

Grassroots leaders

FROM PAGE 1
state of emergency. They said they came to know about the programme from news reports and have taken no preparation yet to hold the protest programme under the state of emergency.

They said they are planning to seek permissions from local administrations for the programme in district headquarters. But highly placed sources said the government has yet to take any decision regarding allowing AL to protest at district levels.

"We will apply to the local administration seeking permission to hold the programme, if they allow us we will hold it," said ANM Shafiqul Haque, Sylhet district unit president of AL, adding that they however have yet to take any preparation for the protest.

But several district level leaders said they will talk to both district and central leaders in a day or two to figure out a way for holding the programme.

"As there is a ban on indoor politics, we are discussing among us to figure out a way to observe the programme without violating the state of emergency," said Maj Gen (ret'd) AMSA Amin, president of Kurigram district unit.

Bagerhat district unit General Secretary Sheikh Qamruzzaman Tuku and Dinajpur district unit General Secretary Advocate Mostafizur Rahman said they have yet to decide whether to observe the programme, as none instructed them about it.

"We haven't been informed either officially or verbally about the programme. We have learnt about it through newspapers," said Rahman.

Lalmonirhat district unit AL leader Nazrul Haque Patwari said, "It will be very tough to observe the programme here."

"When we can't even open the office, how are we to observe the programme under the emergency?" asked Feni district unit General Secretary Abdur Rahman.

Barguna district unit General Secretary Jahangir Kabir said he thinks the local administration will not allow them to hold such a political protest under the emergency.

He said they will contact the central leaders seeking guidelines

within a day or two.

However, Mherpur district unit President Mohammad Joynal Abedin said they will go on a hunger strike in front of the deputy commissioner's office. He said they will not take part in the upcoming parliamentary election with Hasina in detention.

AL insiders said the AL presidium under pressure from the party's different front organisations announced the token strike programme across the country with a demand for the party chief's release.

Over the last several days, AL's front organisations have been pressuring the party's central leadership to launch a one-point all out movement to get Hasina freed.

Similar pressure is also there on AL from grassroots level leaders.

"Sheikh Hasina's release is our sole demand. The party can't take part in any election with her in jail," president of Juba League, AL's youth front, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, told The Daily Star over the phone.

He however said they already instructed local leaders to observe the token hunger strike to press home the demand.

Tagore

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Department of Archaeology is unable to display those at the museum, declared an archaeological museum in 1969.

"The Rabindra Memorial Museum boasts articles used by the poet and a few of the poet's paintings," Nahid said.

The main attractions of the museum are the traditional wooden sandals, furniture, palanquin, water filter, piano, and a metal monogram of the estate, said Nahid Sultana.

On an average 150 people visit the museum every day but there are no modern facilities for them, archaeology office sources said.

"The museum needs a library for Rabindra research, a guest house, and a parking lot," Nahid said.

She said at least 20 employees are needed for the smooth running of the museum but now there are only 14. The two-storied museum building needs more attention of the department, she added.

CNG Price

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Employees Union, said, "We have information that over 100 of our fellow drivers had to be assaulted by the passengers as they demanded some extra fare."

Asked, it is not possible to wait till the government's new decision as the drivers have to pay the double price of the CNG.

Terming the government decision unwise without consulting the drivers, he said the government should have to re-fix the fare before increasing the CNG price.

Demanding the immediate re-fixing of fare, Dhaka District Autorickshaw Labourers Union leaders threatened, "Unless, the government would have to be responsible if any unrest is developed among the labourers."

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Truck Owners' Association president Rustum Ali protested the government decision and termed it illogical.

He told The Daily Star, "There is no alternative to increase the fare of CNG-run truck, bus and other vehicles."

"While we have been insisting the truck and other transport owners to convert their vehicles into CNG-run, the government is discouraging them with its unwise decisions," he said.

He said about 60 percent of the trucks ply in and around the capital is CNG-run and the number is increasing day by day.

"As the CNG price is increased, we must have to increase the fare," he said and added, "The fare of truck is fixed neither by the government nor by the owners' association, it is fixed depending on demand and supply."

Moreover, the owners of the CNG-run buses ply on the roads are also considering of increasing the fare. But they did not started yet.

They said they would decide in this regard soon.

Presently, around 1,32,000 CNG-fuelled vehicles ply the roads in Dhaka, Chittagong and Comilla. The number of CNG pumps stands at 229 with 19 more set to be opened within a couple of months, said Petrobangla sources.

CNG sector consumes two percent of 1,750 million cubic feet gas produced per day, they added.

Bengal Plastic

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heroes while two giant screens displayed their business successes in brief.

Congratulating the awardees, the commerce adviser emphasised on 'personality revolution' and said the country should not wait for a single person to lift the nation. The country does not need one driver, it needs many drivers, he said. "It's a multi-driver reality."

Talking about corruption, price hike, malnutrition, poverty and other social and economic hurdles, the adviser said statistics of despair is not the only reality. "We should rise beyond these despairs."

He said businesses should discover their inner confidence which will make them move forward.

"We have to unleash a culture of showing our generosity through these kinds of events," he added.

In his reaction Viyellat Group Chairman and Managing Director KM Rezaul Hasnat said barriers are also the strength and if businesses can cross the barriers with honesty, sincerity and quality, they will achieve success.

"I believe in dreams," he said adding that he wants to get his company listed on the Fortune 500 list. "If many Indian companies can make their way to the Fortune 500, why can't we?" he added.

In her reaction, Nilufar Farooq, recipient of the Outstanding Woman in Business award, said development of women in a country is closely related with the overall development of the country.

Nilufar, who received the award for her success in flower business, said flowers are cultivated across the country nowadays and are exported. "It has a substantial potential," she added.

Receiving the Enterprise of the Year 2007 award on behalf of Bengal Plastic Industries, its Chairman Morshed Alam said he came on to the stage last night crossing a lot of barriers like many other established businesses.

He wants to offer more quality products to his buyers and said his company recycles around 60.5 percent of the raw materials so that his plant does not pose any threat of environmental hazard.

His company is a performance-based one, he said adding that his future plan is to set up textile and paper mills.

Earlier, stressing the need for a genuine trust based partnership between the government and businesses, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said businesses should forget petty rivalry and be united.

Renewed necessity for rediscovering self-confidence and inner power are the keys to growth, he said adding that no individual, no community, and no country can move forward without self-confidence.

"We will have to take any crisis positively," he said paraphrasing an Albert Einstein quote that every crisis is an opportunity, contextualising it amid current local and global economic problems.

Terming the private sector as 'engine of growth', he said the business community actually functions among both natural and man-made challenges. Despite the challenges, Bangladeshi businesses are not only surviving but also have found a niche on the global market, he added.

RS Subramanian, vice-president of DHL South Asia, also spoke while Desmond Quish, country manager of DHL Express Bangladesh, delivered the vote of thanks.

Dhaka can follow

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On the completion of a two-day visit, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi left here in the morning for Pakistan.

Dr Iftekhar Chowdhury said Bangladesh and China are partners in the new Asian Age and the visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi would further cement this relationship.

"Our friendship is rooted in history, but like all friendship relationships between nations have also to be renewed and reinvigorated from time to time, and this visit was an occasion to do just that," the foreign adviser stated.

Replying to a query, he said: "We have told him [Jiechi] of our 'One-China policy'. We have said matters pertaining to Tibet are internal affairs of China... have agreed the forthcoming Olympics in Beijing will be an occasion of pride for all Asians and [it] must not be politicised."

He added: "We discussed regional and international politics as well. I have explained to him the warmth of our relations with India and Pakistan, and the growing cooperation with all SAARC countries. Very importantly, we've talked about going ahead with the idea of a tripartite understanding among Bangladesh, Myanmar and China regarding a road linkage, something that I had raised with him earlier at a bilateral meeting in Manila."

Asked about Chinese view on the caretaker government's performance, the foreign adviser said:

The luckiest 3 among

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yesterday to attend an Adivasi Student Convention based on the theme of 'Quality Education for All: End Exclusion Now', which was jointly organised by Oxfam G-B, and Research and Development Collective (RDC) in the auditorium of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh.

In standard well pronounced Bangla, a thin and shy young man, Younguang, spoke of his childhood memories when he regularly had to walk three hours up the hills to go to his primary school, and had to walk for another two and a half hours to return home.

Younguang found himself facing a plethora of problems after he and ten of his classmates had successfully completed their secondary education from among 59 students of the class.

But luck favoured him as he had a relative living in Rangamati, who afforded him lodging there for studying in a college. Four of his schoolmates also managed to get admitted to colleges, but finally only three of them including Younguang made it to the university for the first time ever from the community.

His two friends who share the luck with him are Youngrong Mro also studying Pali, and Kaingwai Mro, who is studying Bangla.

"My nation is helpless out there on the hills. They are simple and don't demand much. I can't take a job here after completing my education, as that will hamper my intention of serving my people. I will go back to the hills and become a teacher," said Younguang with much emotion, when asked about his future plan.

"Our country is culturally diverse. This diversity has enriched us and it is a treasure we have. We must ensure that no child from any Adivasi community is deprived of quality education, and that no language is extinct," said Associate Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of RDC, who presided over the convention.

Bivash Chakrabarti, programme coordinator of RDC, noted that the promise Bangladesh government had made in 2000 that no children will remain out of school by 2015 will not be possible to keep if governments continue to neglect ensuring Adivasi peoples' education.

"An Adivasi education policy is necessary and the state should concentrate on how the policy will be formulated. Our policymakers don't have a concept of our cultural diversity and the Adivasi people are considered as others in our society as if they came from the planet Mars," said Dr HKS Arefin.

Four papers were presented by Adivasi students from Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Chittagong University, and Rajshahi University.

Abud Shama Al-Burmawi, a researcher at the Muslim World League and former head of the Committee for Burmese Affairs at the Passport Department, said the rate of crime had fallen since the campaign began. "I wish the campaigns were launched 10 years ago," he said.

Rohingyas, who constitute four percent of Burma's population, are indigenous people of Arakan, the western province of Burma bordering Bangladesh. Due to persecution, about 1.5 million Rohingyas have either been expelled or left Burma since 1948, Arab News mentioned.

Meanwhile, there are around 25,000 Rohingya refugees in two camps in Cox's Bazar, and officials concerned estimate some 1.5 lakh Rohingyas are staying in the Chittagong hill districts.

It is alleged that many Rohingyas, claiming themselves to be Bangladeshis, secured Bangladeshi passports and went to Saudi Arabia for performing Hajj or Umrah and for other religious purposes. But they destroyed those passports and sought work permits to stay in the kingdom.

The Saudi authorities also issued work permits to these Rohingyas considering the issue of their persecution in Burma.

Arab News said Saudi authorities recently allowed Burmese residents in the kingdom to open bank accounts without the need to present copies of their passports.

mance, the foreign adviser said: "Minister Yang Jiechi has lauded it. I have told him we have scheduled elections for December, and he was pleased with the progress of our road map leading to it. In the meantime, he was deeply satisfied with Bangladesh's international role as a peace-loving and stabilising force."

"We both recognised that in the dawn of this new Asian Age we both have responsibilities. We must bring our peoples a much better quality of life as we are doing. We must provide each other mutual help. A new chapter in the history of the world has begun," he said.

The Chinese foreign minister has conveyed invitation to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed on behalf of the Chinese prime minister and to the foreign adviser on his behalf.

"We'll need to work out the details," the foreign adviser said with regard to the schedules of such visits.

CJ urges

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the workshop, said there is no scope of autocracy if the constitutional rule exists.

He said everything must be done in accordance with law as none is above the law.

Twenty senior assistant judges are taking part in the workshop.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILLA) organised the workshop at its auditorium.

"Free access to quality education is a fundamental right of every human being. Commercialisation of education or doing business with education must be resisted and stopped," he added.

"It is our responsibility to uphold the dignities of diverse Adivasi communities and their distinctive languages. You can't always go on saying that we fought for the Bangla language, you must fight for the languages of other communities too, like Marma, Mro, and Chakma," said eminent writer Dr Mohammad Zafar Iqbal in his chief guest's speech.

"Our problem of discrimination towards the Adivasi people is deeply rooted among ourselves. Our parents don't teach us that the first point to value in an individual is that he or she is a human being, and then come other identities like whether the person is an Adivasi or rich or poor," he said.

"A society is more beautiful when it is diverse, diversity is beautiful," he added.

Adivasi students from 23 communities and studying in different public universities attended the convention, organised as a part of a global action week for education for all.

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"An Adivasi education policy is necessary and the state should concentrate on how the policy will be formulated. Our policymakers don't have a concept of our cultural diversity and the Adivasi people are considered as others in our society as if they came from the planet Mars," said Dr HKS Arefin.

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Myanmarese refute

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used to help improve relations between the two communities, said the Arab News report.

Ayoub Al-Jamal, a Saudi businessman of Burmese origin and one of the sponsors of the campaign, told Arab News that the idea for the campaign came up during a meeting at the governor's office attended by local community leaders.

In that meeting with Abdul Aziz Al-Khudari, undersecretary at the governor's office, it was decided that the campaign would start in districts where Burmese and Bangladeshis live in large numbers, said Al-Jamal.

The campaign was launched with the help of the Islamic Education Foundation (IEF).

"Some people with vested interests spread a rumour that the campaign was a trap laid by the Passport Department to arrest Burmese people. Despite the rumours, the campaign was a success with people attending in large numbers," Al-Jamal said.

Abdullah Marouf, head of the IEF for Asian communities in Makkah, said he hopes the campaign will educate people to stay away from crimes.

Ataallah Shaqdar, public relations director of the campaign, said 22 events took place in 17 districts with large numbers of Burmese and Bangladeshi residents. "The campaign was successful with more than 60,000 people attending," he said.

Onion price

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and Tk 22 per kg and the prices of Indian onions were between Tk 14 and Tk 15 per kg.

Dulal Uddin, an onion trader of Pabna, told The Daily Star that the hoarders stockpiled onions for two weeks pushing the price upwards. He said he was selling local onions at Tk 16-20 per kg in the wholesale market of Karwan Bazar two days ago.

During a visit to Karwan Bazar, The Daily Star correspondent saw bad onions being sold from different wholesale and retail shops. Many traders claimed the hoarders were getting rid of onions that have gone bad due to the scorching heat and they have started collecting fresh onions from farmers to stockpile and keep prices high.

Prices of brand soya bean oil went up by Tk 10 per litre in retail markets in the city during the last five days.

Traders said the distributors on April 20 told them that the prices of soya bean oil would go up by Tk 10 per litre and the traders hiked the price from April 21.

A five-litre container of brand soya bean oil was selling at Tk 564 yesterday while a 900ml container was selling at Tk 112 in retail.

Prices of different fishes continued to go up. The prices of all types of fish increased by Tk 10-20 per kg in retail markets of the capital, fish traders said.

Even though the supply of fish at different markets was smooth, traders said the hike was due to the season coming to an end.

The prices of coarse varieties of rice remained between Tk 34 and Tk 38 per kg while the price of finer rice saw a slight drop. It was selling between Tk 40 and Tk 45 per kg in retail markets yesterday.

The price of battery chicken in retail remained between Tk 115 and Tk 125 per kg while the prices of free-range chicken remained between Tk 90 and Tk 220 as per their size.

Pulse of different qualities was selling between Tk 80 and Tk 100 per kg in retail.

Road blocked

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AAKH Garments Factory at Hemayetpur.

Witnesses said a bus of Janoseba Paribahan ran over Nasiruddin while he was crossing the road at Hemayetpur bus stand at about 7:40am.

Nasiruddin died on the spot while the driver of the bus sped away.

When the news of his death spread among his fellow garment workers, over 100 workers of AAKH Garments factory took to the street and damaged five to six vehicles protesting the incident.

The transport labourers at the bus stand tried to prevent the garment workers from damaging vehicles resulting in a chase and counter-chase between the two groups.

Meanwhile, about 150 more garment workers came out of the factory and damaged 10 to 12 more vehicles.

Several hundred buses, trucks and other vehicles remained stranded on the highway.

Later, members of the Rab, army and police brought the situation under control.

Sub-inspector Faruk Kamal who was on duty at the scene, said vehicular movement on the road remained suspended for about two hours as the garment workers put barricade on the road.

Nasiruddin's brother filed a murder case but no case was filed in connection with the violent incident.

Savar police said the body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital for autopsy.

4 children

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same household.

Meanwhile, Farhad, 4, son of Malek Prodhan, and Moina, 4, daughter of Kader Prodhan, also slipped into a pond and drowned in south Islamabad of Matlab (north) upazila while playing, family sources said. They were also cousins.

Nature makes

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along with 84 associates, said a press release.

"Maqsoodul Alam and a collaboration of scientists from around the world have produced a genome assembly for 'SunUp', a genetically engineered and commercially produced fruit tree that is virus resistant," writes the Nature.

"Comparing the genome sequence with that of a distant relative, the grass *Arabidopsis*, the authors find that the papaya genome is three times larger but in fact contains fewer genes—which could provide clues about the evolution of seed-producing plants. The sequence contains features that offer insight into the plant's adaptation to day length in the tropics, and into how it attracts seed-dispersal agents and creates the volatile compounds responsible for its delicious flavour," it adds.

Prof Alam also earned fame and recognition he mapped the genetic patterns of the bacteria that thrive in Hawaii's inhospitable environments, says the press release. His work led to a number of medical breakthroughs including creation of a blood substitute.

Prof Alam was a visiting scientist at Washington State University, senior research scientist at Russia's Academy of Sciences, and the Humboldt Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute in Germany.

Kalihati Tragedy

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weaver Solaiman of Rampur village, told The Daily Star that her husband's handloom factory remains closed, as all seven employees of the factory did not join work since the incident apprehending that they would not be paid timely in Solaiman's absence.

"It is not possible for me to run the factory in the absence of my husband. I have two daughters and a young son," she added.

Fatema Begum, 28, wife of deceased weaver Faruque Mia of the same village, said her husband had to lend several lakh taka from moneylenders and NGOs a few months back to repair his handloom factory badly damaged in the flood.

After her husband's death, the moneylenders are putting pressure on her to repay the loans, she said.

"Now what shall I do... I have two daughters," Fatema said.

Another dead weaver Dudu Mia's wife Rushmida Begum, 25, said she is now worried about repaying a loan of Tk 70,000 her husband had taken from yarn traders.

She said the future of her two young sons is uncertain, as her husband was the lone breadwinner of the family.

"I want proper compensation and also punishment of the persons responsible for my husband's death," she added.

Lal Mahmud, uncle of dead weaver Altaf of Mominnagar village, said the government should provide proper compensation to the family members of all the victims as the

Gas, Fuel

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also addressed by association vice-president Prof Samad Abedin and secretary general Abdur Rashid Sikder.

The finance adviser said at the beginning of this fiscal year, some Tk 6,000 crore had been allocated as subsidy. But later, the government had to increase the amount of subsidy to Tk 15,000 crore.

Asked whether the price-hike of CNG is timely, he said, "No time is good enough. If the price of CNG was not increased, then the government would have been forced to realise the extra expenses (of subsidy) through increasing tax or through deficit budget."

Aziz said prices of many things like gas or other fuels are many times lower in Bangladesh than the neighbouring countries.

Addressing the seminar as chief guest, the finance adviser urged the Bangladesh Statistical Association to come up with "timely, reliable and objective statistics without being politically influenced."

Without authentic data, no development project can be implemented successfully, he said.

Cancel so-called

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the leaders also demanded the chief adviser ban all political activities in religious institutions.

Reading out a memorandum already sent to the chief adviser, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad president Ayesha Khanam said the government should express their commitment regarding equal rights and equal participation of men and women in society which is guaranteed in the constitution.

"It is a matter of great concern that the government is yet to cancel the review committee despite repeated demands from the women and citizen community," she said adding that the review committee recommended deleting 15 sections from the policy.

"When the whole nation is vocal on the issue of bringing the war criminals to book, the identified anti-liberation force is trying to oppose the constitution and basic principles of the country in the guise of opposing the Women Development Policy," she added.

Wondering at how the "war criminals" could attack police violating the state of emergency and being indifferent to the country's law, eminent writer and commentator Shahriar Kabir said the government has double standards.

The Khatib of Baitul Mukarram was responsible for the anarchic situation in front of the mosque a week ago, but instead of sacking him the government formed the review committee under his leadership, Shahriar said.

When the advisory body had finalised the policy then by dint of which law it was allowed to be reviewed, barrister Sara Hossain said adding that the nation should know under which regulation the review committee was formed and why the government is yet to take any steps against those who violated the state of emergency.

An adviser has been saying that the policy is suspended for the time being, but how can say so when the policy was finalised with the consent of the entire advisory body, the speakers questioned.

The speakers asked whether the review committee headed by the Khatib of Baitul Mukarram, a government employee, and if that was the case, it needs to be explained how only a few advisers could opt to form the committee.

As the government did not allow

tragic accident has rendered them helpless.

Balla No-2 Ward Weavers' Association President Jinnat Ali, 60, also a member of Balla Union Parishad, told The Daily Star that most of the dead weavers owned small handloom factories with 5 to 10 handlooms and they had established the factories borrowing money from moneylenders and NGOs.

"The authorities concerned should provide proper compensation to the family members of the victims considering their poor condition," he added.

Tangail Deputy Commissioner (DC) Akhter Ali Sarkar visited the family members of the victims at Rampur village and gave Tk 15,000 to deceased weaver Solaiman's wife Ambia Begum, and Tk 10,000 to Janu Begum, wife of deceased weaver Dulal.