

9-POINT DEMAND
Union councils demonstrate across country

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Union councils held demonstrations and brought out processions at district headquarters across the country yesterday to press their nine-point demand, according to reports from our correspondents.

Their demands include enhancement of budgetary allocation for development activities under local bodies, authority to collect taxes and lease markets, water bodies and government lands and an end to 'interference' in their activities by local lawmakers.

They are also demanding fixation of salaries at Tk 5,000 and Tk 3,000 for union council chairmen and members respectively and authority to recruit village police.

Our RU Correspondent reported that chairmen and members of 71 union councils in Rajshahi district held a rally, brought out a procession and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner to press their demands.

The procession, led by Rajshahi Divisional Convener of Bangladesh Union Council Forum, Bazley Rezbi Al Hasan Munzil, followed a rally held on Rajshahi court premises with Puthia Union Council Chairman Waezul Islam in the chair.

Speakers at the rally alleged that the government is squeezed income sources of union councils while local lawmakers are interfering in their activities. These hamper their activities.

They urged the government to fulfil their demands and threatened of tougher agitation for non-compliance.

In Gaibandha chairmen and members of 82 union councils in held a rally in front of the Shaheed Miner with Amanul Huq Mona in the chair, our correspondent reported.

Similar programmes were also organised in 15 other northern districts.

Speakers at the rally urged the government to turn local bodies at grassroots levels as centres for all development activities.

In Rangpur, the Union Council leaders paraded streets on the town after a rally and handed over a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner.

At the rally, they urged the government to empower local bodies as per Articles 59, and 60 of the Constitution and hold upazila council election following a High Court directive issued in 1992.

Indigenous people decide not to observe Boishabi this year

Leaders allege lack of security in hill districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

Indigenous leaders here yesterday announced that they would not observe their biggest traditional festival Boishabi this year due to lack of security.

Boishabi festival, marking beginning of the Bangla new year, falls on April 12-14.

The indigenous people also took out a procession in Khagrachhari town yesterday protesting recent attacks on them in different areas. They blamed a section of ruling BNP leaders for the attacks.

The procession brought out from Marma Unnayan Sangshad premises at Pankhaiyapara parade streets of the town. The processionists chanted slogans demanding security of indigenous people, withdrawal the Bangalees and Army from hills and punishment to those responsible for the March 29 and April 3 clashes in Gamaritili, Komolchhari, Maichchhari and Mohalchhari in the district.

After the procession, Marma leaders submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Commissioner demanding immediate steps for security in the hills.

The decision not to observe the Boishabi was announced at a press conference by Democratic Youth

Forum (DYF), an organisation of indigenous youths, held at Marma Unnayan Sangshad.

DYF President Dipankar Chakma, its secretary Mithun Chakma, Hill Women Federation President Sonali Chakma and its secretary Rina Dewan addressed the press conference.

They said the festival will not be observed as life and property of indigenous people are not safe any

more.

At least 60 indigenous people were injured in the clashes on March 29 and April 3 and two women were raped, they alleged.

On Tuesday, leaders of Sachetan Jum Samaj, an indigenous organisation, at a press conference at Khagrachhari alleged that most of the clashes took place as a section of Bangalee settlers enjoying backing from ruling parties tried to grab lands

of hill people. They demanded immediate settlement of land disputes.

Sources in the areas said panic prevails among indigenous communities though army and police are on patrol there.

Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner and Police Superintendant visited the areas on Tuesday and talked to leaders of Bangalee and indigenous communities in an effort to foster communal harmony.



PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous people led by Marma Unnayan Sangsad and Marma Students Council brought out a procession in Khagrachhari town yesterday protesting attack on them allegedly by Bangalees in some areas of the district on March 29 and April 3.

Robbers injure 35, loot night coach

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Highwaymen stabbed passengers of a Panchagarh-bound night coach and snatched money and valuables worth about Tk two lakh at Katakhalai on Bogra-Rangpur road in the early hours of Tuesday.

Police said a gang of robbers boarded the bus in the guise of passengers. As soon as it crossed Bogra town, they took control of bus robbers by wielding arms and then looted passengers.

The passengers who tried to resist miscreants were stabbed indiscriminately and beaten up. At least 35 were injured, 15 of them stabbed.

3-day hartal called to 'resist' Nizami's Satkhira visit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Tension is mounting centring the planned visit to Satkhira by Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami.

Nizami is scheduled to address public meetings at Assassuni, Shyamnagar and Satkhira Sadar upazilas on April 14, 15 and 16 respectively.

The local units of Muktijoddha Sangsad and Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, backed by some opposition political parties, have announced programmes including a 72-hour hartal from to resist the visit while the Jamaat prepares to make the visit a success.

The programmes taken up at separate meetings held last night include processions and rallies and wearing black badges by freedom fighters.

Enamul Haque Biswas and Abul Khair Sardar, convenors of Satkhira units of of Muktijoddha Sangsad and Nirmul Committee respectively told this correspondent yesterday

that they would resist Nizami's visit at any cost because of his role during the Liberation War.

They said, the people of Satkhira will never accept a 'collaborator' in the district.

Chhatra Maitry, student front of Workers Party, will also hold rallies and bring out processions in the district against Nizami's visit, sources said.

A source in Satkhira District Bus-Minibus Owners Association seeking anonymity said, they will not allow their transports for carrying people to Nizami's meetings.

BNP leader Abdur Rouf, now at loggerheads with Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque is general secretary of the association. Both are aspirants for nomination from the ruling coalition in the next parliamentary election.

On contact, Altaf Hossain, publicity secretary district Jamaat said, Nizami's programmes at Satkhira Sadar, Assassuni and Shyamnagar upazilas will be held on schedule and none will be able to resist those.

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