

School girl takes her life due to teasing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A school girl has taken her life due to teasing by some local hoodlums for long.

"I will never go to school again", 14-year old Ayesha Ferdous told her mother in utter disgust on return from school.

She threw her school dress, closed the door of her room and hanged herself with the scarf from the ceiling.

The incident took place on Sunday at Gathachora village under Longdu upazila in Rangamati. Ayesha was a student of class seven.

Police recovered the girl's body in the evening on information from her father and sent it to Rangamati Hospital for autopsy.

Her father Shamsul Alam, a timber trader, told this correspondent at the hospital that she was being teased by local hoodlums Md Khalil, Rafiqul and Alamgir for some months on her way to school.

He also alleged that Longdu police declined to accept his FIR and instead recorded an unnatural death case.

Longdu police could not be contacted over telephone.

'Eight outlawed bodies active in SW dists'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday told the parliament that some eight outlawed organisations have been carrying out criminal activities in 11 southwestern districts.

"Blessed by a particular political party, these groups are trying to deteriorate the law and order in the region," the minister told the House without naming the particular party in question. He also informed the parliament that the government had taken necessary steps to fight criminals.

Replying to a call attention notice by M Nurul Islam, BNP lawmaker, the home minister said these outlawed groups are involved in different illegal activities including rape, murder, arson, extortion, terrorism and gun running.

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10 more BSS journalists sacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The management of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) has sacked 10 more journalists from the state-run news agency.

They are Chief of the BSS Unit of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Ajit Kumar Sarkar, Farook Kazi, Bithi Zaman Chowdhury, Afzal Hossain, Yunus Sheikh, Obayedul Gani, Azan Sarwar, Sanwar Alam Chowdhury, Al Mamun and Abu Naser Razib. BSS sources said.

Nine journalists were sacked earlier.

Termination letters of the 10 journalists were sent to their home address on Saturday. The letters contained no reason for termination of their jobs. Most of them attended office till they came to know over telephone yesterday that they were sacked.

Meanwhile, some senior journalists of BSS including the Chief News Editor filed a writ petition with the High Court yesterday, challenging termination of jobs, the sources said.

An uneasy calm is prevailing at the news agency following the sacking of journalists.

Nor' wester in city triggers shower

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A norwester blew over the city yesterday evening at 42 km per hour, triggering showers and cooling the summer heat.

The Meteorological Department here said seasonal storms also hit Rajshahi and Sylhet at 37 and 62 km per hour respectively.

The storm in the city left many areas in darkness as electricity supply was disrupted.

Fire Service said there was no report of any damage.

Norwesters are likely today in different areas of the country, the Met office said.

Tk 57 cr in unpaid bills CCC may sue tax-dodgers including 2 ministers

UNB, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has served notices on 108 eminent persons, including two ministers and some opposition Awami League leaders, asking them to pay a total of Tk 1.16 crore in municipality tax arrears.

The notice, issued by Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also asked the alleged tax-evaders, including 11 leaders of both BNP and Awami League, to pay off the taxes within one month of the notification.

Officials of the City Corporation said some of the arrears dated back to 1980.

The CCC is supposed to get a total of Tk 57 crore from various government and non-government organisations and individuals.

Of the amount, Tk 32 crore is outstanding with government organisations and Tk 25 crore non-government organisations and individuals.

"The city-dwellers have to pay 17 per cent tax for their total income from houses, which has not been increased in last eight years," said one CCC official.

The ministers concerned, however, denied receiving such notice from the CCC.

A CCC official said they would take legal actions against the tax-dodgers if they don't pay the arrears within the stipulated time.

Stop creating anarchy, join parliament

Four-party rally in city urges AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Later on, the ruling alliance took out a 'mass procession' in the city to protest 'evil efforts' to create anarchy in the country. The alliance also brought out mass processions in all divisional headquarters yesterday also to protest 'conspiracy' to damage the image of the country abroad.

Bhuiyan alleged that the AL conspiracy against the government started after their massive defeat in the October 1 general election. "They could not accept the people's verdict and are plotting conspiracy one after another to foil 'the election results'."

He accused the main opposition party of sponsoring terrorist attacks on the minority community immediately after the election debacle. "They also tried to brand it as a communal riot and blamed the BNP for the attack."

The LGRD minister strongly criticised the AL chief for her 'planned propaganda' to tarnish the image of the country abroad. "When the US swooped on the Taliban in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks, Hasina alleged that the government was doing nothing for them and later during her visit to the US she said that all in Bangladesh had become Taliban."

Bhuiyan further alleged that the AL had hands behind the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) reports on Bangladesh.

Turning to city corporation elections, the BNP leader said sensing inevitable defeat the AL boycotted the polls. Bhuiyan urged his party men to keep vigil so that no-one could create disturbance during the polls.

Addressing the rally, Dhaka city mayoral hopeful and Livestock and Fisheries Minister Md. Moinul Hossain said the LGRD minister strongly criticised the AL chief for her 'planned propaganda' to tarnish the image of the country abroad.

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PHOTO: STAR

Traffic snarl-ups build up on the road in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday due to electioneering for the DCC polls by the BNP-led four-party alliance.

Govt has already banned opposition: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina who bitterly criticised the proposed new law has questioned if the government is out to slap a ban on opposition politics.

"If they want to do that, let them declare that all parties would be banned, excepting BNP and Jamaat," she said addressing union leaders belonging to the Jatiya Sramik League Water Development Board unit at Awami League central office yesterday.

In her apparently angry remark on the government's move to get a new law passed by parliament to curb terrorism Hasina said the government had already imposed as 'ban' on all political parties. "Now there is only one party -- BNP-Jamaat."

Referring to the repeal of the Public Safety Act framed by the past Awami League government, she ridiculed the government for what she said its double standards and said the new law would be even harsher than the PSA, which will deny the people justice.

"It's worse than the martial law," the ex-PM said adding that the proposed "draconian law" is aimed at suppressing the Awami League.

Alluding to the government's reported intention to sell out natural gas to India, Hasina said the government is

enacting the "Black law" to silence public protests on this issue so that the people cannot stage any movement against the export of gas.

"This legislation is all about denying fundamental rights, harassing political workers and stifling the voice of the people against the evil design of the government," she told her audience.

The opposition leader, however, cautioned that however stringent the law may be, people cannot be suppressed by torture and repression as they had fought against the martial law and restored democracy in the country.

"Being outraged by the torture of the present government, the people have started vigorous protests against torture and repression," she said.

Referring to termination of employees of the Water Development Board, she said members of all professional groups became victims of torture of the present government.

She said the present government indiscriminately terminated officials and employees to politicise the administration and assured that those who lost their

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Hectic campaign in Khulna

My task is still unfinished: Tayebur Most corrupt mayor: Enayet

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

As the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) polls draw near, three candidates running for KCC Mayor have intensified their campaigns for election to the top post of the local government body, going from door-to-door and holding meetings.

Four-party alliance candidate and incumbent Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman has begun hectic campaigning that includes mass

prayers early in the morning and continuing non-stop till noon, pledging to transform Khulna into a beautiful city if elected.

"Give me another chance to serve you as I have been doing for the last ten years to finish the unfinished task," Tayebur appeals to voters as he goes from one place to another in a hired rickshaw, renouncing the comfort of his air-conditioned Pajero Jeep.

The mayor's electioneering technique is unique in that he does

not try to cast aspersions on his rivals in the race. He tells voters what he plans to do giving reference to his past achievements.

On the other hand, Tayebur Rahman's main rival Shaikh Enayet Ali kicked off his election campaign through a press conference on Thursday where he lashed out at the incumbent mayor accusing him of violating the election code of conduct.

While announcing an 18-point

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4 die in assassination attempt on Afghan defence minister

AFP, Kabul

At least four people were killed and 18 injured yesterday in an apparent assassination attempt against Afghan Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim amid fears of a plot to bomb the interim cabinet, officials said.

The attack in the eastern city of Jalalabad came after some 260 people were arrested last week over an alleged plot to sabotage the fledgling government.

The victims of yesterday's explosion, including a child, had gathered on the street near the centre of town to greet the minister when the device went off in a roadside stall seconds before the arrival of his 50-strong convoy.

"Four people, including a child, were killed. Eighteen others were injured," the minister's secretary, Gulbuddin, told AFP. "They were

just ordinary people who were there to welcome the minister."

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press reported that a fifth person died later in hospital.

The private news agency said up to 27 people had been injured in the blast, including schoolchildren who had come to welcome Fahim.

A state of emergency has been declared at two hospitals in Jalalabad, the agency said.

The convoy had been making its way from the city's airport to the palace when the device exploded in Talashi square in mid-morning, Gulbuddin said.

The device, described as "a deliberately detonated mine", was big enough to blow up at least two cars. It went off 50 meters (yards) ahead of the convoy.

Asked if the attack was targeted at Fahim, Gulbuddin replied: "Naturally."

Fahim's senior lieutenant, Besmillah Khan, and corps commander of the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, Atta Mohammad, were also in the convoy, Gulbuddin added.

Fahim, an ethnic Tajik, is the successor to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance military leader Ahmad Shah Masood who was assassinated two days before the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

Officials said those arrested last week were followers of former prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the ethnic Pashtun leader of the fundamentalist Hezb-e-Islami party.

Fahim is a prominent member of Hezb-e-Islami's arch rivals, the Jamiat-i-Islami, and once commanded troops against Hekmatyar in the south of Kabul in the mid-1990s.

Move to shift tanneries to Gazipur area protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand villagers and environmentalists at the Bhanara Bazaar playground in Gazipur (Mouchak) yesterday demonstrated against a move by the government to relocate the Hazaribagh tanneries to the area.

At a rally jointly organised by the local Bhumi O Paribesh Rakhya Committee (BPRC) and the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BPA), speakers urged the authorities to find an alternative relocation site.

They pointed out that the Buriganga River had become extremely polluted due to toxic effluents of the Hazaribagh tanneries and other industrial units.

Professor Mozaffar Ahmed said that pollution from tanneries could not be allowed to spread. He urged the government to shift the tanneries to a less densely populated area. There must be a waste treatment plant at every industrial unit, he felt.

Nurul Islam Sikdar, the BPRC president, who presided over the rally, said that there are already 70 large industries in the Madhyapara union in Gazipur.

The toxic waste from other industrial units has already polluted the water of the Turag River. He said trees in the area no longer bear fruits and the production of paddy has slumped due to pollution.

"If the tanneries are shifted here, lives of people will become even more miserable," said Sikdar.

Abu Naser Khan of the BPA urged the government to relocate the tanneries to the estuary of the Gumti and Meghna rivers in Gazaria.

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'Unite to protect rights of the oppressed'

UNB, Chittagong

Speakers at a convention here yesterday urged the civil society to unite to protect the rights of the oppressed people.

The convention titled "Crimes against Humanity" was held at the local press club. Chittagong Committee for the convention organised a daylong discussion.

Prof. Anisuzzaman inaugurated the convention presided over by elderly revolutionist Binod Behari Chowdhury, Barrister Amirul Islam spoke as chief guest.

Barrister Tania Amir and journalist Abul Momen presented two papers on "Women and Children Repression: Continued Political Tools" and "Democracy and Election: Picture of Human Rights".

Dr. Hamida Banu, Tarana Halim, Begum Mustari Shafi, Prof.

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Tragic death of Jalalabad Gas employee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An employee of the Jalalabad Gas Transmission & Distribution Systems Limited met a tragic death while extinguishing fire at a commercial area of Sylhet town in the early hours of yesterday.

The victim was identified as Jasimuddin, 37, of village Kayaura of Brahmanbaria, a technician of Jalalabad Gas.

Sources said a fire originated from a small tin-shed structure near Sitara Mansion at the Zindabazar area at around midnight yesterday and soon spread to adjacent structures. The Fire Service and Jalalabad Gas personnel rushed to the spot and launched a frantic effort to extinguish the fire.

During the operation, Jasim came into contact with a live electric wire as he tried to disconnect the gas supply line. He died instantly.

Other firemen injured during the operation were admitted to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The fire gutted as many as 23 tin-shed structures. Property loss was estimated to be of worth Tk 5 lakh.