight between police, muggers: Five injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people including two police inspectors were injured in a gunfight between police and a gang of alleged muggers in the city's Lalbagh area in the early hours of Thursday, sources said.

The injured are Sub Inspector (SI) Shaifq, Assistant SI Abu Hanif and muggers Mosharrar Hossain and Babul and tempo driver Shahjahan who was driving the police vehicle.

A patrol team from Lalbagh thana chased the gang at Nagar Beltali lane at about 3 am. While fleeing, the gang members fired shots and threw crackers at police. Police then fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells, the sources said.

At one stage, local people caught two members of the gang, beat them up and handed them over to police.

The injured policemen were admitted to police hospital. Of the two arrested, one was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the other to Pangu Hospital. The driver was given first aid.

When contacted Thursday night, the duty officer at Lalbagh thana, however, denied that any policeman was injured in the incident.

Police registered a case accusing the two arrested persons of violence against police.

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India's 'no' to US proposal for military alliance

AFP, New Delhi

India reportedly thumbed its nose at a US proposal to become Washington's "foremost military ally" and a "counterweight" to China and Islamic states in the region, India Today magazine reported yesterday.

In a press statement released here, India Today Editor Prabhu Chawla said he had "confidential documents" which showed Washington had approached Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee with a proposal for a major military alliance.

"India's Cabinet Committee on security (CCS) deliberated on this at their meeting on October 19 and November 3 and rejected the proposals," the statement said.

The magazine said that US President George W Bush's pro-

posal would have, in effect, made India the foremost military ally of the United States in Asia.

"It envisaged a central role for India as a counterweight to China on the one hand and the Islamic states of West Asia on the other," said the magazine.

"The US had proposed military bases in India for training its forces and these included the establishment of a naval firing range and land training facilities."

The magazine added that in addition, Washington wanted the Indian Navy to safeguard American interests from the Arabian Sea to the Straits of Malacca by providing escort for its naval supply ships.

"In the event of these ships being attacked, the Indian navy was expected to engage the enemy," said the magazine.

The US proposal also included the establishment of joint communication networks.

The political newsmagazine added that despite India's initial rejection, the proposal for greater Indo-US military cooperation could dominate talks between Vajpayee and Bush at the White House Friday.

"Apart from hinting that military cooperation could figure during the agenda of the Vajpayee-Bush talks in the White House on Friday, officials in both countries are tight-lipped," said the magazine.

Vajpayee's meeting with Bush comes a day before the US president is due to meet President P e r v e z

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A S M NURUNNABI

It is a deplorable fact that in the absence of proper zoning laws for the Dhaka city, posh residential areas like Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Uttara have lost much of their residential character. All these areas have seen better times, but now-a-days a commercial character has been gradually creeping into them.

Dhanmondi was once noted as an excellent residential area. The one-big-plots in this area offered a good scope for the growth of suitable residences with enough space for gardens and greenery. All this changed within a decade, as schools, clinics, fast food shops, banks and other commercial establishments began to crop up all over the place. The non-residential characteristics of the place have lately become so predominant that acute traffic congestion currently prevails in that area, making its residential life miserable.

The same fate has befallen other elite residential areas in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and

DOWN TO EARTH

City's posh residential areas shrinking

lately Uttara. Establishments like hotels and restaurants, banks, insurance companies, shopping malls and other commercial and industrial offices have come up effacing the residential character of the areas.

Ten or fifteen years ago, such developments were unimaginable. In the late sixties and early seventies, Gulshan and Banani residential areas were laid out, followed by Baridhara in the eighties and later Uttara. People belonging to affluent sections of society were allotted residential plots by the RAJUK. Particularly in

Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas, such allottees included big industrialists, businessmen, high-ranking government bureaucrats, government ministers, MPs and other rich professionals. In these areas, specific diplomatic zones, particularly in Gulshan and Baridhara were set aside for embassies of different countries. The residential accommodation for the high-ups of those missions were also located in the same areas. As a result, these areas came to be regarded as select areas carrying weight and importance. At the same time, the value of land

begun to rise by leaps and bounds. This led to the emergence of commercial incentives in shaping further development of these areas, which significantly reduced the residential aspects.

This trend attracted the attention of real estate development agencies which began buying up residential buildings for conversion into high-rise ones.

Inevitably the craze for acquiring the prime land holdings pushed up the price for such lands t o s t a g

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Confce on human rights in Delhi from tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

The two-day South Asian conference on human rights will be held from November 11 to 12 in New Delhi.

A 50-member strong Bangladesh team comprising leading personalities from different professions and organisations will attend the conference.

The delegation includes judge of Supreme Court's appellate division justice Fazlul Karim, justice Naimuddin Ahmed and Ikhtedar Ahmed, member and secretary respectively of the law commission, economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, lawyers Dr Kamal Hossain, Barristers Amir-Ul-Islam and Sigma Huda, senior journalists Mahfuz Anam, Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury and Abdul Quayum, civil society leaders Dr Hameeda Hossain, Dr Enamul Huq (ex IGP), Taley Rahman, cultural figures Sara Zaker and Shomi Kaiser, a press release said.

The South Asian Human Rights Organisation (SAHR) is a voluntary, democratic peoples organisation comprising human rights activities, groups and networks f o r o m

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Hasina tells Patuakhali rally Terrorists are freed on phone calls

UNB, Patuakhali

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday apprehended the worst law-and-order situation under the coalition government as she called the home minister herself a "terrorist".

"Where can the law-and-order situation stand when the home minister herself is a terrorist," she said addressing a mammoth public meeting in the coastal Patuakhali, hometown of the home minister.

Citing vote ratio between the minister and her party candidate in some centres of Patuakhali-1 constituency, the Awami League chief alleged that the minister became MP at gunpoint. "Even our agent at one centre could not cast vote," she said.

Castigating the caretaker government, the Election Commission and the President, Hasina said they engineered the defeat of her party candidates in the 100 to 120 seats where they were sure to win and cited situation of 14 centres in Patuakhali.

She renewed her complain that the 4-party alliance had targeted 12

to 14 centres from each constituency to manipulate the election and it was materialised by the administration, army and the "terrorists" of the alliance.

The opposition leader alleged that of the 14 centres captured by the home minister in Chaita High School centre, a 100 per cent voting was shown with Awami League getting only 28 votes. In 1996 Awami League got 473 votes in this centre while BNP got 332.

In Kathalia Primary School centre, Awami League candidate Shahjahan Mia did not get any vote despite a 100 per cent polling, she said, adding that in 1996 AL got 346 votes.

"Have all the people who voted for Awami League in 1996 died?" She questioned.

Hasina further pointed out that though it was shown that cent per cent vote was cast in Srinagar, the AL candidate in the October 1 election secured only 6 votes while BNP got the rest. In 1996, the numbers were 623 for AL and 534 for BNP.

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WTO meet opens, Moore says 'deep differences' remain

AFP, Doha

World Trade Organisation ministers are deeply divided as they head into a critical conference here aimed at boosting global trade, WTO Director General Mike Moore acknowledged yesterday.

"Nothing has been agreed at this stage," Moore told the inaugural session of a five-day meeting to draft an agenda for a new round of trade liberalisation talks.

"Deep differences remain." But Moore described draft texts worked out in the past few weeks as "clear and business-like documents" that could serve as a basis for agreement.

Problems before the ministers have been "reduced to a manageable minimum," he added.

The conference, taking place at a luxury hotel on the shores of Gulf, was formally inaugurated by the

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World Trade Organisation (WTO) Managing Director Mike Moore speaks to reporters prior to the opening of the WTO conference in Doha yesterday.

Missing BRAC employee found dead in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The body of the missing BRAC employee was recovered from a ditch near the National Bank at Tajpur Bazar under Balaganj Upazila on Thursday evening.

The victim's bicycle was also found in front of a restaurant at the bazar the same day.

Shahadat Hossain, 38, a field officer at BRAC office at Tajpur Bazar was missing since he left his office at 8 am on November 7. He left on a loan recovery assignment at village Rabidass.

Police said Shahadat might have been killed by unidentified assailants.

A case was filed in this connection.

Attacks on World Trade Center Biman averts major crisis in business

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Biman has averted a major financial crisis in the wake of terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York in September, leading to a global slump in the aviation industry.

Aviation sources said while leading airlines made a nose dive in business with a drastic fall in air travel, Biman did not suffer any major crisis in business after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

"We had a slight fall in the number of passengers in international routes from September 1 to October 14 this year compared to that during the corresponding period last year," a top official of Biman told this correspondent.

A total of 1532 flights carried 15,8668 passengers and 5456 tonnes of cargo during the period September 1 to October 14 last year. In the corresponding period this year, 1492 flights carried 15,7135 passengers and 5109 tonnes of cargo.

The official said the only problem the national airlines had to face was to increase insurance coverage of cargo because of the rise in risk coverage due to the international situation following US-led air raids on Afghanistan. It led to a slight increase in premium on air cargo, he mentioned.

AL ends tour programme tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first phase of Awami League's post-election organisational tour ends tomorrow with all central party leaders returning to the capital from districts.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina who is on the last leg of her six-day tour of southern districts is scheduled to return to the capital today.

The central leaders and most of the newly elected party lawmakers embarked on the countrywide tour on November 5 in 15 teams. They held public meetings, workers' rallies as well as under took mass contact programmes at district and upazila levels.

During the tour, Hasina covered seven southern districts including Gopalganj, Narail and Barguna from where she contested the last parliamentary election.

Following the October 1 poll debacle, AL held a series of self-analysis meetings in its pursuit to get a clearer picture of what went wrong for the party in the last elections.

It resolved to go for some changes in party leadership at different levels. Sheikh Hasina herself announced that she would like to see a perfect blending of experienced and young leaders in her party.

Against this background, the ongoing tour programme of the party is considered important as it is giving the central leaders a chance to get views from the grass-roots level.

AL workers damage former minister's car in Rajshahi

UNB, Rajshahi

Some agitated workers of local Awami League damaged two vehicles, one belonging to a former state minister, in the city yesterday afternoon.

Witnesses said the trouble erupted after some party workers locked into an altercation with party leaders during a meeting at the local Public Library. They were discussing the party's debacle in the October 1 election.

Former state ministers Prof Abu Sayeed and Prof Zinnatunnesa Talukder were present at the meeting. The agitated workers attacked the party leaders and damaged the vehicles, one owned by Prof Zinnatunnesa Talukder.

Following the incident, Prof Abu Sayeed and Prof Zinnatunnesa left the venue and the meeting was postponed.

Satkhira AL meet ends in pandemonium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta left the podium as two rival factions of local Awami League clashed during a meeting in Satkhira town on Thursday afternoon.

Former state minister Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP was present when fierce clash occurred at Satkhira PN High School ground.

The meeting ended in pandemonium when local AL leader Jaglul Haidar started casting personal aspersion against former MP AK Fazlul Huq.