



PHOTO: STAR

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote took out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad.

Barisal now free from violence: Mayor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal city mayor yesterday denied that there had been any attack on the motorcade of Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina during her visit to Barisal on February 26.

Barisal city is now free from violence and crimes, Mayor Majibur Rahman Sarwar said at a press conference at a local restaurant.

A group of agitated people who were the victims of repression during the previous AL regime broke the windowpanes of a car while Hasina was at the Circuit House, the mayor said.

This was an isolated incident and no BNP workers were involved in it, he added.

Sarwar said, "Hasina even went to hospital to visit the injured AL workers, but we could not find any such worker here."

He alleged that the previous AL regime patronised the criminals.

Barisal AL leaders who resorted to repression could not come back to their areas for fear of reprisals, he said, adding that the ruling party workers did not prevent them.

Boys end up as near-slaves at Dublar Char fish plants

PINAKI ROY, back from Dublar Char

They are aged between 7 and 15 but end up as virtual slaves when they migrate to Dublar Char near Sundarbans to work at the dry fish farms.

Hundreds of boys come from different parts of the country, some from as far as Chittagong, to earn some money for their poverty-stricken families.

They are often tortured and sexually harassed but have to stay there for five months during the peak fishing season once they join the work at Dublar Char (a group of islets) in the Bay of Bengal.

"Jainal Majhi (boatman) paid my parents Tk 3,000 when I came here with him. I will get an additional amount of Tk 2,000 when I go back to my parents at the end of five-month period," said Ibrahim who has been working at the dry fish farm of Shah Alam at Majher Char.

Nine-year-old Ibrahim, a student of class three at his village home at Tushkhali of Mothbaria in Barisal, quit the school about five months ago and headed towards Dublar Char along with some other boys to work at a dry fish plant.

The fishing season began on the first day of Bangla month Kartik (October) and the peak season lasts for five months (from mid-October to mid-March).

An estimated 10,000 boys like Ibrahim have been working in the fish plants at 13 chars—Office Killa, Majher Killa, Meher Ali Char, Alor Kol, Shehar Char, Narikel Bariya, Choto Aam Bariya, Baro Aam Bariya, Manik Khali, Kobar Khali, Chapra Khalir Char, Kokil Moni and Holdi Khali. Together they are known as Dublar Char.

From morning to evening, these boys sort out fishes and process them for drying.

"Sometime we have to work at midnight when the fishing boat return from the deep sea. We have to help unload the fishes from the boat," said Mohammad Ershad, 13, who hails from Banshikhali of Chittagong.

These boys are often harassed sexually by their seniors, locals said.

Generally the owners of the fish plants prefer child workers as their wages are much less than that of adult workers. So they engage the boatmen to collect chil-

dren. The boatmen also get a commission in return.

Sometimes, the children also come on their own as Ershad who came with his father to work here.

There are 13 fish processing plants in the Dublar Char. The entire area remains abuzz with activities during the peak season. Kitchen markets, grocery shops, barber's shops appeared again but only for five months.

The owners of the fish plants make new huts for the labourers and to store the dry fishes.

The government collects as much as Tk one crore in taxes from the fish plants every year.

PSA observes strike at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

The daylong strike, called by Progressive Students Alliance (PSA) in all educational institutions across the country to protest the attack on activists and general students of Dhaka University by police and JCD cadres on Wednesday, was observed peacefully at Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday.

Most of the students did not attend the classes on their own while a large number of teachers kept themselves away from taking classes to express their solidarity with the agitation.

JU unit of the PSA brought out a procession on the campus in the morning to drum up support for the strike.

A rally was also held. The speakers demanded removal of the home minister, and punishment to the police and JCD cadres who attacked the students.

They also demanded immediate release of all students arrested by the police and punishment to the culprits involved in the attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad.

Earlier, the PSA activists prevented the university buses from coming out of the campus to make the strike successful.

Shekor (Root), a cultural organisation, formed a human chain at the foot of Amar Ekushey in protest against the police attack.

Daylong bird fair at JU today

JU CORRESPONDENT

A daylong bird fair will be held on the campus of Jahangirnagar University (JU) today.

The fair has been organised jointly by JU Nature Club, Prothom Alo Bandhusava and Bangladesh Birds Club.

Police action on general students condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political organisations yesterday condemned the police action on general students at Dhaka University during demonstration on the campus protesting the attack on eminent writer Humayun Azad.

The organisations demanded resignation of the home minister and release of students arrested during the demonstration on Wednesday. They demanded arrest of the real culprits responsible for the attack on Azad.

The organisations are Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students Council, 11 Party, Awami Jubo League, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajantrik Dal (Inu), Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Smriti Sangrakkhon Sangsad and Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal.

Our CU correspondent adds: Left leaning student organisations in the port city yesterday also condemned the police action.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) district unit brought out a procession and held a rally at Shah Amanat roundabout in the city. Speakers at the rally demanded immediate resignation of the home minister.

The BCU will arrange a students-teachers-guardians rally on the local Press Club premises today.

Progressive Student Alliance (PSA), a conglomeration of three leftist student organisations, and Samajantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) also protested the attack and demanded release of their arrested leaders.

President assents to Bar Council (Amend) Bill

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday assented to The Bangladesh Legal Practitioners and Bar Council (Amendment) Bill, 2004.

The bill was passed by the eighth parliament in its current (11th) session, says an official release.

JICA indicates to continue scholarship programme

UNB, Dhaka

A two-member JICA Study Team has expressed satisfaction at "Japanese Development Scholarship (JDS) on Human Resource Development" and indicated to continue the programme in Bangladesh.

The team led by Masayuki Nakamura, Deputy Director of Grant Aid Division of Japanese Foreign Ministry, showed the indication after meetings with concerned government officials and visiting first two JDS-fellows who returned home after completing programme on Information Communication Technology.

The Japanese team arrived here on Monday to monitor JDS programme and a Minutes of Meeting in this regard was signed yesterday at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) between the two governments, says a press release.

Both sides confirmed their commitments to take positive action about the follow-up activities for the former JDS fellows.

"Japanese Development Scholarship" was introduced in 2001, with the opportunities to students from recipient countries to study at universities and other higher educational institutions in Japan for helping them in building their human network.

Under the programme, 70 fellows have so far been selected (from fiscal year 2000-2003) to study for Masters Degree in the fields of Law, Public Administration, Economics, International Relations and ICT.

JAABS website inaugurated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The activities of Jahangirnagar Alumni Association of Business Students (JAABS) were inaugurated on Wednesday in the city with the slogan 'Creating value through synergy'.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) Bangladesh Chapter, inaugurated the activities of the association by opening the JAABS website at the Russian Cultural Centre.

He said the students will have to prepare themselves to face the new rules of World Trade Organisation after 2005.

Presided over by JAABS President Towfiq-e-Elahi, the function was also addressed by Dean of the social science faculty Prof. Sheikh Monjurul Haq and JAABS General Secretary Sabrina Chowdhury.

In the second half of the function, election was held to form a new executive committee. Nazmur Rahim Sumon and Rajibul Karim were elected president and vice-president respectively.

The function was rounded off with a cultural programme.

Nets worth Tk 29.30 lakh seized

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Coast Guard members in separate drives seized banned nets and liquor worth Tk 30.16 lakh from different coastal areas on Wednesday.

Some 2.72 lakh metres current nets and 11 other kinds of fishing nets worth Tk 29.30 lakh were seized from the coastal areas of Chandpur, Mohonpur,

Nilkomol and Char Sakina, Nissanbaria, Laldiarchar, Patharghata and Asherchar of Patuakhali district.

In another raid, they seized 73 bottles of liquor worth Tk 86,000 from nearby area of Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport.

The seized liquor was handed over to the local customs office, says a Coast Guard press release yesterday.

KCC employees observe token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna City Corporation (KCC) employees yesterday observed a two-hour token hunger strike at Shaheed Hadis Park to protest grenade attack on Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman on Sunday.

Later, leaders of Employees Union and Ward Commissioners Welfare Association at a rally reiterated their programme of greater movement after expiry of 72-hour ultimatum today.



PHOTO: STAR

Agitated students from Humayun Azad Manch damaged a video camera of a Detective Branch (DB) man near the Teacher-Student Centre on Dhaka University campus yesterday.



Gaziul Hasan made chief editor of BSS

BSS, Dhaka

The government has appointed journalist Gaziul Hasan as the Managing Director and Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Khan made his debut in the profession as a reporter of the then Eastern News Agency (ENA) in the wake of the Liberation War. Earlier, he was associated with different newspapers while he was doing his masters in economics and higher diploma in journalism in Dhaka University.

In 1976 Khan went to London with a Commonwealth scholarship to study journalism and later obtained a higher diploma on international relations from London University.

During this period he got himself involved with the BBC Radio broadcasting and later was appointed as senior editor of London-based World Times.



Participants at the inaugural ceremony of Jahangirnagar Alumni Association of Business Studies held at the Russian Cultural Centre in the city on Wednesday.