

'Don't treat us as ornaments in parliament'

Women's rights activists reject ruling party's proposal for 45 women MPs, demand direct election

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha.

Women's rights activists yesterday rejected the ruling party's proposal to raise the number of women members of parliament to 45 and demanded direct election for women representatives.

They also demanded a "local number of seats" for women in parliament, to be elected by people.

"We don't want to be ornaments in parliament, we like to be elected by people," said Anjum Naheed Chowdhury, Programme Manager of Gano Unnayan Kendro.

The activists were addressing a press conference at Gaibandha Press Club, jointly organised by some NGOs here.

It was also addressed by Shireen Akhter Liza, Associate Programme Officer of Gaibandha Unnayan Network and Jaharul Kaiyem, Convenor of Samajik Uddokta Dal. Representatives of Steps Towards Development also attended the press conference.

The NGOs later on the day organised a human chain in the town.

Anjum Naheed claimed that the

two major political parties promised direct election of women members of parliament through people's vote. But once in power, they forget their commitment and try to utilise women members in parliament to retain power, she said.

She castigated the ruling BNP for its proposal to place a bill in parliament to raise the number of women MPs to 45.

"It is for retaining power only as the 45 women members will be distributed among parties as per their strength (in parliament).

"It is a mockery of women's rights", she said.

Shireen Akhter said the women-folk in Bangladesh is being deprived in every field. They become victims of violence but they can not raise their voice as they are not elected by people and their number is few in parliament. She asserted that if direct election for women parliament members is allowed, the number will increase many times than it is now.

It is a political decision to be taken by the political parties, she added. Once their number increases in parliament, their voices will be louder and much of the social



A partial view of the human chain formed by women's rights activists at Gaibandha yesterday demanding direct election of women members of parliament.

curse will disappear, she said. This will also hasten social and economic development.

The speakers termed selection of women members of parliament an

insult to the women community. Huge amounts of money is being spent in budgets for women's education. But this has little impact on women's empowerment, they said.

RIVER DIVERSION PLAN

Fact-finding mission to study adverse effect in Bangladesh

BSS, Dhaka

A fact-finding mission to Kansat in Chapainawabganj is being organised by the Citizens Fact-finding Commission to study the adverse effect of diversion of rivers at upstream in India on March 16.

The visit is being organised against the backdrop of Indian mega plan to inter-link the Himalayan rivers leaving the economy, ecology and livelihood in Bangladesh in tatters.

The citizens commission representing about 20 organisations of environmentalists, journalists and human rights activists will make down to earth rapid investigation to bring to the notice of people what adverse impacts diversion of rivers causes to life and livelihood of people who live at downstream of rivers in Bangladesh.

The trip involving the participation of several thousand people will begin from the National Press Club, Dhaka at 6 am on March 16. The participants will have interactions with citizens of Rajshahi who are also sufferers of diversion of water of the Ganges, at Rajshahi Madrassah ground at 12 noon.

The convoy of citizens commission will set off for Kansat from Rajshahi at 2 pm. After having interaction with farmers, fishermen, boatmen, businessmen and elite of the area, the citizens will return to Rajshahi at 7 in the evening.

PM visits Mymensingh today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will pay a visit to Dhubaura in Mymensingh today, district administration sources said.

On arrival at Dhubaura by helicopter at noon the prime minister will lay the foundation of Jagrakhal bridge. She will then address in a public meeting organised by the Four-party Alliance on the Mohammadia Dakil Madrassah premises.

Mysterious disease claims 4 lives in Faridpur

BSS, Faridpur

A mysterious disease having symptoms of high fever and shivering has claimed four lives so far at Mallikpur village.

Rabeya Khatun, 50, and Hazera Khatun, 50, died on Saturday while Rafiza Khatun, 55, and Rafique Molla, 36, died on March 6, according to Faridpur Medical College (FMC) sources.

Five persons identified as Shirin, 50, Maziron, 40, Hasin, 36, Manju, 29, and Mokhtar Sheikh, 35, of the village are undergoing treatment at the medical college, Faridpur General Hospital and Madhukhali Upazila Hospital.

14 years' RI for keeping illegal arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A man was sentenced to suffer 14 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) for keeping illegal arms on Saturday.

The convict is Selim, son of Amir Ali Gazi of Atulia village in Shyamnagar upazila, court sources said.

Police arrested him from Mahkhola bazaar in Sadar upazila on June 2, 2002 and recovered three pipe guns.

Save Kaliganga from pollution

Villagers march streets, submit memo to Manikganj DC

CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

People of Manikganj pourashava brought out a procession in the district town and held a rally in front of Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office yesterday demanding steps to protect Kaliganga river from pollution by industrial waste.

With Nur Mohammad Master in the chair, the rally was addressed by, among others, Iqbal Hossain Khan, Afjal Hossain Khan Joki, advocate Sakhawat Hossain, Nabagram Union Parishad (UP) ex-chairman advocate Nazrul Islam Badsha, Garpara UP ex-

chairman Hasibur Rahman Selim, Habibur Rahman Swapan and Mir Jahid Hossain.

The speakers said the river water is being contaminated by waste from a textile mill at Gilondo village in the Sadar upazila. The mill set up eight years ago has no waste management plant, they said.

Nearly 600,000 people of 30 village on the banks of the river are facing serious crisis of water. They can not even bathe in the river, not to speak of using the water for cooking and other use because it has turned almost black due to

pollution, the speakers said.

All varieties of fish in the 10-kilometre stretch of the river in the area are disappearing and hundreds of fishermen have become unemployed.

Many people in the area have been attacked with various chronic diseases after using the water, they claimed.

Later they submitted a memorandum to Manikganj DC demanding steps within 48 hours to check the pollution. Otherwise, a tough agitation programme will be announced, the memorandum said.



The narrow stream of dying Kaliganga (left) is unusable and people marching Manikganj streets yesterday demanding steps to stop its pollution.



PHOTO: STAR

Abduction bid foiled in Barisal court area, 2 beaten by mob

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two persons were beaten by a mob on the Barisal magistrate court compound on Sunday when they tried to snatch two persons accused in a case.

Those beaten are Parimal Chandra Pal, Nalchhity upazila fishery extension officer in Jhalakati district and Laden Tarek, a BNP activist and alleged drug peddler, police and witnesses said.

After the incident Laden Tarek

filed a case with Kotwali thana against some lawyers including TM Yunus office secretary of Barisal district Awami league and former president of Barisal Bar. Other named in the case are Majibor, Manjur, Delwara Munshi and Delwar Hossain Dilu, all leaders of Awami Ainjibi Parishad.

Police said Parimal and Laden Tarek tried to snatch Gopal and Milon, accused in a case for allegedly stealing Parimal's mobile phone, ornaments and money.

Gopal and Milon had gone to

a magistrate court in Barisal on Sunday to conform a bail granted to them by the High Court in the case.

As they were preparing to appear before the magistrate court, Parimal and Laden Tarek tried to snatch them from the lawyers.

Hearing the hue and cry, their lawyers and others came and foiled the bid and beat Parimal and Laden Tarek. Some of the lawyers were also injured in the incident.

SNAPS

Wife burnt to death by husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A housewife was burnt to death allegedly by her husband at Bagha char village in Singair upazila on Sunday.

The victim is Shanaj Begum, 20, daughter of Alfaquddin of the village. She died while being taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital.

Victim's father Alfaquddin filed a case against Shanaj's husband Hashem with Singair Police Station.

One dies, 15 hurt in Habiganj clash

A CORRESPONDENT, Habiganj

One person was killed and 15 were injured, two of them critically in a clash between two rival groups of villagers at Togli village in Bahubal upazila on Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahim, 75. His sons Saru Mia, 50, and Salek Mia, 35, were admitted to Habiganj Sadar Hospital with critical injuries. Other injured were admitted to Bahubal hospital.

No case was filed till filing of the report on Sunday afternoon.

Human chain by disabled in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Several hundred disabled people under the banner of Trainomul Pratibondhi Sangathan formed a human chain here on Sunday.

The disabled were demanding speedy trial of culprits who raped a 22-year-old physically handicapped woman on December 15, 2003.

Osman Molla, 40, son of late Afiluddin of the same village dragged her behind a mosque and raped her.

The incident created resentment among local people.

However, police arrested the accused on February 11.

But the rape victim and her mother are being threatened by an influential circle in the area to withdraw the case or 'face eviction,' the victim told this correspondent at the local ADD office on Sunday.



Usha Rani's Sraddha held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Sraddha, a ritual of late Usha Rani Goswami, mother of The Daily Star district correspondent Rajat Kanti Goswami and wife of a retired journalist of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Radhika Mohan Goswami was held at her Moulvibazar residence on March 1.

A 24-hour (Ashta Prohor) 'Nama Kirtan' was also held in her memory on March 3.

Relatives, well-wishers, journalists, businessmen, different professionals and government officials attended the Sraddha.

Makeup - 3

Shaheed Capt Bashar Gate ready for Mar 26 opening

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Finishing touches are being given to the Shaheed Captain Bashar Gate at Nilphamari and it will be inaugurated on the Independence Day.

Octogenarian mother of Shaheed Captain Bashar, Begum Rizia Ahmed, will inaugurate the mausoleum.

It has been constructed to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of freedom fighter Captain R A M Khairul Bashar for the country's independence. He fought in Sector No 2 during the Liberation War. His mortal remains could not be traced.

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon will be present during the inauguration ceremony.

Milon on Saturday visited the gate constructed in front of Moshir Rahman College at the entrance of Nilphamari town on the Nilphamari-Syedpur highway.

He inquired about progress of work and asked officials and others concerned to complete it well ahead of the Independence Day.

The mausoleum is being built by Nilphamari Zila Parishad.

Milon, who designed the gate after the Savar National Mausoleum, asked the officials to tastefully decorate it.

They mausoleum is already drawing large crowds every day. It will not only uphold the dignity of martyred freedom fighters but also enhance beauty of the town.

Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner, Police Superintendent and Zila Parishad engineers were present during the visit.

PSTU VC resigns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) Prof Dr AKM Abdul Hannan Bhuiyan tendered his resignation to the Education Ministry on Sunday.

He resigned in face of an agitation by teachers, students, officials and staff for two months. After his resignation students brought out a victory procession on the campus.

However, Acting VC and Treasurer Prof Dr Abdul Latif Masum told the journalists that he is yet to receive official letter of the ministry.



State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon (with a paper in hand) inspecting the progress in construction of Shaheed Capt Bashar Memorial Gate in Nilphamari town on Saturday.

ICS activists beaten by JCD at Barisal polytech

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Newly elected vice-president of Barisal Polytechnic Institute Students' Union Masum Sheikh, general secretary Al-Amin and assistant general secretary Reazul Karim belonging to Islami Chharta Shibir (ICS) were assaulted and injured by defeated Jatiotabadi Chharta Dal activists at their dormitories on Friday.

The JCD men also ransacked their rooms, searched some other rooms and chased ICS supporters.

Injured ICS supporters Sohel Rana, Russel Ahmed and Mehedi of Mechanical Department were sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, SBMCH. The JCD activists also drove away ICS worker Md Ilias from the campus and forced him to pack up for home.

In the students union election held in Thursday, ICS bagged 11 out of 18 posts while JCD got 8.

A tense situation is prevailing on the campus.

Sluice gate being built in Satkhira by illegally cutting WDB embankment

4,000 bighas of land to go under water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A sluice gate is being constructed illegally by cutting Water Development Board's embankment on Kholpetna river at Khalishabunia in Shyamnagar upazila.

About 4000 bighas of shrimp enclosures will be inundated if the sluice gate is constructed at that point, local people claimed while talking to this correspondent recently. They urged the authorities concerned to stop the construction.

They said one Bappi of Khulna is constructing the sluice gate at polder No. 15 without the authorities' permission.

Earth has been removed from a

sizeable portion of the WDB embankment and bricks, sand and cement have been taken there for the construction work.

The local people alleged that Bappi has collected a handsome amount of money from a few owners of shrimp enclosures assuring them supply of saline water for shrimp cultivation. Once the sluice gate is completed and saline water supplied, 4000 bighas of shrimp enclosures will go under water, they said.

The local people also held demonstrations protesting the illegal move and urged the officials concerned to take take action, but to no effect, they said.

There are croplands in the area, which will also reel under saline water, they said.



Earth has been removed from WDB dam at Khalishabunia. Brick, cement and sand have been piled up for construction of a sluice gate there.

PHOTO: STAR