

Barisal journalists' convention against 'repression' on newsmen

Punish culprits or face news blackout

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Newsmen of southern districts at a convention to protest "repression on journalists" here yesterday demanded arrest and punishment of persons responsible for the acts and threatened of a blackout of administration's news for non-compliance.

But they did not give any deadline for the blackout.

The blackout will also include news of political parties and leaders "sheltering" party men responsible for the alleged persecution.

The convention of about 300 newsmen from greater Barisal and Faridpur, first if its kind in the

country, was jointly inaugurated by 20 journalists who "suffered persecution either by law enforcers or by political activists" belonging to ruling or opposition parties at different times. It was held at the Central Shaheed Minar and organised by the Barisal Reporters Unity (BRU).

Speakers at the convention alleged that the "repression" and filing of "false" cases, done mainly by law enforcers and ruling party men continued, but Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and State Minister for Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Shajahan Omor, both hailing from greater Barisal, did not take any action. They are well aware of the

situation but playing deaf and dumb. They are against press freedom, the speakers said.

The speakers blamed the two government leaders for continuation of the "repression in the southern part of the country".

The journalists took an oath to launch a "movement against oppression and repression on journalist".

It also demanded scrapping of sections 500, 501 and 505 (Kha) of CrP and trial of the culprits in speedy trial tribunals.

The convention was presided over by BRU President Anisur Rahman Khan and addressed by, among others, BRU Secretary

Shawkat Milton, Masud Nizami from Dhaka, Salim Samad of Reporters Sans Frontiers, Barisal Union of Journalists Secretary Kazi Makbul Hossain, Barisal Press Club Secretary Humayun Kabir, Barguna Press Club Secretary Mostoka Kader, Jhalokhati Press Club President Shamsul Alam Chand, Probrir Sikdar from Faridpur, Moinul Hossain of Ittefaq, Nikhil Chatterjee from Patuakhali, Rangan Bakshi Nupu from Pirozpur, Farid Hossain Babul from Bhola, Khairuzzaman Kamal, and cultural activist Mintu Bose.

After the convention, the journalists brought out a colourful procession and paraded the main streets of the city.

Ferry service faces collapse at Teesta Mukh Ghat

Terminals shifted thrice in two weeks due to erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Ferry service with Bahadurabad Ghat has become irregular as erosion has taken an alarming turn at Teesta Mukh Ghat in Fulchhari here since December 15.

The ferry terminals for passengers and carrying railway wagons were shifted at least thrice in the last two weeks, creating great difficulties for

people and the railway department.

The terminals were shifted as erosion continued to devour large portions of the terminals. About 300 yards of the Ghat eroded into the river in the last three days, railway officials said.

Ferry service has also become irregular as shifting of the marine yard (where goods wagons are kept for boarding ferry) and 'shore guarder' is a time

consuming process.

The GRP Barrack, locomotive office, TXR shed, SSI (way) shed and passenger pontoon FF-6 have to be shifted frequently, they said.

People are to board ferry vessels after walking a long distance. Railway employees have to take utmost care to avoid accident.

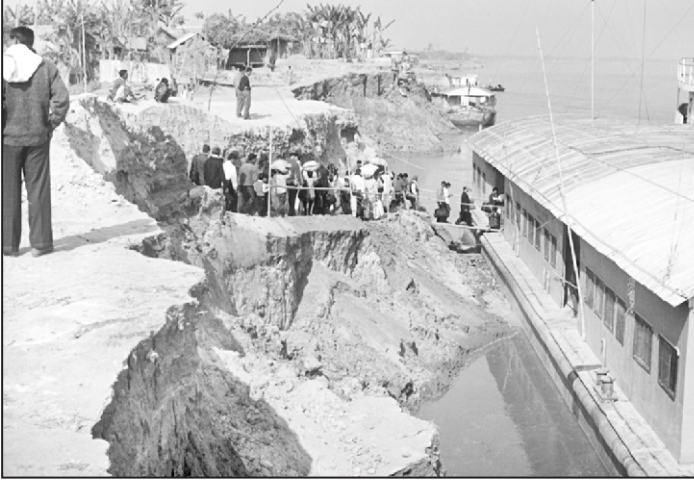
They said they face painstaking trouble to shift the rail tracts.

This involves a lot of work including earth cutting and earth filling.

Moreover water level of the Brahmaputra is falling rapidly. Many shoals have emerged in the mid-stream.

During nighttime, ferry vessels often run aground and remain stranded in the river for hours together, they said.

Ferry service may be stopped at any time, they apprehended.



Vessels may run aground any time... passengers walk through ladders to board a ferry dashed against the erosion-affected bank of the Brahmaputra at Teesta Mukh Ghat (left) and rail tracts laid after cutting the river bank being readied for loading goods wagons (right).

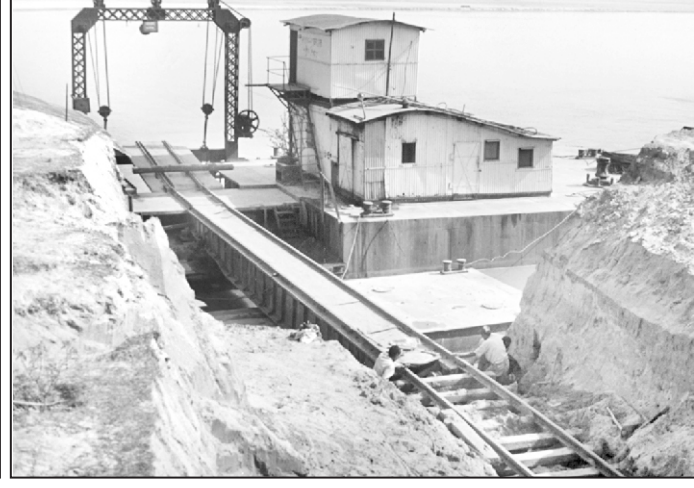


PHOTO: AKM REZAUL HAQ

SNAPS

Token strike

A RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi University Engineering and Technology Teachers' Association (RUETA) observed a token strike in front of the Vice-Chancellor's (VC) office on Tuesday.

They met VC Professor Karamot Ali Mollah and handed over their 15-point demands.

The VC assured them to convey their demands to the authorities concerned during second Syndicate meeting which is due on January 7.

Sylhet newsmen dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Sylhet District Correspondent of The Independent, Saiful Islam Chowdhury died in the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in the early hours of Wednesday.

He was 44.

Saiful was admitted into the Coronary care unit of the hospital on Tuesday afternoon. He had been suffering from diabetes, and heart diseases. He left behind his widow, only daughter, besides his mother, three brothers, friends and relatives to mourn his death.

Saiful had been in the profession for about 12 years. He also served the Daily Sylhet Bani for long. His first Namaj-e-Janaja was held at the Sylhet Press Club after Asr prayer. Another janaja was held at Hawalderpara Jame mosque after Esha prayer. He was buried at the mosque graveyard.

Sylhet town protection Discontent brewing as govt sitting on half-done project

IQBAL SIDDIQUE, Sylhet.

Despite demonstrations by people, work on the Tk 90 crore Sylhet Town Protection Project is suspended for the last one year due to administrative retapism.

Concrete blocks and boulders procured for the project are lying unused at the sites for the last two years.

Local people staged demonstrations and gave representations to the authorities to save their respective areas from erosion by the Surma river, but to no effect.

The uncertainty has angered the people because if the project is not implemented before the next monsoon, the work so far done at the cost of a huge amount of public money will vanish.

The project was taken up several years ago to protect the Surma banks along the city and in suburbs. Under the programme, 12 kilometre road and river bank protection work was to be done.

The major portion of the work includes renovation of the road from the Major of Hajrat Gazi Burhanuddin (RA) in the east to Kanishail-Darsha in the west of the town and protection of the river bank in Alampur and Mistri Masjid areas.

The work was started during the tenure of Awami League government at the instruction of the then Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, who was the MP from Sylhet-1 constituency. The work

could not be completed due to lack of funds.

When BNP came to power, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, MP from the area, instructed revision of the project with inclusion of new areas.

The Water Development Board (WDB) floated tenders for Tk 4.39 crore. About 50 per cent of the work was completed.

Meantime, the finance minister ordered implementation of the project from the east to the west part without any break. But, WDB continued the work as per the old project Proforma (PP) as the revised PP was lying with the planning ministry for approval, the sources said.

Unless approval is received, it was not possible to work as per the new PP, covering the proposed new sites, they said. High officials of the WDB visited some of the project sites a few months back. Finding "low quality work and irregularity at points" they suspended the whole work.

The earlier PP was prepared keeping provisions for protection of the riverbank at Kalapara, Darsha, Alampur, Kanishail and some other areas at a sanctioned amount of Tk 14.61 crore.

The revised PP involving Tk 90.7 crore expenditure includes protection of 9.7 km area on the right bank of the river and 8.05 km on the left bank.

They said they hoped the revised project would be approved

soon and work would begin.

Meanwhile Sylhet City Corporation commissioners Haji Faruque Ahmed of Ward 23 and Mohammad Shahjahan ward 24 alleged that WDB did not do any protection work in Masimpur, Mednibag, Noagaon and Kushighat areas in the last dry season though concrete blocks had been lying there.

They blamed WDB officials for negligence of duty.

Same was the view of Ataur Rahman Ata, a resident of Mendibag and president of Sylhet Division Photo Journalists Association.

Ataur said a commotion is prevailing among the residents of the areas as their several representations and demonstrations for implementation of the project went unheeded by the authorities.

Every year the Surma devours lands in the city and its suburbs. The areas include Sheikhghat, Tukurbar, Ghopal, Jangail, Pirpur Chargaon, Haiderpur Sahebergaoan, Kanishail, Broikandi, Anantapur, Darsha, Kamalganj, Technical Road, Alampur.

There was no major dredging in the river Surma for long. Dredging was done on only in 2 km area from Dhanpur to Chandpur in the Sadar upazila in 1978.

Hill waters from Indian cause the erosion every year and sometimes overflow the riverbanks.

SUST Teachers' Assoc polls Jan 5

STAFF ORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Election of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Teachers Association (SUSTTA) will be held on January 5.

Candidates from two panels, one aligned with the ruling party and the other with the opposition, will contest in the polls. Nominations were filed on Monday.

Candidates of the pro-BNP panel are: Prof Dr. Kamal ahmed Chowdhury (president), Dr. Mohammad Iqbal (vice-president), Dr. Sajedul Karim (general secretary), Mokhlesur Rahman (assistant general secretary) and Dr. Mostafa Hasan (treasurer). Candidates for posts of member are Abdul Hai Chowdhury, Abdul Maleque, Kamruzzaman Akan, Abdur Rahim, Dr. Akhtarul Islam and Anwar Hossain Khan.

The pro-Awami League panel includes Dr. Sushanta Kumar Dass (p)resident, Dr. Rashed Talukder (vice-president), Jahir Uddin Ahmed (general secretary), Delwar Hossain Swapon (assistant general secretary), Dr. A. Gani (treasurer). Members candidates from this panel are Dr. Yasmin Haque, Dr. Akhtarul Islam, Sayema Khatun, Farzana Siddiqua, Kamruzzaman and Jagannoy Das.



PHOTO: IQBAL SIDDIQUE

Concrete blocks left uncared on the bank of Surma river for two years, awaiting to be dumped to protect Sylhet city.

Live REB cable, 15 transformers stolen in Gopalganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Electric equipment and goods worth about Tk five lakh of the Rural Electrification Board (REB), Gopalganj have been stolen from different supply lines and REB sheds in different areas of the district.

According to official source, the stolen goods include 18 transformers and 5700 feet cable.

One 15 KV transformer, one 10 KV and two 5 KV transformers were stolen from Gopalganj Sadar recently. Three 10 KV transformers were stolen from Kotwalipara upazila; two 15 KVA, two 10 KV and three 5 KV transformers from

Kasiani and one 5 KV and two 10 KV transformers were stolen from Mukusdupur upazilas.

They said organised gangs of thieves took away 2700 feet live electric cable from Dhopervita under Mukusdupur upazila and about 1000 feet from in front of Fukra School under Kasiani upazila. Live cables were stolen from other areas.

Thirteen cases have been filed -- four of those with Gopalganj Sadar thana, one with Kotwalipara thana, four with Kasiani thana and four with Mukusdupur thana. Electric supply has been disrupted in the areas, they said.

Extortionist killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An extortionist was beaten to death by mob and another received critical injuries at Malmari village under Gangnj upazila in Meherpur district on Saturday night.

The mob also recovered firearms from them and handed those to police.

The dead was identified as Hamidul Islam, 42, of the aforesaid village.

Police said the extortionists, allegedly belonging to an outlawed party, demanded toll from farmers at the village. At night they went to realise the money from them.

As soon as they reached there, the villagers encircled and beat them up. On information police rushed to the spot and rescued them. But one of them named Hamidul died on way to hospital while his associates Mafizul Islam alias Bachchu, 25, is now under treatment.

Death anniversary



Late Abdus Sattar Chaudhury, was a retired police officer. He received the Coronation Medal of Queen Elizabeth II. He also received the President's Police Medal Award during the Pakistan era.

Discussion on Zainul Abedin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A discussion was held at the Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala auditorium here marking the 89th birth anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin on December 31.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources A K M Mosharraf Hossain addressed the discussion as chief guest with Md. Abdul Karim Sarker, Secretary of National Museum in the chair.

Dr Shah Md.Faruk, ex-Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Dr Abdus Sattar, Director of Fine Arts Institute, Dhaka and artist Amirul Islam were present as special guests. Dr Bejoy Krishna Banik, Deputy Curator of the Sangrahashala delivered the welcome address.

Later, prizes and certificates were distributed among 11 winners of an art competitions in three groups which was held on December 29. A total of 75 participants in three groups took part in the competitions.

Man gets 3 years RI for denying wife's rights

A CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A court here on Monday sentenced a man to three years rigorous imprisonment (RI) for not recognising his wife legally.

The convict, Sirajul Islam, son of Jolil Mia of Pipulia village under Manikganj Sadar upazila was also fined Tk 5,000, in default to suffer six months more RI.

Sirajul Islam had a love affair with Sheuli Akter Shilpy, daughter of Sheikh Shaheb Ali of the nearby village Satani. He used to live together with Shilpy from March 23 in 2001 after their marriage solemnised through reading verses from the holy Quran. Ultimately she became mother of a girl child. Shilpy's guardians requested Siraj to take Shilpy to his house, but he denied. He also disowned her as his wife.

Shilpy filled a case against Siraj on August 8 in 2001 with a first class magistrate court in Manikganj while she was carrying a baby.

Additional district magistrate Kazi Meraj Hossein pronounced the verdict.

The 13th anniversary of death of Abdus Sattar Choudhury, founder of the Falgonkara Charity Order (FACO) will be held on Tuesday, says a press release. Late Abdus Sattar Chaudhury, was a retired police officer. He received the Coronation Medal of Queen Elizabeth II. He also received the President's Police Medal Award during the Pakistan era.

Pneumonia claims 10 in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Pneumonia claimed 10 lives in three upazilas here in December last year.

Eight of them hailed from Nandail upazila, and one each from Phulbaria and Gouripur upazilas.

Of the victims, seven were identified as Khadeja, 3, daughter of Abul Kasem of Hawlapara village, Babu, a 40-day old baby son of Abul Bashar of Haliura village, Shikha, 23, daughter of Shahed Miah of Achargoon, Raihan, 10 months old baby son of Jahangir at the village, Babu, 45-day-old baby son of Abdur Razzaq of village Bashati and Sumona, one-year-old daughter of Soheli Miah of Piange Kanda village of Nandail and one year old son Rebat of Abul Kalam of Balukjan village of Phulbaria upazila. The identity of three others, two in Nandail and one in Gouripur upazila were not available at the civil surgeon's office.

During the same period, 440 persons were affected with pneumonia. Of them, 213 were attacked with pneumonia while 227 with severe pneumonia, official sources said.

However, in December 3,242 persons were affected with diarrhoea but no death was reported, the civil surgeon office sources said adding diarrhoea claimed 12 lives and affected 9,210 people in November.

RUTA election on January 15

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Election to the 15-member executive committee of the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) will be held on January 15.

The BNP-Jamaat-backed white panel and the Awami League-backed Yellow panel will contest the election. The last date of submission of nomination is January 7.

Polling will be held at the Juberi Bhaban of the university from 8.30 am to 2 pm.

The outgoing acting Treasurer of RUTA Prof Nurullah will act as the Election Commissioner.

Boy killed in Bhola fire

A CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

A child was roasted alive and 12 people were injured, five of them critically, in two fire incidents at Dularhat village in Charfession upazila on Thursday.

Seven-year-old Khokon was killed when a fire gutted their house at Dularhat. Khokon's brother Shumon, 7, both sons of Abdul Kheleque, was also critically injured. He was admitted to Charfession hospital.

In another incident at the same village on the same day, 10 people were injured when a fire originating from a kerosene lamp gutter a house.

Critically injured Abul Bashar, Abdul Hoque, Syed Ahmed, Abul Kasem was admitted to hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

A girl receiving a cheque amounting to Tk 25,000 as loan from Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Manikganj Mohammad Abdul Bari on the occasion of the National Youth Day recently. The Youth Development distributed loans among youths who were trained in computer operation, dress-making, fisheries and livestock.

A year of crimes in Ctg

Reshuffle in police admin fails to restore people's confidence: A ray of hope after a few court verdicts

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

Crimes increased and took a new turn in Chittagong last year.

Over 1,500 crimes including 265 murders and 500 robberies were recorded in the district during the period.

The abduction of business magnate Jamaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury, killing of millionaire businessman Rezaur Rahman Zakir after kidnap, murder of college student Rafeza Khanam Poppy, suicide of college girl Umme Habiba Rumi following teasing, murder of computer engineer Srikantha Rakshit, horrifying death of 11 people of a family at Shilpara in Banskhal were some of the incidents that shook the nation.

Besides, an accused --Amar Das--died in custody allegedly due to torture.

Chittagong hit newspaper headlines on several occasions and was talked about nationally because of these harrowing incidents, especially the Banskhal carnage of November 18 midnight.

In-between these, the tragic road accident at Fateyabad under Hathazari upazila on the night of January 30 in which 11 youths including nine cricketers died tore

apart many hearts in Chittagong and elsewhere in the country.

The killing of college students Rumi and Poppy also sent shockwaves across the nation.

Abduction for ransom virtually turned into a spree in the bygone year, creating a sense of insecurity among the people and destroying their confidence on law enforcers.

A reshuffle in police administration against the backdrop of the situation did a little to restore people's confidence on law enforcers.

Businessman and BNP leader Jamal, abducted on July 24, is yet to be rescued.

Abduction and murder of business magnate Rezaur Rahman Zakir in the following month (August 11) came as another slap for the police administration here.

Than came the custodial death of Amar Das, a suspected abductor of businessman Jamal on December 10, only to further defame police.

Besides the Banskhal carnage, seven persons including six of a family were roasted alive on March 10 in a devastating fire at city's Burma Colony under Baizid Bostami police station.

Another three of a family met

with a similar tragedy at Nathpara of Chambal union in Banskhal on May 9. Another fire on August 8 took lives of two of a family at Batua village in Patiya Upazila.

Lynching of alleged muggers or dacoits by mobs took a frenzied turn in the year. Fifteen alleged muggers or dacoits were lynched in separate incidents at Patiya, Satkania and other areas in the district.

Murder of two Awami League activists eaders inside a madrassah on the night of Eid-ul-Fitr (February 12) at Burishchar under Hathazari Upazila, three brothers at Chariya of Mirzapur under the same upazila on May 26 and of Sramik Dal leader Shafuluddin Ahmed, a railway employee, at Ambagan in the city on June 14 are mentionable among the political killings.

Two court verdicts came as a relief to the people of Chittagong.

However, a few court verdicts in some sensational murder cases have created an impression among the people that that criminals can not escape the hands of law always. Four cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibit were given death sentences on February 6 in Principal Gopal Krishna Muhuri murder case. Another five are to die killing Laxmipur BNP leader advocate Nurul Islam.