

TENGRATILA BLOWOUT

Stop Niko's work, release White Paper on deals

Protesters in Sylhet give government a 30-day deadline for compensation and to meet other demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Protesters, joined by political leaders, at a rally here on Thursday urged the government to immediately stop all exploration work by Canadian company Niko at Tengratila gas field.

They also gave the government a 30-day deadline to accept their 9-point demand and threatened of tougher agitation for non-compliance.

The demands include realisation of compensation for losses suffered by people in Teangratila and for gas burnt out due to blowouts and publication of a white paper on deals with Niko.

Otherwise, a tougher agitation programme will be announced after August 22, speakers at the rally said.

The rally was part of a day-long programme held at the Court Point.

It was organised by the Chhatak Samity and the Dakshin Chhatak Unnayan Parishad in Sylhet, two non-political forums.

A month-long programme was

also announced at the rally to create public opinion in favour of the demands.

The programme that began yesterday includes mass contact at grass root level in Chhatak and Doarabazar upazilas, holding of protest rallies and view-exchange meetings with professional groups.

If the authorities fail to accept the demands, a tougher agitation programme will be announced on August 22, the speakers said.

Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran addressed the rally, presided over by Principal Akhlaqur Rahman, President of Chhatak Samity in Sylhet.

It was also addressed by, among others, Sylhet Awami League President ANM Shafique, former lawmaker Muhammad Ashraf Ali, former chairman of Chhatak Pourashava Abdul Wahid Majnu, district unit president of Sylhet Bibhag Unnayan Parishad Rafiqul Haque, Assistant Secretary of Sylhet Jamat-e-Islami Syed Fazlullah Bahar, JSD General

Secretary Syed Habibur Rahman Hiron, Sylhet city AL vice-president Rajuddin Ahmed, Ward Commissioner Abdul Khaliq and Govindaganj Alia Madrasah Principal Moulana Abdus Salam Al Madani.

They said people of greater Sylhet region along with leaders of all political parties will join the agitation programme to realise the demands.

They demanded immediate stoppage of exploration activities by Niko at Tengratila and payment of compensation for damage of crops, houses and the environmental in the area.

They alleged that Niko is given the exploration work at Tengratila through a 'dubious deal'. People have the right to know it.

The incompetent company has already burnt out gas worth hundreds of crores of Taka due to two blowouts in only six months. But, the government did not take any action against it, they said. Rather it has been allowed to continue work in the same location. They said some

powerful quarters within the government are active to save Niko, they said.

They also demanded expulsion of other foreign companies who got exploration blocks through alleged unfair means, realisation of compensation for damages caused by Occidental at Magurchhara, formation of judicial committees to probe irregularities in the oil and gas sector, rehabilitation of the affected people of Tengratila, declaration of Tengratila a 'disaster zone' and supply of drinking water, food, and medicines there.

They also demanded steps to revamp government owned Bapex, exploration wing of Petrobangla, with adequate manpower and funds and to give it greater responsibilities.

Before the rally, the podium was kept open for all, when mass songs were rendered and representatives of various professional groups spoke.



PHOTO: STAR
BIWTA sea truck ST Khijir-5 sailed from Galachipa launch terminal for Char Montaj in the coastal area yesterday with 50 passengers on board.

Sea truck service on Golachipa-Char Montaj route

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Sea truck services on Golachipa-Char Montaj route began yesterday, fulfilling a long cherished desire of the local people.

Sea truck ST Khijir-5 sailed for Char Montaj from Galachipa at 8 am with 50 passengers.

Galachipa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mezbah Uddin inaugurated the service at Golachipa launch terminal.

About one-and-a-half lakh people of shoal areas in six unions of the upazila had been demanding sea truck service on the route.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) opened the service. Launch service in the risky coastal route was stopped after a launch--Prince of Patuakhali--sank in the Buragouranga river in the route on May 15, killing over 80 people.

After suspension of the launch service, country boats and trawlers were used by people in the route.

Plying of launch in the route is prohibited from March 15 to October 15, the season of storms.

Every year, during monsoon, launch disasters take place in the risky route, claiming lives.

People of the outlying coastal areas had long been demanding introduction of sea truck in routes in.

Tk 329.56 cr BCC budget for FY2005-06

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal City Corporation (BCC) Mayor Advocate Majibor Rahman Sarwar on Wednesday announced a Tk 329.56 crore budget against the revised budget of Tk 37.57 crore for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

No new tax was imposed in the new budget.

The budget was announced at Barisal Club in presence of a large gathering. Whip Shahidul Huq Jamal MP, BCC commissioners, division and district level officials and elite of the city were also present.

Over Tk 287 crore has been fixed for development sector.

An amount of Tk 31.75 crore has been fixed as earning from revenue sources including holding tax, land registration, water supply, bus terminal, stall rents and other sources while Tk 28 crore would be spent from own sources as establishment cost.

Major expenditures in development sectors included Tk 64 crore for development and management of city roads, Tk 42 crore for water treatment plant and Tk 26 crore for development of extended areas of BCC.

Abducted college girl rescued, 2 arrested.

A CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police rescued an abducted college girl on Thursday, four days after her abduction and arrested two alleged abductors from Bazidpur in the town.

According to police, one Ferdous Ahmed Titu of Kachudanga village in the Sadar upazila and his seven accomplices kidnapped Sharmin Akter Rumi, 20, a first year honors student of Government Saadat College when she was returning home from Bepari Para area in the town with her mother on July 16.

Rasheda Begum, mother of the victim lodged a case with Tangail Sadar police on July 19. Police led by OC S Alam rescued the girl from a house at Bazidpur and arrested alleged abductors Ferdous Ahmed Titu and Kawsar Ali. They have been sent to jail hajat.

Reception to GPA-5 achievers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A reception has been given to students who got GPA-5 and A+ in this year's SSC and Dakhil examinations from different schools and madrasahs in Dumki upazila in the district. The reception was given on Thursday at Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) Auditorium.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was the chief guest at the function, organised by Shikka Unnayan Sangho, a local NGO.

PSTU Vice Chancellor Dr Prof. Wahid-uzzaman, Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner Rafiqul Islam, Police Superintendent Shafiqul Islam were also present.

All 55 students, who scored GPA5 and A+ were present at the reception.



PHOTO: STAR

The Rangpur-Bogra highway has become vulnerable by flood water at Hawkhana point in Gobindagonj upazila. The photo was taken yesterday.

BANGALEE SAMO ADHIKAR ANDOLON No fresh voter list in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Parbatya Bangalee Samo Adhikar Andolon has rejected a proposal of the 14-party combine for preparing a new voter list for three hill districts before the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) elections.

The Samo Adhikar Andolon leaders rejected the proposal at a press conference held at Bandarban Press Club on Thursday.

The leaders warned both the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition that the hill people along with anti-peace treaty supporters would build up a strong movement to prevent any move to implement such proposal.

The press conference was told that the peace loving people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are yet to accept the so-called peace treaty signed on December 2, 1997. Under the circumstances, the announcement of fresh voter

list would create unrest in the CHT, they said.

The statement further said the Chittagong Hill District Council Act (amendment), Peace Treaty of 1998 and CHT Regional Council Act 1998 allow separate voter list only for CHT district council election, not for JS election. The proposal for fresh voter list is 'imaginary and unrealistic', they said.

Because of the 14-party leaders' ignorance about the CHT problem, they have included such a demand in their reform proposal of caretaker government and electoral system on July 15, they alleged. Such demand would create only new controversies, they said.

Parbatya Bangalee Samo Adhikar Andolon president Prof Osman Gani said, 'The demand is fully controversial'.

Among others, Azizur Rahman, Abdul Quddus, Abdul Mabud and Hafizur Rahman were present in the conference.

Clashes at Bagamara AL council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bagmara upazila Awami League council on Thursday was marked with clashes in which about 20 leaders and activists were assaulted.

Upazila Jubo League President Abdus Salam and Chhattra League President Mahbub were injured.

The council held at the Riverview High School field was interrupted for about two hours as groups led by Rajshahi district BNP secretary Tajul Islam Md Faruk and joint secretary Ibrahim Hossain were locked in clashes that began at around 2 pm.

The trouble began when rival groups chanted slogans in favour of party leaders Khoda Bux and Zakirul Islam Santu.

At one stage, followers of Santu pushed Khoda Bux off the podium. He was supposed to address the council.

About an hour into the trouble, rushed there and brought the situation under control by charging batons.

The council began again after about two hours with Upazila AL Acting President Motiur Rahman Tuku in the chair.

Central AL Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan attended the council as chief guest. Veteran politician Sardar Amjad Hossain who joined AL from Jatiya Party recently, Rajshahi city AL Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, former state minister Prof Zennatun Nesa attended the council as special guests.

Addressing the council, Abdul Mannan asked party men to identify the troublemakers and threatened them with expulsion.

He said there is no room for hoodlums in the party. Any body creating any trouble or discrediting in the party with face disciplinary action, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Jubo League, as part of its countrywide agitation programme, brought out a procession in Barisal city on Thursday demanding trial of persons responsible for the August 21 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina's rally in Dhaka.