



Police obstructing an Awami League procession led by Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, brought out during hartal hours yesterday to protest Wednesday's bomb blasts across the country.

Oust protectors of fanatic forces from power

Tofael tells Comilla public meeting

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Awami League (AL) Presidium member Tofael Ahmed alleged that the alliance government is pushing the country towards establishment of a fundamentalist state.

Time has come to resist the fundamentalist forces, he said and called upon the people to rally round Awami League for this. This government should be dislodged to resist the fundamentalist forces because it is protecting them, he said.

The "corrupt and inefficient" four-party alliance government has already tarnished the image of the country abroad. It is now planning to establish a fundamentalist state, he alleged.

The people who made the string of bomb blasts on Wednesday thrived under the protection of the government, he claimed. So, the

government is to be blamed for this.

He was addressing a public meeting at Comilla Town Hall ground on Friday marking the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Peace will not be established in the country till removal of this government from power, he said.

Organised by the district unit of Bangladesh Chitra League, it was addressed by, among others, former lawmakers Abdul Hakim, Tajul Islam and AHM Mostafa Kamal (Lotus Kamal), former Whip and district AL acting general secretary Mojibul Haque, News Editor of ATN Bangla Noyeem Nizam and BCL central Secretary General Nazrul Islam Babu.

Tofael claimed that law and order had started deteriorating under the rule of the alliance government as the ruling party men are sheltering criminals. Ruling party men are also

involved in acts of violence and extortion.

But most of crimes go without trial as the government has also politicised the judiciary, the former minister alleged.

The government failed to arrest any of the killers of Shah A. M. S Kibria but is harassing Awami League activists in the name of investigation. This is only to cover up the murder, he alleged.

Tofael said the government is killing Awami League leaders and activists by engaging police and Rab. Bangla Bhai men are also killing our party workers under the protection of ruling party men.

Realising a sure defeat in the next parliamentary election, the alliance government is now trying to cling to power through repression, he said.

Tea holds high hopes in hills

Plantation starts in Bandarban, to spread to 11,000 hectares in CHT in four years

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU,
Bandarban

"This will change life in hills", said an enthusiastic Mong Kew Ching. He has planted tea saplings in his two gardens covering 10 hectares of land in Majherpara area in Bandarban Sadar upazila in the current monsoon season.

Mong hopes the fertile barren lands left uncared for decades will now be properly utilised and bring fortune for the hill people.

Tea plantation will generate activities and create jobs in different fields, he told this correspondent during a recent visit to his garden. He said he has already engaged about a dozen workers to nurse the tender plants as per advice of experts of Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) and Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI). Some BTRI experts from Srimolgol in Sylhet are now in Bandarban to assist tea planters.

Mong visualises a scene when scrubs in the hills will be replaced with lush green tea gardens, opening up great prospects also for the country.

The government is giving financial and technical assistance for raising tea gardens in Bandarban as part of a plan for the whole of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

But AKM Jahangir did not wait for government's financial assistance.

"I planted tea saplings on my own", he said at his garden in Chemi in the Sadar upazila.

"I think there is a bright future for tea plantation in the area", he said.

"There are lot of hassles in getting loan. So I started without taking any loan. Tea experts are assisting me", he said. Some other investors have also become interested to raise tea gardens, he said.

Mong and Jahangir are among some enthusiastic people in Bandarban who are raising gardens under a government plan to promote small private tea holdings in the CHT.

About 175 hectares of land have been brought under tea plantation in Shualok, Dolupara, Majherpara,

Goaliakhola and Chemi areas in the Sadar upazila in the current monsoon.

The programme began this year. So far, 35 landowners have planted tea saplings on each of their five-hectare holdings, BTB sources said. A total of 550 hectares will be brought under tea plantation in Bandarban this year, they said.

Tea plucking is expected after four years.

About 70 per cent of owners of the holdings are indigenous people and the rest are Bangalees, they said.

BTB undertook the venture after a

programme.

A loan of Tk 1.26 lakh is given per hectare. The loan will be disbursed in five installments. Besides, Tk 15,000 is given to cultivators as grant to buy tea seedlings and cuttings.

The BTB has so far distributed two lakh cuttings and 10,000 seedlings among tea planters.

They said the survey revealed that 46850 hectares of land in CHT are suitable for tea cultivation. All these lands will be brought under tea plantation in phases, they added.

In the first phase, 6332 hectares in four upazilas in Khagrachari, 3475 in three upazilas in Bandarban and

in CHT, they hoped.

Meanwhile, tea cultivators in Bandarban have formed an organisation styled Bandarban Tea Estate Owners Association led by Prof Md Osman Ghani as its president.

Talking to this correspondent, he said though tea plantation was inaugurated in Bandarban in 2003, nothing fruitful came forth. It was done just to make the people aware that tea can be cultivated here.

But now, with the government providing financial and technical assistance, many landowners are

preparing their lands for this. Many of them have collected saplings and cuttings from nurseries of BTB and Tea Research Institute, and even from different tea estates in Sylhet, he said. This sector has a bright prospect in the CHT districts because many investors are coming forward, he said.

In 2003, the then commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury had inaugurated tea plantation at a garden in Bandarban.



Tea seedlings being raised in a nursery of Bangladesh Tea Board in Bandarban (left) and a plant in a garden.



PHOTO: STAR

PATUAKHALI JUBO LEAGUE LEADER MURDER 8 chargesheeted but main accused dropped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Sadar thana police yesterday submitted charge sheet in Jubo League leader Palash Mridha murder case.

Eight out of 15 accused including main accused Patuakhali Pourasabha Chairman Mostaq Ahmed have been dropped from the charge sheet, filed 38 days after the murder.

Sub-inspector Noresh, investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet.

Palash Mridha was killed on July 11 in a factional clash at a council of Patuakhali district Jubo League.

Advocate Sultan Ahmed Mridha, father of palash and a former chairman of the pourasabha, filed a case accusing 15 people including incumbent Pourasabha Chairman Mostaq Ahmed.

The chargesheeted persons are Jahangir, Rinku, Reaz, Shoeb, Anisur Rahman, Jasim Uddin Tito and Tofazzel.

10-yr-old boy remanded for 'bomb attack'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Police yesterday took 10 year-old 'Tokai Sagor' and his relative Tuhi, 15, on three days' remand on bomb blast charge.

'Tokai Sagor' was arrested from Jessore town just after the bomb blasts on Wednesday. Acting on his statement, police arrested Tuhi from Lohagara in Narail district Thursday night.

Police produced them before a Magistrate Court in Jessore town yesterday and prayed for seven days' remand. The court granted three days' remand.

Road barricade to protest extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Agitated traders barricaded the Patuakhali-Kuakata road at Hetalia Badghat for several hours after extortionists looted and ransack some shops in Patuakhali town yesterday.

Ten traders were injured, three of them critically in clashes with the extortionists. Three of them -- Alamgir, 32, Razaul, 20, and Munsur Ali, 17 -- were admitted to Patuakhali General Hospital.

The businessmen said, a gang of extortionists numbering 15 demanded Tk one lakh from them as toll at about 1.30 pm. On denial, they attacked them with sharp weapons and ransacked the shops.

After the incident, businessmen shut down their shops and created barricade on the road. Traffic on the road remained stopped till writing this report at 5 pm.

Avilash Chakma on 5-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangamati

Avilash Chakma, 32, a notorious criminal, was taken on five days' remand yesterday in connection with the murder of Biru Chakma, a former member of Shanti Bahini, in April.

Avilash is also the prime accused in the case for abduction of three foreign nationals from Kalapahar in Rangamati in 2001. He was the mastermind behind the abduction, police said earlier.

Avilash was arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on August 14 from Lal Dighirpara area in Chittagong and handed over to Naniarchar police on the following day, police said.

Police had prayed for 10 days' remand but First Class Magistrate Zahir Raihan granted five days' remand.

Avilash of Hazachhari village in Naniarchar upazila faces nine cases for crimes including murders, abduction and extortion. He was absconding for long, police said.

Honey collection a good business in 3 N-dists

350 MT collected in Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon annually, BSCIC says

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Honey collection is now a profitable occupation for many in the district.

Many farmers have taken to the profession as it is more profitable than agriculture.

"I took it as a profession as it earns me more than farming", said Biren Sarker of Biral upazila in the district. He said he is collecting honey for the last four years.

He has 75 honey collection boxes. He places those in different areas, preferably in crop fields or forests.

He now collects around two kilograms of honey a day from 75 boxes.

The collection is almost double in winter season when mustard seeds are cultivated in a massive scale. The yield is also good when mango and litchi trees sprout, he said.

"I invested a little but I make good earnings. I earn between Tk 50,000

and 70,000 a year", Biren told this correspondent during a visit to the area.

Like Biren, Rahman of Birampur upazila is also collecting honey through several boxes. He said honey collection is better than agriculture as a profession.

Biren and Rahman are among several hundred people in the district engaged in commercial honey collection.

Around 350 tonnes of honey is collected in Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts in a year, according to officials of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in Dinajpur.

They said the quantity will increase as more farmers turning to the profession in the three districts.

But the collectors have problems in preservation and marketing of their honey. They supply the collected honey to traders at low prices as they do not have any processing

and preservation facility, the officials said.

Till last year, BSCIC provided training to about 200 professional honey collectors and supplied them honey boxes at nominal prices, they said. They were given 15 days' short training on bee keeping.

The BSCIC training programme, now stopped, will resume next year, they said.

Some NGOs including BRAC is now training intending farmers. BRAC sources said they so far trained 150 bee keepers in the three districts and provided them with instruments.

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7x2

12x2



Boxes for honey collection in a shed of a bee-keeper in Dinajpur.

PHOTO: STAR