

## 'Cancel move to procure additional oil tankers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Oil tanker owners have threatened to cease work from March 24 if the government does not cancel the move to procure additional oil tankers.

At a press briefing held at a city hotel yesterday, they called on the government to cancel the move, which would make more from their fleet of 104 idle and their workers jobless.

"Due to decreasing demand of fuel following the emergence of CNG, our tankers cannot run more than two trips a day at present," said Bangladesh Oil Tanker Owners' Association President TM Giasuddin.

"Our member companies are facing huge losses with high maintenance costs and decreasing number of trips," he said.

"Around 50 percent of our tankers have been sitting idle as it is. If more oil tankers are brought in, the industry would be in crisis," he added.

As 90 percent of the oil in the country are transported through the waterways, if the tankers sit idle oil would not be readily available and many industries would come to a standstill. Farmers would not be able to get their hands on fuel for irrigation, which would in turn gravely affect the agriculture industry, said Habibul Islam, senior joint president of the Oil Tanker Owners' Association.

He said they are looking forward to sitting with the government to come to an understanding.

If the talks fail all operations would stop from March 24 midnight, he added.

The association requested immediate government intervention to avoid unrest in the industry.

According to Bangladesh Oil Tanker Owners' Association, oil tankers are the cheapest means of oil transportation in the country ranging from Tk 0.88 to Tk 1.44 for ton/per mile.



Deputy Leader of Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury receive Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the city yesterday on her return from China.

## Deep-sea port to benefit all neighbours: Hasina

BSS, Kunming

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh's proposed deep-sea port in the Bay of Bengal would benefit all neighbours, including China.

"We planned to develop the deep-sea port which would benefit all the countries in the region, including China," Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad quoted her as saying as Governor of Chinese Yunnan Province Qin Guangrong met her ahead of her departure for Bangladesh yesterday morning.

She added that the intensified cooperation between the countries like China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh would accelerate development of the region while she stressed enhanced connectivity for mutual economic benefit.

"Bangladesh is ready to put in its best efforts to increase regional connectivity and

fight against poverty and other regional problems," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said Beijing had proposed the construction of the Chittagong-Kunming Highway through Myanmar which Bangladesh wholeheartedly welcomed but added that because of its economic capability, Beijing would have to take the lead responsibility for the implementation of the proposal.

Being the nearest Chinese region to Bangladesh, Yunnan province authorities also has a significant role to play to set the direct link between Bangladesh and China, she said.

The governor termed the Bangladesh premier's China visit as "very fruitful" to add a new dimension in Dhaka-Beijing ties while he recalled Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Beijing visit in 1960s.

Qin Guangrong also referred to Hasina's China tour during the previous 1996-2001

tenure in government and commented that her family had a deep-rooted relation with China throughout three generations, including the premier's son Sajib Wajed Joy.

He highly appreciated Sheikh Hasina's emphasis on regional cooperation between India, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar saying poverty and other problems of the region could be removed through concerted efforts among these neighbours.

The prime minister expressed her concern over the present drought in the Yunnan province and expressed the hope that like in the past, the Chinese authorities and its people would overcome the situation soon.

She expressed her happiness that she came to know that a business forum has been set up between China and the South Asian countries, secretariat of which will be set up in Kunming.

## Dalits demand end to social discrimination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding immediate end to social discrimination on grounds of caste and professions, Dalit people rallied around the country yesterday on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2010.

Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) formed a human chain at Muktangan in the city demanding fulfilment of its 12-point demand, including formulation of a law against discrimination.

Other demands of the organisation include extension of government-allocated residential area and permanent allotment of land, immediate stop to eviction of Dalits, allotment of khas (fallow) land and constitution of a special cell in Human Rights

Commission for them.

BDERM also organised such programmes in 20 districts across the country for fulfilling the same demands.

Our Khulna Correspondent adds: Paritran, a human development organisation for the outcaste, Khulna chapter of Bangladesh Dalit Parishad, and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised a grand rally at Zia Hall.

Earlier at 10:30am, a colourful procession was brought out where Khulna City Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque also took part.

The mayor said social discrimination in a democratic country would not be allowed to go on.

The government is pledged to remove social discrimination of all forms against members of Dalit community so that they can enjoy equal human rights like

others, he added.

Bangladesh Dalit Parishad President Uday Das and Paritran Executive Director said they would launch a movement this year to realise their demands for representation of Dalit community in local government bodies and national parliament, special quota in academic institutions, including universities, employment opportunities and inclusion of Dalits in the government's safety net programme and allotment of khasland for them.

Some 1,000 participants wrote separate letters at the rally, addressing the prime minister with a view to drawing her attention to eliminate social discrimination to ensure their rights.

Uday said the letters would be sent to the PM through Khulna chapter of Bangladesh Dalit Parishad.

## 3 Jamaat leaders held in Rajshahi

100 Jihadi books seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested three Jamaat leaders during a raid at their office in the city's Hatimkhan area last night in connection with the February 9 violence in Rajshahi University.

The arrested persons were Jamaat leader and Poba upazila chairman Mokbul Hossain, city Jamaat publicity secretary Emaj Uddin Mondol, also the son-in-law of the earlier detained city Jamaat Ameer Ataur Rahman, and Ahsan Habib, a clerk of RU accounts department.

Confirming the report, Humayun Kabir, assistant commissioner of Boalia zone of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police said, the police seized over 100 books that propagate Jihad, registrar books and some official documents.

Kabir said a huge contingent of police from detective branch, Boalia and Motihar police stations surrounded Jamaat office at 8:00pm and raided it for 40 minutes.

"We conducted the raid following information that some of the suspected persons involved with the RU violence were holding a secret meeting at the Jamaat office," the police officer added.

He said policemen were deployed around the Jamaat office for avoiding any untoward incident.

## Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The fifth death anniversary of Sayeda Afifa Fatima, a social worker, will be observed today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at her residence at Khan Bahadur Garden, 195/2 Shantibagh, in the city.

Fatima, wife of engineer Mirza Tariqul Hossain, died on March 22 in 2005 at the age of 49.

## SRIMANGAL TEA GARDEN

## Around 900 trees left to be felled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Around 900 trees are left out of a total 4,000 marked for felling by a timber trader in Nahar Tea Garden (Nahar Paan Punji) in Srimangal of Moulvibazar.

Salim Uddin Mohaldar of Messrs Salim Timber and Traders embarked on a massive tree felling on March 13 following a High Court green signal to cut a total of 3,550 trees and felled approximately 1,450 trees until yesterday.

The trader bought 4,000 trees from Nahar Tea Garden in 2008 and felled 1,200 trees immediately following the government permit.

As a consequence of tree

felling, the ethnic Khasia community is feared to be displaced with the loss of betel leaf cultivation.

Different socio cultural, environmental and indigenous community organisations across the country protested the act of tree felling.

Meanwhile, Nahar Tea Garden manager Pijush Kanti Bhattacharjya told The Daily Star Friday that a surveyor team from Moulvibazar deputy commissioner's office conducted a land survey of Nahar Tea Garden.

According to the survey, Khasia community plant betel leaf in the land of Nahar Tea Garden.

Earlier in 2008, the tree

felling move was stalled following public protests by the environmentalists and local Khasia community, who depend on the trees for traditional betel leaf cultivation.

Later in February this year, the forest department issued a fresh permit to continue with the tree felling but asked the trader not to cut 450 trees in Khasia punji (settlement) and slapped an enhanced royalty for the trees.

The garden owner and timber trader filed a writ with the HC that stayed the government's new decision and ordered felling of 3,550 trees.

However, garden authority has decided not to cut 450 trees.

