

BNP activists, ministers engaged in corruption

Badruddoza tells Sirajganj meeting

AKBAR HOSSAIN, back from Sirajganj

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday accused the BNP-led alliance government of establishing a reign of terror by patronising criminal activities and unleashing corruption.

"Bangladesh has been identified as a most corrupt country in the world as leaders and activists of the BNP, including the ministers, are engaged in rampant corruption," he said at a meeting in Sirajganj town on the occasion of opening a party office.

"Filing of murder cases against BNP men proves that this government is patronising criminal activities," the BDB chief said.

Referring to the Bogra and Chittagong arms haul, the former president criticised the government for its failure to nab the criminals involved.

People are now passing their days with a sense of insecurity as criminal activities by the ruling party men are on the rise, he said.

Referring to the 'crossfire' deaths, Badruddoza said the criminals are being killed by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in the name of 'crossfire', but the godfathers are still behind the curtain.

Crimes would not decline unless the godfathers are arrested, he added.

On the Anti-Corruption Commission, Badruddoza said it is not working well as persons aligned with the BNP were appointed in the commission.

He also said the ministers and their family members shared all the Rajuk plots in Uttara, depriving the citizens who deserved to get those plots.

The BDB chief said the wrong policy of the government has rendered thousands of workers jobless as mills and factories were closed down.

He said the BDB would focus on

development once it is voted to power.

BDB Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP said the successive governments have ignored the voices of the civil society.

"The two major political parties have divided the nation in the name of Sheikh Mujib and Zia," he said and called on the people to be united to move the country forward.

Mahi said people are now tired of the current politics and they are now looking for a change.

Presided over by BDB Sirajganj district unit convenor Prof MA Mannan, the meeting was also addressed by BDB Secretary General Major (ret.) MA Mannan and leaders ATM Kamal, Aslam Khan and Maniruzzaman Manir.

Tight security measures were taken in and around the meeting venue, with pre-entry screening by metal detectors.

Young leadership a must for progress: Joy

DU CORRESPONDENT

Young leadership is a must to lead the country towards a better future, said Sajib Wazed Joy, son of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, at a meeting with the leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at the party's Dhamondi office in the city yesterday.

The young leaders must come from the BCL, student wing of the AL, he said, adding, "We have to think now how we can move forward."

Joy said it is possible to make the country a modern one within a very short time, and for this educated and progressive leaders are needed.

He said if all of us try hard, it is possible to achieve progress like Thailand in five years, like Malaysia in 10 years and like Singapore in 15 years.

For this, corruption and criminal activities have to be uprooted, Joy said, adding that the country has been facing hard time, and records of corruption and criminal activities have exceeded all previous records.

He said the present situation is beyond description and if this condition persists, the country would be destroyed.

Joy said it is not possible to change the things that happened in last 33 years after the liberation war, but it is possible to change the things that are going to be happened.

BCL President Liaqat Sikder, General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Marufa Akter Popy, Saifuzzaman Shekhor, Ashraf Azim Rubon, Rafiqul Islam Kotawal, Sahjada Mohiuddin, Khan Moinul Islam Mostak, and Delwar Hossain were present at the meeting.

GENDER PARITY IN PRY EDN ENROLMENT

Dhaka on course to meet target

Says Unicef report

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh is well on course to achieve gender parity in primary education enrolment by 2005, a target set by the UN as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a Unicef report said.

In the 'Progress of Children's report', launched on Monday in

Dowry-free wedding ceremony

UNB, Dhaka

Thirty young couples tied the knot at a dowry-free wedding ceremony in the city yesterday calling on others to follow suit to rid the country of dowry menace.

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar and State Minister for Education Ehsanul Huq Monir attended the function. They urged all to turn anti-dowry campaign into a social revolution.

The Gulshan Masjid Council organised the marriage ceremony at the Spectra Convention Centre.

Lutfozzaman Babar said dowry has become a social vice and all have to come forward to curb the menace.

The function was told that such ceremony would be arranged at the district level in future.

Geneva, Unicef noted that Bangladesh is among 125 out of 180 countries that are on course to meet the target.

The report launched by Unicef's Executive Director Carol Bellamy, also highlighted that millions of girls in South Asia, Middle East, North Africa, and West/Central Africa are still denied a basic education, impacting heavily on their health and survival.

Unveiling the report, Carol Bellamy said: "A girl out of school is more likely to fall prey to HIV/AIDS and less able to raise a healthy family."

Six of the eight countries in the South Asia have been specially targeted by Unicef as part of its '25 by 2005' initiative, aimed at accelerating progress on gender parity. Of these, Bangladesh has been the most successful in increasing the participation of girls in primary school and according to the report, is on target to meet gender parity by 2005, along with the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

The report, however, also categorised Bangladesh in the list of countries where total primary net enrolment/attendance ratio is below 85 percent. The secondary net attendance ratio is 60.9 for boys and 59.1 for girls.

"Bangladesh has done well on gender parity in primary school enrolment but there is still much to be done in the later years of schooling," said Morten Giersing, Unicef Representative in Bangladesh.

Gender parity is a prerequisite to achieve universal primary education by 2015 which is unlikely to be met without a

'quantum leap,' the report said.

Bail move of Galib stayed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A Gaibandha court stayed the bail move of Asadullah Al Galib, the chief of the Ahle Hadith movement who is accused in the Mohimaganj Brac office and Takier bazir bomb blast incidents from April 19.

Public Prosecutor Jahangir Alam Jinnah sought a fresh bail date in Galib's absence. The court fixed the next hearing day on April 30.

Police sources said Galib, who is now in the Naogaon district jail amid tight security, was scheduled to attend the Naogaon Judge court on April 18 in connection with the Porsha Brac office bomb blast and the murder of Khejir Ali. Galib will have to attend the Naogaon Magistrate Court on April 20.

Galib faced another remand move to the Sirajganj Magistrate Court on April 3, but was not produced before the court on the plea in connection with the Ullapara Grameen Bank bomb blast incident, police said.

Tributes paid to Madhu Da

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday paid tributes to Shaheed Madhusudan Dey, popularly known as Madhu Da.

The meeting was organised in observance of his 34th death anniversary at the Madhu's canteen of Dhaka University (DU).

Madhu Da was killed by the Pakistani occupation forces along with his three other family members on the night of March 25, 1971.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, Pro-VC AFM Yusuf Haider, Treasurer Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan, Jute and Textile Minister Shahjahan Siraj, Awami League president member Matiya Chowdhury, former Water Resources Minister Abdur Razaque, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Communist Party General Secretary Muzahidul Islam Selim, A K M Jahangir and student leaders of different organisations spoke at the meeting.

Earlier in the morning, Madhu Da Mityubarshik Udzapon Parishad and different student organisations placed wreaths at the Madhu's sculpture.

ILLEGAL VOYAGE TO SPAIN 2 brothers claim Salam's innocence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two brothers of Abdus Salam, who was arrested in connection with the tragic deaths of 11 Bangladeshis killed on an illegal voyage to Spain in February, proclaimed their brother's innocence yesterday, saying the true traffickers have yet to be caught.

Speaking at a press conference at the Dhaka Court Reporters' Association, Abdul Alim and SM Qudus said a confusion over the names of the travel agencies resulted in the wrongful arrest of their brother.

Abdus Salam owns Dohar Travels and Tourism, while the agency that sent the youths abroad is Dohar and Nababganj Travels, they said.

The two brothers told reporters that Qurban Mondol, father of the victim Anwar Hossain, one of the 11 victims, filed a case with the Ramna Police Station on March 13 against two persons named Mostaque Ahmed and Raju.

But police instead arrested their brother on March 13, even though none of the victims' families suspected him. Moreover, Khairul Islam, brother of the victim Mohammad Ibrahim, gave a judicial statement to a magistrate on March 14 saying the victims gave Tk 8 lakh to Mostaque for sending his brother to Italy.

The two brothers said the police have intentionally failed to arrest the persons responsible for the tragedy.

Salam was later shown arrested in a regular case of suspicion filed with the Ramna Police Station and taken on a one-day remand for interrogation.

Ramna police arrested Abdus Salam from his Bijoynagar office in the city at about 1:30pm on March 13 and seized 35 Bangladeshi passports, three registers and other documents.

ADMIN PROMOTION

Board sits today to finalise list of new dy secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Superior Selection Board (SSB) will meet again today to finalise the list of eligible senior assistant secretaries for promotion to the post of deputy secretary.

The seven-member SSB, headed by Cabinet Secretary Dr Saadat Hussain, earlier prepared a list of some 300 senior assistant secretaries after six rounds of meetings and sent a proposal on April 4 to the prime minister for her approval.

But it was delayed due to objection from some PMO officials, Secretariat sources said.

However, the PMO sources claimed that it was delayed due to visits of foreign dignitaries like the Chinese premier and the emir of Qatar.

When contacted, a top official at the PMO told The Daily Star that the promotion to the post will take place

within a couple of days.

Sources said the list of the SSB included some 300 senior assistant secretaries, mostly from the 1984 batch, but now some minor changes will be made when the SSB meets today.

Sources also said the government is unable to elevate all 500 qualified officials because of shortage of vacancies. Two-sixty-three of the total 830 approved posts of deputy secretary in the civil administration are currently lying vacant.

Establishment ministry sources said the SSB has been facing tremendous pressure from the officials of different batches, particularly from the 1985 batch, since it had initiated the promotion process.

The 1985-batch officials had qualified for promotion long ago but the government could not promote them pending the promotion of the officials of 1984 and previous batches.



The National Platform for Protection of Garments Workers and Industry stage a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding compensation for the victims of Savar garments factory tragedy.

GARMENT FACTORY COLLAPSE

'Try all responsible for tragedy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the workers' death in the garment factory collapse at Savar as 'mass killing', left-leaning 11-party leaders yesterday demanded immediate trial of all responsible for the incident.

They also demanded a compensation of at least Tk 5 lakh for each family of the victims.

"We cannot consider the factory collapse as a simple accident, rather we consider it as a planned mass killing," said Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon at a press conference in the city.

"Through an impartial investigation, the government should ascertain separately the responsibilities

of the garment owner, investment board, financial organisations and factory inspectors for the mishap," Menon asserted.

He alleged that the government is now trying to hide the actual number of deaths.

The frequent killing of workers by 'so called accidents' proves that the lives of workers are also cheap like the cost of labour, he viewed.

Menon also demanded of the government to take immediate steps to close down the garment factories without proper safety arrangement.

"The government's reluctance to declare a national mourning proves that it does not want to show respect to the poor garment workers who play a vital role in the country's

economy," said Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim.

The garment factories have turned into death traps owing to unplanned construction of factory buildings and insufficient security system, said 11-party Convenor Bimol Biswas.

The 11-party will stage demonstrations throughout the country on April 25 to press home their demands.

Organised by the 11-party, the press conference was also addressed by Dilip Borua of Samyabadi Dal, Haji Abdus Samad of Gono Azadi League and Ruhin Hossain Prince of the CPB.

BUILDING COLLAPSE

'Provide lifelong assistance to victims' families'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women leaders of 10 workers' organisations yesterday demanded that the government provide all kinds of lifelong assistance for the families of the victims of Savar garments factory tragedy.

The nine-storey building of Spectrum Sweater Industries collapsed in Savar on April 11, leaving hundreds of workers dead or injured.

In a joint statement, the leaders also demanded that those responsible for the factory disaster be brought to book immediately.

They said that owners of the factories had made the workplaces a 'death trap' for workers.

They urged the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) to take stern action against the owners of vulnerable buildings, which were constructed with faulty design.

The signatories to the statement include Aysha Islam of Trade Union Kendra, Hazera Sultana of Jatiya Sramik Federation Bangladesh, Roushan Jahan Sathi of Mohila Sramik Sangha, Rozvi Begum of Sanjukta Mohila Parishad, Advocate Gulshan Ara of Labour Federation, Khaleda Anwar of Sramik Federation, Hazera Khatun of Jatiya Sramik Jote, Shamim Ara of Bangladesh Sramik Federation, Farida Akhtar of Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress and Sahera Khatun of Mukta Sramik Federation.

Meanwhile, Karmojibi Nari, a women workers' organisation, demanded payment of Tk 7 lakh compensation to the family of each victim of the garments factory tragedy.

The leaders of the organisation also called for forming a neutral committee to identify the persons responsible for the disaster.

BUET exams rescheduled again

BSS, Dhaka

The authorities of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) have rescheduled again the term final examinations of the university from May 7 instead of April 30.

Controller of examinations Dr Abu Siddique said the examinations have been rescheduled giving special considerations to the appeal of the students.

Fertiliser worth Tk 9 cr missing from CUFL

UNB, Ctg

As much as 15,278 tonnes of fertilisers worth about Tk 9 crore disappeared from the stock of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL), according to an investigation report.

General Manager of the CUFL (operation) Faroque Hossain was suspended in connection with the "misappropriation" of the huge amount of fertiliser.

From the factory that produces 1,700 tonnes of urea a day, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation-listed dealers supply fertiliser to 25 districts.

In a latest checking, 34,163 tonnes of fertiliser was found in the godown against 49,441 tonnes stored, according to enquiry findings.

Earlier, a high-powered investigation committee was formed after some "specific allegations" were made to the authorities concerned. The committee submitted the final report after a weeklong investigation.

Assistant Security Manager of CUFL Joydul Abedin filed a general diary with Karnaphuli Police Station.

Journo gets death threat for reports on Islamic NGO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown callers have threatened to kill a staff reporter of the daily Sangbad for running a series of reports on the Revival of Islamic Heritage, a Kuwait-based Islamic NGO.

Dipu Sarwar, the reporter, received the calls on his mobile phone from three mobile numbers - 011639765, 0191381266 and 0178088122 - on Monday evening. The callers identified Dipu as an enemy of Islam.

"The callers told Dipu if the activities of the NGO is stopped in Bangladesh because of the report, he will have to pay for it with his life," said an official of Motijheel Police Station quoting the General Diary Dipu filed yesterday.

The callers also threatened to attack his village home.

The Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh expressed concern over the threat and demanded arrest of an exemplary punishment to the criminals.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka

Begum Zinat Omar, Awami League leader of ward No. 75 and wife of city AL vice-president Omar Ali, died yesterday at the age of 57.

Her namaz-e-janaza was held at Tikatuli Mosque in the city after Zohr prayers yesterday.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and General Secretary Abdul Jalil in separate messages expressed deep shock at the death of Zinat Omar.

They prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed their sympathies to the members of the bereaved family.

Md Rezuwan Ali Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Md Rezuwan Ali Khan, a noted academician, died of old age complications at his residence at Nasirabad Housing Society here on Monday night at the age of 80.

He left behind four sons, five daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His eldest son Dr Matiar Rahman Khan is a resident surgeon at Chittagong Medical College.

The first namaj-e-janaza of the deceased was held at Nasirabad on Monday night.

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard at village Charulia under Damurhuda upazila yesterday afternoon after the second namaj-e-janaza there.

Quilkhwani

Quilkhwani of Hasina Banu, wife of late principal Jalaluddin Ahmed, will be held at the residence of her daughter Shamsunnahar Siddique at House No-13, Road No-7, Gulshan-1 after Asr prayers today.

Chehlum

Chehlum of Diruba Rahman Ruma, wife of film personality Badal Rahman, will be held today, says a press release. On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at her residence after Maghrib prayers and foods will be distributed at noon in orphanages.



PHOTO: STAR

Five left-leaning parties stage a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting attacks on the Ahmadiyya community in Satkhira.

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, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions till 6.00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and Mongla and lowest 22.9 degree Celsius at Srirongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:22pm today and rises at 5:32am 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	35.4	27.4	78	55
Chittagong	34.5	27.0	78	69
Rajshahi	36.5	26.2	71	55
Khulna	35.7	27.2	91	77
Barisal	35.4	26.3	80	77
Sylhet	34.5	24.1	67	69
Cox's Bazar	34.5	27.0	72	74