

Human chain protesting Ctg attack on journos

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bangabandhu Shishu Kishore Mela, Rangamati unit, organised a "human chain" near the Deputy Commissioner's office yesterday morning protesting recent police attack on journalists at Chittagong Stadium.

After the human chain, speakers at a rally said the barbaric attack on intellectuals has tarnished the image of the country.

Bitterly criticising the alliance rule, they said the government has politicised the police to fulfil their ill motives and cling to power. They said people of this country never allowed to happen such act.

Tougher action programmes will be announced if (port) DC, Ali Akbar who himself assaulted a senior newsman is transferred to Rangamati, they said.

Condemning the brutal incident they demanded stern punitive action against the police officers including Ali Akbar.

Freedom fighters, social workers, elites, NGO activists, human rights activists and local journalists took part in the human chain.

Lowest ever water flow in Padma

Share decreases as Ganges water being diverted at upper riparian points, officials allege

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Bangladesh has received the lowest ever quantity of water in the Padma this year.

The flow of the once-mighty river has decreased alarmingly due to withdrawal of water at Farakka point in India, leading to drying up of at least 15 of its tributaries.

The country got only 15,118 cusec water on an average during the last 10-day spell of water-sharing during dry season (December-April) under the agreement signed with India in 1996.

The water flow at Hardinge Bridge point yesterday was 17,000 cusec, according to an official record.

"The quantity of water at the (Farakka) point has been declining every year due to withdrawal of Ganges water at the upper riparian

through various canals by violating Article 2(2) of the treaty," Director of Joint River Commission (JRC) Mir Sajjad Hossain told a group of journalists at the Hardinge Bridge point recently.

According to historical average of the Ganges flow, Bangladesh should have got 27,633 cusec water during the period, he said during the visit by officials of Water Development Board (WDB) and JRC.

"It is true we have been receiving our own water share at the Farakka point according to the accord, but water diversion from the Ganges through various means at upper riparian points has been depriving Bangladesh of its just share", he said.

Bangladesh in a letter to India has protested the withdrawal of water and the issue will be raised at the

May 3 meeting of the Ganges Water Sharing Accord Implementation Committee, other officials said.

They said as per the agreement, Bangladesh was supposed to get at least 39,000 cusec water during every dry season, but it never got it.

Bangladesh got 29,000 cusec in 1997; 38,685 in 1998; 33,892 in 1999; 35,509 in 2000; 19,898 in 2001; 34,725 in 2003; 25,000 in 2004 and 19,000 cusec in 2005 at Hardinge Bridge point, sources said.

According to Kushtia WDB, the southwestern region of the country is fully dependent on the Padma river.

At least seven out of 15 tributaries of the Padma have already dried up. Theses are Hisna, Kaliganga, Kumar, Hamkura, Harihar, Bhairab and Chitra.



The emaciating Padma at Hardinge Bridge point. A vast area of the once-mighty river has now become grazing field.

PHOTO: STAR

Construction of a much-awaited embankment starts in Jessore

ABU BAKR SIDDIQUE, Jessore

The Water Development Board (WDB) has at last started construction of an embankment of Beel Khuksia in Jessore that will benefit over five lakh people in five upazilas in the district and one upazila in Khulna.

Work on the 12 kilometre peripheral embankment began on Thursday.

The embankment being built under WDB's Tidal River Management (TRM) project will make 1,06,000 hectares of land freed from water-logging in Keshabpur, Monirampur, Abhoynagar and Sadar upazilas in Jessore and Dumuria upazila in Khulna, allow intensive cropping on about 60,000 hectares of land, revive navigability in Harinadi (a river) and allow fish cultivation in 27 beels (water bodies), WDB sources and local people said.

WDB's Chief Engineer in South-Western Zone Abdur Razzak inaugu-

rated the work.

Presided over by WDB Executive Engineer in Jessore Division Dipok Kumar Sarkar, the inaugural function was addressed by, among others WDB engineer SK Nurul Alam, Keshabpur Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO) Mominur Rahman, president of Water Management Association Khairul Islam, and president of Water Management Federation AKM Shariful Islam.

WDB sources said local people offered 846 hectares of land for construction of the embankment styled "Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project".

The WDB took an initiative to construct the embankment last year but could not do it as land was not available from farmers, sources said.

Similar projects will be taken up subsequently in Beel Kapalia, Beel Boruna, Beel Bokor and Beel Paira in the areas, the WDB chief engineer told this correspondent.

Illegal pathological labs mushroom in Rangamati

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Unauthorised pathological laboratories and disgnostic centres that mushroomed in Rangamati hill town are doing brisk business in the last few years at the cost of patients.

Due to wrong diagnosis by the centres, patients are getting wrong treatment, at times leading to death but the authorities are unconcerned.

According to sources at the Civil Surgeon's office, 22 out of 27 pathological laboratories operating in Rangamati district have no licence. They are ill-equipped and operating illegally, also depriving the government of revenue. Fourteen of the 27 centres are in Sadar upazila.

The five centres operating with licence are Lake Site Hospital, Janata Laboratory, Dr. Lab (Severon), Nironjan Usha Memorial Hospital and Sagor Sudha Diagnostic Center, the sources said.

Owners of the illegal pathological centres are doing business allegedly in connivance with a section of dishonest health officials and doc-

tors working at government hospitals, they said.

Patients are often lured away from government hospitals with a promise for better treatment, allegedly with the help of the dishonest health officials and their agents.

Most of the people working as 'technicians' at illegal pathological centres have no training and requisite qualification. In most of the illegal disgnostic centres, health assistants perform tests and diagnose diseases, which often prove to be incorrect, sources said.

As per law, a pathologist must have a diploma from a recognised institution and undergo three years' training before working as a technician in a pathological laboratory, sources at CS' office said.

When contacted over phone, Civil Surgeon Md. Nazer said a three-member team headed by a medical officer at CS office has been formed to look into the matter.

"We have, meantime, served notices on the owners of diagnostic centres to apply for license".

Khulna Divisional Press Club Federation formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A new federation of press clubs styled 'Khulna Divisional Press Club Federation (KDPCF)' was formed at a meeting held here yesterday.

A 23-member ad hoc committee was also formed with Khulna Press Club President Alhaj Liaquat Ali as convener and General Secretary A K Hiru as its member secretary.

Earlier, a meeting was held at the VIP auditorium of the club in the morning.

Presided over by Liaquat Ali, the meeting was attended by all presidents and general secretaries of the press clubs in 10 districts of the division.

Speakers at the meeting stressed the unity of journalists sinking petty differences to fight against repression and criminal activities.

Mother, child killed after gangrape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A housewife and her six-year-old child were killed allegedly after gangrape on Thursday night at village Rumaliyarchara here.

Police quoting local people said victim Rita, 21, wife of rickshaw puller Zakir and the child were sleeping when some miscreants entered into the room by breaking open the door of the house. The miscreants raped and killed them in absence of husband Zakir.

15 get life for murder in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Fifteen people were sentenced to life imprisonment Sunday in a murder case of Baralekha upazila of the district.

District and Sessions Judge Md Shahidullah in his judgment also fined each of them Tk 50,000, in default to suffer 2 years more imprisonment.

According to the prosecution story in brief, one Jewel Alam, son of Tobarak Ali of village Barni under Baralekha upazila in Moulvibazar was attacked with sharp weapons by his opponent group of the same village over a land dispute on August 28, 2003. Jewel died on the spot.

After examining the witnesses and records the judge sentenced 15 to life imprisonment. The convicts are Nazrul Islam, Abdul Basit, Abul Ahmed, Alauddin, Abdus Shakur, Abdur Noor, Abdul Martin, Nazim Uddin, Kabir Ahmed, Enam Uddin, Martin Miah, Aslam Uddin, Malik Uddin, Afser Uddin and Helal Uddin.

Shrimp looted in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Shrimp and other fishes worth Tk 1.5 lakh were looted from a fish farm allegedly by a group of leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal (JJD) Saturday at village Patharghata in Sadar upazila, police said.

Police quoting local people said, a group led by local Juba Dal leaders swooped on the farm owned by Islam Dakat who allegedly leads a gang of robbers and beat the staff and looted shrimp and other fishes. They did it to retaliate a recent robbery, they said.

While talking to this correspondent yesterday Fuljan Bibi mother of Islam Dakat said, a group of local leaders and activists of JJD led by Merin, Kader, Jalil and Khalid looted her son's farm.

On contact, local Juba Dal leader Merin said, a gang of robbers led by Islam Dakat raided his (Merin) house on March 23 and the house of Joynagar Union Parishad chairman Tapan Saha on March 30 and looted valuables from the two houses.

"As we came to know that Dakat is catching fish from his (Islam) farm, we along others went there to catch him. Sensing their presence, Islam Dakat fled away", he added.

"We did not loot fishes rather we distributed those among the villagers", he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Summer is the season of delicious fruits. A young farmer is collecting mouthwatering lychees from his garden in Banskhal, Chittagong to sell them at local markets.

Handicraft making has changed their lifestyle

MOKLESUR RAHMAN, Kishoreganj

Handicrafts and fashionable dresses produced mostly by women in six villages in Pakundia upazila in Kishoreganj are exported to some countries in Middle East and to the USA.

Over 4000 people are now engaged in the profession, working either at small factories or at their houses.

Jasim Uddin, who took the initiative by setting up a small handicrafts workshop on his homestead at Moddha Mandarkandi village, said he earlier worked at a factory in Mirpur in Dhaka city and learnt the craft.

"Returning home, I trained up some women deserted by their husbands and set up a workshop in 1995.

"Now there are eight workshops in my village", he told this correspondent during a recent visit.

In five other villages in the union, although there are no workshops but women there produce fashionable and decorated dresses and handicrafts with cloth and accessories supplied

from Moddha Mandarkandi. Many men and women work in the village.

This correspondent also visited nearby Digam Bordhi, Photia, Kakarchar, Alamdi, Pabda and Moddha Kandi villages. Men and women were seen busy in putting ornamental thread (jory) and laying designs on sarees and three-piece dresses for women.

For the sarees and three-pieces, accessories are supplied by the buyers. Workers work on contract basis, either at workshops or at their homes.

The learning of the skill has changed the lifestyle of the people in the area.

They get between Tk 150 and Tk 300 for decorating a three-piece garment and between Tk 300 and Tk 1000 for working on a saree.

Sufia, wife of Abdul Karim of Pabda village said, "I am doing this for the last seven years. I am better off now with my children".

Nazrul Islam is in the profession for about 10 years. He earns around Tk 6000 a month.

Rita, a high school student who collects accessories from a workshop for her parents, said, "My mother and two sisters can decorate a saree in three to five days earning Tk 700 to Tk 1000 for the family. My father also works at a workshop".

Normally, decorative work on sarees is done by women at home as they can also involve in the work, said entrepreneur Mostafa.

Workers are paid on Friday, which is also the market day in the union, they said.

Most of the buyers are from Dhaka. Buyers from other cities and towns also come. The suppliers supply the products as per buyers' specification.

Work on at least 2000 three-piece garments and 1000 sarees is made in all the workshops in the union.

They said some big buyers also export the items to Middle East and to the USA.

But the entrepreneurs lamented that they are yet to get any support from government, banks or NGOs.



PHOTO: STAR

A half-day hartal was enforced in Cox's Bazar yesterday demanding removal of names of 'fake' freedom fighters from the memorial plaque at Shaheed Swarini. The freedom fighters and political parties also brought out processions and put up road barricades to press their demand.



PHOTO: STAR

The seismic centre built in Sylhet is lying idle for years.

to the Prime Minister's Office for approval months ago. The prime minister is also in charge of the ministry of defence.

It would not be possible to complete formalities for import of machinery and install those by June, the director added. "So we have sought extension by another year".

A Tk 10-crore project was first taken up in 1999-2000 for setting up four seismic observatories in Sylhet,

Chittagong, Rangpur and Gazipur, considering the regions to be more vulnerable to earthquake.

Later, a revised project plan (PP) was made raising the cost to Tk 18.17 crore. Under the programme, construction of three new buildings was completed in 2002.

But, due to non-allocation of funds after 2001-2002 financial year, the work remained stalled.

Last year, the project was reviewed

and trimmed by dropping the component that provided for installation of equipment for agriculture-related forecast. The revised project involves Tk 14 crore.

Public Works Department (PWD) completed the new buildings at Sylhet, Rangpur and Gazipur. PWD will hand over the new building in Sylhet to the meteorology department within weeks of completion of the boundary wall and electrical work.