

LEADERS TELL RALLY MARKING ONE YEAR OF SYLHET BOMB ATTACKS

# Govt inaction proves its blueprint to crush AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Central leaders of Awami League at a big public meeting in the city Sunday evening blasted government's failure to nab the culprits involved in the grenade and bomb attacks in Sylhet including the one on an AL rally on August 7.

The alliance government could not make any headway in probe into any of the incidents but harassed opposition leaders and activists by falsely implicating them in cases.

A number of AL men and a police official were killed while the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh was injured in the attacks, speakers at the meeting said.

Sylhet city AL Publicity Secretary Mohammad Ibrahim was killed and 50 others were injured in a grenade attack, made minutes after a party meeting ended at Gulshan Centre on August 7.

Sylhet City Corporation Mayor and city AL President Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran chaired the rally, held at the City Point. It was addressed by, among others

Opposition Whip Abdus Shahid, Suranjit Sengupta MP, AMA Muhi, former lawmaker Sultan Mohammad Mansur, district AL president ANM Shafique, Nurul Islam Nahid, Syeda Zebunnesa Haque and city AL General Secretary Misbahuddin Siraj.

The speakers alleged that bomb attacks on Awami League rallies and leaders prove that the ruling alliance is out to crush the opposition.

Many party men including front ranking leaders SAMS Kibria and Ivy Rahman have been killed and many others are now behind bars in false cases. But AL is getting stronger with public support day by day, they said. The government could not prove a single allegation against any of the AL men falsely implicated in the cases, they said.

Rather, BNP supporters' involvement has been proved in Kibria murder, they claimed.

Whip Abdus Shahid said the government also failed to ensure security of religious places like the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA).

Several incidents of bomb and grenade blast took place in the shrine in recent years.

The Whip said the administration also failed to ensure security of the British envoy but later tried to implicate opposition men in the incident, he added.

The August 21 carnage that claimed life of a number of AL leaders including Ivy Rahman in the capital and the murder of Kibria and four others in Habiganj are part of a plan to eliminate AL leaders, he alleged.

Suranjit Sengupta said, ruling BNP should now concentrate to 'keep its house in order'.

"Saifur Rahman's house is in flames which will not be extinguished soon. It will spread".

Suranjit reiterated his party's allegation that Law Minister Moudud Ahmed and State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar made gross irregularities in freeing BNP cadre Jhinto from a double murder case. "Whatever they say now is not acceptable as per law", the veteran AL leader said.

He claimed that BNP is not accepting proposals for caretaker and electoral reforms because it knows these will bring its "sure defeat" in the next parliamentary election.

"We will compel them to accept the reform proposals", he asserted.

He alleged that the alliance government is playing a mysterious role in probe into the grenade and bomb attack incidents because "its Taleban Bahini" is behind all these, done with a motive to crush the opposition.

Criticising the activities of Rab, Cobra, Cheeta and other law enforcing agencies, he said extra judicial killing can never be supported in any democratic society. It is violation of Constitution and law.

AMA Muhi said, a fundamentalist militant group blessed by BNP and the administration is active in Sylhet region. It was involved in all the attacks but the government never tried sincerely to nab its members.



PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous people from 16 northern districts brought out a colourful procession in Dinajpur town yesterday as part for International Indigenous Day programmes.

KHULNA-JESSORE REGION

## 8 BJMC jute mills get Tk 8 cr to resume production

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) has sanctioned Tk eight crore for eight state-owned jute mills in Khulna Jessore region to resume production.

The mills were laid off due to severe financial crisis.

Officials at the local BJMC office told this correspondent yesterday that they got a fax message from the Dhaka head office on Thursday about sanction of the amount. Authorities of the eight mills have also been informed.

The money will be disbursed to Platinum Jute Mill, Peoples Jute Mill, Eastern Jute Mill, Aleem Jute Mill, Star Jute Mill and Sonali Jute Mill in Khulna and Jute Carpeting Mill and Jessore Jute Industries in Jessore.

These mills were laid off at different times early this year due

to fund shortage and raw material crisis.

But the officials said each of the mills requires at least Tk four crore now to resume and continue production for a month.

The mill officials are in a fix what to do with the money, whether to pay arrears salaries or to buy jute, they said.

The sanction followed submission of a report to the BJMC Chairman during his visit to Khulna on July 9 this year, which had said Tk 32 crore would be required by the eight mills to keep those running for a month.

Project Directors of these jute mills are not satisfied with the small amount of money given by the government.

"It is a farce in the name of reopening the mills", said the Project Director of Peoples Jute Mill.

## Reopen mills, save jute

Speakers tell Khulna roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Speakers at a Roundtable here have expressed their grave concern over what they termed an 'international conspiracy against Bangladesh's jute and jute mills'.

All the mills are closed at a time when jute marketing season has started they said and demanded immediate government steps to reopen the jute mills.

They also called upon all stakeholders including jute growers to unite to save the golden fibre and the mills based on it.

The Dainik Purbanchal published from Khulna organised the roundtable on Friday at its office.

Moderated by Dainik Purbanchal Editor Liaquat Ali, the roundtable was addressed by, among others, Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Munir Ahmed, Greater Khulna Development Action Co-ordination Committee leader Haider Gazi Salahuddin Runu, Mohsin Jute Mill Manager Mill Anwarul Momin, prominent labour leader Sarder Motaaharuddin, labour leader and Khulna Workers Party General Secretary Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, prominent jute

exporter Fazlur Rahman, NGO executives Kazi Wahiduzzaman and Rafiqul Islam Khokon, social worker Shutapa Bedagya and Chief Reporter of Dainik Purbanchal Amiyu Kanti Pal.

They said the government has turned its back to jute when demand for the environment-friendly fibre is increasing in the world. The government is acting on the advice of World Bank, they claimed.

They demanded removal of all corrupt officials and CBA leaders from Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) and its mills and suggested formation of 'monitoring cell' to ensure transparency in running the mills.

They urged the government to explore the possibility of diversified use of jute and promote handicrafts and other products made of jute.

Editor of The Daily Tribune, Begum Ferdusi, Khulna Press Club President Shaikh Abu Hasan, Prof Anwarul Kadir, former lawmaker Enayet Ali and shrimp exporter Kazi Belayet Hossain were also present, among others, at the roundtable.

## Jute looted from boat

A CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Robbers looted about 100 maunds of jute on board a boat on the Jamuna river at Ratagram under Kazipur upazila in Sirajganj district yesterday.

Police said the engine boat with the jute and four traders was going to Narsingdi from Chilmari Ghat in Kurigram.

When the boat reached Patagram, a gang of robbers numbering 15 to 20 intercepted the boat.

They attacked the traders, snatched Tk 20,000, tossed them into the river and took away the boat along with the jute.

Traders Alef, 35, Hamidul, 28, Sanu 25, and Fakir Ali 30 were rescued by other boats and taken to a nearby clinic, police said. The traders were later admitted to a local hospital.

## Youth killed in feud over toll money

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A youth was hacked to death in Race Course area in the town Friday night in a feud over share of toll money.

Police recovered the body next morning and arrested two suspects—Sharif mahamud, 22 and Jamal Hossain—of the area for killing Md Shahed, 22.

## Constitutional recognition to rights demanded

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

International Indigenous Day was observed here with a call to the government to take steps for constitutional recognition of their rights and protection of their traditional culture.

Several thousand indigenous people from Dinajpur and other districts gathered in the town to participate in various programmes marking the day.

The day was observed in a festive mood through various programmes including rally, cultural presentation and discussion meeting.

At around 12 noon, they brought out a colourful procession with banners and festoons in hand and marched the streets of Dinajpur. The pro-

cession was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Surut Zaman.

After the procession, a big rally was held on the premises of Santal Education Center in the town. Dinajpur Municipal Chairman Safiqul Haque Chutu was present as a chief guest while Nirmal Shoren was the special guest at the rally.

At the rally, indigenous leaders put forward a 16-point demand to the government which included constitutional recognition to their rights, right to education through their mother tongue, end to alleged encroachment of their lands in different areas by Bangalees and their representation in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Speakers at the rally said Bangladesh has a very small community of indigenous people. They want to live in peace with Bangalees. But vested quarters at places occupy their lands. The government can easily stop this.

After the rally, a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister was handed over to the Deputy Commissioner.

They also called upon all indigenous communities in the country to unite to realise their demands.

The rally was presided by Victor Lakra and addressed by, among others, Moazzem Hossain, Orium Tudu, Shandha Malo, Dr. Diezandra Nath Roy and Bhagabata Tudu.

## Rescuing the arsenic-hit

GSK installs 2 plants in a Satkhira village to supply pure drinking water

ABU AHMED, Satkhira

A multinational pharmaceutical company has finally come forward to give succour to the people of Kolaroa upazila, where all the tube wells are contaminated with arsenic beyond permissible level.

It is supplying arsenic-free water in Kaila village, the worst affected area. A large number of people in the area are affected with various diseases as the level of arsenic in groundwater is between 0.50 and 0.70 against the WHO permissible level of 0.05.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has installed two arsenic removal plants wherefrom hundreds of

men, women and children also from far away villages are taking drinking water.

The level of arsenic was detected in a survey conducted by a local NGO in co-operation with Public Health Engineering Department (PHE) under the Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project in 2001.

Observing the alarming situation, the GSK came forward and took up a project at the initiative of its Communication Manager Dr Ashok Kumar Roy.

The two community-based plants have been set up on the premises of Kaila High School and Kaila Primary School at a cost of

Tk 5 lakh.

Each project includes an over head tank, water treatment plant and a deep tube well.

The two plants purify about 2400 litres of water a day and supply it to villagers, who pay only Tk 10 per family a month. It is not a business venture. The money thus collected is spent to run the two plants.

A community-based body styled Association for Arsenic Mitigation formed by the villagers manages the two plants. It is headed by Kaila High School Headmaster Abdur Rouf.

GSK has also placed Tk one lac with a local bank as fixed deposit in favour of the committee on condition that it will draw the monthly interest only to meet monthly expenditure. "We have so far covered 450 out of 500 families in Kaila village under the project," Abdur Rouf told this correspondent during a recent visit to the village.

"We will be able to cover the rest 50 families under the project soon", he said.

The villagers are also being motivated not to use arsenic contaminated water.

The community-based association has been formed to ensure participation of all the villagers so that they can run the plants in future, Dr. Roy told this correspondent.

This is the first attempt by GSK to combat arsenicosis in the country and more will come up in future, he noted.

Some of the villagers said women no longer have to walk miles for a pitcher of water.

Middle aged Rahima Khatun of the village said GSK has saved the villagers from a serious problem and being gradually affected with arsenicosis and other incurable fatal diseases.

## Touchstone statue seized in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Detective Branch Police Sunday night recovered a Tk one crore 'Shiblinga' made of touchstone from a house in Cement Crossing area in the city. It weighs 50 kilograms.

Police arrested six persons including a police source from different parts of the city and the district and also recovered six cell phones from their possession.

The arrested persons are Abdus Salam, 60, of Chagachhar in Dohazari; Iqbal Hossain Jewel, 25, of Doulat Khan in Bhola; Mohammad Faruk, 32, of Dakkhin-Madhyam Haliashahar; Mohammad Shahed, 30, of Shikalbaha under Karnaphuli thana in Chittagong; Shyamol Majumder, 25, of Binajuri in Raozan and Rakhal Chandra Dhar, 35, of DC Road, West Bakalia in Chittagong. Of them, Faruk was a police source. They are being quizzed in DB custody, police said.

Tipped off, a DB team headed by Assistant Commissioner AKM

## Kabir gets GPA-5



Md Hossain Kabir, son of newspaper hawker Anwar Ali Sikdar, got GPA-5 in this year's SSC examination from Bandar Boys High School in Chittagong.



Mosharrar Hossain Meazi raided a rented house at Ali Bhavan at Moqbul Mistri Road in Cement Crossing area at around 10.00 pm Sunday and recovered the Shiblinga.

Police said Faruk on Friday informed AC (DB) Mosharrar about the Shiblinga. Mosharrar then rented two rooms of Hotel Al-Faisal posing as a border and invited the gang members there for a 'deal'.

Some BD members took position in the hotel and plainclothed policemen were deployed outside.

When three of the gang came, the DB team took them to the DB office. After quizzing for about four hours, they divulged everything. Mosharrar told newsmen yesterday.

Police then arrested them from different areas of the city and the district, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

People taking arsenic-free water from a treatment plant at Kaila village in Kolaroa upazila in Satkhira district, set up by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)