

50 hurt as outsiders beat up RMG workers in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 workers of a garments factory in the city's Tejaon Industrial Area were injured yesterday afternoon when over 200 outsiders, allegedly hired by the factory authorities, attacked the workers who were protesting the repression of two of their leaders by the authorities.

The attackers, led by police informant and local hoodlum Mobarak, beat up the workers, mostly women, and also confined five workers to the office of an executive on the third floor of the seven-storey Padma Poly Cotton Knit Fabrics Ltd.

Police rescued the five -- Joyнал, Ashraf, Momin, Yousuf and Rakib -- in unconscious state five and a half hours after

the incident. However, they came round shortly afterwards.

The workers alleged that the outsiders also molested the women workers during the two-hour attack from 4:00pm.

The police team stepped in after the attackers left the factory at around 6:00pm.

The workers alleged that they informed and pleaded with Sub-Inspector Abdul Bari, who was patrolling the area at that time, to come to their rescue, but to no avail.

When contacted, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Tejaon Industrial Area Police Station Mahbubur Rahman said that SI Bari informed him of the incident after 6:00pm. He also said it is clear that the outsiders were hired by the factory authorities.

When the attackers left the factory, over 2000 workers and

their relatives laid a siege to the factory following a rumour that the five workers were beaten to death inside the office room.

However, they were found lying unconscious when the security guard unlocked the room following pressure from the workers.

The police arrested Executive Director of the factory Shahid Ahmed Zia and three others.

The workers said they did not do any work in the factory yesterday in protest as the authorities sacked Majibar Rahman, one of their leaders on Sunday and the outsiders beat up two other leaders -- Sayeed and Ashraf -- on Monday night who were protesting the termination.

The workers also said Sayeed has been missing since the Monday's incident.

Threat to kill Rupsha UZ journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A newly floated underground party on Monday threatened to kill Rupsha upazila correspondents of all national and local dailies and blow up Rupsha Press Club in bomb attack.

Rupsha Upazila Press Club president and crime reporter of local 'Dainik Probarton' received a letter on Monday afternoon mailed to him from Khulna GPO by 'Purbo Bangla Mission Juddho (PBMJ)', a newly formed underground party.

The computer composed letter signed by one Abir Hasan said PBMJ has been formed only in Khulna district with Faruque Rashid as operation commander. It has already formed units in all upazilas in the district, the letter said.

The letter said Rupsha upazila correspondents of local and national dailies will be killed in phases. The killing mission will be conducted at an opportune time.

Murders of Journalists Humayun Kabir Balu, Manik Saha and Sheikh Belaluddin committed by other underground parties are not enough. More murders of media men are badly needed in the south-western region, PBMJ letter added.

Khulna Police Super has been informed of the death threat given by the outlawed party.



PHOTO: STAR

Relatives of the victims of mass arrest crowd in front of the Dhaka Central Jail in the city yesterday.

Bombs hurled at SQ Chowdhury's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants last night hurled two homemade bombs from a taxicab at the Dhanmondi residence of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, former parliamentary adviser to immediate past Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, police said.

Police quoting witnesses said the homemade bombs exploded in front of the gate of the House No 28 at Road 10/A at around 8:30pm.

None was injured in the incident while police could not arrest anyone in this connection. Salahuddin was not in the house during the blast.

231 RU teachers demand CA's resignation

RU CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

A total of 231 teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) in a statement yesterday demanded resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed as chief adviser (CA) blaming him busy implementing blueprint of BNP-led four party alliance.

The Awami League backed teachers' body under the banner of Progressive Teachers' Society (PTS) also blamed the president/CA pushing the nation towards critical political crisis.

To get rid of the crisis, the teachers demanded a neutral caretaker government, a reformed election commission, a correct voter list and announcement of new election schedule.

The signatories to the statement include former RU vice chancellor Professor Saidur Rahman Khan, PTS Convener Professor Abdus Sobhan, Professor Julliquar Matin, Professor Khairul Alam Khan and Professor Moloy Bhoomik.

City mayor distributes warm clothes

Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka distributed warm clothes among the destitute on Monday night in different places of the city, says a press release.

City mayor distributed more than 2000 blankets among the cold-hit poor people in Bailey Road, Shantinagar, Motijheel, Maniknagar, Karwan Bazar, Azimpur, Farmgate, High Court Mazar and Dhaka Stadium areas.

Chief Executive Officer of DCC Saifuddin Ahmed and other high officials also accompanied the mayor during the blanket distribution.

Red Crescent Society
Meanwhile, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has taken up a plan to distribute 9000 blankets among the distressed people as a cold wave has been sweeping the country.

As part of the programme, Chairman of the BDRCS Professor Md Abdur Rob distributed 500 blankets among the distressed people of Kamalapur Railway Station and Sadarghat Launch Terminal at 11:00pm on January 7, says a press release.

BDRCS chairman requested the wealthy people and organisations to donate warm clothes or money to the BDRCS for distribution among the poor.

Treasurer of the BDRCS SM Munir Lablu, members of the Managing Board and the secretary general and Bangladesh Chief of the International Federation Selvaratnam Sinnadurai were present at the time of distribution.

POLITICAL CRISIS

Govt, parties urged to take well thought out steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten retired army officials yesterday appealed to the government, major political parties, the armed forces and senior retired army officials to uphold the spirit of the constitution, ensure security of the country and its citizens, show respect to political views and protect reputation of the army.

In a joint statement, the retired army officials also urged them to keep in mind that "the constitution is for the people" while taking any decisions to resolve the political crisis.

Expressing concern over the political stalemate, they said security of the country and its people, economic progress, the image of the army and, above all, the image of the country abroad depend on the future course of the present crisis.

They called on the government and major political parties to contemplate any steps involving the army before its implementation.

Referring to the laudable role of the army at home and abroad, they hoped that the members of the armed forces would do everything in the greater interest of the nation.

They also appealed to the senior retired army officials to come forward and use their intellect to solve the

present crisis.

The signatories to the statement include Maj Gen (retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, Maj Gen (retd) Masudur Rahman and Maj Gen (retd) SM Shahab Uddin.

'Hold polls with participation of all parties'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League Dhaka University (DU) teachers yesterday urged the caretaker government (CG) not to hold the ninth parliamentary elections without participation of all political parties.

Teachers staged an hour-long sit-in in front of the High Court holding a banner that read - teachers are ashamed with the activities of the president/chief adviser to the CG Prof Iajuddin Ahmed.

Former DU Vice Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Dean of Social Sciences Faculty Prof Dr Harun-or-Rashid, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof RIM Aminur Rashid, Prof Sadeka Halim, Prof Abul Barakat and other teachers joined the programme.

Poush Mela on Friday

DU CORRESPONDENT

Poush Mela Celebration Council will organise the tenth Poush Mela (Winter Fair) at Ramna Batomul in the city on Friday.

The daylong mela will mark street dramas, poetry recitation, songs, dance, traditional pitha (cake) and other rural winter cuisines exhibition and other programmes.

Mela Celebration Council announced detailed programmes at a press conference in the city yesterday.

Around 400-500 artistes will participate in different programmes of the mela, organisers said.

A number of cultural organisations, including Udichi, Rhishizo, Krinti, Bonhishikha, Padatik, Dhruapado, Sukanya, Khelaghar, Kanthoshilon, Sharbritto and others will perform.

Channel 1 will broadcast the mela programmes from 8:00am to 10:30am.

Dr Anisuzzaman is the chairman and Biswajit Roy is the member secretary of the mela.

Co-chairmen Golam Quddus, Jhuna Chowdhury, Mahmud Selim, Babul Biswash and others were present at the press conference.

CPB calls for continuous agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Monjurul Ahsan Khan has called for continuous demonstration including hartals on January 21 and 22 if the farical election is not cancelled.

Speaking at a rally in the city yesterday, he said those who have opted for oppression to complete the farce in the name of election will have to face public court someday.

The rally was organised to press for CPB's 53-point demand including cancellation of polls schedule, preparation of correct voter list and radical reforms of electoral system.

Presided over by CPB Dhaka Committee President Abdul Kader, the rally was also addressed by CPB central leaders Morshed Ali and Ahsan Habib Lablu.

Birth anniversary of Vivekananda today



release.

On the occasion, the Mission has taken up various programmes, including special puja, reading from the scriptures and devotional songs.

Anil Kumar Saha will perform classical music at 4:00pm and a discussion on 'Swami Vivekananda: Ideal of Harmony' will be held at 5:00pm, with Justice Gour Gopal Saha in the chair. Prof Kabir Chowdhury will be present as the chief guest while Swami Aksharananda Maharaj will deliver welcome address.

Help uphold Constitution

Khaleda urges journalists

UNB, *Dhaka*

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the journalists to play their professional role in upholding the constitution through creating mass awareness in the prevailing situation.

She made the call when a delegation of the newly elected office-bearers of National Press Club led by its new president Shawkat Mahmud and General Secretary Kamaluddin Sabuj made a courtesy call on her at her Hawa Bhaban office in the evening.

Reiterating her party stand on election on time, Khaleda said none is beyond the Constitution--all have to comply with the

Constitution.

"Those are carrying out movement don't obey anything--Constitution, Election Commission, democracy," she said.

The meeting over, Shawkat told newsmen that they assured the BNP chairperson of carrying out their effort to protect the Constitution.

He said Khaleda and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan assured us of enacting Right to Information Act if they formed the next government.

He said the BNP chairperson also assured us of cooperating in the development of the Club.

BFUJ President Mozammel Huq and Secretary General Ruhul

Amin Gazi, former National Press Club president Reazuddin Ahmed and DUJ General Secretary Sardar Farid were present.

COMILLA VISIT TODAY

Another report adds: Khaleda goes on election campaign to Comilla and Chandpur today.

She will address wayside and public meetings at Chandina and Padua Bazar which is part of Comilla-8 constituency from where she is contesting the January 22 polls. She will also hold similar meetings at Barura, Kachua, Haziganj and Chandpur.

Party sources said Khaleda is scheduled to go to Dinajpur on January 12 and Barisal on January 13 for election campaign.

Officials to be on poll duty worried

FROM PAGE 1

conference yesterday at the National Press Club urged the caretaker government (CG) to take necessary measures so that government employees can perform their duties neutrally.

The leaders also urged the CG to create a suitable condition to ensure the participation of all political parties in the polls.

Presiding over the news conference, Parishad President Syed Yusuf Hossain said government employees are feeling extremely insecure about performing duties at polling centres in the current volatile political situation.

He urged the authorities concerned to take necessary initiatives through amending the constitution, if necessary, to ensure a free and fair election.

"The constitution is for the people, not that the people are for the constitution," he said adding, "constitution can

be amended."

Nurul Huda, executive president of the Parishad, said the government officials are in an uncomfortable situation with the declaration of election on January 22.

He threatened to take tougher actions like not cooperating in polling activities if the situation demands.

The leaders urged all officers and employees concerned to perform their duties as Returning, Presiding and Polling officers without being politically biased.

The organisation's Senior Vice President Prof Ikbal Arsalan and General Secretary Agriculturalist Nazrul Islam also spoke at the conference.

Prof Mohammad Ali Chowdhury, M Shahabuddin, Suraiya Akhter and other leaders were also present.

Government, semi-government,

autonomous and sector corporation officers and employees in the northern districts of the country expressed similar concerns.

A district election officer told our Rajshahi correspondent, "Officials are seeking leave and many school teachers are refusing the duties on ground of sickness."

The officials likely to be appointed in the extremism and militancy prone areas of Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Joypurhat, Pabna, Sirajganj and Bogra are extremely worried about their security, said the sources.

They also fear that they would incur the wrath of the grand alliance for performing poll duties as the grand alliance had vowed to resist the polls, said several district and upazila level election officials.

One-party poll to raise

FROM PAGE 16

organised by Odhikar at Spectra Convention Centre in the capital.

European Public Law Center (EPLC), Organisation of Development Program for the Under Privileged (ODUP) and Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) co-organised the conference financed by the EC Delegation to Bangladesh.

Expressing concern over the consequences of the present political crisis, Dr Frowein observed that it is more important than ever for the civil society to play an active role to search for a national solution that commands agreement of people.

The situation must impel all stakeholders in the election process to examine their conscience and to pursue constructive avenues of compromise, which will allow the voices of all Bangladeshi voters to be heard at the polls, he added.

Speaking as the chief guest, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, however, put emphasis on holding the election within the 90-day timeframe of the caretaker government, as it is mandatory in the constitution.

The Supreme Court will also not go beyond the constitution to extend this time, he expressed his belief.

"Just because all the major political parties are not contesting, nobody can term the January 22 election as 'illegal' or say that it will not be acceptable," Khan said adding that if turnout of the voters is 50 to 60 percent, it will be an acceptable election.

The election observers should not see if the election is acceptable or not, rather monitor if it is transparent, the ACC chief observed. It is the citizens' right to exercise voting power by not being intimidated by any political parties, he added.

Taking part in the discussion following the inaugural session, Maj Gen (retd) Moinal Hussain Chowdhury expressed his frustrations over the

present political crisis saying that the extension of the 90-day period for holding election will also not bring a good solution.

Democracy in the country would never be established unless the political parties practice it within themselves, he observed.

The daily Shamokal Editor Abed Khan said the problem that could be solved within a day, could not be solved just for the partisan character of the President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed.

"Instead of light, he [chief adviser] gifted the nation darkness," Abed Khan said observing that the scheduled election might be held, a government might be formed and another election might be held 90 or 180 days from the January 22. "But question remains if the future of the parliamentary system of democracy will exist by that time," he said.

The common people will be cheated and they will get into conflicts leading to a disaster and total uncertainty of the nation, Abed Khan added.

EPLC election experts Charlemagne Sophia Gomez and Marco Sioli, SEHD Executive Director Philip Gain, Dhaka University Professor Dr Asif Nazrul, Maj Gen (retd) Syed Mohammad Ibrahim and Fair Election Monitoring Alliance President Munira Khan spoke in the sessions moderated by columnist Farhad Mazhar.

UNB-BNP LEADERS' MEETING

Kundan Shrestha and Christian Boswell, international election experts of UNDP, held the meeting with BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, former adviser to foreign ministry Riaz Rahman, former state minister Mir Nasiruddin, and former Privatisation Commission chairman Enam Ahmed Chowdhury at the BNP's election conducting office at Banani.

However, none of the foreign

delegates and political leaders agreed to disclose to reporters the agenda of their meeting that lasted over an hour from 1:45pm.

Nazrul Islam only told reporters, "We discussed issues relating to the upcoming election and we promised not to disclose the meeting agenda."

Meeting sources said the BNP leaders told the UNDP delegation that there is no alternative to holding the election within the stipulated 90-day period from handing over power.

They also said people will take part in the January 22 election--despite the boycott by the Awami League-led grand alliance--as many other political parties will take part in the election.

The BNP leaders said they can take fresh initiative for resolving the political crisis and holding another election after the January 22 poll.

Sources said the UNDP experts told the BNP leaders that they want to see an election participated by all major political parties for smooth continuity of democracy.

14 houses gutted in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Chittagong*

Fifteen houses and valuables worth Tk 10 lakh were gutted in a devastating fire yesterday.

Fire service sources said the fire broke out at a house near Salt Gola Crossing at Bandar areas at around 8:00am.

The fire spread fast engulfing adjoining houses and reduced 11 semi-pacca houses, two stationary shops, one pharmacy and a cosmetic shop to ashes.

The fire originated from an oven and the loss in the fire was estimated at Tk 10 lakh, said the fire service sources.

Obituary

Emdad Hossain, retired chief engineer of PWD, passed away at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city on Monday, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons, a daughter and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held today after Zohr prayers at Gulshan Azad Masjid.

Ramananda Mallik

Ramananda Mallik, former general secretary of Bangladesh Polytechnic Institute and educationist, passed away on January 7 at his residence at Tikatoli in the city at the age of 76, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was cremated at his village home at Keraniganj.

Bangladesh Polytechnic Teachers' Association (BPTA) organised a meeting to condole his death yesterday.

Mustafa Hussain, Kafil Uddin Mollah, Abul Kashem Majumdar and Shah Alam Majumdar spoke at the meeting with Mohammad Shamsur Rahman in the chair.

Death anniversary



Today is the sixth death anniversary of eminent educationist Prof Nurul Islam, says a press release.

On the

occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his Dhanmondi residence.

Thomas F Gomes



Today is the 19th death anniversary of Knight Thomas F Gomes, an eminent religious and social worker, says a press release.

On the

occasion, a prayer meeting will be held at Thomas Tower at Kakrail in the city at 6:00pm. Prayers will also be held beside his grave at Wari Christian Cemetery.

Prayer meeting



A prayer meeting in honour of late Isabella Gomes will be held at Thomas Tower at Kakrail in the city at 6:00pm today, says a press release.

Isabella Gomes, a religious person, passed away on December 17, 2006 due to old age complications at the age of 97 at her residence at Thomas Tower.

DHAKA
T O D A Y

Workshop
Ministry of Labour and Employment in association with Save the Children Sweden-Denmark organises a national workshop on 'Formulation of National Labour Policy: Bangladesh Perspective'. Venue: Biam auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Meeting
Jatiyatabadi Anijibi Forum will hold a meeting to observe Constitution and Democracy Protection Day. Venue: Supreme Court Bar auditorium. Time: 1:00pm.