

AL protests attacks

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Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, among others, attended the rally.

Our Syhet Correspondent adds: Misrule of the BNP-Jamat led-government would soon end in the face of a combined resistance by all the peace loving forces of the country, AL leaders said at a rally in the city's Poura Point area yesterday.

AL Presidium Member Alhaj Abdus Samad Azad MP said the government did not bother to take any tangible initiative to avert bomb attacks on personalities like British High Commissioner, former finance minister Kibria, and City Mayor Kamran.

Former minister Abdur Razzaq MP said the government has totally failed to contain the price hike of essentials and the downside in the law and order.

Central leaders Dewan Farid Gazi MP, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmad, and Nurul Islam Nahid, City AL Chief Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran,

among others, spoke at the rally.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent adds: Awami League Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury yesterday said the government should resign immediately for what she termed its loss of control over law and order.

She was addressing a public rally at Shahi Bazaar last evening.

Speaking at the rally, Muhammad Nasim, former minister for state affairs, alleged that the government has formed Rab, Cheetah and Cobra in order to shield the godfathers of criminals.

Rajshahi city AL President Maksudul Haque Dulu chaired the rally, which was attended also by AL leaders Mukul Bose, Akharruzzaman, Rajshahi AL leaders Zinatun Nesa Talukdar, Tajul Islam Md Faruk and AHM Khairuzzaman Liton.

BCL threatens non-stop strike at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday threatened to call an indefinite strike at Dhaka University (DU) if its leader Abu Abbas Bhuiyan is not released by February 22.

Police arrested Abbas, joint secretary of Sir AR Rahman Hall unit BCL, on February 17 as a suspect in a string of blasts during a Valentine's Day programme near the TSC.

The leaders of the BCL, student wing of main opposition Awami League, at a rally on the campus said Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) forced police to arrest Abbas.

They alleged the arrests of Abbas and other leaders have been made to shift the responsibility for the blasts to the BCL leaders.

They said Abbas' honours final year examination is on and his next exam is on February 22, and demanded his release immediately.

BCL President Liakat Sikder said Abbas has no link to the TSC blasts and his arrest is part of a conspiracy by the JCD.

Bac staff yet to start working for ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The former staff of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) did not start working at the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday as they did not receive any official orders from the commission in line with its decision taken on Thursday.

ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan said after Thursday's meeting that all Bac staff would be attached temporarily to the ACC and start working from Saturday.

Some Bac staff, talking to The Daily Star yesterday, said they would not start working until they get written orders. They however welcomed the decision to attach them to the ACC.

"Since there are government instructions not to work with the commission, we can't risk working with the ACC without written document," said a mid-ranking Bac official.

The commission, meanwhile, did not send any letter to the government for withdrawing the officials who worked with the bureau on deputation. The Thursday's meeting decided not to attach some 80 such officials to the commission.

ANTI-TOBACCO LAW 50,000 workers rally against govt decision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

About 50 thousand bidi factory workers of Haragach and its adjoining areas yesterday held a rally in Rangpur town and laid siege to the office of the deputy commissioner in protest against the government's decision to pass an anti-tobacco law.

The bidi workers leaders said the government must think of creating alternative earning sources for the bid workers before passing such a law.

About 100,000 workers in Haragach and its adjoining areas earn their livelihood by bidi making, said Aminul Islam, who presided over the rally.

If the bidi factories are closed as a consequence of the implementation of the anti-tobacco law, their families will have to starve, he added.

The agitating workers kept all main roads blocked from 11:00am to 1:00pm causing huge traffic congestion in the town.

After the rally, leaders of the bidi workers handed over a 19-point memorandum to the deputy commissioner and asked him to send it to the prime minister.

Man, nephew die

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the bodies of the deceased criminals where they lay, recovering them only several hours later.

Police sources said Habib had earlier been shot in the right leg during a fight with former Awami League lawmaker Shamsi Osman over establishing ownership of a sand trade at Fatulla in Narayanganj. Habib's family alleged he and his nephew were killed in a planned retaliation for the conflict, even though Habib has made efforts to settle it.

Habib's son Bappi was not released as of yesterday afternoon.

Police said they recovered a shotgun, a rifle, a pistol, six revolver chambers, 36 shotgun cartridges, four rounds of bullets, 12 shotgun shells and four machetes from the spot.

5 journos

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The criminals in the letters termed them extortionists and musclemen, saying they will keep an eye on them and send two more letters each. If the journalists change their attitude, they might not carry out the threat.

Notice

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The Daily Star will also observe

Tight security plan

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On this day in 1952, the students of Dhaka took to the streets in protest against the then rulers' denial to give Bangla the status of a state language and imposition of Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Ratiq, Jabbar and many others embraced martyrdom when the police opened fire on the procession upon the orders of the then government.

The protests that sparked off on February 21, 1952 led to the long-drawn out nationalistic movements that achieved the recognition of Bangla as a state language in 1956, and eventually the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

One hundred and eighty-eight countries across the globe are also joining Bangladesh to observe the 21st February following UNESCO's recognition of the day as the International Mother Language Day on November 17, 1999.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will lead the nation in paying homage to the language martyrs by placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar as the clock strikes one minute past midnight. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will follow the president.

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IMF team due tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is due in the capital tomorrow to review the conditions for the fourth instalment of the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) loan.

The IMF had deferred the review mission visit last month as the government failed to fulfil some conditions including initiation of the Rupali Bank's privatisation.

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Police not planning to arrest Asadullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police say they have no immediate plans to arrest the controversial Rajshahi University teacher Dr Muhammad Asadullah Al Galib, citing 'lack of evidence' but admitted they are maintaining close watch over him.

Asadullah, also the ameer of Ahle Hadith Andolok Bangladesh, was suspected of links to militant activities after Shafiqullah, the arrested top Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) leader of Bogra, as well as 12 other militants of Natore, claimed him as their leader.

Police say these and other allegations are not enough to warrant an arrest. "We have not received any clearance from our high ups to arrest him. We also lack strong evidence against him," Motiar Rahman, Rajshahi Metropolitan police commissioner, told The Daily Star yesterday.

UP member shot, hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Unidentified assailants shot and knifed a Union Parishad (UP) member to death and injured another in Agkola village in Daulatpur upazila Friday night.

The dead is Bachchu Molla, 47, son of Nurul Molla of Wail village and member of ward No. 7 of Kolia UP.

Police and witnesses said up to 12 criminals appeared at local Kalibari temple at about 9:40pm during a Kirton (religious song) performance.

They shot Bachchu from behind when he was taking tea at a tea stall near the function. The killers also chopped him until he died, the police and witnesses added.

An electrician, Pakhi, was also injured during the knife attack, police said, adding that the UP member was killed due to previous enmity.

Space for liberal

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Muslim was a suspected terrorist, recalls Irene, distressed by the adoption of draconian laws by the US to deal with terrorists.

What is needed is an alternative vision to the war on terrorism, Irene stresses, and spells her view: "One doesn't need to wage war. What is needed is a culture of peace and human rights."

A frank and forthright person, Irene is not loath to admit bias and double standards in the practice of human rights. "Selectivity and hypocrisy have been part of the discourse on human rights," asserts Irene.

Irene is pained by the unilateral actions of US.

"Some powerful nations have made us feel that (human rights) apply in some situations more than in others. Long before 9/11, the US was violating human rights with impunity in Latin America and Southeast Asia."

Calling a spade a spade, she declares: "Human rights are not Western values; they are human values. The West is violating them as much as the South."

How does it feel like being the first woman and the first Muslim to head a global rights organisation?

"Being a Muslim woman, I am able to raise the issues about the way Muslim women are being treated in Muslim countries more effectively."

"The Sharia (Muslim personal law) is being used to suppress women in many Muslim countries," says Irene, for whom the atrocities and discrimination against the minorities in her country in 1971 was a turning point in her personal life.

"I saw a lot of suffering and cruelty at that time. I was barely 15 then - a very impressionable age. A Hindu girl in my school was killed. That's when I thought I must do for

Arms haul at Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati

Two light guns and a foreign revolver were seized from the possession of a union parishad (UP) member at Kadamali in Baghaichhari upazila yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, police and paramilitary BDR launched a joint drive under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Azizur Rahman and Rokanuddin and Asumuddin, all brothers, and Afajuddin and Mohitul Islam were jailed for life.

Judge Shamsul Alam Khan of the Third Additional Sessions Judge's Court handed down the verdict at a jam-packed courtroom in presence of the convicts.

The death convicts can appeal to the High Court against the verdict within seven days from the date of receipt of the judgement copy, the court said.

Earlier, the prosecution and defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 19 prosecution witnesses.

In a case filed with Uttara Police Station on September 24, 1998, the victim's brother Matiur Rahman said Tajul and Sharif killed Ahsanullah over a dispute in buying a shop the same day. They took Ahsanullah to Baania Bazar and gunned down him, he added.

Matiur filed the murder case against Tajul and 10 others and the investigation officer pressed charges on May 30, 1999.

Face conspiracy

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(literature, posthumous), Prof Abdulla Abu Sayeed (education), Prof Iqbal Mahmud (education), Prof Jubaida Gulshan Ara (literature), Bishuddhanan Mahathera (social welfare, posthumous), Prof Ashab Uddin Ahmad (literature, posthumous), Abu Saleh (literature), Bashir Ahmed (music), Chittaranjan.

Saha (education), Mohammad Abdul Gafur (language movement), Abu Sattar Mohammad Shah Zaman Apel Mahmud (music) and Md Mashir Hossain (journalism).

Ministers, MPs, people of various professions, diplomats, political leaders, bureaucrats and the recipients of the Ekushey Padak attended the function held at Shilpkala Academy auditorium.

The prime minister appealed to the Bangladeshi both at home and abroad to sharpen their merit, talent, pen, spirit and speech and act against all ill motives.

She said poets, writers, journalists

Killed for a meter

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The attacks only intensified when Mostafa's wife, Nazma Begum, arrived. As her husband lay bleeding, they demanded she return to them the Tk 3,000 that Mostafa took for buying and setting an electric meter at Mojibur's house.

Nazma complied, but the beatings continued again when she left to retrieve the money, so brutally in fact that Mostafa finally died at approximately 5:00am.

When they realised he was dead, the attackers hung Mostafa from the grill of the balcony and told Nazma, who returned in the morning, that he had committed suicide.

Khilaon police arrested Zahir, Mojib and Farzana after Nazma filed a case against them and additional two to three unknown assailants.

Unesco website

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The officials of the education ministry, however, said that Unesco already has adequate documents in this regard.

"We furnished them with all the necessary documents relating to the Language Movement when we submitted the proposal in 1999 to declare February 21 as International Mother Language Day," said Mohammad Asabur Rahman, additional secretary of the education ministry.

The could easily have the historical background included in their website, he added.

Two most wanted cadres of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBPC) Janajuddho faction -- Shohi and Sumon -- evaded Rab operation in Khulna every time alerted by Mofazzel, who was posted in Khulna on August 18, 2003.

Local journalists incurred his displeasure because of their reports on outlaws and smugglers closely linked to him, and he used to guide them to attack journalists or threaten them to stop writing such reports.

"Mofazzel became a godfather of Janajuddho cadres who got his help to hide in Khulna city and maintained contact with him through cell phone," one source said seeking anonymity.

Intelligence agencies are also probing if he had any role in the murder of journalist Manik Saha in a bomb attack by outlaws on January 15 last year near the local press club.

charge sheets were submitted, but the process of trial was impeded by one reason or other. As a result, the perpetrators have become desperate. The whole society is in grave fear following spread of terror in that region."

The joint communiqué said the growing repression on journalists and killings will not only destroy conducive atmosphere for healthy journalism but also prove derogatory to the image of that nation, it added.

At present the overall situation marked by criminal activities, chaos, anarchy and political unrest has also caused a risk for the profession of journalism, it added.

"We notice that journalists are being killed one after another, but the killers were not identified. Such incidents are on the rise since the killers and perpetrators remain beyond the touch," said the communiqué.

Leaders of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ), Gramer Sangbadik Sangathan and senior journalists from print and electronic media took part in the rally.

Presidents of the two factions of BFUJ Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Gias Kamal Chowdhury addressed the gathering. Iqbal proposed to keep a blank space of 6 inches in all newspaper on February 28 and called for a newspaper strike on March 1 to protest the killing of journalists.

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