



PHOTO: STAR

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) took out a colourful procession in the city yesterday marking the Independence Day.

# Acute drinking water crisis in SW coastal belt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 50 lakh people living in the southwestern coastal belt of the country are facing acute drinking water crisis thanks to excessive salinity in surface water and depletion of groundwater level in the last one decade.

The salinity problem is causing less agricultural production, reduction of soil fertility, extinction of freshwater fishes and destruction of bio-diversity in the Sundarbans,

said the leaders of Pani Committee, a forum for water problem of southern region, at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity office yesterday.

Pranab Ghosh Bablu, coordinator of the committee, attributed the reduction of potable water sources to shrimp cultivation, siltation of riverbeds, excessive iron in tubewell water, arsenic contamination in groundwater, and construction of Farakka Barrage by India.

He said a vested influential

quarter is making the soil of the region toxic in the name of shrimp cultivation.

Pranab demanded of the government to formulate a guideline for shrimp cultivation and fish processing industries by saving fresh water sources and taking step to increase navigability of the rivers Kapatakkha, Shibsa, Shalikhha and others. He also demanded re-excavation of the dead rivers in the region.

Pranab, who is also a chairman of Khalilnagar union parishad under Tala upazila in Satkhira district, said the population of Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts are the worst-sufferers.

"Now our women have to collect safe drinking water even from two kilometers away. Some people also purchase water and depend on rainwater," he added.

Pranab said the severe water crisis is also resulting in quarrel, women repression, eve-teasing and silent migration.

He alleged that the southern region was not given due importance in the National Water Management Plan and National Safe Water Supply and Sewerage Guidelines of the government.

The committee will hold a sit-in programme at Mukhtangon in the capital at 11.00am on March 30 demanding government steps for ensuring safe drinking water supply.

Sharifuzzaman Sharif, Selim Akhter Swapan and Manirul Mamun of the committee were present at the press conference.

## BOU HSC results announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of the first and second year examinations of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) Programme under Bangladesh Open University (BOU) have been announced in the grading system.

A total of 25,787 candidates appeared in the final examination.

The pass percentage is 38.81, says a press release.

Of the successful candidates, only one secured A+, 26 got A, and another 26 received A-. Besides, 322 were placed in B, 4831 in C and 4802 in D grade.

The university also published the results of the HSC first year examination.

Examinees have been advised to contact their respective HSC Tutorial Centres to know the result.

## Zia kick-starts war as Mujub fails

Bhuiyan tells Independence Day rally

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) General Secretary Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Awami League (AL) failed to provide the nation with the right direction at a crucial time in March 1971, Ziaur Rahman kick-started the liberation war proclaiming independence of Bangladesh.

"Unless Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had wasted time holding dialogue with Yahea Khan till March 23, the March 25 massacre could have been averted", he told a crowd at the Paltan Ground before leading an Independence Day pageant in the city.

LGRD Minister Bhuiyan said

while the independence-aspirant people were chanting the slogans "Bir Bangalee asrto dhoro, Bangladesh Swadhin Koro (take up arms, free Bangladesh), Sheikh Mujib was at the roundtable with the Pakistani regime.

The ruling-party leader said apart from "a few Rajakars and al-Badrs", most people of the country fought for independence directly or indirectly.

"But when AL assumed power, it claimed to be the only party to fight for the freedom", Bhuiyan told the rally.

He observed AL talks about spirit of liberation war, but its spirit was "establishing one-party rule, denying freedom of press, creating famines and making the country a bottomless basket".

But coming to power, Ziaur Rahman introduced multiparty democracy, established freedom of press and worked to make Bangladesh self-reliant.

"We have gained a lot during the last 34 years; we have to earn much more. Now let's work together to make the country as self-reliant and prosperous under the leadership of Khleda Zia," he urged the people.

The minister further blamed the main opposition for letting anarchy in the country and damaging its image abroad and disrupting economic development by calling hartals "unnecessarily".

"Please, don't hamper country's image calling hartal only for the sake of your petty party interest", he said urging AL leaders to come to the parliament and discuss the issues there.

Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka presided over the meeting that was followed by the march that moved through several streets of the city marking the 34th anniversary of national independence.

Among others, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Dr Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Barkatullah Bulu, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam and Abdus Salam joined.

## Attacks on AL Independence Day rallies condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir in a statement yesterday condemned the attacks on the Independence Day rallies of AL in Chandpur and demanded legal steps against the culprits.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) cadres attacked on the rallies at Dhamalua, Bichhara and Gulbahar villages under Kachua Thana in Chandpur marking the Independence Day on March 26, the statement said.

A total of five AL leaders and its supporters were injured at the attacks while two of them were taken to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) later.

The AL presidium accused Ehsanul Haque Milon, sate minister for education, of masterminding the attacks.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of the Christian community offer prayer on the occasion of the Easter Sunday yesterday in front of the Sangsad Bhaban.

## 1,401 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,401 people, including two listed criminals, on various charges during their countrywide drive in the last 24 hours as of 6.00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered two firearms, one other weapon and 52 bullets and filed two cases against three people under the Arms Act, says a police headquarters press release.