

Manik Saha killing Journos end protest, concerned over outlaw poster

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Journalists in Khulna yesterday ended their seven-day programme with a symbolic hunger strike against the killing of New Age newsman Manik Saha and expressed concern at the posting of posters on roadside walls apparently by an underground outfit.

The demonstrators sounded worried about the posters the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party's Janajuddho faction posted near the protest venue of journalists, giving celebratory messages on the second anniversary of freeing its ringleader Tapan from police custody on January 26, 2002.

The underground outfit claimed responsibility for the killing of the former president of Khulna Press Club on January 15.

The journalists said the acts of operatives who apparently dodged security watch to post the posters around the press club underlined law and order downslide in the

industrial city.

Khulna journalists urged police to arrest the killers of Manik, who was bombed to death on his way home in an incident that sent shock waves through the country.

Police yesterday quizzed Ananda Saha, an expert in making home-made bombs, arrested on January 16 for suspected ties to the banned outfit.

Investigation Officer and Officer-in-Charge of Khulna Police Station Ataur Rahman believes Ananda will give intelligence leading to the arrest of the killers.

Our Chittagong Staff Correspondent adds: Newpersons staged a daylong symbolic hunger strike in Chittagong yesterday in protest at the killing and demanding punishment to the killers.

Chattagram Sangbadpatrasebi Oikya Parishad, an alliance of journalists and other staff of newspapers, organised the strike at Chittagong Press Club.

CHT taskforce meets after 4 years, winds up without success

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The task force on refugees in the Chittagong Hill Tracks (CHT) met yesterday after about four years but failed to take up the issues on the agenda as a representative of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and a refugee leader on the body boycotted the meet.

Sudhasindhu Khisa of the PCJSS and refugee leader Santosit Chakma did not join the 12th meeting of the task force alleging it was convened without following rules.

They had also walked out of its 11th meeting in May 2000 protesting what they said was inclusion of Bangladeshes in the refugee list.

Chairman of the taskforce Shamiran Dewan said yesterday's meeting did not discuss any issue on its agenda and took no decision.

"If they (PCJSS man and refugee leader) had any objections regarding the meeting, they could raise those at the meeting," he added.

Constitution amendment

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planning to raise the JS seats to 450, including 50 reserved for women, from 300 and widen the gap between two sessions to 90 days from 60 days.

The BNPPP met only for the third time yesterday in the last two and a quarter years despite the lawmakers' desire to sit as frequently as the JS sessions.

At the over an hour-long meeting, the BNP chairperson asked the deputies to seek permission from party secretary general for giving press interviews.

Reminding Khaleda's previous commitments, some party legislators asked for a reshuffle in the cabinet after reviewing the annual confidential report (ACR) of ministers.

They felt some people with low-levels of commitment and allegiance to the party were holding important portfolios.

Most lawmakers who spoke were critical of the government failures in cutting crimes, especially in six metropolitan cities and containing the price spiral of essentials.

Some demanded revival of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh for import of essentials in the public sector to break private sector's monopoly and determination of market prices at will.

Some lawmakers aired their grievances at not getting enough attention to the party were holding important portfolios.

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Young BNP legislator Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu sought recourse from the party leadership for frequent reference of his name as an example of government action on lawbreaker.

He said some BNP leaders participating in different media programmes pegged his arrest as a symbol of premier's commitment to the rule of law, denting his image.

In response, Khaleda gave the directive of not talking to the media without the party sanction.

The long gap in parliamentary party meeting and refusal of chance to most deputies to speak dissatisfied many lawmakers.

BNP Standing Committee Member Obaidur told the meeting that the BNPPP should not be open-ended, it should have a specific agenda. Young deputy Moazzem Hossain Alal reminded the prime minister of her pledge to review the performance of ministers.

He called for revamping the cabinet after reviewing the ministers' ACR.

Meeting sources said Mahmudul Haq Rubel, another young legislator, told the meeting that many lawmakers came to know about the government plan of constitutional amendment from press reports.

He called for taking such a vital decision after a detailed discussion in the party forum.

Many lawmakers told journalists that they were looking forward to the resumption of the adjourned meeting, the date of which was unlikely to be fixed before the Eid-ul-Azha.

The BNPPP first met a few days after the BNP-led alliance took office in October 1 ballot in 2001 and the second time in June 2002 to ask the then president Badruddoza Chowdhury to stand down.

Outlaws kill

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also snatched a police rifle from Lance Naik Jamal, police said.

Police held an injured gang member Sahidul Islam with a 9mm pistol after the gunfight, sources added.

He was admitted to local hospital under police custody.

As many as 12 policemen have been killed in the violence-torn Khulna district in last one year. Besides, journalist Manik Chandra Saha was killed only recently.

Azam Reza remanded again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Azam Reza, arrested on charge of killing his wife Jayanti Munshi, was placed on a fresh one-day remand, for the third time, yesterday.

The Detective Branch (DB) produced Reza before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka on completion of a two-day remand. He was remanded for four days soon after his arrest on January 10.

The DB yesterday sought for a three-day remand for further interrogation. In the petition, the investigation officer said he gathered important information from Reza about the murder during the last two-day's interrogation.

The defence lawyers submitted a bail petition stating that Reza was implicated in a 'conspiracy' for harassment.

After hearing both sides, Magistrate Quamrunnahar rejected the bail petition and ordered for a one-day remand.

The Gulshan Police Station on January 17, handed over the case docket and other documents involving the death to the DB.

Jayanti, a teacher of the Australian International School, was found dead at her Banani house on January 9. An unnatural death case was filed with the Gulshan Police Station the same day and later a murder case was filed after autopsy report confirmed that she was killed.

Schoolboy killed

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GD (general diary) as he did not return home, they added.

The duty officer at the police station told them that police found the body of a child near the rail gate. Hearing this, Bablu's parents went to the spot and identified their son, police said.

Later, Jafar lodged a murder case accusing Kashem, Shelly, Munni, Rafique and Shahjahan, police added.

Unknown killers knifed Bablu to death. His body bore marks of stabbing and there were bruises in his left cheek, police added.

The schoolboy might have been murdered due to land dispute between Jafar and his brother Kashem, police suspect.

Lalbagh 7-murder

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The petitioners submitted that the accused, who had been absconding for nine years, was refused bail by the lower court after he surrendered. But he later obtained bail from the High Court by "suppressing facts" of the murder case.

After being released on bail, Aziz threatened the prosecution witnesses with death to hold them back from making depositions in the trial court against him, said the counsel for the petitioners.

The lawyers submitted a general diary lodged with the Lalbagh police on January 15.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman, a ruling party MP, appeared for the accused. Deputy Attorney General Altafar Rahman stood for the state while advocate Jahangir Hossain Selim appeared for the informant of the case.

Kids in fetters

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remains ignored when they are produced before the court and thus they end up in prison, some legal experts said. Sometimes, police also up the age of a juvenile while producing before a court to avoid legal complications, they added.

The central jail authorities claimed they send a juvenile to the correction centre at Tongi whenever they receive a court order to do so. Sources, however, said there are exceptions, as there are five cases at present where the accused children are still inside the jail even after the court ordered them to be sent to the correction centre. "Thirteen-year-old Rafique has been in central jail since November 19, 2003, though the court ordered to send him to the National Correction Centre at Tongi," said a social worker, preferring anonymity.

"Sometimes, we can't send a juvenile to Tongi as the centre authorities are too particular about related documents," said Ritesh Chakma, deputy jailer of Dhaka Central Jail. "Now they demand a proper certificate of age," he said, adding, sometimes the centre even sends back juveniles to the central jail.

"Obviously we can't accept a resident without court order and proper document of his age," said a high official of the Tongi Correction Centre. "Previously, they used to send people to our centre only with a custody warrant, which sometimes enabled over-aged people to enter the correction centre," he claimed. At that time, older criminals staying in the centre created nuisance and corrupted its environment. The authorities don't want these things to be repeated, the official explained.

Teesta Water-Sharing

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issues' relating to terms of reference for the joint survey of Teesta water, particularly during lean season, was taken at the two-day meeting of Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) headed by water resources secretaries of the two countries.

The technical committee, to be formed this month-end consisting of four experts from each country, would submit its report by the middle of May and soon after that the secretary-level JCE would meet to finalise the draft for Teesta water-sharing accord.

Indian Water Resources Secretary V K Duggal, who led a 13-member delegation at the talks, told reporters here that the formation of the technical experts committee marked a "positive forward movement".

There had been some pending issues of technical nature and "we agreed to make a headway to finalise the terms of reference and the interim agreement within a timeframe," he said. Duggal's Bangladesh counterpart Ayub Qadri said, "We see this as a move forward and the outcome of the JCE meeting was positive."

The meeting, he said, was held in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. The next meeting of JCE would be held in Dhaka after the report of the technical experts, he added.

The decision by the two sides to fix a timeframe for the preparation of the report of the technical com-

Tigers killed 36 in Sundarbans last year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sakthira

At least 36 people were killed by man-eating tigers in the Sundarbans last year, official sources said.

Most victims were fishermen or woodcutters who fell behind their groups before they were singled out by the man-eaters.

The victims included 28 fishermen, five woodcutters, two honey collectors and a forest guard.

WSF ends with flourish

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days of high-powered conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss such weighty subjects as land, water and food sovereignty and militarism, war and peace, as well as giving activists around the world a chance to get together and celebrate their solidarity.

Prerana Reddy, part of a team here to shoot a one-hour special on the WSF for FreeSpeechTV, believes that this has been the real accomplishment of the WSF.

"The reason you come to the WSF is to get the energy of other people who are working in local ways that never get publicised. . . There's a lot of people who feel that the things we want to accomplish are impossible and so we need to remind ourselves of the successes and come together and disseminate that information internationally because no-one else is going to do that for us."

Another reason is, of course, networking, and the WSF has provided a way for people working on connected issues with similar goals to get together to exchange experiences and ideas.

There have been reports of friction between some of the groups furthest from the mainstream, such as sex-workers, the transgendered and gay and lesbian rights groups, and the more conservative local organisations. Dalits' rights groups have also complained of poor treatment by other delegates and even event organisers.

But, for the most part, the coming together of such disparate groups has been successful as alliances have been forged and common ground reached. "It has been really something to see all the mingling," says Bangladesh activist Ivan Jaigirdar. "For the first time I'm seeing the inter-connectedness of it all."

Vajpayee

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should 'demonstrate visibly that funds are used properly'.

Chief ministers of the north-eastern states pledged to create a climate conducive to investment and asked the Indian corporate sector to exploit the region's rich natural resources keeping in view the opening of border trade with Bangladesh and China.

Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi sought to dispel fears of investors about terrorism in his state which he said has come along way and offered opportunities in such diverse sectors as information technology, forest-based products, tourism and textile. The state also provided a single-window clearance for projects, he added.

Meghalaya Chief Minister D D Lapang pointed out that the state exported goods worth Rs 140 crore to Bangladesh in fiscal year 2002-03 and those having overseas markets in South East Asia would find the place attractive to set up cement factories and processing plants.

Meanwhile, the Indian cabinet on Tuesday night approved the framework agreement on the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) among Saarc countries.

The agreement, signed during recent Saarc summit in Islamabad, goes into force from January 1, 2006 after completion of negotiations on lists of sensitive goods, rules of origin, revenue loss and a compensation mechanism for least developed countries of the region by the end of June 2005.

Bodies of man, woman found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bruised bodies of an unidentified man and woman were found in the city yesterday.

Police recovered the body of a middle-aged man at Uttar Khan and a woman at Asulia.

Being informed, police recovered the bloodstained body of about 45 years old man at 10:00am near Christianpara at Rajabari in Uttara, locals said.

The body bore marks of stabbing in the head and neck, police said.

Unknown assailants might have strangled him sometime on Tuesday night and dumped the body there, police suspect.

Pallabi police recovered the body of a woman, aged about 25, near Ashulia Road at around 8:45pm.

She was clad in pink saree and black borkha. Blood was oozing from her mouth and there were marks of injury all over her body, police said.

Minister tells JS

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and others entitled to gunman security as part of protocol, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury said in reply to Delwar Hossain Saidee of Jamaat-e-Islami.

He mentioned that chief justice, former presidents, speaker, ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers, leader of the opposition, chief whip/whips, chief election commissioner and advisors get security as part of protocol.

US Ambassador Harry K Thomas Jr. and British High Commissioner David Carter are among the 25 persons given gunman security by the government.

The list also includes Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman and Justice Latifur Rahman, chief advisors of the past two caretaker governments.

Others given gunman security, but not MPs, are weekly Jai Jal Din Editor Shafiq Rehman, PSC (Public Service Commission) Member and former district and sessions judge Kazi Golan Rasul, who was the trial judge in Bangabandhu murder case, Attorney General AF Hassan Arif, Jatiya Party (N-F) Chairman Nazir Rahman Manzur and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Chairman ZA Khan.

Among the MPs with gunman security are Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, Anwar Hossain Manju of Jatiya Party (Manju) and Kader Siddiqui of Krishak Sramik Janata League and Mufti Fazlul Haq Amin of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), a partner in the ruling coalition.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) MPs getting gunman security are Oli Ahmed, Harunur Rashid Khan Monnoo, Chairman of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Redwan Ahmed, Nurul Islam Moni, Rustam Ali Farazi, M Nurul Huda, Hafiz Ibrahim, Salahuddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad, MAH Selim, Ishrat Sultana Elen Bhutto and Mohammad Ali Asghar Lobi.

Primary teachers

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An Association press release yesterday said eight teachers fell sick on the second day of the hunger strike.

Leaders of various groups of teachers and political parties expressed solidarity with the teachers' movement.

But, for the most part, the coming together of such disparate groups has been successful as alliances have been forged and common ground reached. "It has been really something to see all the mingling," says Bangladesh activist Ivan Jaigirdar. "For the first time I'm seeing the inter-connectedness of it all."

Cancer clinic

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said he had been providing only elementary treatment to the poor cancer patients.

"One does not need much expertise to provide preliminary treatment to the cancer patients," he shot back and added, "We call in specialised doctors whenever the need arises."

Dr Salam is the owner and only attending physician in the clinic which has 11 patients.

The visiting card expounds surgical facilities for cancer patients in the clinic. When asked to comment, Dr Salam admitted that there is no operation theatre in his clinic which has seven staff and nurses. "We refer to or arrange operations of serious patients with other clinics," he added.

Dr Salam alleged that a section of local clinic owners have been conspiring against him and his clinic because he provides treatment at low cost. He takes Tk 200 in consultation fee from his patients. The rent of a general bed is only Tk 200 a day against Tk 400 to Tk 600 in other clinics in the area, he claimed.

The Daily Star contacted Dr Salam again on Saturday. He claimed that his clinic is a proposed one and on a test run. He also said he had applied for registration with the Directorate of Health but could not say when.

After a while, he said for outdoor services there is no need for registration. And that his is a consultation chamber and patients are given only prescriptions and no-one is admitted. This correspondent however found 11 patients undergoing treatment at the clinic.

He also claimed Dr ARM Rafiqul Islam of NICRH is a regular visitor as an expert oncologist to his clinic.

Investigations also revealed that Dr Salam had never studied medical oncology (post-graduation) to be a cancer specialist.

Quick disposal of cases in higher courts pondered: PM

UNB, Dhaka

The government is contemplating ensuring quick disposal of the cases in higher court that have been tried in the speedy trial tribunal.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said this while replying to a supplementary from Moazzem Hossain Alal of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) during the prime minister's question hour in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

She told the House that enactment of the Speedy Trial Act 2002 and formation of the speedy trial courts under the law were some of the many efforts her government had taken to remove the delay in dispensing justice.

A total of 2,632 cases were disposed of under the Act till November 22, 2003, the prime minister said replying to a question from M Rustam Ali Farazi (BNP-Pirojpur).

Responding to Hafizuddin Ahmed of Jatiya Party, the prime minister said the past Awami League government had filed 'false cases' against supporters of the then opposition. These cases were baseless and aimed at harassment, she added.

She mentioned that a committee was formed to investigate the cases and after its findings, the false cases were withdrawn. The opposition lawmaker himself termed the cases as false, she said.

Replying to Dewan Mohammad Salahuddin (BNP-Dhaka), Khaleda said punitive measures will be taken against the schools, colleges and madrassahs having zero percentage of pass in public examination.

In reply to a question from Alhaj Salauddin Ahmed (BNP-Dhaka), she assured that the Mohakhali flyover will be completed by June this year. A flyover at Jatrabari is also under active consideration of the government, she added.

Khaleda listed her government's programmes to ease traffic congestion in the capital and improve communication network all over the country.

Replying to Mohammad Giasuddin (BNP-Narayanganj), the prime minister mentioned various special measures undertaken by her government in 2003 against terrorism.

Bush defends Iraq war

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need for education and health care here at home."

Bush explicitly tied US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya's surprise pledge last year to give up its unconventional arms programs after nine months of secret talks with the United States and Britain.

"One reason is clear: For diplomacy to be effective, words must be credible. And no one can now doubt the word of America," he said. "Because of American leadership and resolve, the world is changing for the better."

Bush said Washington was working with the US-appointed Iraqi interim Governing Council to draft laws, starting with a bill of rights, and hailed Council President Adnan Pachachi, who was present as Laura Bush's guest.

The president made passing mention of diplomatic efforts to disarm North Korea and Iran, which he lumped with Iraq in an "axis of evil" in his 2002 speech.

"Different threats require different strategies," he said. "America is committed to keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the world's most dangerous regimes."

Recent polls have shown Bush's approval ratings slumped from their sky-high levels after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, amid growing skepticism about his domestic programs and concern about the US-led occupation of Iraq.

Some 500 US troops have been killed there, roughly half since Bush announced the end of major combat in a May 1 speech, and US troops have yet to find the weapons of mass destruction at the core of Bush's case for war.

UK minister

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He said, "We hope killers of Manik Saha will be brought to justice."

Replying to a query on political instability and main opposition's boycott of the parliament, the UK minister said the problem should be resolved through discussion and all the parties have to work together to make the parliament functional.

Gareth Thomas arrived in Dhaka Tuesday and left for West Bengal in India last evening. During the visit, he signed two separate agreements with Bangladesh government granting the country £ 150 million over an eight-year period for implementing two separate projects to upgrade primary education and livelihood in char areas.

Thomas said, under one of the grants, £ 100 million will be spent for a programme to provide free primary education to over 17 million children a year. The grant aims to enhance the quality of primary education by improving teachers' skills, widening access to teaching materials, recruiting and training more teachers and increasing number of classrooms.

"The other grant of £ 50 million will be spent in programmes aimed at delivering improved social services for char-dwellers," he added.

The minister yesterday also visited some primary schools and an HIV-AIDS awareness programme being run at a brothel in Tangail funded by British grants.

Thomas said, "The programmes here are running very well. Education programmes are very positive, as more children are going to school, of whom girls number as many as the boys."

He termed Bangladesh as a crucial partner of Department for International Development (DFID) as well as the UK. "Our development assistance programme here is the second largest in Asia, with Tk 800 crore being spent annually."

British High Commissioner David Carter was also present at the press conference.

Non-govt teachers

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asked the teachers to evaluate their performances and the initiatives taken by the educational institutions during the period. She, however, said imparting good education is a continuous process and a permanent programme.

The prime minister said she wants the present government's tenure to be identified as an era of expansion, improvement and modernisation of education and making it available to all. "We'll do everything possible to build a knowledge-based society suiting the 21st century," she said.

Khaleda mentioned various steps taken by the government, including free primary and girls' education, stipend programmes, preventing cheating in public examinations and special emphasis on computer education and vocational training.

The government has also amended the Non-governmental Teachers and Employees Welfare Act, enacted laws for the pension of the teachers and employees, and ensured timely promotion, she said.

Referring to establishment of the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, she said the government programme for expansion of education has been acclaimed internationally.

The prime minister, however, regretted that the growing dependence of students on private tutors and mushrooming growth of coaching centres.

"This is not a healthy sign," she said and asked the teachers to concentrate more on classroom education and follow regular class tests to encourage the students in studies.

She also asked the students to be more attentive to their studies. "You'll have to acquire education and knowledge in true sense, not just to pass exams and get certificates," she said.

Watchdog

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minister did not specify how soon the new force would be set up.

Replying to a separate query, Altaf said the government has allowed hawkers to sit and run their business on several city footpaths. He said policemen are assigned to patrol and ensure that people are not robbed in those busy roadside makeshift markets.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party lawmaker Monjur Kader raised the question about hawkers occupying some important city pavements at Motijheel, Gulistan and Baitul Mukarram areas and expressed concern at frequent incidents of pickpocket there.

Jubo Dal council

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Bakkar and General Secretary Kazi Belal went unruly during the hour-long clash, damaged furniture and vandalised a few vehicles on the road before Kotwali police rushed to the spot to stymie them.

Bakkar is reportedly loyal to Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Belal to Tourism Minister Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin.

Witnesses said confusion over sitting arrangement and precedence of speakers' order at Swaranika Community Centre in Love Lane preceded the clash.

Later, the Jubo Dal leaders briefly completed the meeting in presence of police.