

# Ensure equal rights of indigenous people

Speakers tell reception ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a reception ceremony yesterday called for ensuring equal rights of the indigenous people as they also took part in the Liberation War.

A huge number of indigenous people took part in the Liberation War alongside Bengalees with a view to

achieving their freedom as they did not see it as something concerning only the Bengalees, they said.

But the people failed to realise that this land is not only for the Bengalees but also for other communities with a diverse culture, resulting in discrimination, conflict and deprivation, they added.

However, it is time to pay

due respect to everyone irrespective of caste, culture and community who joined the Liberation War, the speakers said.

'Shudhui Muktijuddho Publications' accorded the reception to freedom fighter Yu K Ching, the lone member from the indigenous community who was awarded 'Bir Bikram'.

Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University said, "Through this programme, we are also showing respect to plurality and cultural diversity of the country."

The people from other cultures should also have equal rights, he added.

Yu K Ching, a Marma of Ujanpara in Bandarban, was a member of East Pakistan Rifles in 1971. He took part in the Liberation War and fought in Rangpur district as a platoon commander.

But the elderly freedom fighter with his eight family members is now leading a miserable life, as he cannot work hard due to his illness and does not receive any support from the government.

Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutt, a sector commander of the Liberation War, condemned the repression of the indigenous community in Chittagong Hill Tracts and called on the government to ensure their rights.

Col (ret) Sazzad Ali Zahir Bir Protik, Maj Gen (ret) KM Shafiqullah, Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury and litterateur Selina Hossain also spoke at the programme at the Liberation War Museum.



Maj Gen (ret) KM Shafiqullah hands over a crest to freedom fighter Yu K Ching Bir Bikram at a reception ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. On their right is Prof Mesbah Kamal and on their left are Selina Hossain, Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutt and Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury.

## 'Stop killing Palestinians'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Pro-liberation Students' Union for Better Bangladesh formed a human chain and brought out a procession on the Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday demanding an end to the Israeli air strikes on Gaza which killed hundreds of civilians.

The organisation formed by the students of different public and private universities arranged the programmes to create public opinion against Israeli attacks.

Hossain Selim, a Palestine student of the Asia Pacific University, made a call to boycott Israeli and USA made products as a protest to the Israeli attacks on Palestine citizens.

Sayem Mohammad, convener of the organisation, termed the Israeli attacks as genocide and called upon world community to stand beside innocent Palestine people.

## HC hearing on toxic milk resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) is likely to hear the pending writ petition regarding melamine mixed powdered milk on its reopening day today after two weeks of wintervacation.

Sources said the officials concerned of the health ministry have already submitted some laboratory test reports on 37 brands of powdered milk available on the domestic market to the office of Supreme Court Registrar as per an earlier court order.

SC Registrar Abu Bakar Siddiqui, however, could not confirm whether his office received any report from the government officials regarding melamine tainted powdered milk.

Sources said the health ministry officials have collected samples of all brands of powdered milk available on the local market in presence of the representatives

of chemistry department of Dhaka University, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution for laboratory tests.

Counsel for the writ petitioners advocate Manzil Murshid said if the lab test reports were not submitted to the HC through the SC Registrar by December 31 last year then the government will be liable to contempt of court as per a Supreme Court direction.

Earlier on November 17 last year, the SC directed the health ministry to send samples of all brands of powdered milk available on the domestic market to any European country through the World Health Organisation (WHO) for laboratory test and submit the reports to the HC by December 31.

## BCL's 61st founding anniversary today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will observe its 61st founding anniversary today.

To observe the day BCL has chalked out elaborate programmes, which include placing wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi, cutting cakes, and bringing out colourful procession on the Dhaka University campus.

Incumbent and former leaders and activists of the organisation will join the programmes.

BCL was formed on this day in 1948 under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then a student of Dhaka University.



The number of outdoor patients thronging Dhaka Medical College Hospital everyday is so big that the doctors fail to cope with providing proper healthcare service to them. This picture was taken at the outdoor section of the medicine department yesterday.

## Passenger bus catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A passenger bus caught fire due to mechanical fault at Shahbagh area in the city last night.

The CNG-run bus of My Line city service was burnt to ashes in front of Aziz Super Market at around 7:20pm when it was heading for Khilgaon Taltola from Mirpur, said police.

None was injured in the incident as the passengers got down from the bus quickly.

Firefighters of Palashi Fire Brigade unit rushed to the spot and doused the fire at 7:50pm.

They said the fire originated at the engine of the bus and spread fast to other parts of the body.

Police said the fire caused severe traffic jam as of 8:30pm when the wreckage of the bus was removed from the area.

## FFs' ultimatum to extend retirement age to 67

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The freedom fighter civil servants have given the outgoing caretaker government (CG) a 48-hour ultimatum to implement their one-point demand of extending their retirement age from 57 to 67.

The freedom fighters under the banner of 'Bangladesh National Rewarded, National Awarded Disabled Freedom Fighters and Shaheed Family Welfare Parisad' gave the ultimatum at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

They said if the government does not implement their demand by January 5, they will commit to self-immolation at Muktang at 12:00 noon of January 6.

In a written statement at the press conference, Parishad Senior Vice-president Submariner Abidur Rahman said the proposal of the freedom fighters was accepted at the secretary committee

meeting on December 24, and the summary of the proposal was sent to the chief adviser's office on that day for placing it in the advisory committee meeting for final approval, but the proposal is yet to be implemented.

He said the freedom fighters were appointed much later than their fellow colleagues as they took part in the liberation war, and many of them were injured and took time for treatment.

Abidur said 90 percent of freedom fighter government servants would go for retirement by 2009 while many of their children are not matured enough to get their jobs.

So if they are to go for retirement at this stage of life, they would be forced to lead an inhuman life, he added.

Parishad Chairman Hemayet Uddin, General Secretary MAMajed, Hedayetul Bari, Mohammed Zakir Khan, Nurul Islam Mollah, Kazi Abdur Rashid, Jafar Sadeq Tapan and Abdul Kader also addressed the press conference.

## Nurse students protest misbehaviour with trainees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trainee students of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Nursing Institute yesterday kept its Principal Tahatunnahar captive for around three hours for scolding them as they wore new uniforms.

The activities of the college came to a halt as the agitating nurses staged a demonstration on the institute campus for misbehaving with them.

However, the situation came under control with police intervention at noon.

The students said as per the directive of the principal, they made new uniforms last month. They were supposed to start clinical practice with the dresses from yesterday.

But without any valid reason, the principal scolded the students in uniforms and stopped taking class that evoked excitement among them.

They locked the door of the principal from 10:00am to 1:30pm. At last, they stopped the agitation after getting assurance of a solution to the problem from the nursing director.

The principal, however, said the government is yet to send any model of dresses for the students of BSC Nursing College. A directive would come from the government in this regard soon.



Trainee students of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Nursing Institute stage a demonstration on its campus yesterday protesting the principal's misbehaviour with them.

## RMG workers demand salary, damage factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating garment workers of a factory at Jamgara in Ashulia yesterday damaged its main gate and windowpanes and put up barricade on Jamgara road as the factory was closed without paying their salaries.

Police said the authorities of S-Suhi Industries Park declared it closed for 17 days yesterday without any prior notice to its workers, which triggered agitation among them when they saw the factory closed.

Before its scheduled closure, the factory authorities earlier announced a four-day holiday, they added.

As the workers were not informed of the matter, they became agitated and ransacked the main gate and damaged several windowpanes.

At one stage, they put barricade on the road in front of the factory for half-hour creating a severe traffic congestion, police said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and removed the barricade assuring the workers of paying their dues.

Quoting the authorities, Sub-Inspector Mofizur Rahman of Ashulia Police Station said as there was no yarn in the factory, they closed it for the time being.

When contacted, the authorities said the factory will resume production on January 18 after receiving yarn and they will not lay off workers.

## Attacks on four-party leaders protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Muktijoddher Projonmo formed a human chain yesterday to protest the post-election attacks on the four-party alliance leaders and activists in Baksal style by Awami League (AL) activists, says a press release.

The speakers at the programme in front of the National Press Club in the city said the AL activists are involved in plundering shops, arson and attacking business establishments and student halls.

Although the AL supremo assured the countrymen of working with all the political parties for a strengthening democracy, but the attacks go against her statement, they added.

The speakers called on the grand alliance leaders to take necessary steps to stop such atrocities.

Jatiyatabadi Muktijoddha Dal Vice-president Md Abdeur Rahman, Organising Secretary Waliullah Bablu, central leader of the Projonmo Abu Al Yusuf Khan Tipu, Syed Mozammel Hossain Shahin and Kalam Fayezi spoke at the programme.

## Polls credible in line with int'l standards: EWG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Working Group (EWG), a conglomeration of 32 local NGOs, yesterday said the 9th parliamentary election on December 29 was conducted in a free, fair, credible and transparent manner in consistent with international standards.

EWG, which deployed a staggering 1.55 lakh observers covering every polling booths, in its observation report also said that voters' desires were reflected in the election results.

The polls report was released at a press conference at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Hailing the overwhelming enthusiasm and 87 percent voter turnout, EWG said keen participation of women voters, electing record number of women lawmakers, vote casting by ethnic and religious minorities without fear or pressure and first-ever participation of Bihari people in the polls were satisfactory.

Mohsin Ali, an EWG member, said though some minor incidents were reported, it found no evidence to suggest any systematic abuse of the electoral system affecting the integrity of the elections.

In its report, EWG also mentioned that although there was no evidence of systematic violence, few confrontations between rival party activists were reported that resulted in temporary suspension of proceedings in some polling centres.

Congratulating the Election Commission (EC), it said introduction of the milestone electoral roll with photographs, electoral law reform, and voter and civic education initiatives played an effective role in ensuring the free and fair elections.

## Foggy Weather Hundreds of vehicles stranded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Several hundred vehicles, including passenger buses, remained stranded at Paturia and Daulatdia terminals yesterday as ferry services in Paturia-Daulatdia and Paturia-Kazirhat routes were disrupted for eight hours due to dense fog.

Thousands of passengers suffered a lot for hours on both sides of the Padma.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) sources said the ferry services were disrupted from 2:00am to 10:00am bringing traffic to a complete halt

and causing immense sufferings to passengers, particularly women and children.

Besides, two ferries -- Shah Mokhdum and Amanat Shah -- with vehicles with passengers anchored in midstream for hours when several ferries sat out the Paturia, Daulatdia and Kazirhat ghats, sources said.

A snarl-up stretching about four kilometers was seen on road to Paturia Ghat at about 5:00pm yesterday.

Ferry services resumed at about 10:00am when the foggy weather is cleared, Abdus Sattar, marine officer of BIWTC at Aricha sectors said.

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