



Awami League organises road march from Bahadurshah Park of the old city to Cen-Tra Shaheed Minar yesterday demanding resignation of the government.

SHRIMP CULTURE 'Ecologically suicidal, economically unjust'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shrimp culture is ecologically suicidal, socially impoverishing and economically unjust, said the speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They said saline water for shrimp cultivation has not only destroyed the fertility of agricultural land but also damaged the bio-diversity and shrunk traditional poultry breeding.

The two-day workshop on 'Terrorism-based trade, Democracy and Rights of the Poor' was organised by Nijera Kori, an NGO for rural development, at the WVA auditorium in the city.

Prof. Abul Barkat of Dhaka University presented a paper on 'Commercial shrimp culture, imperiled ecology and rights of the poor' at the opening session.

In the paper, he explored how salinity and terror inflicted by owners of the gher (enclosed shrimp culture ground) in the south-west region, have deprived the marginal people of their livelihood by displacing them from their ancestral homesteads.

"Due to various malpractice in commercial shrimp culture, the land-less people have also lost their right to Khas land," said Prof Barkat.

Two crore people of 15 districts in the country's coastal area have become the victims of this unjust economy, he added.

Prof Barkat said shrimp culture occupied 20,000 hectares of land in

1979-80 while a total of 410,000 hectares of land came under this business in 1996-97.

He said a shrimp gher owner earns a net profit of Tk 200, 000 per acre of land whereas a marginal farmer, who owns the land, gets Tk 4 to 6 thousand.

Rahela Begum, who came from Khulna to take part in the workshop, said, "The crop field has lost fertility because of shrimp culture which thrives on labour exploitation, muscle power and terrorism."

"Women workers at the shrimp processing plants are subjected to serious health hazards and inhuman working conditions," said Dr. Sadeka Halim of Dhaka University.

"As contractual labourers, these women often do not get wages month after month but they cannot raise their voices as the shrimp traders are highly influential," she said.

Prof. ABM Faruk of Dhaka University said 32 percent of the country's people depend on medicinal plants for treatment but salinity in the shrimp breeding grounds has wiped out these plants in Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira regions.

Prof. Ahmed Kamal of Dhaka University presided over the session attended by 65 participants including 42 land-less people, seven journalists and five lawyers.

Direct election to reserved seats a must for empowerment of women

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties and women rights organisations at a roundtable yesterday demanded direct election to the seats reserved for women in the Jatiya Sangsad to ensure true representation of women in parliament.

Without direct election to the reserved seats, dynamic leadership from the women community will not be established, the participants told the roundtable organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad to mark its 34th founding anniversary at CIRDAP auditorium.

Gono Forum General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik said that without increasing women's participation in politics, empowerment of women would never be possible.

"After the fall of autocratic ruler in 1990, we thought that democracy would get an institutional shape," Manik said. Without direct election to the seats reserved for women, democracy will never be strengthened as indirect election is an impediment to the dynamic leadership, he added.

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said that if the women community was not encouraged through reserved seats, they would never be able to come at forefront of the politics.

"Those who believe in democracy can never ignore the importance of direct election to the seats reserved for women for their empowerment," Selim said.

Direct election is a matter of principle as it will create true leadership from women community, he added.

Mahila Parishad General Secretary Ayesha Khanom said it is a matter of regret that the government has ignored the demand for direct election though it promised to hold direct election to the reserved seats if voted to power.

"The women community constitutes not only half of voters but also plays an important role in country's economy," Ayesha Khanom said. If women are elected through indirect election, they can not act effectively, she added.

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khosru told the roundtable that without true representation of women parliamentary system could not function effectively.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)

President Hasanul Hoq Inu said the direct election to the reserved seats is important for the empowerment of women.

to ensuring women's rights, he added.

Columnist ABM Musa said women would not be able to play effective role under the existing parliamentary system. He said pressure has to be put on political parties so that they nominate women as their candidates in parliamentary elections.

Presided over by Mahila Parishad President Hena Das, the roundtable was also addressed by the Bangladesh Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Somnilita Samajik Andolon President Ajoy Roy, CPB President Monjurul Ahsan Khan and women activists.



Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organises a roundtable on the occasion of its 34th founding anniversary at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

Death threat to 3 BNP leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The Banglar Communist Party (BCP), an outlawed organisation, leader has given death threat to three local BNP leaders in Chuadanga.

In a message faxed to local newspaper offices on Saturday night, one Uttam claiming himself as a regional leader of the underground outfit, declared the death penalty for them.

The leaders are Damurhuda upazila BNP Secretary Zahurul Islam, former Chuadanga district BNP treasurer and Damurhuda upazila chairman Liaqat Ali and Natipola union BNP Secretary Manzurul Karim.

2 AL activists slaughtered in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two Awami League (AL) activists were killed in two separate incidents in Jhenidah on Friday and Saturday.

According to police, a gang of 12 armed men belonging to outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) stormed into the house of Bakul Hossain, 45, at Higli village under Harinakundu upazila in the early hours of Friday and picked him up at gunpoint.

The miscreants took Bakul to a nearby field and slaughtered him there.

In another incident, unidentified assailants slaughtered Subhash Chandra Poddar, 35, who took part in last union parishad election as a member candidate.

Police said the gang killed Subhash when he went to see his paddy field at Beledari at about 11.00pm on Saturday.

Victim's family told the police that

Subhash had a long dispute with some local people over a land. The rivals earlier threatened him with dire consequences.

Police suspect the killing as a sequel to that enmity and arrested one Tofazzel Hossain in this connection.

Two separate cases were filed with the police stations.

Obituary



Jaliur Rahman Chowdhury, former managing director of Janata Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, died of cardiac arrest at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University yesterday at the age 64.

He was also the director general of Bangladesh Institute of Bankers and active member of Dhaka, Chittagong and Comilla Club.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Baitul Mukkaram National Mosque after Isha prayers. His body was sent to his village home in Comilla for burial.

His qulhwani will be held at his village home on April 9 after Asr prayers.

He left behind his wife, three sons, three daughters and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

Tiny scientist's fair at Methodist

Methodist English Medium School (MEMS), a serene home of schooling of hundreds of children of the greater areas of Mirpur at Mazar Road organised an annual scientific programme titled "Annual Science Fair 2004" on April 3, says a press release.

At the fair students at large gave their textual scientific knowledge experimented in the school's science laboratory guided by the teachers. Students from each class put in their effort in making individual and group projects. Students from Standard 2-9 presented the projects in their classrooms.

Characteristically the programme encouraged the tiny tots to invent and exhibit projects like Windmill, Periscope, Arsenic Remover, Rocket Power, Microscope, Nitrogen Cycle of Life, Stick the Super Computer, Burglar Alarm etc.

In their earnest obsession and with the care of the teachers, the event branded these small wonders in the real recognition and made them true champions in their toiling effort. Three judges did a prestigious job of judging and selecting the best performances. Sudhir Adhikary, a scientist, Sohona Tabassum, YLC of the British Council and Nafid Imran Ahmed, IT Strategist and IT Page In-charge of The Daily Star assisted by the Principal Richard Tapas Adhikary were among the panel of judges. MEMS Board of BMCT also gave its guidance and was present on the occasion.

DHAKA TODAY

Drama festival
As part of the weeklong drama festival of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Kathak Natyadal of Thakurgaon will stage a drama titled 'Natok Dadon Chakra'. Venue: Theatre hall of the academy, Segun Bagicha. Time: 6.00pm.

Film show
Rainbow Film Society, in association with Goethe Institut, will screen three films titled 'Traversees' by Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud (1982), 'The First Night' by Luis Alberto Restrepo (2003) and 'Jacobina' by Fabio Barreto (2002). Venue: German Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.00pm.

Indian film show
The High Commission of India will organise the screening of a film titled 'Mr. And Mrs. Iyer'. Venue: Indian Cultural Centre, Gulshan-2.

Movie show
Academy Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Kill Bill Volume 1' (2003). Venue: Society auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Painting exhibition
The opening ceremony of an exhibition of prints and paintings by Jean-Pierre Tingaud will be held with Prof Anisuzzaman to inaugurate. Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.00pm. The exhibition will remain open until April 25 from 11.00am to 9.00pm daily.

Prize giving ceremony
The annual prize giving ceremony of Ahmed Bawani Academy School and College will be held with City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: Academy premises, Armanitola. Time: 10.00am.

Discussion
Narigrantha Prabartana organises an opinion sharing discussion on direct election to reserved seats for women in parliament. Venue: Sir Syed Road, Mohammadpur. Time: 4.00pm.

Lecture
Darul Ihsan University organises a lecture on 'Moral values and present world' with Prof. Aminul Islam of Dhaka University as guest speaker. Venue: Iranian Cultural Centre. Time: 4.00pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Drama festival
As part of the weeklong drama festival of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Laxminarayanpur Theatre of Noakhali will stage a drama titled 'Ijjat'. Venue: Theatre hall of the academy, Segun Bagicha. Time: 6.00pm.

Film show
Academy Film Society will screen an Iranian film titled 'Taste of Cherry' (1998). Venue: Society auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Publication ceremony
The Association for Land Reform and Development organises the publication ceremony of a book titled 'Abhivasan, Bhumi Bichhinnata O Jatigata Danda: Parbatya Chattagram Daridratar Karan' and a roundtable with Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan as chief guest. Venue: YWCA auditorium, Mohammadpur. Time: 3.00pm.

BNP meeting
A meeting of Dhaka city unit of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will be held with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: Mohanagar Natya Mancha, Gulistan. Time: 5.00pm.



Sudhir Adhikary, third from left and Sohona Tabassum, second from left, visit student projects of the science fair at Methodist English Medium School.