



Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a roundtable on "Democracy and Election: Caretaker Government" at a city hotel yesterday. Bangladesh Awami League organised the roundtable.

Hawkers occupy sidewalks four hours after eviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The hawkers yesterday rebuilt their open-air shops on the footpaths of Nilkhet in the capital four hours after Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) evicted them.

The hawkers took control of the footpaths stretching from the Dhanmondi Police Station to Gausia Hawker's Market in the morning and encroached the way as it was before the eviction.

The DCC authorities, however, blamed the police for letting the encroachment continue by taking bribes from the hawkers, who also admitted the claim.

The DCC authorities had bulldozed all the illegal shops located on the pavements of Nilkhet in the early hours last night.

Last night, the DCC in the presence of Magistrate Hamim Hassan also bulldozed an illegal kitchen market in New Market during the eviction drive.

"Lastnight's drive at Nilkhet and New Market was a part of the continual eviction process," Mohammad Abu Taleb, chief estate officer of DCC told The Daily Star last evening.

Most of the hawkers were at home when the DCC drove the bulldozers at around 12:30 am, said the hawkers, alleging that the authorities did not give them prior notice before the eviction.

notice before the eviction.

Hearing the news of the drive, some hawkers rushed to the spot to save the structures and remove the books and materials in safer places while the others came at dawn, the hawkers said.

Some of the hawkers alleged people took away books and materials during the eviction. "I did not find a box of books worth around Tk 1,000 when I came here at around 4:00am," said Mahmud Hassan, a hawker.

"It was not a mass-loot," said another hawker Badshah, adding, "People who were in the market at that time took a box of books or a book while passing by during the eviction."

Most of them constructed their structures by dawn and were ready to start business by 5:00am. "I did not find the structure where I left it last night," said a CD seller, adding, "I bought a ready-made khat (wooden bed) and started selling at 7:00am."

Meanwhile, DCC had evicted the same place some 15 days ago, Abu Taleb informed.

"We have no other choice but to continue business on footpath to run a family," said Golam Mostafa, an elderly hawker who has been running his business for 18 years, when asked why the hawkers encroached the footpaths.

"At least two families live on each of the shops that we have here and each of the hawkers make around Tk 8,000 to 15,000 per month," said Mahmud.

Police take tolls from the hawkers and do not 'disturb' the illegal business, said a top official of DCC.

Most of the hawkers also admitted giving bribe to the on-duty policemen there. "We give Tk 20 to Tk 50 from each shop everyday to remain untouched from the eviction," a hawker told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We are trying to evict the illegal structures from the footpaths repeatedly, but they (hawkers) are encroaching again and again," said Abu Taleb.

Blaming the negligence of police, Taleb said "We will keep the drive going as long as they rebuild the shops and encroach the footpaths."

Obituary



Comrade Abdur Razzaque, member of the national council of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), died at his Norail residence due to old age complications yesterday at the age of 88, says a press release.

Comrade Razzaque played a vital role in the anti-British and Tebhaga movements and War of Liberation in 1971.

He left behind his wife, four sons, two daughters and a host of relatives.

He was buried with state honour at Narkelbaria of Sharsha in Jessore.

Death anniversary of Dr Razee today

UNB, Dhaka



The 20th death anniversary of Dr Aaleem Al Razee, a renowned parliamentarian, jurist, scholar and educationist, will be observed today.

Dr Razee who became an icon in his lifetime was at the forefront of all socio-political, intellectual and cultural movements. He was a living embodiment of resistance against all forms of oppression and exploitation and dedicated his life to ushering in an egalitarian society based on rule of law, justice and fair play.

In a message yesterday, President Iajuddin Ahmed paid tribute to the "distinguished educationist, jurist and parliamentarian".

Different educational institutions, voluntary and socio-cultural organisations have taken up separate programmes to mark the day.

Dr Aaleem Al Razee Memorial Council will place wreaths at Razee's graveyard in Banani and hold a milad mahfil.

Sandhani National Eye Donation Society, Tangail Zila Samity, City Law College, Nagarpur Government College, Dr Aaleem Al-Razee High School, and 'Life', a UN associated organisation, will hold discussions.

Qulkhwani



Qulkhwani of Dilruba Rahman (Ruma), wife of Badal Rahman, will be held at the Eastern Housing Society Complex Community Centre at Siddheswari after Maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

Dilruba Rahman died at the Apollo Hospital in New Delhi on March 12.

Friends and relatives are requested to attend the qulkhwani.

Govt reneges on polls promises: Badruddoza

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led coalition government has totally failed to deliver election promises to curb corruption and violence, said former president and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) chief Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday.

The government is not sincere enough to fulfil its election pledges as the ministers are engaged in corruption," said Badruddoza at a meeting after a daylong token hunger strike at Mohakhali rail crossing.

The BDB staged the token hunger strike marking the one year of the attack on its leaders and workers by the hoodlums of the ruling party.

Such attacks on opposition proved that the BNP-led coalition government does not believe in democracy, said the BDB president.

Ferring to the report published by the Transparency International Bangladesh, he said, "The economy of the country is on the verge of collapse due to wrong policy adopted by the government."

Badruddoza said the common people are passing their days in great hardship as prices of essentials have soared beyond their reach.

He urged the countrymen to be united to bring an end to the 'bad politics' and establish a true democracy in the country.

Eminent lawyer and President of Gono Forum Dr Kamal Hossain joined the meeting to express solidarity with the token hunger strike.

He said people now want to live in peace and do not want to see any more violence.

He called for unity of patriotic men to bring a positive change to the country.

Dr Kamal also said the people must unite against the misrule and influence of 'black money' to build a prosperous country.

Krishak Sramik Janata League chief Kader Siddique, BDB Secretary General Major (retd.) Abdul Mannan, Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP were also present.

7,000 POSTCARDS SENT TO PM Minimum wage for labourers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two thousand women workers from various garment industries yesterday posted their postcards to the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia demanding the implementation of minimum national wage for labourers.

They also demanded prompt declaration of the national minimum wage rules for the sake of 6.80 crore workers in the country.

They urged the Prime Minister to take effective measures to eliminate all kinds of wage discrimination against women labourers.

Before posting their postcards they held a rally at Muktangan organised by Karmojibi Nari (KN), a non-government organisation working for women.

Leaders and activists of different political parties, trade unions, human rights bodies and women organisations joined the rally expressing solidarity with the demands of the garment women workers.

Sources said that garment workers had already posted 5,000 postcards and yesterday they posted another 2000 postcards to put forth their demands.

"The rights of work and livelihood has been recognised in the constitution. But upholding those rights of workers no government has come forward with a plan of action to set up a minimum wage for labourers," said Hasanul Huq Ain, president of the Jatiya Samajantirik Dal (JSD).

"The cost of living has greatly increased since the 70's but the wage of a worker has not increased yet," said Jafar Hasan, Secretary General of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS).

Sirin Akhtar, president of the KN,

Tawhidur Rahman of Garments Sramik Oikky Parisahad, Hajera Sultana of Samilita Nari Samaj, Syed Jafar Saijat of JSD, Mahbub Rahaman of Dhaka Match Factory and Aminul Haq Amin of Jatiya Garments Sramik Federation also addressed the rally expressing their support for the demands.

Course on diplomacy begins April 2

UNB, Dhaka

As the world today is witnessing rapid and profound changes in domestic and international politics, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) will organise a three-month course on Diplomacy, International Relations and Foreign Policy from April 2-June 30.

Retired Ambassadors of Bangladesh with area specialisation will deliver the lectures to help the participants to understand and appreciate Bangladesh's perspective and perception on a whole range of topics to be covered under the programme.

Bangladesh's relations with other countries/organisations will be the centre piece of the course.

The classes for the course will be held thrice a week from 6.00pm to 7.00pm at the BEI conference room (House No. 20, Road No. 5 Gulshan-1, Phone: 9892662-3).

Fee for the course is Tk 8,000 with admission open to all till March 25.

Country achieves MDG in edn sector ahead of schedule

Minister claims at symposium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education sector is the only area in which Bangladesh has achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) ahead of schedule, said Education Minister Dr M Osman Farruk at a symposium yesterday.

The symposium was organised by the Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies in the city to celebrate Commonwealth Day.

This year the theme of the day was 'Education-Creating Opportunity, Realising Potential.'

Speaking as chief guest, the education minister outlined three main objectives for the education sector: providing education on basic core subjects, teaching job market skills, and lastly, providing the skills and values to becoming an upstanding citizen of the country and "fight the evil environmental injustices."

He stressed the need to close the gap between the two streams of education, the madrasas and secular educational institutions. "We

must ensure that the two streams grow with equal emphasis on core subjects," he said, adding that most religious leaders are "eager to accept this package."

The education minister downplayed fears brought during the symposium regarding religious leaders who oppose the efforts of NGOs and government initiatives that give girls better access and incentives for education. "I do not think religious groups are any impediment to progress in education in the country or achieving gender parity," he added.

Dr Farruk stressed that donor countries must do their part by adhering to their commitment of investing 0.7 percent of their budget towards helping to achieve the MDG.

Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz spoke of the need for collaboration among the universities of the commonwealth nations for student exchange programmes and scholarships.

"English is not only a language, but a global currency for acquiring knowledge, jobs and prosperity,"

remarked British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury.

The symposium highlighted the country's achievements in the education sector, obstacles to progress and plans for the future.

It also noted that the improvement of literacy rate to 66 percent and increased gender parity in primary school enrollment were the significant achievements.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, former advisor to the caretaker government, read out Queen Elizabeth's message for Commonwealth Day at the symposium.

Australian High Commissioner Lorraine Barker, Canadian High Commissioner David Sproule, former ambassador M M Rezaul Karim, former secretary M Moquammel Haque, and Secretary General of the Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh Zaglul A Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

Bangladesh is one of the 53 sovereign independent nations of the commonwealth that collectively make up almost 25 percent of the world's population.



Bangladesh Awami Jubo League stages a demonstration at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity and water.

'Ban commercial fair on playground'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Around 200 young men from the city's Indira Road, Razabazar, Monipuripa and Sobhanbagh stood hand in hand around the T&T playground beside the Manik Mia Avenue yesterday demanding immediate ban on holding commercial fairs on the only playground of the area.

They said thousands of young men and women of the localities were totally deprived of sports and games for over seven months between August '04 and February last as the Ministry of Housing and Public Works rented out the playground to different organisations for holding commercial fairs.

Every year the playground is rented out in the similar manner, they added.

In August, the playground was rented out for Tk 5,000 a day to Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, and then to Jatiyatabadi Tanti Dal for holding fairs.

The playground was again rented out to Jubo Dal for holding Victory Day Fair, and the Export Promotion Bureau

for holding another fair.

Lately, there is a sign on the playground announcing that the Jatiyatabadi Sangskritik Sangstha has rented the playground for holding a Fun Fair between March 20 and April 17.

Abdul Majid, a sports organiser of Indira Road, said the way the playground is being rented out clearly indicates that the authorities have no respect for the sentiment of the young people of the area.

"As there are dozens of shopping malls around the area, we cannot understand the reason for holding commercial fairs on the playground," said Majid.

Vahidur Rahman of West Razabazar said during the fairs the loud speakers used by the organisers 'make life hell' for the residents of the area.

"Gambling and other anti-social activities are very common during the so called commercial fairs, and we want immediate ban on this sort of malpractice on our playgrounds," Rahman added.

Arif and his friends, who are the

residents of Indira Road, stood at the protest rally with cricket bats, stumps and balls in their hands and shouted slogans against the holding of fairs on the playground.

Arif said they have no other place to play as the area is densely populated with small lanes and by-lanes.

"Even after the fairs are over, we cannot play on the ground as the surface is riddled with numerous holes," he added.

The Save Environment Movement (SEM) along with five sporting clubs of the area organised the protest rally.

When contacted, Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works Iqbaluddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the permission to hold fair on the playground is given "under pressure".

Besides, he said there is "little space" left in the city to hold such fairs.

He however said, "We shall be more careful in giving permission for holding such fairs on the playground in future."

FIRE AT CEPZ GARMENTS FACTORY Huge raw materials gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A huge quantity of raw materials for jackets, particularly padding, worth several crore taka was gutted in a fire that broke out at a garments factory of Youngone Group at Chittagong Export Procession Zone (CEPZ) on Sunday night.

An electrical short-circuit sparked off the blaze at Titas Sportswear Industries Limited at around 9.30pm, sources said.

Firefighters rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after a struggle for about four hours. However, there was no report of casualties. The blaze was finally extinguished at 6.00am yesterday.

Police in a general dairy filed with Bandar thana put the figure of loss at about Tk 6 crore, but the fire service sources said an investigation is going on to find out the causes of the fire and to estimate the loss.

The fire started at the warehouse on the ground floor of the four-storey building, sources said.

The authority yesterday suspended the production of the factory on the three floors above the warehouse.

In a press release yesterday, Youngone (CEPZ) President Peter Bauer said the fire broke out in the packing section of the Titas Sportswear Limited but none was injured.

Due to quick response from the trained security as well as the Bepza

Fire Department, the fire was contained within the packing section.

A full audit would be undertaken in the next 24 hours to assess the damage, the press release added.

22 houses gutted

Meanwhile, 22 houses were gutted in another fire at Victoria Jute Mills Colony at Colonelhat in the city on Sunday night, rendering 65 families homeless.

An electric short-circuit sparked off the fire, causing an estimated loss of Tk 6 lakh, fire service sources said.

Tahaboor joins as UNB editor

UNB, Dhaka

Golam Tahaboor, former Bureau Chief of Agence France Presse (AFP), has joined United News of Bangladesh (UNB) as Editor.

Prior to joining UNB, Tahaboor was Editor of The New Nation. He also worked as Advisory Editor of the New Age.

Tahaboor began his journalistic career in 1967 in The Morning News. After independence, he joined Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) as a Senior Reporter and worked in the national news agency in different positions, including Resident Correspondent of BSS in New Delhi, India.

'Restore '72 Constitution'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion on Sunday called for the restoration of 1972 Constitution to uphold the spirit of the liberation war.

The discussion titled 'Militant fundamentalism, jeopardised human rights and the constitution of Bangladesh' was organised by the Committee to Resist Killers and Collaborators of 1971 in the city.

Acting president of the committee Shahriar Kabir said Bengali nationalism and the restriction on religion-based politics have long been vanished away from the constitution.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury said if needed hartal and other forms of protest will continue to establish human rights in the country.

Justice KM Sobhan said the spirit of the liberation war was first undermined by former president Ziaur Rahman, and the rest is going to be eliminated by the alliance government.

Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzak, Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, President of Bangladesh Adhivi Forum Promod Mankin, Prof Ajoy Roy and General Secretary of Women's Voice Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury also spoke.

WEATHER

TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kusthia and Comilla till 6.00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 34.1 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 16.8 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:08pm today and rises at 6:07am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.1	21.3	50	31
Chittagong	33.4	22.2	74	72
Rajshahi	33.4	17.0	50	40
Khulna	33.0	19.4	80	63
Barisal	32.4	20.5	78	69
Sylhet	33.2	19.0	65	61
Cox's Bazar	33.2	23.2	73	71