

Rail-road barricade to protest sugar mill lay-off decision

70 hurt as police, BDR fire rubber bullets, tear gas shells

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

At least 70 people including a BDR personnel and three policemen were injured when workers and local people protesting Rangpur Sugar Mills lay-off decision clashed with law enforcers at Gobindaganj yesterday.

Seriously injured BDR personnel Chand Mia and policeman Bazlur Rahman were admitted to Gobindaganj health complex. None of the injured among the demonstrators went to the hospital fear of being arrested.

The clash took place when police and BDR tried to disperse the dem-

onstrators who barricaded the Rangpur-Bogra highway as per an earlier announced programme.

Besides indiscriminate baton charge, law enforcers fired 74 rubber bullets and 34 tear gas shells to the demonstrators who replied with brickbats.

The protesters, numbering over 1,000, first barricaded the Bonapara-Santaher rail tract near Mohimaganj railway station by placing the mill's tractor trolleys and laying on it.

This detained a Shantaher-bound local train and the Lalmonirhat-bound Padmarag Express train for two hours.

Police and BDR personnel

persuaded them to withdraw the barricade and they obliged.

The demonstrators then paraded 18 kilometres road from Mohimaganj mill area breaking police cordon, and barricaded the Rangpur-Bogra highway at Gobindaganj.

Police and BDR then swung into action, using batons and firing rubber bullets and tear gas shells. The angry demonstrators replied with brickbats, injuring four of the law enforcers and damaging seven vehicles.

People ran for safety and shopkeepers downed their shutters. Traffic on the road was disrupted for over two hours, creating jam on both

sides.

Police arrested 14 people. Gaibandha Police Superintendent later said police went into action in self-defence.

Protesting the law enforcers' action, people observed an undeclared hartal in Mohimaganj mill area yesterday. Police have been deployed in the mill area and at Gobindaganj.

The mill workers and employees have been demonstrating for the last few days protesting a government decision to lay off the mill from March 31.

On Tuesday, they brought out processions and held rallies to withdraw the decision.

SUST teachers protest anomaly in recruitment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) Teachers Association held an emergency general meeting last night to discuss alleged irregularities in the recent appointment of teachers and employees at the institution.

The meeting was continuing when the report was filed at 7 pm.

The Association's president, Shushanta Kumar Das, told this correspondent over mobile phone that the meeting was discussing an action programme to protest the irregularities.

On Tuesday, the Executive Committee of the Association met and discussed the situation.

The SUST Syndicate at a meeting on February 19 approved these appointments, suggested by a selection committee, which interviewed the candidates days ago.

Fifty-seven teachers have been appointed against 41 posts in 16 departments, for which newspaper advertisements were published months ago. Six others were also kept in the waiting list. Sources claimed that those in the waiting list would be appointed later without any formality.

In another five departments, teachers have been appointed without newspaper advertisement.

Two out of five members of the selection committee did not sign the proposal alleging lack of transparency.

They are Dr. Reza-E-Karim Khondaker, Dean of Social Science and Dr. Tulsi Kumar Das head of Social Works department.

Dr. Tulsi Kumar had also raised objection against some of the appointments in his department. Two days before the Syndicate meeting, he had written a letter to the Registrar and requested him not to appoint those people. He also

sent copies of the letter to the SUST Chancellor (the President), Acting VC and to Syndicate members.

Four teachers have been appointed in the department of Social Science against advertisement for two posts. Another person is on the waiting list for appointment.

In Statistics department, five appointments have been made against four advertised posts. Three others are in the waiting list.

Six teachers have been appointed against four advertised posts in Civil and Environmental Engineering department, three against two in Chemistry, five against four in Chemical Engineering and Polymer Science department, nine against six in Computer Science and Engineering and five against two in English department.

The SUST authorities also violated University Grants Commission rules in the appointments, they said.

Nine persons have been appointed in posts of administrative officer against four advertised posts. Two others have been appointed assistant administrative officers without any advertisement.

One of the administrative officers will perform the duty of Assistant Registrar. Three computer operators have been appointed against two advertised posts.

Seniority was not taken into consideration in promoting two assistant engineers.

The SUST Officers Association also held an emergency meeting on Sunday and demanded that there should be transparency in appointment of officials.

When contacted, an official preferring anonymity admitted the irregularities, but claimed that it is regular practice by almost all the public universities.

Rapist gets life term

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A rapist was sentenced to life term imprisonment on Tuesday by the Additional District and Sessions Judge Court of Kushtia.

The convict is Abdul Hannan of Dolua in Bheramara upazila.

The court also asked him to pay a fine of Tk 25,000. Besides, he was asked to pay the living cost of the victim's under-age daughter till attainment of maturity. She was born after the rape incident.

The convict raped the girl in January, 2001. But the victim could not disclose the incident as the rapist threatened to kill her.

However, after several months of the incident the victim became pregnant. Then her poor father met the culprit and proposed to marry her, but he declined. Finally, he filed a case against him.

Solar energy changes life, opens business prospect

Plants in Patuakhali villages create jobs for women

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

At remote Badura village in Patuakhali where government is yet to supply electricity, school student Arif was reading under fluorescent light. Others in the family were enjoying TV programmes in another room.

They, like many others, have changed their lifestyle by using solar energy.

"This is a great encouragement to my children", Arif's mother Jasmin told this correspondent during a recent visit.

Use of solar energy and electricity battery is gaining popularity among rural people in Galachipa and Sadar upazilas in the district, thanks to the innovative efforts by two local NGOs. Neither the PDB (Power Development Board) nor the REB (Rural electrification Board) has supplied electricity in the

remote villages there.

Their efforts have also created jobs for many village women, who work in small plants assembling solar energy and electric battery sets. The sets are also supplied to neighbouring districts, opening up a good business prospect also.

The Coastal Electrification and Women's Development Cooperative (CEWDC) and the Centre for Man Education in Science (CMES) have installed solar energy system in about 150 houses and battery system electricity in another 2000 since they took the initiative in 1999. More people in villages in Char Montary, Rangabali, and Char Biswas unions under Galachipa upazila now want these facilities.

The Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme (ESMAP) the World Bank and other donors extended their helping hand in the work.

Prokashali Sangsad Limited of Dhaka is giving technical support.

All the activities are managed and supervised by 35 women who have little education.

At Char Montary, where the CEWDC office is situated, a small factory has been set up where solar and battery sets are assembled and recharged. The equipment is imported.

Mohiuddin, field manager of the project, said a solar unit costs Tk 16,000 to Tk 34,000.

A solar unit can run six lights and a TV set. An 8-volt battery costs Tk 1,850 and a 12-volt costs Tk 3,280.

A battery has five years' guarantee with monthly recharge facilities and back-up support by the providers.

"Our products are supplied to different areas of the country including Jhenedha, Satkhira, and Bhola", Mohiuddin said.

Ten meritorious but poor stu-

dents are getting lighting facilities free of cost, he said.

Jakia, Bimola, Lima and Sahida, all members of CEWDC, said a worker earns Tk 1500 to 2000 per month from the project. They deposit a part of their income to the organisation's fund as savings.

Solar energy user Kabita Amin of Char Montary village said she bought it at Tk 20,000. Her schoolgoing son Rajib and two minor daughters are very happy now as they can read under fluorescent lights and enjoy TV programmes, she said.

Majeda Begum of the same village bought a battery electricity set at Tk. 1580 to light her house. Neighbours also come to her house to view TV.

Moniruzzaman of CMES said they have supplied 10 solar sets in the Sadar upazila.



Arif studying under fluorescent light, left, and women at work at a small plant assembling solar energy units at Char Mostaz in Patuakhali, right.



PHOTO: STAR

'26,000 AL men killed'

Party organising secy claims at council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Awami League Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan has said people have rejected the coalition government for its 'misrule' and alleged failure in maintaining law and order in the last two and a half years.

About 26,000 AL workers and supporters were killed and 20,000 women raped during the period, he claimed while addressing the triennial council of Assasuni Thana AL, held at Assasuni High School ground on Tuesday.

Presided over by Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, the council was addressed by, among others, SM Kamal Hossain, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Monir Ahmed and Nazrul Islam.

The BNP-Jamaat government is now trying to cling to power repre-

sion, Mannan alleged. But they will not be able to stay in power as people have become annoyed.

They are also closing down industries one after another, making people jobless.

The council elected Dr Mokhlesur Rahman and Advocate Shahidul Islam new president and general Secretary of Assasuni Awami League.

Attack on Dr. Kamal protested in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Magura district unit of Oikyo Prochasha (unity move) brought out a procession in the town yesterday protesting the attack on Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain in Rangamati on Monday.

After parading the streets, they held a rally in front of Magura Press Club.

It was addressed by its local leaders of Oikyo Prochasha Wahidul Huq, Bibekananda Majumdar, Samir Kumar Sarkar and Ashraful Islam.

The speakers demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the attackers.

Dr Kamal's motorcade was attacked in Kaukhali while he and some other political leaders were going to Rangamati to address a rally of pro-peace Parbattya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

Youth training camp opens in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A six-day Chittagong Divisional Youth Camp began at the Customs Excise and VAT Training Academy here on Monday.

Chittagong city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury Chittagong opened the camp as chief guest while Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) Secretary General AFM Obaidur Rahman was special guest.

BDRCS city unit acting chairman Dr Shahadat Hossain presided over.

New committees of 2 Satkhira Mahila Dal units

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A 31-member committee of Satkhira Sadar thana unit of Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal and another 31-member committee of Mahila Dal's pourasabha unit were formed at a joint biennial council held at the Sadar upazila auditorium here on Monday.

The Sadar thana unit committee was led by Rashida Mirza as general secretary and Nasrin Akhtar Rosy as organisational secretary while the pourasabha unit body was led by Rokeya Begum, Tahmina Moslem and Wahida Begum as president, general secretary and organisational secretary.

Satkhira district Mahila Dal Convener Hossain Ara Ahmed opened the conference while Rashida Mirza presided over and Habibul Islam Habib, member of parliament (MP) was present there as chief guest.

Among others, Satkhira district BNP General Secretary Advocate Syed Iftekhar Ali, Abul Hasam Hadi, Nasim Farooq Khan, Chairman Shahidul Islam, Emmanuel Islam Sharif, Abdus Samad, Rokeya Akhtar, Ayesha Khatoon, Suruda Khatoon addressed the council.

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BDRCs city unit acting chairman Dr Shahadat Hossain presided over.



Helena Yasmin, Project Coordinator of Seba, a voluntary organisation in Manikganj, addressing a meeting organised to observe the International Mother Language Day at Baniajuri union in Manikganj on February 21.

Workshop on development

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A day long workshop on "Rule of Government, Civil Society and Development Organisation" was held at Kushtia Zila Parishad hall room on Tuesday.

Setu, a local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and a Dhaka-based development organisation named Alliance for Development Support and Co-operation (ADSC) jointly organised the workshop.

Setu Executive Director M A Kader was in the chair while ADSC Executive Director Shamsul Huda was special guest.

Abu Bakar Siddique, Executive Director of Anchal, a local NGO, presented the key-note.

The workshop was addressed, among others, by Mirpur College Assistant Professor Mohammad Mustafa, Islamic University Public Administration Research Fellow Amanur Aman, local NGO directors Nazrul Islam, Dewan Akhteruzzaman and Kushtia Community Development Library Coordinator Akthar Sultan.

Home minister tells Patuakhali Mohila Dal council

Trouble-mongers to face hard time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Home Minister Air Vice-Marshall (Rtd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said the elected government will complete its term to uphold constitutional process.

None has the right to dislodge a government which came to power with a massive people's mandate. The trouble mongers will not be allowed to create anarchy in the name of politics, he said while addressing a council of Patuakhali Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal, women's wing of ruling BNP.

"They (trouble mongers) were not allowed to come out of houses during the recent hartal, and will not be allowed in the February 28 hartal also", he said.

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon, State Minister for Culture Salima Rahman and BNP

lawmaker Shahidul Alom Talukar also addressed the council, held at the Shaheed Alauddin Children Park in the district town. It was presided over by Prof Laila Yasmineen, convenor of the party's district unit.

Home minister's wife Suraiya Akter Chowdhury, district BNP Vice-President Abdur Rashid Chunnu Mia, Jatiyatabadi Samajic Sanskrta Sanstha (Jasas) central secretary Abul Hossain Rana and central Mohila Dal leaders Shahriar Akter, Ferdousi Rahman, Ferd