

LONG MARCH 'Take steps to stop Tipai dam'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Sylhet

Islami Andolan Bangladesh organised a rally on the Government Alia Madrasa premises in Sylhet yesterday on the way to taking their long march to Zakiganj.

Speakers at the rally said people of Bangladesh are united against the Indian attempt to construct the Tipaimukh dam.

They called upon the government for immediate steps to stopping such a mega project, which would cause a devastating situation in the country.

They also said the Tipai dam would be a death trap for Bangladesh.

Charmonai Pir Moulana Syed Rezaul Karim, Amir of Islami Andolan, Bangladesh, spoke at the programme, while district president Master Fazlul Haque chaired.

President hosts Xmas reception

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday hosted a reception for members of Christian community at Bangabhaban on the occasion of the holy Christmas.

Archbishop Paulinus Costa, diplomats of different countries, distinguished persons of Christian community, religious leaders and professionals joined the reception.

President welcomed the guests and exchanged greetings with them.

A decorated Christmas tree was set up while a group of young singers of the community sang Christmas carol during the reception.

Later, Zillur Rahman cut a 40kg Christmas cake with the members of the Christian communities. A Santa Claus was roaming around and distributed chocolates among the children.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Advocate M Shahjahan Miah and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promode Mankin were present on the occasion.

Perpetrators' easy access to acid keeps violence unabated

Laws being abused, most jewellery shops have no licences to use acid

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Massive campaign against acid violence and strict laws could not bring much success to control the crime in the country as two sets of the existing laws are being abused, leading the perpetrators' access to acid easily and, at the same time, helping them escape from punishment.

The unabated acid violence elsewhere leads to burning few hundred people, mostly women and children every year. Still, at least one acid violence is taking place in every three days as 90 incidents occurred since September this year, injuring 116 people.

Though the Acid Control Act 2002 prohibits using, transporting and selling acids without licences, very few users of acids, especially the little jewellery shops, have licences.

While visiting in the city's Tantibazar and Goolnagar areas, it was found that a significant

number of jewellery shops have no licences for using acids.

"The acid sellers know us and so we don't have to show licences to buy acids from them," said one Razzaq, employee of a gold jewellery shop at Tantibazar, adding that police even don't say anything if they are given some hush money.

"The licence policy is not good," said Mohammad Shamsul Haque, president of Bangladesh Acid Merchants Association.

"There are many small types of jewellery that need only half kilogram of acid a year. The owners of these jewellery shops usually don't bother to apply for licences, because they think it a hassle of showing trade licences, membership of chamber, income tax certificates, bank solvency certificates, deeds, experience certificates, etc after paying a range of Tk 7,000 to 25,000 as licence fee," he said, adding that most of the small types of jewellery have no licences for using acids.

"We demanded the government provide the user licences with reduced preconditions and money. But the government did not pay heed to it," he said, adding that the criminals usually collect acids from the small traders who have no licences of using and selling acids at all.

The government has imposed restrictions on using and selling of acids, including hydrochloric, sulphuric, chromic and caustic potash by enacting a law, but those are being sold in the market openly at a price between Tk 2 and Tk 40 per kg.

But unfortunately, the deputy commissioner's office does not know who are selling and using acids without licences. Even, since 2007, no mobile court visited the areas to identify those who are violating the laws.

Lack of manpower is the main reason for field visit as well as to nab the criminals, they said.

An Acid Survivors Foundation report

revealed that some 490 people fell victim to acid violence in 2002, which was 411 in 2003, 325 in 2004 and 221 in 2006. But the conviction rate is quite negligible compared to that of the incidents.

"The number of the acquitted is higher than the number of the convicted," said Meherun Nessa Parul, in-charge of Acid Monitoring Cell of Police Headquarters.

In most cases, the accused are acquitted, because the witness often fears to give his/her statements in the court. Besides, the acid throwers often manage the victim's family to compromise and withdraw the case as most of the acid violence takes place among the relatives, she said.

From January 2002 to October 2009, some 1,480 cases were filed under the Acid Crime Control Act. Of them, only 273 accused were convicted in 165 cases while 1,457 accused were acquitted in 434 cases, said Police HQ sources.

India eases tourist visa guidelines

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA,
New Delhi

India has announced relaxation in the new guidelines on tourist visas issued last month, which had made it mandatory for foreigners holding long-term multiple-entry visas to take a two-month break between two visits.

The norms, said a statement of the External Affairs Ministry on Thursday, were eased to facilitate bona fide tourists who enter India but plan to visit another country and then re-enter India.

This particular category of tourists will be allowed by Indian missions abroad to re-enter India two or three times before their final exit from India provided they submit a detailed itinerary of their visit and supporting documents.

Apart from Indian missions, immigration authorities have also been intimated about the changes to allow foreign tourists to travel to another country and re-enter India.

"The authorities in all immigration check posts in India have also been authorised to allow tourists to make two or three entries, as the case may be, based on production of itinerary and documentation (ticket bookings) substantiating the need for tourism-related travel," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Vishnu Prakash said.

The changes, officials said, were made for tourists who use India as a base for travelling to other countries in the region.

The Indian government introduced the new visa guidelines on November 4 in the wake of unearthing of terror plots of American citizen of Pakistani origin David Coleman Headley who along with Canadian national of Pakistani origin Tawwaur Hussain Rana was plotting attacks in India. Both have been arrested in Chicago.

According to the guidelines, a two-month gap between the visits is mandatory for foreign tourists holding long-term multiple-entry tourist visas.

However, the move had evoked concerns from the United States and Britain, which said genuine tourists would be hit. Britain in particular was concerned as six to seven lakh British tourists visit India every year.

SECTOR-7 FFs' REUNION

'Govt plans various facilities for war heroes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will take initiatives to offer various facilities to the freedom fighters, the best sons of the soil, for their welfare, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs AB Tajul Islam said yesterday.

The facilities include food rationing programme for insolvent freedom fighters, free medical treatment and setting up banks, insurance companies and media houses in their names, he said.

A modern hospital will be built at Tejgaon in the city for the freedom fighters and a 20-storied commercial-cum-residence complex would be constructed at Muhammadpur, he said.

The government is also planning to give allowance to every freedom fighter gradually, he added.

The minister also said that very important person (VIP)

status will be given to war-maimed freedom fighters and the martyred freedom fighter's family members and gradually to all freedom fighters.

The state minister said this at the reunion of freedom fighters who fought under Sector-7 battle zone comprising Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra and part of Dinajpur districts.

He also said that the election to the Muktiyoddha Sangsad is likely to be held next month.

Muktijoddha Parishad, Sector No.-7, organised the reunion at the LGED auditorium in the city.

Col (retd) Kazi Nuruzzaman, who led the Sector No. 7, presided over the event.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, "We fought for a prosperous Bangladesh, but we could not achieve our desired development due to political confrontation and division."

On the other hand, Jamaat-e-Islami, which opposed the Liberation War, is now more powerful, he said and added: "We need to take fresh preparation to fight against them and continuation of pro-liberation government is imperative for it."

Festivity was in the air as hundreds of freedom fighters joined the reunion. They embraced each other and exchanged pleasantries.

They called for immediate start of the trial of war criminals.

They urged the government to involve local freedom fighters in preparing the list of war heroes at upazila level to avoid any mistakes.

Maj Gen (retd) KM Shafiqullah, Dr Quaium Khan, Dr M Amad Hossain, Mansur Ali, MA Gafur, Moqbul Hossain and Azad Ali also spoke.



President Zillur Rahman cuts a Christmas cake with the members of the Christian community at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

WEATHER TODAY

Cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

The mild to moderate cold wave that is sweeping over Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions and the regions of Srimangol, Mymensingh, Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Comilla and Feni may continue in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country during the period, Met Office said.

It also said light to moderate fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:19pm today and rises at 7:40am today.

Country's highest temperature 25.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 7.2 degrees Celsius at Srimangol.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	23.3	11.4	57	58
Chittagong	24.1	13.0	78	52
Rajshahi	23.8	07.4	87	73
Khulna	23.8	10.3	91	60
Barisal	24.2	09.5	93	85
Sylhet	23.7	12.4	100	77
Cox's Bazar	25.4	14.0	60	59

Textile mill owner stabbed to death in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi

A gang of assailants killed the owner of a textile mill and looted his money in his mill at Choula in the district town on Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Mostafa Mia, 65, owner of Mostafa Textile Mill in the area.

Witnesses said a gang of assailants stormed into the mill at about 11:00pm after the employees left for home after their duties.

The miscreants stabbed Mostafa indiscriminately, leaving him dead on the spot. They also looted Tk 50,000 from his possession.

Receiving information, the police recovered the body of Mostafa from the mill yesterday morning and sent it to Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

Prepare list of razakars Sajeda asks party leaders, activists

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Magura

Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday called upon the Awami League leaders and activists to prepare lists of razakars in their respective areas and said every razakar would be tried.

"The then prime minister

will also be charged with helping razakars like Nizami and Mojahid to fly national flag on their cars and inducting them in the cabinet," she said.

She was addressing a meeting at the Nomanai Maidan in the district town in the afternoon to mark the death anniversary of former president of district AL and lawmaker of Magura 2 constituency advo-

cate Asaduzzaman.

The meeting was organised by district unit AL and its front organisations.

With district unit AL president Altaf Hossain in the chair, the meeting was also addressed by Whip of parliament Abdul Wahab and local lawmakers Mohammad Serajul Akbar and Biren Shikder.



Architect Mazharul Islam cuts a cake at Bengal Gallery in the city yesterday on the occasion of his 86th birthday. Admirers and well-wishers of the pioneer of modern architecture organised the event.

PHOTO: STAR

4 robbers held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested four robbers with arms in Srimongol on Thursday.

The arrested robbers were identified as Mustafizur Rahman, Idris Ali, Azad Miah and Shah Alam.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab arrested them when they went to hire a microbus to be used in their criminal activities. A pistol, a pipe gun, 2 machetes and 2 rounds of bullet were recovered from their possession.



Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Fazlul Haque, a visually impaired person, has appealed for financial assistance for his treatment, as he has been suffering from cancer since 2005.

Fazlul Haque, 30, who did his master's from Dhaka University, is now working with an NGO at Sirajganj. He is married and has a seven-year-old son.

He has already spent a big amount on his treatment. He recently underwent treatment at Tata Memorial Hospital in India after he developed more complications.

According to doctors, he needs about Tk 10 lakh for his treatment, but it is not possible for him to manage such a huge amount.

So, he has appealed to the generous people to extend a helping hand to save his life.

Contributions can be sent to Md Fazlul Haque, Savings Account No. 21046391, City Bank, Sirajganj Branch, Sirajganj.

Interested persons can also call him at 01720104203.

70,000 bales of cotton yield expected next season

UNB, Dhaka

The country is likely to see some 70,000 bales of cotton production in the next season, as the Cotton Development Board (CDB) has planned to bring more lands under hybrid cotton cultivation.

"In the 2010-11 season, we're expecting some 70,000 bales of cotton harvest, as hybrid cotton will be cultivated on new lands apart from the traditional ones," said Dewan Md Intajul Islam, executive director of CDB.

He said the use of hybrid seeds would be raised by three times next year and more plain areas of Habiganj and the three hilly districts would be brought under its cultivation.

The CDB chief also hoped that they would be able to raise the cotton production to one lakh bales in the next five years by encouraging the farmers for using hybrid seeds.

In the 2009-10 season, some 31,500 hectares of land were brought under cotton cultivation with a production target of 60,000 bales.

Of the total land, 289 hectares were brought under cultivation of two hybrid varieties -- HSC-4 and DM-1. Around 3 to 3.5 tonnes of cotton are expected to be produced in each hectare (1 hectare=2.47 acres) compared to two tonnes from traditional CB-9.

In the 2008-09 season, some 32,600 hectares of land were brought under the cultivation from where 50,175 bales of cotton

were harvested.

In the current season, the farmers have started growing hybrid cotton from two local business houses -- Supreme Seed Company and Lal Teer Seed -- began marketing the Chinese variety of hybrid seeds.

"The fibre length of the hybrid variety is also better than the traditional one," Intajul added.

The quality and market price of hybrid cotton is also higher -- Tk 200 to Tk 300 -- than the traditional one. The hybrid cotton is now selling at Tk 1,800 per maund.

But, considering the demand of the country's textile industries, the local producers can meet 3 to 5 percent of the demand as the textile sector needs to import around 35 lakh bales of cotton a year which is around 95 to 97 percent of the total demand.

Talking to the news agency, Abdul Hai Sarker, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), said they would welcome any CDB initiative to give a boost to cotton cultivation.

"We'll extend our cooperation to the CDB in this regard. We'll buy the additional production, as we need around 3.5 million bales of cotton a year."

The main raw cotton-importing countries are Chad, Mali, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Of the existing traditional varieties of seeds like CB1, CB2, CB9 and CB10, CB9 is cultivated on around 90 percent of the total land, said CDB Deputy Director M Farid Uddin.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Centre for National Regional Service organises a roundtable on national education policy and spirit of the Liberation War. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 3:30pm.

Seminar

BADC Agriculturists Association organises a seminar on 'seeds and fertiliser management for food security'. Venue: BARC auditorium, Farmgate. Time: 9:30am.

Policy seminar

PPRC and Concern Worldwide jointly organise a policy seminar on 'Food price inflation: Impact and response'. Venue: RDEC conference room. Time: 10:00am.

BLAST roundtable

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Service Trust (BLAST) organises a roundtable on review of article-30 of Bangladesh labour law. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Naripokkho organises a seminar on health rights of women and government health services. Venue: IDB Bhaban. Time: 9:30am.