



SAVE RIVERS, SAVE THE COUNTRY: Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon forms a human chain at Shahabag in the city yesterday protesting the Indian River-Linking Project.

Rocca enquires about victims of trafficking, camel jockeys

BDNEWS, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca yesterday visited a shelter home, which housed some 153 children, adolescent, women victims of trafficking and camel jockeys.

During around two-hour stay in the 'Proshanti', shelter home run by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) at Agargaon in the city, Rocca talked to the victims of trafficking and camel jockeys and enquired about their condition.

The BNWLA officials briefed her about their activities, how they work with the government and people in the community level, and how they cooperate with the victims.

"She enquired about how we provide assistance to a victim when the community denies to accept her. We provide alternative option for the victims through income generating activities," BNWLA Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali said.

She said Rocca also discussed about violence against women and children, and domestic violence.

The inmates of the shelter home staged a colourful cultural programme for Rocca.

The adolescents presented Rocca with dolls, made by them.

BNWLA officials, including Advocate Sigma Huda, Fouzia Karim, US Ambassador in Dhaka Harry K Thomas and other senior officials of the US Embassy were present.



Shaukat Osman's anniversary of death today

Today is the seventh death anniversary of noted litterateur Shaukat Osman, says a press release.

Different organisations will hold various programmes, including placing wreaths to his grave and memorial meetings, on the occasion.

Discussion and poetry recitation in his memory will be held at the Liberation War Museum in the city at 4:30pm today.

Noted poet Shamsur Rahman will be present at the programme as chief guest.

Rawshan Jamil

The fourth death anniversary of noted cultural personality Rawshan Jamil will be observed today, says a press release.

On this occasion, different programmes have been chalked out in the city.

Jago Art Centre will organise a cultural programme in the memory of Rawshan Jamil, its former director, at its auditorium at Swamibagh in the city at 5:00pm today.

She was awarded with 'Akushey Padak' in 1995.

INDIAN RIVER-LINKING PROJECT

'100 rivers to dry out if implemented'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment activists at a citizens' rally yesterday demanded of the Indian government to repeal the Indian River-Linking Project considering its possible ecological unsound impact on the region.

They called upon the countrymen to take a common stance against the Indian project for the sake of protecting their own entities.

Addressing the rally organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) at Shahabag in the city, they also demanded that the government ensure due share of the interna-

tional rivers for the country.

"India is undertaking the project to divert water from different rivers, including the Ganges and Brahmaputra, to the southern India, which would be disastrous for Bangladesh," Bapa General Secretary Mohidul Haque Khan said.

Once the project is implemented, about 100 rivers will completely dry out, he pointed out.

"The Indian government has already gone further to implement the project, although it continues to say the project is still under conceptual phase," Mohidul said.

He also stressed the need for forging an alliance at the national and regional levels and waging a common movement to prevent the disastrous river-linking project.

Bapa activists also expressed their concerns over the government's inaction to prevent the project.

Presided over by Bapa Executive Member Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed, the rally was also addressed by its Executive Members Sharif Jamil, Engineer Iqbal Habib, Joint Secretary Dr MA Matin and Engineer Sheikh Md Shahidullah.

Jamaat blames BNP for erosion of public support

They have captured all govt lands, ponds, properties, a leader tells Rajshahi confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The grassroots level leaders of Jamaat-e Islami Bangladesh (JIB) yesterday blamed the party hierarchy for losing the public support.

Addressing a conference of the party at Rajshahi Madrasa Maidan, they said the central leaders' reluctance to establish the rule of Islam and their persecution by BNP partners are mainly responsible for this erosion of support.

Some 16,000 union and ward level workers from eight districts of Rajshahi region attended the meeting.

They suggested their leaders should follow the teachings of holy Quran and Hadith to establish the rule of Islam.

They also called for increasing the number of party nominations in the

upcoming general election.

"The big-brother-like conduct of BNP leaders has cornered our political activities. Even their (BNP) petty workers own mobile phones and motorcycles. As a result, we are facing difficulties in carrying out our own activities," said Maulana Abdur Rahman, JIB president of Parbatipur union under Chapainawabganj district.

Besides, many of our leaders have skidded off from the path of Islam leading to the withdrawal of support from many people including the low-income groups, he said.

Nasir Ali, president of Chapainawabganj municipal ward, demanded the nomination of a JIB man in the coming elections from their constituency replacing the current BNP lawmaker who does not bother to care them.

"They (BNP men) have captured all government lands, ponds and properties, they are controlling all government and non-government appointments, transfers, besides harassing our party men in false cases," he added.

Nasir Uddin, president of Bogra municipal ward, told the meeting that all JIB leaders from central unit to grassroots level are now lacking necessary Islamic zeal hampering the organisational activities.

"People question us about our policy to establish the rule of Islam," he added.

"Our leaders are detracted from typical Islamic activities," said Abdul Mannan, Ameer of Belkuchi Udaypur under Sirajganj district, while Gulzar Hossain from Shinga of Natore expressed his dismay as JIB activities could not gain any success towards establishing an Islamic state.

Mahfuzur Rahman, president of Rajshahi city ward, said most of JIB recruits come from their student front Islami Chhatra Shibir which is organised but not social.

Maulana Abdus Salam of Gohali union under Shahjahanpur of Bogra said a central vigilance team should have been developed or necessary rules formulated to control the behaviour of BNP MPs.

Party Ameer and Industry Minister Maulana Matiar Rahman Nizami attended the conference as chief guest.

Pointing to Awami League, he said an evil power has been conspiring to prove the country as an ineffective and fundamentalist one to attract foreign invasion.

Nizami said the opposition's only target is to break the four-party alliance as they are sure that would not be able to go to power by defeating the alliance.

With JIB Rajshahi Ameer Ataur Rahman in the chair, the conference was also addressed by Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque, BNP lawmaker Quazi Golam Morshed, JIB leaders Abdul Kader Mollah, ATM Azharul Islam, Maulan Abdus Sobhan MP, Rajshahi Islami Oikya Jote leader Khalilur Rahman, and Jatiya Party leader Monsur Rahman.

Jamaat leaders meet Rocca

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca had a meeting with Jamaat leaders Barrister Abdur Razzak and Shah Abdul Hannan on burning political and religious issues.

The meeting, held at the residence of US Deputy Chief of Mission Judith Chammas, lasted for an hour exchanging views on issues of governance, corruption, religious extremism and future of democracy.

Barrister Razzak told the news agency that Rocca wanted to know about the effect of Chittagong City Corporation polls on national election, activities of extreme religious organisations and Jamaat's view about the Ahmadiyya community.

They told her that only a few splinter groups of extremism might be here and there in the country, but they do not have any influence as Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country.

About the Ahmadiyya, they said Jamaat considers Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslims, but they have their right to practise their belief and none should take up laws in their own hands.



The doctor makes sure these visually challenged underprivileged children regain their eyesight at Bangladesh Eye Hospital in the city yesterday.

2 DU JCD activists chopped by fellows

DU CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP, in Amar Ekushey Hall of Dhaka University chopped two fellow men leaving them seriously injured over occupation of a seat in the hall early hours yesterday.

Linkon, a first year student of Soil, Water and Environment department and Shafique, a first year student of Botany department went to room No 306 of Rafiqe Bhaban of the hall to occupy a seat for two freshers, sources said.

Following an altercation, Azad, Afzal and Royal, residents of the room and students of Geography and Environment department, chopped Linkon and Shafique.

JCD activists loyal to the injured students caught and beat up Royal, ransacked rooms No 306 and 302 and threw out all the belongings of the students of room No 306 and set them ablaze.

Angry JCD activists searched the rooms of the hall throughout the night for Azad and Afzal, creating panic among the general students.

A case has been lodged against the three and the hall provost handed over Royal to police.

Linkon was admitted to a private clinic with injuries to his head.

In the wake of high tension among the JCD activists following the incidents, additional police have been deployed in the hall to avert further clashes.

7 underprivileged blind children regain eyesight for free

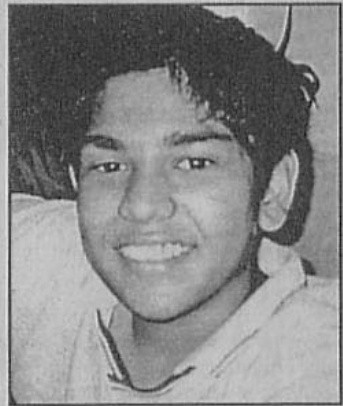
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven underprivileged visually impaired children regained their eyesight through successful operations in the city yesterday.

The operations took place at Bangladesh Eye Hospital in the city yesterday under an agreement titled 'Irrigation Aspiration Posterior Chamber Intraocular Lens Implantation' signed between Bank Asia and the hospital for one year.

Under the agreement, five to seven visually challenged underprivileged children will get their eyesight back every week.

Those who received the free service are Belal, Rashed Islam, Ariful Islam and Rakib Hossain of Nator, Jalil and Hanifa of Pabna and Aminul Islam of Bogra district.



Qulkhwani of Khan Shabab Murshid today

Qulkhwani of Khan Shabab Murshid will be held at his grandfather's residence at Road 121, House 21, Apt C4 at Gulshan in the city after Maghrib prayers today (Saturday), says a press release.

Khan Shabab Murshid, grandson of Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, was laid to rest at Mirpur Intellectuals' Graveyard after namaz-e-jaanaza at the Gulshan Azad Masjid yesterday.

Family members, relatives, friends and well-wishers attended the janaza.

The body of Khan Shabab Murshid was flown in Dhaka by a Thai Airways flight at 2:00pm yesterday and brought to his grandfather's residence at Gulshan.

Khan Shabab Murshid, the only son of economist Dr. KAS (Firdous) Murshid and artist Shameem Subrana, passed away at Phnom Penh in Cambodia on May 10.

Obituary

BDNEWS, Faidpur

Abdul Majid Mollah, a valiant freedom fighter and former Assistant Director of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), died of old age complications at his residence in Faidpur yesterday at the age 90.

Mollah defecting from the Chuadanga 4 wing headquarters of the then East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) joined the Liberation War under sector commander Maj Abu Osman Chowhury.

He left behind his 4 sons and five daughters. He was buried at Alipur graveyard in the town with state honour.



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a view exchange meeting with the newly elected office bearers of Barisal and Kushtia district lawyer's associations.

Mere reforms not enough for free, fair polls: CPB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday demanded introduction of proportional representation system along with the caretaker government reforms to ensure a free and fair election.

CPB placed the demand at the two-day meeting of its central committee, which ended yesterday.

Mere reforms would not be enough to hold a free and fair election, the electoral process must be freed from the grip of

black money and muscle power, said the CPB leaders.

They also urged the countrymen to be united to bring an end to the BNP-led coalition government's 'misrule'.

The CPB leaders also emphasised forging a grand unity among all left-leaning parties in order to establish the rights of the countrymen.

Presided over by CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan, the meeting was also addressed by CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim and other party leaders.

Timbers worth Tk 8 lakh seized

UNB, Dhaka

Members of the Coastguard seized two trucks loaded with timbers worth about Tk 8 lakh in the Bahaddarhat area of Chittagong on Wednesday.

Coastguard sources said acting on a tip-off, they seized the trucks but sensing their presence the drivers, helpers and smugglers fled away. The seized timbers were handed over to Kalurghat Forest Depot.

In another drive, they arrested a listed robber, identified as Ferdous at Gunder bazar in Tojmuddin thana of Bhola. He was handed over to the police.

In separate raids they also seized 42 types of banned nets worth of Tk 1.26 lakh from the coastal areas of Bhola. The seized nets were burnt down in front of fisheries officials and local people, said a press release.

Weather Today section with a sun icon and a table of weather data for Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, and Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY section listing various events: Reception, Memorial meeting, Chamber discussion, Indian film show, Academy film show, Award giving ceremony, Discussion, Roundtable, Seminar, Rotary Dhaka Central, and Rotary North West.