

Protest against Netrakona blasts



Clockwise from top left: City Awami League, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Udichi and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal stage demonstrations in the city yesterday protesting bomb attacks in Netrakona.

PM concerned at Netrakona bomb attacks

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep concern and grief at yesterday's bomb attack in Netrakona that left seven people dead.

In a message the prime minister, who is in the Saudi Arabia to attend the OIC Summit, expressed her deep shock at the attack and the fatalities.

She also expressed deep sympathy to the members of the affected families and asked the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for proper treatment of the injured persons.

Urging the people to remain calm, awake and united, Khaleda Zia said the conspirators are getting desperate because of the all-out drive to combat bomb attacks.

The masterminds of these bomb attacks will be resisted with all force she said and sought support of all in this regard.

The prime minister is scheduled to return home this morning.

Khaleda holds talks with Qurei

UNB, Makkah

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia held talks with Palestine Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei on Wednesday night at Al Safa Palace on the sidelines of the OIC extraordinary summit.

They discussed latest developments in Palestine and Middle East peace process.

Khaleda reaffirmed Bangladesh's support to the cause of Palestine and stressed the importance of the peace process in the Middle East.

Qurei apprised Khaleda of the latest situation in Palestine.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul-Gheit also called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and discussed how to strengthen OIC and the Middle East peace process.

Social mobilisation a must to prevent dowry

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Social mobilisation is a must to change age-old mindsets and cultural norms to establish a dowry-free society, said Minister for Women and Children Affairs Khurshid Zahan Haque at a workshop yesterday.

"The government initiative alone is not enough to prevent dowry. It needs united efforts of all citizens including members of the local government, NGOs and civil society," she said while inaugurating the workshop.

The minister said the government is trying to combat the dowry through empowerment of women at grassroots level by providing education and technical skill.

The workshop on 'Dowry-related issues' was organised by UNFPA and the women and children affairs ministry at a city hotel.

Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the prime minister, said despite adequate laws and religious prohibition, dowry-related violence is on the rise in the country.

He stressed the need for strict enforcement of laws and vigorous campaign by public and religious leaders including teachers and mass media to build up anti-dowry opinion among the parents and other family members including young generation.

"It is unfortunate that many parents think that they are buying happiness and security for their daughters in exchange of money or other things demanded by the bridegroom's family," Dr Siddiqui said.

Britt Hagstrom, Swedish ambassador in Dhaka, said dowry is a deep-rooted cultural, political and economic issue which is to be addressed with the involvement of many sectors.

Wolfgang Vollmann, Unesco representative, said some religious laws and social customs are behind the discrimination against women which encourages dowry.

Suneeta Mukherjee, UNFPA representative, said though Islam doesn't permit dowry, the rate of dowry-related violence is on the rise in the country.

Deepak Gupta of UNFPA, in a keynote paper, suggested policy dialogue, ensuring gender sensitive legislative environment and enforcing existing laws to help prevent dowry.

At the workshop, two dowry victims Nazma Begum, 20, and Bakul Mandal, 35, narrated in emotion-choked voice the repression on them for dowry.

They urged the government to set a timeframe to dispose off the dowry-related cases.

A K M Shamsuddin, secretary to women and children affairs ministry, chaired the workshop.

Media urged to help ensure food security for ultra-poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a seminar yesterday called on the media to play a vital role in ensuring food security for the ultra-poor.

They called for a stronger collaboration between the media and development partners to improve the policy and programmes to address the chronic food insecurity of the poorest and the most vulnerable.

They also underscored the need for putting the issue higher on the public agenda.

The World Food Programme (WFP), which has been operating various programmes in the country to ensure food security for the ultra-poor, arranged the national media seminar in the city yesterday.

With 30 million hardcore poor, who does not have food security, Bangladesh ranked third in the world just after China and India, said the speakers.

They said advocacy reporting on the problems and their solutions in this sector could help the government and the development partners to tackle food insecurity.

At the seminar, the WFP launched a media award for reporting on food security and hunger.

"We hope the award will encourage the media professionals to capture and echo the sufferings of the 30 million people in the country who cannot afford even two square meals," said WFP Representative Douglas Broderick.

The award will be announced on World Food Day in October every year. Investigative or analytical reports published in the print media or broadcast on electronic media during the period from August 1, 2005 to September 2006 can be submitted as entries for next year's awards.

Manzurul Hsan Bulbul, executive editor of the daily Sangbad, Usha Mishra, senior advisor of WFP, and Emamul Haque of WFP, presented papers on the 'Media and Food Security'.

Prof Shakhawat Ali Khan of Dhaka University moderated the seminar while Sukanta Gupta Alok, news editor of the daily Bhorer Kagoj, also spoke.

INT'L ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY TODAY Dhaka yet to sign UN convention

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Amid Dhaka's reluctance to sign the UN convention against corruption, the International Anti-Corruption Day will be observed in the country as elsewhere in the globe today.

"The Law Minister and the Foreign Minister will have to reply to the nation why Bangladesh did not sign the convention," Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, a trustee of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), told BDNEWS.

He said Law Minister Moudud Ahmed at a seminar marking the day last year said he will look into why Bangladesh did not sign the convention and take steps to sign the UN convention.

"Since then we don't know what the government did in this regard. This kind of thing happens when there is dishonesty on the part of the government," he added.

The TIB trustee said they repeatedly wrote to the government, but "the government did not respond."

"We did not hear anything that parliamentary committee took any initiative in this regard," said Prof Muzaffer.

Marking the International Anti-Corruption Day, the TIB will once again urge the government to ratify the United Nations convention.

The day is observed on December 9 to mark the signing conference for the "UN Convention against Corruption" held in Mérida, Mexico in 2003.

On the occasion of the day, TIB has organised a seminar on "corruption and human insecurity in Bangladesh" at 10:00am at Jatiya Press Club today.

The seminar will be followed by distribution of prizes among the winners of essay and debate competitions on the day while cultural function will be held at the same venue at 2:15pm.

TIB officials said similar programmes will also be held in 18 places, including Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet and Rangpur.

It has also released some TV advertisements urging people to resist corruption.

On the occasion, the Transparency International will launch "Global Corruption Barometer 2005" and TV advertisement "Think Again!" at a press conference in Paris, France.

The Global Corruption Barometer 2005, based on a Gallup poll conducted for the TI will reveal widespread and ingrained pessimism about corruption around the globe.

Netrakona bomb attacks condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political, socio-cultural and human rights organisations have condemned the yesterday's deadly bomb blasts in Netrakona leaving at least seven people dead and injuring 46 others.

The suicide squad of banned Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) carried out the brutal attacks in front of the district office of Udichi (a leading cultural body).

Leaders and workers of the organisations also brought out processions just after the spread of the news of the blasts.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi organised a rally at the city's Muktangan to protest the attack in which Khwaja Haidar Hossain, assistant general secretary of district udichi, was killed.

Udichi also announced a two-day programmes including rallies, processions, token hunger strikes, and black flag hoisting across the country.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Biswas, in a statement, said no government initiative would be effective unless Jamaat is removed from the alliance-government.

The militants this time proved their strength by carrying out suicidal attacks in the hometown of the home minister, the statement added.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad said the militants are now desperate to carry out the brutal bomb attacks across the country as the government has resorted to a double standard policy to prevent the militancy.

The general people should now build up mass-resistance against the militants' activities without depending on the government and administration.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manzurul Hsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the nation will have to rise once again like 1971 to prevent the militants and communal forces.

The CPB also organised a rally and brought out a procession protesting the blasts.

At the rally, CPB leaders said the brutal bombings will not stop unless anti-liberation elements involved in militancy are removed from the cabinet and administration.

Left-leaning Five-Party in a statement said the latest bomb

blasts substantiate the popular claim that the government is involved with the attackers.

Joint Secretary General of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) Firoj M Hasan urged the government to remove those involved in militants' activities to prove its willingness to stop the bomb attacks.

Leaders of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal at a protest rally yesterday demanded resignation of the home minister for his failure to stop the bomb attacks.

The other organisations that condemned the bomb blasts and demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits included Bangladesh Awami Swachchasebok League, Dhaka City Awami League, Bangladesh Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal, Progotishil Chhatra Jote, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Sylhet Division Development Action Council, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Bam Ganotantrik Front, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Party (Manju), Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, Doctors for Health and Environment, and Bangladesh Abrititi Samanya Parishad.

Our RU Correspondent adds: Local units of Udichi and political leaders yesterday took out a joint procession and held a rally at Gonockpara Crossing to protest the suicide bomb attacks in Netrakona.

The speakers condemned the attacks in front of Udichi office and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the militants.

They also demanded resignation of the government alleging that the attackers are operating under the shelter of a partner in the ruling alliance.

They threatened to go for tougher agitation if the government fails to ensure security of cultural activists, judges and lawyers.

Presided over by Rajshahi City Udichi President Prof Alamgir Malek, the rally was addressed by local Peshajibi Parishad President Dr Shafiqul Alam, CPB City President Abul Kalam Azad, Workers' Party leader Advocate Entajul Haque Babu, RU Udichi acting president Zahid Hossain and Journalist Jahangir Alam Akkas.

Bar Council chalks out action plan today

UNB, Dhaka

In the wake of undeterred bomb attacks across the country, an extended meeting of Bangladesh Bar Council, a statutory body regulating lawyers, will be held at 9:00am today.

Bar presidents and secretaries from across the country will attend the meeting that will discuss the recurring bomb attacks targeting courts and killing judges, lawyers, police and justice-seekers by Islamic militants.

The meeting will chalk out an action plan to fight the growing militancy that gripped the nation, sources said.

The meeting will be held in camera and none, except the presidents and secretaries, of the 82 affiliated bar associations will be allowed to attend it.

Meanwhile, Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali, ex-officio chairman of Bar Council, has raised a point of order challenging the validity of convening such a meeting.

In a note of dissent, he said the Bar Council Order, 1972 and its rules do not provide for convening such a meeting of the Bar Associations.

"Although its chairman opposed the meeting, it will be held as per the schedule," Bar Council Vice Chairman Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud told UNB over phone yesterday evening.

Obituary

Taufique Siraj, chairman of Master Garments Ltd, passed away in Bangkok General Hospital yesterday at the age of 73, says a press release.

He hailed from East Bhadesvar at Golapganj in Sylhet, will be buried at his family graveyard in East Bhadesvar today.

He is survived by his wife, daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren. His daughter Tasneem Siraj Mahboob is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Dhaka University.

Jahangir Alam Bachchu

Md Jahangir Alam Bachchu, a social worker of Faridabad and an advisor of Moitree Samaj Kalyan Sangha, passed away due to cardiac arrest at the National Hospital in the city on December 6 at the age of 50, says a press release.

He left behind his mother, two sisters and three brothers to mourn his death.

His qulhwani will be held at his residence at Faridabad Lane in the city after Asr prayers on December 10.

Mustari Khan gets Time Magazine Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Time Magazine has honoured Mustari Khan of Bangladesh as one of the global hero for her outstanding performance in introducing innovative systems to develop health services among the poor in the country.

Mustari, co-founder of the Concerned Women for Family Development (CWFD), was one of the ten recipients around the world who received the award at Time Magazine's Global Health Summit in New York on November 1-3.

The summit was organised with ten key questions including why around 10 lakh children die in the world every year, whether global health issue should be considered as charity or business, and could drug be accessible to all.

Mustari shared her experience and feelings about the award with the media at a function organised by the American Centre at its office in the city yesterday.

She said, "The feeling of receiving the Time Magazine Award is quite different from those of receiving the Margaret Sanger Award, the Leadership Award and the Health Leadership Award which I received earlier, because it is the first time that I received an award from a media through which my organisation and I will be able to reach many people with our health services."

Mustari also spoke about how her organisation has been working through difficulties and reaching around 15 lakh people across the country through 19 clinics with the assistance of the USAID.

The USAID has been supporting the CWFD since 1976 to provide quality family planning and health services. Recently it has included adolescents' programme and gender violence issue in its projects.

Mission Director of USAID Bangladesh Gene V George, and Information and Communication Specialist Troy Beckman of the American Centre were present on the occasion.

Five cops hurt in N'ganj road accident

BDNEWS, Narayanganj

Five policemen were injured in a road accident in Narayanganj yesterday.

The accident occurred when a Doudkandi-bound passenger bus hit a police van from behind on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Mailbagh area under Bandar thana.

The injured are Subedar Razzak, constable Syedur Rahman, Mizanur Rahman, Suruj and Khorshed.

The injured were shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital in Dhaka from the Narayanganj Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Police arrested bus driver Nurul Islam Lebu.



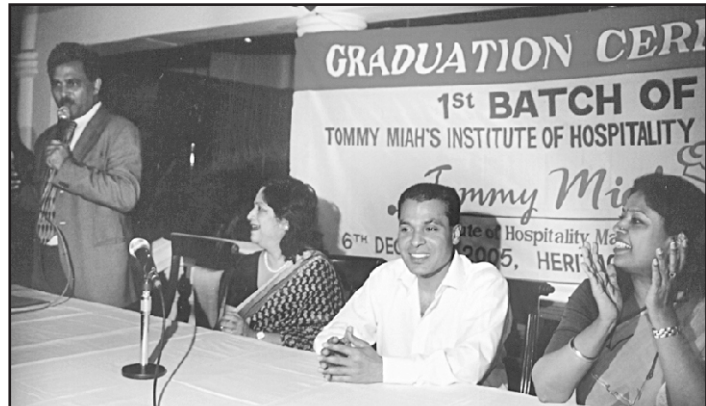
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Advertisement for DHAKA TODAY featuring Medexpo-2005, Geographical confce, and Botanical conference.

Advertisement for WEATHER TODAY featuring a weather forecast table and a headline 'No change in temperature likely'.



Tommy Miah's Institute of Hospitality Management arranged a graduation ceremony for the first batch of food and beverage production diploma course at Heritage Restaurant of Gulshan in the city recently.