



Projonmer Chetona forms a human chain in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding judicial investigation into the incidents of bomb attacks in Sylhet.

COMPULSORY REGISTRATION

Book publishers, sellers give 10-day ultimatum to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers' Association yesterday gave a 10-day ultimatum to the government to withdraw notices asking for compulsory registration of bookshops under the Value Added Tax (VAT) Act.

Otherwise, the bookshop owners will keep the shutters down in Dhaka city on August 22, said the association leaders at a press conference.

They also warned that the association would enforce a countrywide strike for indefinite period if the issue is not settled.

Although book publishers, importers and sellers have been kept out of the VAT net, the Customs, Excise and VAT office at Sutrapur issued registration notices to most members of the association on May 29, the leaders said terming it a violation of law.

"The VAT office has repeatedly issued notices asking for declaration and threatened to collect VAT from us under the law," said association Chairman Md Abu Taher.

But the notice did not mention any specific law under which the

VAT would be collected, he added.

"We even contacted the VAT office and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for clarification but they could not give any satisfactory reply," said Taher.

Md Faisal, an importer, alleged that the customs officials have seized many imported books for non-payment of VAT.

"They are now harassing the book importers by imposing VAT on the books imported during 2000-2003," he added.

He also alleged that the customs offices in the ports never issued any notice, but they were asking for VAT verbally.

The association leaders said imposing VAT on book publication, sales and import would seriously hamper the education of the students.

No countries impose tax or VAT on books in line with the Unesco Charter, said Md Osman Goni, director of the association.

Even the traders in the Saarc countries do not pay any tax or VAT for publishing, selling or importing books, he added.

Chinese aid for flood victims

UNB, Dhaka

China will provide Bangladesh 1 lakh US dollar in cash and relief commodities worth about Tk 5.1 crore (RMB 7 million) for flood rehabilitation programme.

A certification of exchange note was signed between the two governments here on August 9 in this regard. Chinese Charge de' Affairs Duan Zhiqun and Secretary of the Food and Disaster Management Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury inked the note on behalf of their respective sides, says a Chinese Embassy News Bulletin.

After the signing ceremony, Chinese Charge de' Affairs handed over a cheque for 1 lakh US dollars to Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf.

Indian HC medical camp from today

BSS, Dhaka

The High commission of India will launch a week-long medical relief camp at Vatara Union Parishad, Baridhara, Notun Bazar and Badda from today.

The camp will provide free medicare services to the flood victims of the city in association with the State Bank of India and the India Association, a High Commission press release said.

High Commissioner Veena Sikri will inaugurate the camp at 10.00 am today in presence of State Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Qamrul Islam.

Edn materials for mentally challenged students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

CityCell, a leading cellular phone service provider, donated education materials to mentally challenged students of the Chittagong Institute for Intellectually Disabled (CIID) at Zakir Hossain Road in the port city yesterday.

The CIID is one of the 30 institutes across the country, run by the Society for the Welfare of Intellectually Disabled (SWID), Bangladesh.

Shovon Mahboob Shahabuddin, general manager of CityCell, Chittagong, handed over the education materials to Md Moslem, president of SWID, Chittagong branch.

SWID President MA Baten, CityCell Media Consultant Shawkat Mahmud and Senior Executive (marketing) Tania Mahbub were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Shovon Mahboob said CityCell has long been trying to improve the quality of life of all in the society under its community programme, 'CityCell Changing Lives'.

Md Moslem said the SWID started its activities in Chittagong in 1981 and established the school in its own land. At present, the CIID has 100 mentally challenged students.

MA Baten said the SWID has rehabilitated about 1400 disabled children since 1977. It also has trained about 1500 teachers.

Obituary

Prof. Dr Jahan Ara Begum, former head of the department of chemistry of Eden College, died of brain haemorrhage on August 8, says a press release.

She was buried at her family graveyard in Habiganj.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Serajul Islam, executive vice-president of United Commercial Bank, will be held at PC Culture Mosque at Shaker Tek, Mohammedpur in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

REPRESSION ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

'Bring culprits to justice'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded punishment to the criminals involved in the post-election attacks on the religious minorities in 2001.

They said the minorities, especially the Hindus, suffered a lot in the wake of general election as armed cadres of ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami looted and set fire to their houses and violated girls and women.

The South Asian People's Union against Fundamentalism and Communalism organised the discussion in the city, with Prof Kabir Chowdhury in the chair.

Barrister Amir-ul Islam said the government has no respect for human rights; it had just turned a blind eye to the repression of minorities.

The government does not even respect the views of the opposition parties, he added.

On bomb attacks in Sylhet, he said investigation into every attack was conducted with a political point of view.

Justice KM Sobhan said a sense of

insecurity has gripped the people as human rights are being trampled systematically.

"Supporters of the Awami League across the country and the religious minorities, in particular, were harassed after the general election but the criminals escaped justice," he said.

Justice Sobhan also said fundamentalism has taken a deep root in the country with active support from the administration.

Fundamentalists are now targeting those who believe in progressive causes and speak in favour of secularism, he said.

Prof. Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir called on the progressive political parties to unite to combat fundamentalism.

President of Mahila Parishad Hena Das, Prof Ajoy Roy and writer Shahriar Kabir also spoke.

A documentary titled 'Let us live our lives' was also screened at the programme. Shahriar Kabir made the documentary depicting the repression the minorities have suffered after the general election.

APPOINTMENT OF DU TEACHERS

Irregularities alleged

DU CORRESPONDENT

Blue Panel teachers of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday made allegations of irregularities in appointment of teachers during a meeting with Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz.

They also requested the VC to convene a meeting of selection committee to recruit teachers at the departments of peace and conflict studies and political science immediately, said Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, president of Dhaka University Teachers Association (Duta), after the meeting.

He said the authorities have postponed appointment of teachers at peace and conflict studies department four times. At present, the department has only two teachers.

The authorities have also postponed the selection of teachers for political science department, which was scheduled for August 10, although they advertised for teachers more than one and a half years ago, he added.

The selection process at the department of Islamic history and culture has

also remained stalled for more than one year, said the Duta president.

He said the selection of teachers for the political science department has been postponed as one candidate expressed his inability to appear in the viva voce because of floods, but the teachers have rejected such plea.

Prof Harun-or Rashid, dean of social science faculty, said they informed the VC about irregularities in appointment of teachers and politicisation of the process.

The authorities have been buying time to recruit teachers at the political science and peace and conflict studies departments as they were trying to drop the brilliant candidates who do not subscribe to their ideology, said a teacher seeking anonymity.

The teachers' delegation also urged the VC to hold the election of syndicate members soon. "The VC assured that the syndicate election will be held this month," said the Duta president.

Duta General Secretary Prof Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman was also present at the meeting.



Sammilita Ainjibi Samannaya Parishad forms a human chain on the Supreme Court Bar Association premises in the city yesterday demanding quick disposal of the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

12-point demand for flood-affected working people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF) yesterday placed a 12-point demand to the government for flood-affected working people of different trades.

The demands included three months' salary as grant and interest-free loan for the workers.

At a press conference in the city, the federation leaders called for waiving previous loans for the farmers, weavers, and fishermen and sanction new loans for their rehabilitation.

They also urged the government to issue Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards among the distressed workers, farmers and day labourers in flood-hit areas.

BSSF President Muklesur Rahman urged the government to take necessary steps to control the price of daily essentials.

BSSF General Secretary Mokaddem Hossain called for ensuring food, pure drinking water and medicine in flood-affected areas.

Thirty lakh workers lost their job as 20 thousand industries were destroyed by the floods, said the federation.

More than 37 lakh farmers were affected and 59 thousand-ton crops damaged, it added.

Flood has also destroyed fish resources worth TK 991 crore and weaving materials worth TK 139 crore, claimed the federation.

BHASANTEK REHABILITATION PROJECT

Bank stops selling forms, receiving money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agrani Bank has stopped selling forms and receiving money for Bhasantek Rehabilitation Project for slum dwellers and low-income groups following the reported allegations of corruption against the developer.

The bank on Tuesday asked its 30 branches in the city and all the branches at district headquarters not to sell any form and receive money from people until further order, sources said.

Bank General Manger Abu Sadek Mohammad Sohel, in a letter to the land ministry, has also sought further direction in this regard.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on land ministry and the North-South Property Development Ltd (NSDL), which is to implement the project, have traded allegation of violating their jurisdictions.

The parliamentary body accused the NSDL of selling forms and receiving money without the approval of the ministry.

It said the NSDL has violated several provisions of the agreement signed between the company and the ministry on the implementation of the project.

The parliamentary body also asked the land ministry to probe the allegations. It decided to discuss the matter at its next meeting slated for September 2.

On the other hand, the NSDL denied the allegation saying it has not violated any provision of the agreement.

It also accused the parliamentary body of violating its jurisdiction to make a statement asking people not to buy forms and deposit money for the project.

"The statement of the parliamentary body has damaged the image of our company. We consider the direction of the parliamentary standing committee as illegal," said Abdur Rahim, chairman and managing director of the NSDL, in a statement.

Being approved by the planning commission, the land ministry signed an agreement with the NSDL on September 29 last year to implement the Tk 347 crore project.

Under the project, 15,024 flats would be built for slum dwellers and low-income groups.



Two mentally challenged students perform dance at a ceremony on the occasion of handing over of education materials for the students of Chittagong Institute for Intellectually Disabled (CIID) yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over the country till 6.00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and the lowest 24.8 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:34pm today and rises at 5:33am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.4	26.3	71	93
Chittagong	32.0	25.2	79	77
Rajshahi	32.8	26.0	81	77
Khulna	31.0	26.1	81	93
Barisal	31.0	25.8	75	92
Sylhet	35.4	26.3	76	53
Cox's Bazar	29.3	24.9	92	92

DHAKA TODAY

Launch

The United Nations launches international appeal for Bangladesh flood relief and recovery. Venue: IDB Bhaban, Agargaon. Time: 3.00pm.

Art exhibition

The inauguration of a five-day-long art exhibition, organised by Bangladesh Charu Shilpi Sangsad to raise fund for flood victims, will be held. Venue: Gallery Chitrak, House-21, Road-4, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.00pm.

Cultural function

The Chayanika, a socio-cultural forum, organises a cultural function in aid of the flood-affected people. Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy Auditorium. Time: 6.00pm.

Musical night

The Muldhara, a forum of writers, journalists and artists, organises a musical night where radio, TV and stage performers will take part to raise fund for flood victims. Venue: House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 9.00pm.

Discussion

Awami Swachchhabok League will hold a discussion to mark the 29th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Venue: Institution of Engineers. Time: 4.00pm.

Memorial meeting

Kendrio Khela Ghar will hold a discussion in memory of veteran journalist Santosh Gupta. Venue: Liberation War Museum, Segun Bagicha. Time: 5.00pm.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen an Indian film titled 'Hum Tum' (2004) and an American film titled 'The Freshman' (1998). Venue: Society Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

Fire performance

NAUR fire spinners, a group who specialise in fire performance, organises an open and free for all event. Venue: Amphitheatre beside the Dhanmondi Lake. Time: 5.30pm.

Seminar

A seminar on 'Youth poverty: Present context and future dimension', organised by Alliance for Development Support and Cooperation, will be held.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Drama

The Palakar, a studio theatre, will stage a drama titled 'Mritika Kumari'. Venue: 32/A, Dilu Road. Time: 7.00pm.

Documentary show

Spectra Group will screen a documentary film titled 'Murang Marsa'. The film is based on the life of Murang community. Venue: House-19, Road-7, Gulshan-1. Time: 10.30am.

Muldhara film show

The Muldhara, a forum of writers, journalists and artists, will screen two films titled 'Gayab' and 'Fahrenheit 9/11'. Venue: House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

Academy film show

Academy Film Society will screen two American films titled 'The Godfather' (1971) and 'The Missing' (2002). Venue: Society Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman speaks at a seminar on "Technological change in media and news editing" organised by Dhaka Sub-Editors' Council at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Bhorer Kagoj Editor Abed Khan and on his left are Dhaka Sub-Editors' Council President Kaikubad Milon, BFUJ Secretary General Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul and Dhaka Sub-Editors' Council General Secretary Shah Muhammad Mutasim Billah.