



Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding steps to end caste-based discrimination.

## Enact law against caste-based discrimination

Dalit community urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Representatives from the Dalit community yesterday demanded enactment of a special law establishing caste-based discrimination as a punishable offence.

They formed a human chain in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh in the city to press their demand and called for an end to caste-based discrimination and prejudice.

Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) and Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR) with support from Nagorik Uddyog organised the event to mark the World Dignity Day and the International Human Rights Day.

Mukul Sikdar, chairperson of BDERM, said Dalits are considered untouchables and forced to live a dejected and isolated life. They are deprived of human rights.

He added that the society needs Dalits to do all the menial work but refuses to meet

their basic needs.

Dalits are often evicted from their colonies and their children are denied admission in schools for their identity, Mukul said.

According to an unofficial estimate, there are around 60 lakh Dalits in Bangladesh. The term Dalit is widely used to refer to the suppressed and social outcasts, including low caste Hindus, sweepers, waste scavengers, cobblers, leather workers and landless labourers.

Speakers at the human chain demanded an end to eviction of Dalits from their colonies, allotment of khas land to them, special quota in schools for the children of Dalits, recognition of Dalit freedom fighters and special social protection schemes for them such as old-age allowance, allowance for widows and vulnerable group feeding.

Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog, researcher Mazharul Islam and BDERM leaders B Solomon, Moni Rani Das,

Master Kanai Lal and Banani Biswas attended the human chain programme.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad organised a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium where the Dalits placed a set of demands, including reserved seat for them in parliament, special cell for Dalits in the Human Rights Commission, and permanent status for sweepers in the Dhaka City Corporation.

The press conference was organised with support from the Self-Help Association for Rural People Through Education and Entrepreneurship (SHARE), Barcik and Oxfam.

Nirmal Chandra Das, secretary general of Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad, presented the keynote paper.

He said Harijans and Dalits are socially excluded and considered lowest in the social order. They do not have right to entry to the public places such as hotels, restaurants and temples.

## Tk 70 lakh VoIP equipment seized in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) in cooperation with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in separate

drives seized illegal Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment worth around Tk 70 lakh in the port city on Thursday and yesterday.

Equipment worth around Tk 50 lakh were seized in a

drive yesterday, BTRC officials said opting not to give details since the drive was going on.

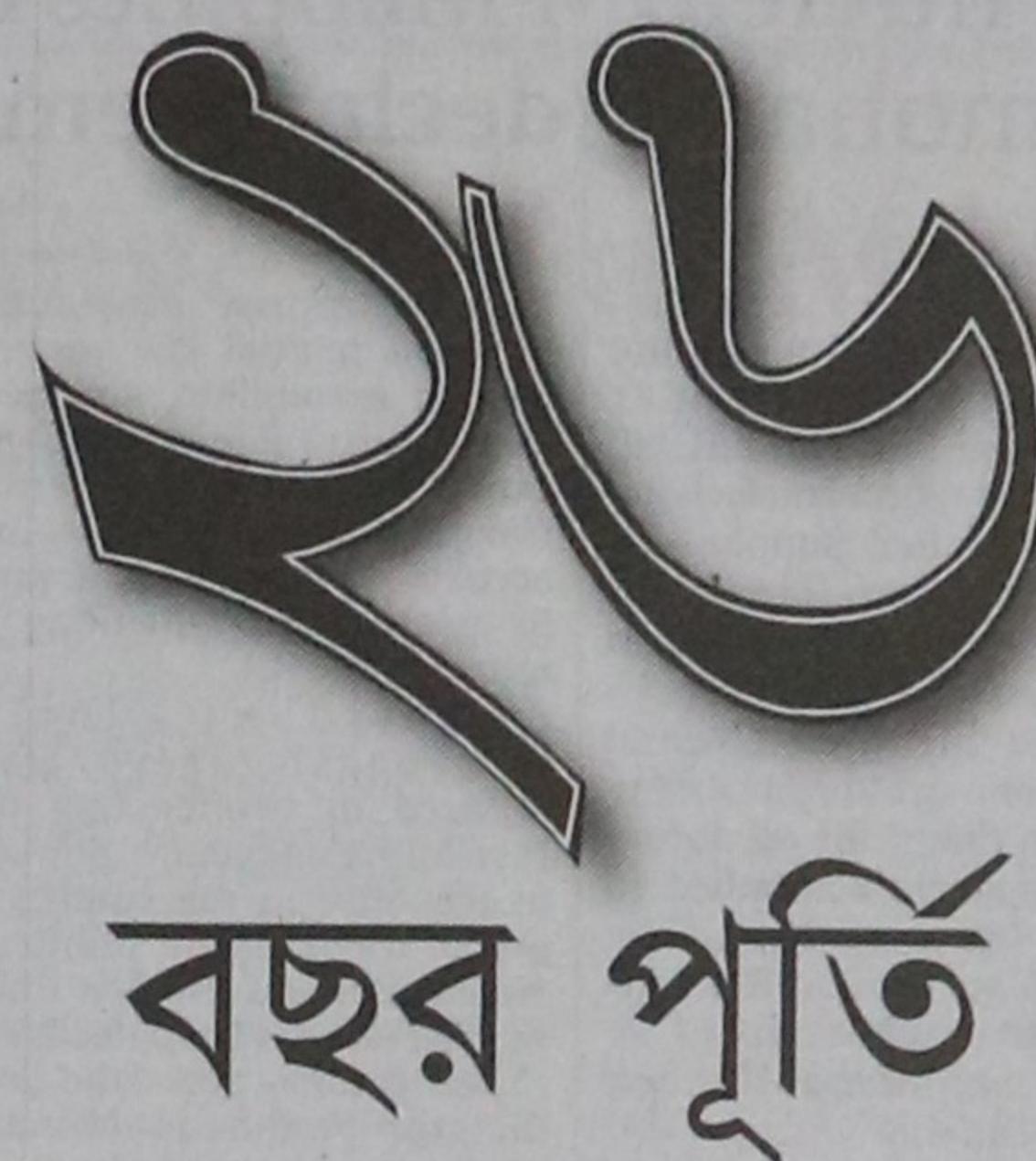
They also detected that 'E1' technology for illegal VoIP trading is being used in individual level.

In another drive, BTRC officials seized VoIP equipment worth around Tk 20 lakh from a house at Jamal Khan By-lane on Thursday night.

None was arrested in this connection.

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## 8 injured as AL factions clash over jhut business

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least eight people were injured in a clash between two factions of Awami League over 'Jhut' (garments wastage) business at Konapbari in Gazipur yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash ensued when Bhawal Badre Alam College Students Union leader Ripon Sarker and his supporters prevented Gazipur Sadar upazila vice-chairman Jahangir Alam's men from loading Jhut into three trucks in front of a garments factory named 'NTKC'.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and policemen rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control.

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MAJOR SUDHIR SAHA (Retd.), LL.B (Hons.), LL.M, CCIC, FCMI  
CSIC Membership No. M 041199

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Dhaka: Tower Hamlet (14th Flr.), 16 Kemal Ataturk Ave, Banani  
Tel: 8836147, 8836187, 8836182, 01711-638734, 01819-268198  
01731-605443, Fax: 8836195, info@ilcb.net

Sylhet : Al-Hamra (6th Floor), Zindabazar  
Tel: 717175, 01713-063136, syl@ilcb.net

