

Minority group calls for resistance against attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad at a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday called upon the religious minorities to unite against persecution and attacks unleashed allegedly by the BNP-led four-party alliance.

None can compel them to leave the country under any threat and persecution, they said.

Presided over by CR Dutt, president of the Parishad, the rally was attended by Awami League president members Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak and Shudhansu Shekhar Halder, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Mukul Bosh, Rashed Khan Menon, Kabir Chowdhury, Nirmal Sen, Dr Nimchandra Bhounmik, Golam Kader and leaders of the Parishad.

Addressing the rally, journalist and human rights activist Shahriar Kabir said the persecution on the religious minorities has started since the caretaker government's takeover before the October 1, 2001 election, and many Hindus left the country in the wake of repression.

Hindus had a great contribution to and were the worst sufferers during the liberation war, but ironically they are now being treated as the second class citizens, he said.

It is the duty of the majority to protect the minorities, he went on.

Abdus Shahid, chief whip of the opposition in parliament, said the government is repressing the opposition activists and the Awami League is being called upon to join the parliament at the same time. It is farcical, he said.

Minorities to help establish rule of Allah!

UNB, Dhaka

Former Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Prof Golam Azam yesterday urged the minority community to help establish the rule of Allah and administration of honest people for which the party has long been fighting.

"I appeal to the non-Muslim brothers to read about Islam, its state system and rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic country so that you can play the due role in establishing the rule of Allah and administration of honest people in the country," he said while inaugurating the two-day 14th council session of Bangladesh Minority Welfare Association (BMWA) at Jatiya Press Club.

Former secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association Advocate SEE PAGE 11 COL 12

Alleged terrorist slaughtered in Demra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged terrorist was slaughtered by his accomplices at Jatrabari in the city's Demra area yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Asaduzzaman Hira, 28, son of Imam Uddin, from Rayerbagh canal at about 9 am.

Police said that accomplices of Hira called him out of his residence at around 3:30 am. They took Hira near a petrol pump and slaughtered him.

Demra police sent the body to Mitford Hospital for autopsy.

Police suspected that Hira might have been killed by his gang members following a row over toll collection in the area.

Victim's elder brother Ajaharuddin filed a case with Demra Police Station in this regard. Police arrested a young man for his alleged involvement in the killing of Hira.



PHOTO: STAR

Long time no see... (From L to R) Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed, Advisor to the BNP chairperson MM Rezaul Karim, Awami League leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Land Minister M Shamsul Islam join a lively discussion on politics at the 11th founding anniversary of The Daily Star at Saffron Hotel, Gulshan, yesterday. The meeting of sorts between leaders of the ruling party and the opposition is the first after the general election.

CMP lists toll-takers

ATAUL GANI SUMON, Chittagong

The Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) have finalised a list of terrorists engaged in toll extortion in the port city.

There are about 600 extortionists active in different areas of the city. The CMP are also going to make lists of professional kidnappers, killers, arms traders and drug peddlers by next month, sources said.

A police official told The Daily Star that political links of the terror-

ists will be ascertained and then the list would be sent to the political parties which back them.

The CMP will ask the parties to act against the terrorists, failing which police would conduct special raids and nab the criminals.

The CMP will also put on display lists of terrorists at different city points.

According to police, the criminals work in gangs and each group controls a specified area to extort tolls from business establishments.

The situation has gone to such extents that people have to pay the criminals even for holding marriage ceremony.

The groups have their own godfathers in different political parties and they avoid arrest by dint of their mentors, CMP sources said.

They said there are about 904 listed terrorists in the city. Two ward commissioners who are also Jubo League leaders are also on the list of extortionists.

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JCD rivals clash in DU hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

Clashes and gunfire between two rival groups of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) sent a wave of panic among students of Mohsin Hall of the Dhaka University yesterday.

A group backed by JCD leader Asaduzzaman Asad and Sultan Salauddin Tuku took control of the hall, driving off its rival group backed by Harun-ur-Rashid Shishir, sources said.

They locked the main gate of the hall and brought out a procession on the hall premises. Resident students, including examinees, got entrapped inside the hall for about three hours.

Police fired about five rounds of gunshots, failing to enter the hall. Countering police firing, the JCD group fired about 15 rounds of gunshots, the sources added.

Later, police backed up by BDR raided the hall, breaking open the main gate and arrested 14 persons, including two students.

The arrested students are Faisal Ahmed alias Faisal, 20, a second year student of the Department of Philosophy and Zahed, whose educational background could not be known.

Faisal was allegedly involved in a gun battle at Jagannath Hall and Zahurul Haq Hall on November 13 last year.

Additional police personnel were deployed at the hall gate following the incident.

Listed terrorist Masum & his 3 accomplices held in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested listed terrorist and BCL leader Didarul Alam alias Masum and his three accomplices from the city's Mohra area under Chandgaon thana on Wednesday night.

Police also seized a Yamaha motorbike and a Toyota Corona private car used by them.

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BTRC starts functioning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly formed Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) started functioning yesterday.

Information Secretary Syed Marghub Murshed, who has been appointed chairman of the commission, joined the new office yesterday morning.

Vice-Chairman of the commission FQM Faruq and commissioners Mohammad Rezaul Haq, AFM Nazmul Hossain Chowdhury and Khandaker Abu Bakar have also joined the office.

The BTRC, the country's first telecom watchdog, was formed under the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act, 2001.

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ISPs face hike in phone line rent

Subscribers to bear the brunt

ABU SAEED KHAN

The government has increased the monthly rent of telephones used by the Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Like other subscribers to the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), the ISPs pay Tk 150 a month for each telephone.

Under the new plan, 21 licensed ISPs in Dhaka will pay Tk 1000, and five in Chittagong and four in Sylhet Tk 800 a month for each connection.

Two ISPs in Rajshahi and two in Khulna will pay Tk 700 a month for each telephone connected to respective servers.

Two ISPs in Bogra will pay Tk 600 a month -- a rate applicable to all other ISPs in the country.

On January 28, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications ordered the BTTB to make the revised tariff effective from January 20.

It will cost the ISPs an additional Tk 50 lakh a month, to be borne by an estimated 100,000 Internet users.

The ISP association protested the decision and

accused the BTTB of cross-subsidising the state-run 'inefficient' ISP service.

Calling for a level-playing field, Akhteruzzaman Manjo, president of the association, said, "The BTTB enjoys financial and infrastructural advantages from the government, but there is no such provision for private ISPs."

Ershad Shafi Chowdhury, general secretary of the association, said the government earlier disconnected the ISP phone lines to stifle the growth of the business. Later, those connections were restored in exchange for huge fines.

Defending the increase in rents, the secretary of the ministry told The Daily Star that the BTTB earned no revenues from the ISP telephones, while each commercial telephone line generates on average Tk 2000 a month, he said. "Therefore, the increased line rent should not be considered a punishment," he said.

The BTTB is planning to connect the ISPs directly with telephone exchanges, the secretary said. "It will relieve the ISPs of the trouble of connection through normal telephone lines."

Enact housing policy, cut flat transfer fee

The Daily Star, BUET, Bangladesh Scouts discussion says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts from different sectors involved in city development at a discussion yesterday unanimously underscored the need for enactment of a National Housing Policy, and reduction of land transfer and apartment registration fees to meet the city's growing housing demand.

They also stressed the need for a united effort of architects, city planners, civil engineers, environmentalists, policymakers and real estate developers to build a

better city for the future generation.

Architects, civil engineers, city planners, real estate developers, and representatives from Rajuk, Department of Environment (DOE), Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), and Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) took part in the lively discussion styled "Apartment Culture in Bangladesh: The Future."

The discussion was organised by The Daily Star in collaboration with Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Bangladesh

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Accent put on long-term, transparent gas policy

Seminar in city demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country needs a long-term, transparent policy for proper utilisation of natural gas.

This was the consensus among speakers at a seminar on "Fuelling the Economy with Natural Gas" in the city yesterday.

They said the ongoing debate on gas export should be encouraged at different levels and it should be given wide coverage in the print and electronic media to reach a national consensus on this vital issue.

They stressed generation of thermal power or conversion of gas into liquid fuels for value addition before sale, rather than export of pipeline gas to neighbouring India.

A comprehensive strategy must be worked out on the basis of proper

estimate of gas reserve to avoid any debacle, they said and referred to 'plunder' of oil revenue by some nations. Continued investment in gas sector is needed for its development, they noted.

Presiding over the seminar renowned economist Prof Muzaffar Ahmad said, "Multi National Companies (MNC) always aim at their own benefit and interest in cooperation with their local agents." The new policy on gas should not provide for things like Production Sharing Contracts (PSC) signed earlier, he observed.

Prof AKM Quader of BUET presented a paper on 'Consumption of Natural Gas in Bangladesh.' He termed natural gas an important indigenous hydrocarbon resource and commercial energy source. It is

a major source of power generation, urea fertiliser, cooking fuel for metropolitan areas and fuel for industry and commercial units, he said.

"None of our industry uses gas as raw material, except the fertiliser factory. We need to find out gas consumption of each category of industry, recognising the application areas to understand use of gas in the industry sector," the paper said.

Prof Meshack Ilobi, visiting faculty member of Dhaka University, and Prof Shaker Ahmed of DU jointly presented a paper on "Bangladesh, A Gas Trading Country not just an Exporter".

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Ekushey Book Fair starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair -- 2002 to commemorate the Language Movement of 1952 and to mark the International Mother Language Day begins on the Bangla Academy premises in the city this afternoon.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is likely to inaugurate the 21-day fair, organised by the Bangla Academy.

Besides, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has chalked out a year-long programme to celebrate the golden jubilee of the historic language movement and the mother language day.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman announced the programmes at a press conference in the city yesterday. Senior officials of Bangla Academy and Shilpa Kala Academy were also present.

The state minister said the

government has decided to observe the immortal Ekushey throughout the year as the Golden Jubilee of Language Movement.

The cultural affairs ministry in association with the foreign ministry, Dhaka City Corporation, Dhaka University and various others concerned have chalked out separate programmes on the occasion.

Special supplements and articles will be published in national and foreign dailies and journals and seminars and symposiums will also be organised by Bangladesh missions abroad, she said.

The other programmes include coordinated cultural programmes on the Central Shaheed Minar premises and festive decoration of the city's major roads and islands by the DCC.

The programmes on February 21 includes those at educational institutions, Quran Khwani and offering of 'Fateha' at mosques, special prayers at places of worship and temples across the country, cultural programmes at the Bangla Academy from February 16 to 19 and competition on drama, poem and painting at the Shishu Academy from February 17 to 20.

The Ekushey programmes will also be observed at district and thana headquarters, the state minister said.

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PHOTO: STAR

Police men guard the Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall of the Dhaka University yesterday following a clash between two factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

Arrest of Aminul condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday condemned the arrest of Aminul Islam Chowdhury, a freedom fighter, veteran journalist and convener of Sirajganj district committee.

The committee in a statement said the government is taking vindictive measures against the Nirmul Committee by lodging cases against its activists and sending them to jail.

It demanded immediate release of Aminul Islam Chowdhury and withdrawal of cases against him.

The Committee also criticised the government move to preside over the inaugural function of the Book Fair of Bangla Academy by a state minister instead of the president of the academy.

Pilgrims' plight continues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The plight of pilgrims awaiting Hajj flights by a private operator continued yesterday.

Air Bangladesh, one of the two private operators which booked for at least 9,000 Hajj pilgrims, failed to provide flights for them for the third consecutive day yesterday.

Company executives attributed this to non-availability of the aircraft they had 'chartered' from a Jordanian company, Air Universal.

The aircraft, a Lockheed TriStar with a capacity of 360 passengers, is coming from London and is likely to land at Zia

International Airport at 10 am today. Their first Hajj flight would take off from ZIA at 2 pm today, they said.

Air Bangladesh officials preferring anonymity claimed that they have obtained landing rights from the Saudi Arabian authorities for their Hajj flights. They have also received clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Bangladesh Biman, they men

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Table with Sun Rises and Sun Sets for Feb 1 and Feb 2.

Table with Prayer Timings for Feb 1, including Azan and Jamaat times.