

300 shops removed from footpaths in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

In a massive drive, the authorities dismantled around 300 illegal makeshift shops on footpaths in different areas of Chittagong city yesterday in a bid to facilitate easy movement of traffic and pedestrians.

Also, several hundred illegal electricity connections were snapped during the coordinated drive.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury conducted the drive named 'Operation Safeguard Civic Rights' with the assistance from Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP), sources said.

Over 250 illegally erected makeshift and floating shops were removed from the busy New Market, Darul Fazal Market, Reazuddin Bazar Amtala and

Station Road areas. These shops also occupied a portion of the busy roads, hampering the movement of traffic.

During the four-hour drive, illegally extended portions of various shops, signboards and slabs that covered the drains for erection of makeshift shops were demolished.

CDA Magistrate Tahera Ferdous conducted the drive in Sholoshahar Baby Super Market area, removing over 50 makeshift shops and floating vendors from Bayezid Bostami Road.

The city dwellers hailed the move to evict the vendors and hoped that the drive would continue against the illegal occupants.

Cold claims 3 more lives in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Cold wave has claimed three more lives in the last 24 hours as of Wednesday night, raising the death toll to 15 in the district.

The victims are Ahmed Ali, 55, of village Kaikhali in Shyamnagar, Morshed Ali, 60, of village Uksa in Kaliganj upazila and Azimunnesa,

105, of village Shushigati in Debhata.

Azimunnesa died of cold-related diseases, her family members said.

When contacted, officers-in-charge of Shyamnagar and Debhata police stations confirmed the report of deaths.



A bulldozer proceeds to dismantle illegal makeshift shops on the footpaths in the port city yesterday. The picture was taken from city's New Market area.

Runaway Scottish girl can stay in Pakistan

Top court says

AFP, Islamabad

A Scottish girl at the centre of an international custody battle can stay with her father in Pakistan, the country's top court ruled yesterday.

The Supreme Court gave the verdict after hearing a petition by Molly Campbell's father, Sajjad Ahmed Rana, against a lower court decision ordering the 12-year-old girl to return to her mother in Scotland.

Molly, who is also known by the Muslim name Misbah Iram, sparked a high-profile police investigation in August 2006, after she ran away from her mother's home in Scotland to live with her father here.

The court said Molly can travel to Scotland whenever she wants. It also asked the father to bear all expenses of the mother, Louise Campbell, if she visits Molly in Pakistan.

"I am very happy," the girl told reporters at the end of a day-long hearing at the Supreme Court.

"I never wanted to go back to Scotland," she said, adding she hoped her mother would visit soon.

Rana said he was grateful for the decision.

"I have never objected to Louise's coming over to Pakistan to meet Misbah and I stand by the agreement," he said.

The court gave the ruling on the basis of a compromise reached between the two parents while the case was being heard.

According to the agreement the mother has withdrawn her custody plea and the father will pay her travel expenses whenever she comes to visit.

The court said the mother would give it advance notice of her travel plans and would be provided with police security during her stay here.



Winners of Dano Vita Kids Drawing Competition 2006 pose for photograph with eminent artists Hashem Khan and Mustafa Monowar and other guests at the prize giving ceremony at Shishu Academy auditorium in the city yesterday.

Pilot killed in Indian Air Force jet crash

AFP, Jodhpur

A pilot was killed in an Indian Air Force Jaguar bomber jet crash yesterday in the northern desert state of Rajasthan, officials and witnesses said.

The British-built aircraft took off from a military airbase in Bikaner district and reportedly caught fire in midair and exploded on impact with the ground in a village in the tourism town of Jaisalmer, eyewitnesses said, adding the pilot had died. Air force officials said the deep penetration bomber aircraft was on a "live firing exercise" in the desert state.

Indian papers say racism thrives in India

REUTERS, New Delhi

While condemning "racist jibes" thrown at a Bollywood star on "Celebrity Big Brother", several major Indian newspapers yesterday said the country should examine its own prejudices before expressing national outrage.

India asked Britain on Wednesday to check whether race laws had been broken in the reported bullying of Indian actor Shilpa Shetty on "Celebrity Big Brother" as her admirers burnt effigies of the alleged abusers.

But the Hindustan Times daily said in an editorial headlined the "Colour of prejudice" that while racism appeared to be "alive and well" in Britain, it also thrived in India.

"Discrimination on the basis of colour is ingrained in the psyche of most Indians," the newspaper said.

"What else explains the quest for the holy grail of fair brides across the country?"

Many of India's one billion people still live within a hierarchy imposed by the Hindu caste system that, for example, stops low castes entering some important temples decades after such discrimination was outlawed.

Muslims face widespread prejudice and have often been seen as the enemy within since Islamic Pakistan was carved out of British-ruled India at independence.

"Indian responses should also factor in our own record of prejudice ... If racism is a fact in many interactions in British society, prejudice is a quotidian reality of Indian social life," the Indian Express said in its editorial.

Bangladesh a country of communal harmony

President tells Buddhist team

UNB, Dhaka

A four-member delegation of Bangladesh Bouddha Krishti Prachar Sangha, led by its president Shuddhananda Mohathero, made a courtesy call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

During the meeting, Iajuddin said Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony. "Here Hindus, Buddhists and Christians all are Bangladeshis and all have been living together in a peaceful atmosphere."

He said all would have to work unitedly for the welfare of the country and the nation.

The President urged the members of the delegation to highlight the life and works of renowned Buddhist scholar Atish Dipankar among the new generation.

He gave the delegation a patient hearing and assured them of cooperation.

The delegation lauded the recent role of the President and expressed their deep gratitude to him.

They said that a sense of relief has returned among the people following the recent steps of the President and the people have hailed this initiative.

The delegation apprised the President of the affairs of the Sanskrit and Pali Education Board and requested him to attend the convocation ceremony to be held for the graduate students under the board.

Secretary to the President's office M Sirajul Islam, Bouddha Krishti Prachar Sangha General Secretary Dr Pranab Kumar Barua, Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust Secretary Prof Sukomal Barua and trustee Chandragupta Barua were present at the meeting.

Leading woman militant held in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

A leading hardline woman separatist in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir was detained as she raided a cybercafe, police said yesterday, as part of her morality crusade in the main city of Srinagar.

"We have detained Aasiya Andrabi and five members from her party as they raided a cybercafe in downtown Srinagar," a police spokesman said.

Andrabi, head of the separatist Dukhtaran-e-Milat, or Daughters of Faith, has formed squads in the Muslim-majority state to raid brothels, cybercafes and other places where she says "immoral activities are carried out".

In a break with the past, when attitudes towards mixing between the sexes were more conservative, younger people in Kashmir are frequently seen dating in restaurants and walking in parks, raising the group's ire.

"We will expose those indulging in immoral activities," the 41-year-old Andrabi, who wears a head-to-toe veil, told people before storming the cafe.

The husband of Andrabi, a fiery speaker who has in the past voiced admiration for Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, is in jail on charges of being a militant.

Last year, she advertised a mobile telephone number for people to call "whenever you are convinced a man or woman has entered some place to commit adultery".

Adultery is illegal in the state and carries a potential jail term.

Andrabi was jailed for two months in 2005 for carrying out a similar campaign.

The group had earlier smeared black paint on racy Bollywood film posters portraying women in revealing clothing. It has also campaigned for women to veil themselves fully.

The drive has been largely unsuccessful in a region which espouses a more liberal form of Islam.

Indian Kashmir has been gripped by a 17-year-old revolt against New Delhi's rule that has claimed over 44,000 lives by official count, and double that number by the separatists' tally.