

ARSON ATTACKS Panicked Biharis fear eviction

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Series of fires broke out simultaneously three nights at several Bihari camps at Mirpur during the last seven days, causing panic and fear of eviction among the Biharis living in the area.

The victims informed that separate fires broke out at MCC camp, football ground camp, madrasa camp, Muslim camp, non-local relief camp

and Wapda building camp situated at Mirpur sections 10 and 11 on Monday and Tuesday mornings and also yesterday.

All the incidents took place between at around 3:00am and 4:00am early morning, they informed. Panicked Biharis of more fire incidents are spending the nights on alert, guarding their houses in shifts.

Although no one was seri-

ously injured, a total of 20 houses and four Benaroshi handloom factories were burnt at MCC camp. At other camps, tin-shed roofs and bamboo fences of several huts were reduced to ashes in the fires.

Tormented Biharis termed the incidents a deliberate act of arson attack and a plot by local influentials to evict them.

Victim Jallil, a barber of

MCC camp, said, "My family narrowly escaped the fire as everyone was asleep during that time. At a time several fires broke out at different places. We lost all earthly possessions and living under the open sky in fear."

Sadakath Khan, president of Urdu Speaking Youth Rehabilitation Movement, said, "Local influentials have been trying to evict us for long. We are living under constant fear for a long time, but the last couple of nights were completely sleepless. We are feeling insecure."

Benaroshi handloom and karchupi craftsman is the main livelihood of Biharis living in the area.

Sadakath mentioned that two incidents of fires in 2004 and 2005 that killed four people and destroyed more than 150 houses were also thought to be arson attacks.

In 2002, the High Court issued a rule nisi asking the government not to evict Biharis unless they are provided with alternative arrangements, he said, adding: "Locals have been trying to evict us for long but they cannot do it legally because of the rule nisi."

Meanwhile, two general diaries (GDS) were filed with Pallabi Police Station in this connection.

Officer-in-Charge Md Abdul Momin said, "Incidents of simultaneous fires are definitely suspicious. We are not yet confirmed who might have been behind the arson attacks. An investigation is going on."

Comrade Ali Aksad laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Comrade Ali Aksad, veteran language hero and leader of Biswa Shanti Andolon and a member of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) was laid to rest with full state honours at the Mirpur Intellectuals Graveyard in the city yesterday.

Comrade Aksad passed away at Square Hospital on March 6 after a long struggle with different diseases including asthma and Parkinson's disease.

Before his burial, leaders of different political parties and organisations including CPB, Workers Party of Bangladesh, NAP, JSD, Ganatantrik Bam Morcha and Awami League (AL) paid their last respects to him.

Earlier in the day, Aksad's coffin was taken to the CPB office at 9:00am where party leaders paid their last respects to him. At 10:00 am his coffin was taken to the National Press Club where deputy speaker of the parliament Col (rtd) Shawkat Ali, AL lawmaker Abdur Razzak, veteran journalist Nirmal Sen, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad and a host of others paid their last respects.

At 11:00 am his coffin was taken to the Central Shaheed Minar for the general public to pay homage to him.

After his namaz-e-jaanaza, Aksad was laid to rest at the Mirpur Intellectuals' Graveyard with full state honours.

Different organisations and individuals have expressed deep shock at the death of the veteran leader.



Policemen form a guard of honour as the coffin of Comrade Ali Aksad (inset) was kept at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday before his burial. Ali Aksad passed away on Friday morning.



PHOTO: STAR

The MCC camp for Biharis at Mirpur in the city after the arson attacks. Fire broke out in several camps in the area last week.

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International Women's Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Women's Day will be celebrated today with a call for all to unite to end violence against women.

Various organisations will mark the day with elaborate programmes across the country.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have given separate message on the occasion congratulating all women.

In her message, the prime minister urged all to unite against all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girl children.

The National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled will hold a discussion on 'We are united to establish the rights of the women with disability' and a cultural programme at TSC Sarak Dwip on the Dhaka University campus.

The Garment Workers Unity Forum will hold a seminar on 'Rights of working women' at 23/ 2 Topkhana Road at 4:00pm.

The Department of Women and Gender Studies of DU will organise a rally and cultural show at 10:00am. The rally will start from Aparajeyo Bangla in front of the arts faculty building.

Karmojibi Nari will organise a human chain and rally at the National Press Club at 2:30pm.

In a joint statement, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu MP and general secretary Syed Zafar Sazzad called for steps to ensure the rights of the women in every

Training course of Art of Living from tomorrow

METRO DESK

The Art of Living, Bangladesh will hold a training regimen at A2, House 4/A, Rangs Lake Garden, Road-139 (Behind Samsonite) at Gulshan-1 in the city beginning from tomorrow, says a press release.

The weeklong course is comprised of a series of Yoga and meditation activities, designed to relieve stress and imbue a renewed sense of harmony between body and spirit.

The Art of Living is a multi-faceted, not-for-profit educational and humanitarian NGO with a presence in over 140 countries.

On weekdays, the course will be held from 6:30pm to 9:30pm while on Friday it will continue from 10:00am to 5:00pm.

Participants are requested to be at the venue by 5:30pm tomorrow.

For further details interested people are requested to contact Rafi Hossain (01199846602), Nawshad Thariyani (01745767404) or Sajeew (017130-83639)

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