

DEC 30 HUMAN WALL Opposition rallies in Sunamganj, Mongla today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mainstream opposition parties will hold two combined rallies at Sunamganj and Mongla today to mobilise people's support for the December 30 cross-country human wall from Sunamganj to Sundarban.

Senior leaders of the Awami League, 11 Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and National Awami Party will address the rallies.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), however, will not join the rallies although it took part in six combined rallies held this month. Instead, the party will stage demonstration in the capital today in support of the human wall.

The opposition parties are also taking preparations to make the second human wall programme a success. Earlier, they organised the first human wall from Teknaf to Tentulia on December 11 as part of their anti-government agitation.

Sources in the opposition parties hinted that the tempo of the agitation led by the main opposition Awami League is likely to slow in the next two months because of the Eid and Saarc summit.

Senior opposition leaders will sit in a couple of days to discuss the next course of their agitation, the sources added.

US embassy closed

on Dec 26, Jan 2

UNB, Dhaka

US Embassy offices, including American Centre, Information Resource Center (IRC) and Student Advising Center will remain closed on December 26 and January 2 on the occasions of Christmas and New Year's Day, says a special release of US Embassy.



PHOTO: STAR

US Ambassador Harry K Thomas called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday.

Focus on poverty cut

Speakers urge Saarc leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on the Saarc leaders to focus on the poverty alleviation in South Asia during the upcoming summit as 40 percent of the world's poor live in this region.

The upcoming South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit should also reflect the common people's hopes and aspirations, they said.

They also suggested creating a scope for the political leaders from outside the government and the civil society members to participate in different forums of the summit.

The Campaign for Good Governance, an NGO, organised the roundtable on 'Saarc summit and civil society: sovereignty, friendship and poverty reduction in South Asia' in the city.

The discussants said the Saarc is such a potential forum that it could change the fate of 130 crore people living in this region.

The Saarc states should emphasise the regional interests rather than the national ones, they said.

They suggested that the forum should also take steps to ensure the people's right to know.

Mostafizur Rahman presented the objectives of the roundtable while Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on defence, Lt. Col. (Rtd.) Faruque Khan, whip of the opposition party, Brig. Gen. (Rtd.) Sakawat Hossain, Dr. Kholiqzaman Ahmed, Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Farida Akhter and Rokeya Kabir took part in the discussion.

Dr. Tofail Ahmed, advisor of the Campaign for Good Governance, conducted the session.

Mahbubur Rahman said many border-related problems could be resolved through discussion at the summit. "If we all give priority to the regional interest, the Saarc would be a very effective forum."

He also called for utilisation of human resources of the region under a coordinated plan.

Sakawat Hossain said that the thoughts of the common people were never reflected in the Saarc summit. If the governments cannot resolve the prevailing problems by discussing those at regional forums

like Saarc, its motto will be failed, he added.

Faruque Khan said that the past history of the Saarc was not very successful and the member countries did not get anything out of it. Dr. Kholiqzaman said, "We can identify specific problems regarding river water and other environmental aspects and also can find out solutions through the summit."

Rasheda K Chowdhury said the South Asian governments should take up a joint initiative to reduce the illiteracy in the region where 45 percent of the world's illiterate people live in this region.

Dr. Tofail Ahmed proposed that the Saarc charter should be reviewed.

Rab nabs 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two criminals and seized arms and ammunition in Tongi and Narayanganj in the last two days.

On information, Rab-1, raided Arshadnagar area under Tongi thana in Gazipur district on December 21 and arrested Kamrul Islam alias Kamru.

Following his statement, Rab later recovered one foreign 9 MM pistol with six rounds of bullet, one gun and 13 rounds of used bullets from Block 5 of Arshadnagar.

In a separate operation, Rab-3 arrested another top listed criminal Samsu from Sumilpara of Shidhdhirganj thana under Narayanganj district on December 22 and recovered a point 22 bore rifle, one revolver and 4 rounds of bullet from a nearby pond.

Decision on formation of 6th wage board within 7 days

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday assured leaders of journalists, press workers and general employees unions and federations of taking a decision on constituting the 6th wage board within seven days following discussions with all parties concerned.

Shamsul Islam gave the assurance when the leaders called on him at his office in the city seeking implementation of their seven-point demand, including formation of the wage board and announcement of 60 per cent dearness allowance.

He said, "In principle the government has no objection to form the 6th wage board and a decision will be taken in this regard within seven days following discussions with all parties concerned."

The meeting discussed the seven-point demand of journalists, press workers and general employees including formation of the 6th wage board, announcement of 60 per cent dearness allowance and full implementation of the 5th wage board award.

Presidents of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Secretary Generals Ruhul Amin Gazi and Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Presidents of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Elahi Newaz Khan and Altaf Mahmud, and General Secretary Shah Alamgir, President of Bangladesh Federation of Press Workers Faze Imam, Secretary General Abul Hashem, President of Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Karmachari Federation Motiur Rahman Talukder and Secretary General Khairul Islam attended the meeting. Information Secretary AMM Nasir Uddin and Principal Information Officer (PIO) Khondaker Monirul Alam were present.

SSKOP strike now on Jan 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) shifted the date of its 24-hour strike to January 2 from December 26 after a meeting with Information Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday.

The minister assured the Parishad leaders of taking a decision about the formation of the sixth wage board for journalists and newspaper employees within seven days.

The Parishad will hold an extended meeting at the National Press Club at 11:00am on December 25 to make the strike a success.

The Parishad leaders will also hold meetings with the journalists and employees at the offices of newspapers and news agencies from December 26 to 30.

City environment is deteriorating fast

Experts tell consultation workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The overall environment of the city except its air is deteriorating fast, said the experts at a workshop yesterday.

They said the achievement in improving its air quality is also seriously threatened now by overwhelming numbers of diesel-run vehicles.

The consultation workshop on 'Dhaka City State of Environment Report-2003' was organised jointly by the Department of Environment (DoE) and Bangladesh Centre for Advancement Studies (BCAS) at IGED Auditorium in the city.

The report showed that environmental condition of the city's land and water is increasingly exposed to serious man-made pollution.

The quality of soil and water bodies including lakes, rivers, canals, wetlands and around the city is being polluted continuously

by the dumping of lethal chemicals, pesticides and haphazard disposal of industrial wastes.

The speakers pointed out that the key driving forces for harming the environment included poverty, illiteracy, migration, overpopulation, unplanned urbanisation and lack of coordination between the core government agencies.

These forces are seriously degrading city's air, water, land and the overall atmosphere, they added. Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam said, "Unplanned urbanisation and city-bound migration of the people have ruined the city environment in the last two decades."

He said most of the city people are not aware of environmental issues, and it is not possible for government alone to maintain a livable city environment.

State Minister for Environment

and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury said, "Over the decades the city has expanded very fast without bringing its environmental aspect into any consideration. As a result the city has now become unlivable."

He however explained different government initiatives for the betterment of the city environment.

Environment and Forest Secretary Dr Shoiab Ahmed attributed the over population as the main reason behind the unplanned urbanisation.

He hoped that comprehensive initiative by the government and the non-government organisation would make the city livable. BCAS Executive Director Dr Atiq Rahman presented the draft of environment report at the inaugural session chaired by Khan M Ibrahim, director general of environment department.

Later at the technical session, the report was finalised.



PHOTO: STAR

Alumni, students and teachers of Armanitola Govt High School took out a colourful rally in the city yesterday to mark the founding anniversary of the school.

BOMB ATTACK CASE

Charges framed
against 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Charges were framed yesterday in the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) against four accomplices of Ershad Shikder in a bomb attack case.

The chargesheeted accused are Jamai Faruk, Liqueur Lashkar, Noor Alam and Iddris Jamal.

Name of Eshad Shikder has been dropped as he was executed in a murder case on May 10 this year in Khulna district Jail. He was principal accused in the case.

Trial of the case will begin on January 19. The case was filed with Khulna thana in January, 1997.

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ঢাকা মহানগরীর পশ্চিম অঞ্চলের সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাইতেছে, কল্যাণপুর ১৩২/৩৩ কেভি উপকেন্দ্রের ক্ষমতাব্যবহারের জন্য বাস্তবায়নাধীন উন্নয়ন কাজের জন্য আগামী ২৪শে ডিসেম্বর ২০০৪ইং তারিখ রোজ শুক্রবার সকাল ৭.০০ টা হইতে বেলা ১০.০০ টা পর্যন্ত কল্যাণপুর ১৩২/৩৩ কেভি উপকেন্দ্রের ১৩২ কেভি ২টি বাসবার সম্পর্ক বন্ধ করা হইবে। ফলে উক্ত সময়ে কল্যাণপুর ১৩২/৩৩ কেভি উপকেন্দ্র হইতে সকল ৩৩ কেভি ও ১১ কেভি ফিডার সমূহে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ সম্পূর্ণরূপে বন্ধ থাকিবে। উক্ত সময়ে ঢাকা বিদ্যুৎ বিতরণ কর্তৃপক্ষের (ডেসা) ঝিকাতলা, সাতমসজিদ, ধানমন্ডি এবং শ্যামলী ৩৩/১১ কেভি উপকেন্দ্র সমূহের আওতাধীন এলাকাসমূহে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ বন্ধ থাকিবে। ইহাছাড়াও একইসাথে ডেসকোর কল্যাণপুর ৩৩/১১ কেভি উপকেন্দ্র এবং আগারগাঁও ৩৩/১১ কেভি উপকেন্দ্রের আওতাধীন এলাকাসমূহে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ বন্ধ থাকিবে।

উন্নয়নমূলক কাজের স্বার্থে সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকবৃন্দের সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য পিজিসিবি, ডেসা ও ডেসকো কর্তৃপক্ষ বিশেষভাবে দুঃখ প্রকাশ্য করিতেছে।

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