

Strike takes toll on education, DU sealed off to BCL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A student strike by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) put a brake on academic activities at public universities and colleges, while the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists attacked or chased their rivals at Dhaka University yesterday.

Activists of the JCD, the student chapter of the ruling BNP, virtually sealed off the DU campus to the BCL activists who enforced their second day of their indefinite strike

yesterday in protest at Thursday's overnight attacks on them.

The JCD activists fanned out across the campus early in the morning and mounted hunts for their rivals until noon. "Our senior leaders instructed us to resist the BCL move," said a JCD worker who was deployed with his fellow workers at Shahbagh intersection.

A group of JCD activists attacked a gathering of BCL men near the Bangla Academy at about 11:00am before they could enter the campus.

Morshed, a student of the Department of Accounting and Information Systems, who was long into BCL politics, was beaten up by JCD activists in front of Central Library at noon. Police rescued Morshed and sent him to hospital.

Another group of JCD men chased a former leader of the organisation, taking him for a BCL leader. "Mostafizur Rahman, who was general secretary of the Shahidullah Hall unit of the JCD

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MP's toll refusal leads to firing, stabbing, assault

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists demanded a toll of Tk 10 lakh from a lawmaker and on refusal, assaulted his brother, at Narayanganj on Saturday.

They also shot a person and stabbed another.

Mobarak Ali Bhuiyan, 65, was hit by a bullet and was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while the victim of stabbing, Abul Hasan, was admitted to a local clinic.

The incident took place when Syed Abdullah M Abu Taher, MP from Choudhagram of Comilla, his brother Harunur Rashid and some others visited their under-construction knitwear factory at Kewadhala in Bandar at around 5:00pm.

According to witnesses, notorious criminal Kamruzzaman Kamu and his accomplices went there and demanded Tk 10 lakh from the MP.

When he refused to pay, the gang assaulted Rashid and stabbed Abul Hasan, contractor of the knitwear firm.

In a statement later, the lawmaker said the extortionists shot at him but the bullet hit Mobarak.

As locals rushed to the spot, the gang fled.

Mobarak's son Javed filed a complaint and the Bandar Police Station recorded a case under Speedy Trial Act.

However, none could be arrested till the filing of this report at 9:00pm last night.

According to Bandar police, Kamu is an accused in 50 cases filed with various police stations across Narayanganj. He was released on bail on June 16.

Hill factions trade fire at Naniarchar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A series of gunfights between armed activists of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) rattled Naniarchar upazila in Rangamati Saturday.

However, casualty reports were unavailable till filing of this story.

Intelligence and army sources at the district headquarters confirmed the shootout, but could not provide details.

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Netrokona by-polls AL accuses BNP of violating code of conduct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the parliamentary by-polls at the Netrokona-3 constituency less than three weeks away, the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday accused the ruling BNP of violating the election code of conduct.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, at a press briefing at the party's Dhanmondi office, alleged five government ministers are now staying at Netrokona and using official transports and all other government facilities which is a violation of the election code of conducts.

Though Jalil said the AL had lodged complaint with the Election Commission (EC), the EC could not confirm it.

Dhaka, Paris sign agreement on military training

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and France yesterday signed an agreement on cooperation in military training.

The agreement was signed at a simple function at the Ministry of Defence at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar here, an ISPR press release said.

Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq and Ambassador of France in Bangladesh M Michel Lummaux signed the agreement on behalf of their governments.

Joint secretaries of the defence ministry M Afzal Hossain and Brigadier General Ismat Ahmed Chowdhury were present.

Under the agreement, the French government would provide training facilities to members of the armed forces in military training institutes of France.

52 killed as explosives go off in Pak village

AFP, Gilgit

More than 52 people were killed and around 70 injured yesterday when explosives used in road works caught fire and detonated in a northern Pakistan village, causing several homes to collapse, officials and witnesses said.

The BBC's Zafar Abbas in Islamabad said almost the entire village was destroyed in the series of blasts.

Police said an electric short circuit triggered a pre-dawn fire in a house in Gayal village, 168 km south of Gilgit, which spread to a nearby building where the explosives were being stored.

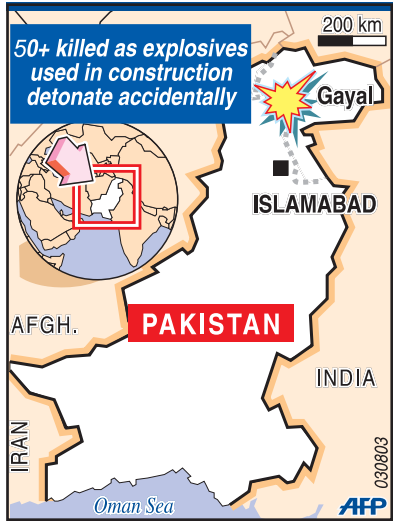
Some 200 people rushed to extinguish the blaze and while they were fighting the fire, the explosives -- owned by a government contractor building roads -- caught fire and exploded, witnesses said.

"Forty-five people were reported dead after the blast overnight and four died during transportation of casualties to the hospital," said doctor Hamid Khan of the nearby Chilas valley district hospital.

"Three more died in our hospital early Sunday," the doctor told AFP by telephone.

Around 70 people were brought to the Chilas hospital with serious

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Admission confusion

Students, guardians suffer as colleges swing between GPA and written test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students and guardians are in confusion over admission to colleges, as the government decided to enrol students on the basis of grade point average (GPA) instead of written tests.

The authorities of some leading colleges in the capital said yesterday they are yet to receive any government circular cancelling the tests and in a dilemma over how to enrol students.

Father Benjamin D'Costa, principal of Notre Dame College, said, "We are respectful of the government decision, but we are yet to have the circular."

Notre Dame College started the sale of admission forms and had scheduled tests for August 14 and 15.

"If the government asks us not to

hold written tests and select students through viva-voce, we will definitely follow that," he said. But it is difficult to select students without tests as there are many students scoring the same GPA, he added.

The government recommended viva-voce to resolve the problem of students with the same GPA.

The Holy Cross Girls College authorities said they will hold tests for admission seekers, despite the announcement by the government.

Holy Cross College is set to hold tests on August 8 and 9 and the admission form distribution will continue until today (Monday).

An education ministry official said colleges have to comply with the government decision and any violation would be considered "punishable offence".

College officials blamed the education ministry for issuing the

circular in an abrupt manner. "If the circular had been issued earlier, we could have decided it beforehand," said an official.

The government in a circular last week laid out the guidelines cancelling tests for admission to public and private colleges. From now on, college admissions will be based on the GPA in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations.

The circular added that those who scored at least Grade D and GPA 1 in the SSC and equivalent exams in 2002 and 2003 will be eligible for college admission.

However, students who passed SSC or equivalent exams held in 2001 will have to sit for admission tests.

"We don't know what to do about the admission of our son," said a guardian of Shaheedbagh.

Cop-villager clash over smuggled cattle leaves 1 dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

One person was killed and six others including a policeman were injured in a clash between police and locals at Raniganj Bazar on the Dinajpur-Rangpur Highway yesterday.

The dead was identified as Abu Sayeed, 25, son of Abdus Satter of Nashratpur village under Chirribandar thana of the district.

The injured are Mohamad Ali, Shamsul Alam, Aftab Uddin, Nazrul Islam, Nuru Miah and police Havilder Edris Ali. They were admitted to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

According to police, the clash ensued when locals put up a barricade at around 2:00am to protest the arrest of six people found with 21

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Razzak's return from London mission fuels speculations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The low-key visit of High Commissioner of Bangladesh in London and former speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali recently to Khulna, his hometown, has given rise to a flurry of speculations in the political circle.

Sources close to him said Razzak Ali was no longer interested in going back to London as the diplomatic assignment is not commensurate with his position as one of the most senior leaders of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Razzak returned to Dhaka yesterday.

The sources further said Razzak is waiting for a suitable job with at least the rank and status of a cabinet minister.

While talking to The Daily Star yesterday from his residence in Dhaka, Razzak hinted at discussing his present assignment with the

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Court boycott issue Pandemonium in lawyers meet in N'ganj

BSS, Narayanganj

Chaos broke out at a meeting of Narayanganj District Ainjibi Samity yesterday when one of the lawyers was prevented from delivering his speech.

The meeting was held at the Samity's auditorium in the morning to address the issue of the court boycott programme of the Bangladesh Bar Council and Supreme Court Bar Association on August 6.

Presided over by President of the Samity Suruj Ali, the meeting was addressed among others by lawyers Sakhawat Hossain, Masudur Rouf, Zakir Hossain, Humayun Kabir, advocate Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Azad Biswas, Shamsul Islam Bhuiyan, Anisur Rahman and

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Traumatised by tremor terror

MONIRUL ALAM, back from Kolabunia and Aimaghora

The people of Borkol upazila in Rangamati district are living under the shadow of earthquake horrors in the wake of a moderate tremor and a train of aftershocks.

Some 200 families of Kolabunia, the worst affected village in the moderate jolts on July 27, took shelter on the Nizkandra Government Primary School grounds after their mud houses were razed by the shudders.

Many hills and hillocks developed cracks in tremor shock waves that rattled the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong city leaving one killed, 25 injured and hundreds of houses flattened.

Some people have shifted their

houses to plains and some have left the area to seek a greater degree of security, Shanti Kumar Chakma of Dhumoichachhora village said.

"There is no medical facility, virtually no relief for the victims here," said Sagir Ali. Sultan and Samsu Mia of the village also echoed the voice.

"At least tell us one thing whether we will be able to stay here," an old man dazed by days on the edge at the shelter asked journalists accompanying local deputy commissioner and a team of experts from Chittagong who visited the area on Thursday.

Halima Begum, a widow and mother of three young girls, suffered severe burns as hot winds blew from the cracks of her home during the

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US warns Niger to keep quiet on Iraq uranium

AFP, London

The United States has warned Niger to keep out of a row over disputed claims that Iraq sought to buy uranium from the west African state, the Sunday Telegraph reported.

Quoting senior Niger government officials, the British newspaper said Herman Cohen, a former US assistant secretary of state for Africa, called on Mamadou Tandja, Niger's president, in the capital Niamey last week to relay the message from Washington.

One official told the Telegraph: "Let's say Mr Cohen put a friendly

arm around the president ... but then squeezed his shoulder hard enough to convey the message, 'Let's hear no more about this affair from your government'. Basically he was telling Niger to shut up."

The American intervention reflects growing concern about the continuing row over claims that the US and Britain distorted evidence to justify the war against Iraq launched in March, according to the right-wing British weekly.

The Telegraph recalled that Hama Hamadou, Niger's prime minister, last week told it that the

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PHOTO: STAR

A jumble of vehicles clogs the road in front of the AGB office at Segun Bagicha yesterday. The congestion proves chronic during rush hours.

Tigers thrashed again

AGENCIES, Cairns

Damien Martyn blasted an unbeaten 92 off 51 balls to lead world champions Australia to a nine-wicket victory over Bangladesh and take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The final match will be played in Darwin on Wednesday.

Martyn, who made 88 not out in Australia's World Cup final win over India in March despite a broken finger, showed on Sunday he was back to full fitness and form.

The 31-year-old stroked the ball effortlessly through the infield on both sides of the wicket, amassing 15 boundaries and one six as Australia cruised to victory with 29.4 overs to spare.

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud won the toss and elected to bat but, after a promising start, the tourists were all out for 147 in

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