

Lift ban on Facebook

Students demand

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Dhaka University (DU) students formed a human chain on the campus yesterday to protest the government decision to block the Facebook, a popular social networking website.

With a banner reading 'Stop interference with the freedom of expression', around 25 students staged the protest near the Aparajeyo Bangla at about 12:00 noon.

Speaking at the programme, students came down heavily on the government for banning the Facebook, saying that the government had violated its electoral pledges by banning the network in Bangladesh.

"I voted the present government as it pledged to present us with a digital Bangladesh, but by banning the Facebook, the government has done the opposite," said Satila Sharmeen, a fourth year student of mass communication and journalism department.

The agitating students called on the government to withdraw the ban immediately. Most of the Facebook users are young people who voted in the government in the last parliamentary elections, they said.

They students also vowed to hold demonstration programmes on the campus today.

In the early hours of yesterday, a group of students also held a protest procession at the TSC intersection demanding withdrawal of the ban.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) expressed resentment and concern over the blocking of the popular social networking website.

In a written statement, it said the move violates the constitution of Bangladesh, United Nations charter and the rights to express opinion.

"While the government wants to build a digital Bangladesh, blocking access to a popular social networking site like Facebook for insignificant reasons clearly violates the rights to freedom of expression," read the statement, signed by BIHR Secretary General Advocate Shahanur Islam.

In a separate press release, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree also expressed grave concern and demanded immediate withdrawal of the ban.



A group of Dhaka University (DU) students form a human chain on the campus yesterday to protest the government decision to block the Facebook.

COLLEGE ADMISSION

No major change in policy likely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will finalise a policy for admission to the colleges within three days without bringing any major changes to the existing one, said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday.

He said like the previous years, the students who passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations would get admission to the college on the basis of their results in the SSC or equivalent examinations.

He said this after exchanging views with the heads of different colleges at National Education Management Academy (NEMA) in the city.

He said there will be no seat crisis in the colleges and all the students will get scopes to be enrolled there without facing any problem.

He, however, said there will be a pressure on the reputed colleges which is usual.

A total of 713,560 students have passed in the examinations under eight education boards this year while there are 810,000 seats in 3,353 government and non-government educational institutions, he said.

On the other hand, some 182,431 students passed under madrasa board while the available seats in the madrasas are around 185,000, Nahid said, adding that the number of seats for the students under technical board is 191,585 while some 64,761 passed.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia along with her party leaders places wreaths at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

Rich tributes paid to Zia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and workers of BNP and its front and associated organisations thronged the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday to pay tributes to him on the occasion of his 29th death anniversary.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia along with her huge party leaders, workers and supporters placed wreaths at the grave of Zia, founder of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The party flag was hoisted at the party headquarters at Naya Paltan in the city and all party offices across the country as part of party's three-day programme marking the day.

Zia was assassinated by a group of disgruntled army men at Chittagong Circuit House on May 30 in 1981.

Khaleda offered fateha at the mazar and prayed for divine blessings of the departed soul of Zia. She also attended a milad mahfil organised by Jatiyatabadi Ulema Dal on the mazar premises.

Later, she inaugurated a voluntary blood donation programme organised by JISAS and distributed food among the destitute at several points in the city.

Party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Nazrul Islam Khan, Mirza Abbas, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir accompanied Khaleda.

BNP leaders and activists, its front and associated bodies and different pro-BNP professional organisations also placed wreaths at the grave of late president Zia.

Khaleda also inaugurated a photo exhibition on Zia's life and works at the National Press Club in the city in the evening.

Maritime university to be set up in Bangladesh

BSS, Chittagong

The second maritime university of South Asia is going to be established in Bangladesh with a view to developing human resources in maritime sector.

It will not only bring an epoch-making change in marine education in Bangladesh, the world's largest delta enveloping 712kms of the sea area but also enable the marine experts here to carry out research and studies on the related field.

The project titled "Enhancement of Marine Academy into Maritime University and establishment of five new Marine Academies in Bangladesh" will be started at the beginning of next fiscal year to be completed by June 2013.

CORRUPTION CASE

HC clears way for trial against AL leader Kader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday in a verdict cleared the way for continuation of the trial proceedings of a corruption case against former state minister for youth and sports Obaidul Kader.

The court also asked the special judge's court concerned to resume the trial proceedings against Kader in the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on charge of amassing illegal wealth and concealing information about it.

The HC bench of Justice Khondker Musa Khaled and Justice Kazi Reza-ul Huq delivered the verdict after rejecting a petition filed by Kader, also Awami League leader, for quashing the proceedings against him in the case.

Following a quashment

petition by Kader, the HC on July 2, 2008 stayed the proceedings of this case and issued a rule upon the ACC to explain why the proceedings against him should not be quashed.

The ACC filed the case with Ramna Model Police Station on October 30, 2007 against him on charge of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 62,84,000 and concealing information about his wealth worth Tk 15,54,000.

It submitted charge sheet in this case on April 17, 2008 and the special judge's court framed charges against him on May 22, 2008 in this case.

After holding hearing of the rule, the HC rejected the petition.

Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan appeared for the ACC, while Advocate Khairul Alam Pipul argued for the petitioner.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY TODAY

Law fails to curb tobacco use

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Five years into its enactment, Tobacco Control Act has remained largely ineffective, allowing the tobacco companies to continue promoting tobacco products in various strategic ways.

In the last five years, no regular case has been filed against any tobacco companies on charges of violating the law.

Today is the World No Tobacco Day. The theme of the day of this year is 'Gender and tobacco with an emphasis on marketing to women'.

Back in 2004, 37 percent of people were found to be tobacco consumers. The figure shot up to 43.3 percent last year, according to a study of World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

In 2007, two years after the enactment of the law, the government issued a directive to form taskforces at every district and upazila to implement the Tobacco Control Act. But most taskforces remain inactive and did not take any initiative to achieve the goal. Even the national

taskforce held only one meeting in the last three years.

The Tobacco Control Act has also a number of loopholes, which are obstacles to its success, said Dr Arup Ratan Choudhury, founder president of the Association for the Prevention of Drug Abuse.

According to the law, only the first class magistrate can fine anybody smoking in public places, while the law enforcers only have the authority to arrest an offender.

Terming this provision a major loophole, anti-tobacco activists said if the law enforcers have the authority to fine smokers, it would be easier to enforce the law.

According to the law, 'no-smoking' sign must be displayed at the public places where smoking is banned. But no such signs are found in public places.

The law prohibits tobacco advertising and distribution of any kind of cigarette or promotional materials. But a number of cigarette companies continue to distribute T-shirts, glasses and lighters displaying company logos to promote their brands. But the law enforcement agencies have turned a blind eye to

such illegal activities.

The law has made it mandatory for all tobacco companies to print warning messages on cigarette packets. But the Bidi companies do not comply.

Syed Mahbubul Alam, convener of the Tobacco Law Implementation Committee of Bangladesh Anti-tobacco Alliance, said anti-tobacco drives by mobile courts are not sufficient and regular. The drives should be stepped up and conducted regularly to properly enforce the law.

The health ministry has recently taken an initiative to review the Tobacco Control Act. A committee formed by the ministry has already submitted a draft copy, said a source of the ministry.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 57,000 people die and 3.82 lakh others become paralysed due to tobacco-related diseases in the country a year.

The government earns Tk 5,000 crore revenue from the tobacco sector, while the countrymen spend Tk 11,000 crore on treatment for tobacco-related diseases a year, said a study of Human Development Research Centre.

Campaign to make road users aware of traffic rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Self-awareness is the key to ensuring your safety. Obey traffic rules while crossing roads and use footbridges to avert danger to life.

To spread these messages, the Prothom Alo and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities jointly organised a unique awareness campaign in Bangla Motor area in the city yesterday.

Carrying banners with the messages, Prothom Alo employees and members of 'Bandhu Sava', a forum of

the Prothom Alo readers, formed a human chain to encourage pedestrians to use footbridges and obey traffic rules, while policemen used megaphones to raise awareness about traffic rules.

The organisers also congratulated the pedestrians and gave them a token gift who used footbridges during the campaign.

Editor of the Prothom Alo Matir Rahman, DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque, film actors Ilyas Kanchan and Imon, singer Mehrin and

other personalities from different professions joined the awareness campaign, which continued from 11:00am to 12:30pm.

Matir Rahman said they will continue to arrange such awareness programme in future.

Shahidul Hoque said they would intensify drives against worn-out vehicles and reckless driving.

"It is my life. I myself have to be careful while crossing roads. We have to get into the habit of using footbridge and obeying traffic rules," said Ilyas Kanchan.



The Prothom Alo and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) jointly organise an awareness campaign for pedestrians in Bangla Motor area in the city yesterday.

Govt working hard for strong parliamentary democracy

PM tells British High Commissioner

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government is working hard for a strong and vibrant parliamentary democracy.

She said this to the British High Commissioner Stephen Evans when he called on her at Gono Bhavan.

"We want that democracy should work strongly in the country and we are working in that direction," she said.

The prime minister told Evans that the Speaker is extending immense scope to the opposition in parliament. Unlike the

past BNP regime, the chair does not interrupt the opposition leader, PM Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters after the meeting.

She said her party was not allowed to speak on the issue of grenade attack, targeting her on August 21 in 2004 that left many of her party leaders and workers killed. She was narrowly escaped.

"My government will not allow terrorists and militants to use the soil of this land," Hasina assured the British envoy. She sought help from the UK to increase social security net, food security and

enhancement of food storage capacity in the country.

They also discussed about the development and advancement of the Cop-15.

Hasina expressed her strong optimism for further strengthening the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. She noted with satisfaction that a Bangladeshi origin was elected MP in the recent UK election and some others were elected as councillor.

Ambassador at large M Ziauddin, Principal Secretary MA Karim and PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad were present during the meeting.

DMP, Rab decide to work together

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior officials of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday at a coordination meeting at DMP headquarters decided to work together.

The meeting was held following the directives from the high-ups of police department after a controversy over the arrest of some suspects in the killing of sub-inspector Goutam Roy.

The meeting was attended, among others by,

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque, Additional DMP Commissioner Abul Kashem, joint commissioners Amulya Bhushan Barua and Manjur Kader Khan, Rab-1 Commander Lt Col Rashidul Alam, Rab-2 Commander Lt Col Ali Reza, Rab-3 Commander Lt Col Mamun and Rab-4 Commander Lt Col Karim attended the meeting.

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque at the meeting hoped that if both the units work together, they would be able to keep the law end order situation under control.

Death anniversary

DU CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Shah-jahan Kabir, founding chairman of the Export-Import Bank of Bangladesh, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held.

Sultan Ahmed

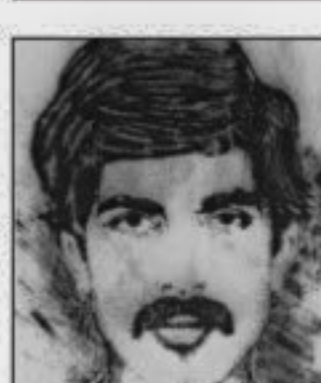
DU CORRESPONDENT



Today is the first death anniversary of Sultan Ahmed, former secretary of the Padma Group of Companies, says a press release.

Jamil Akhter Ratan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Jamil Akhter Ratan, former president of Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri Rajshahi Medical College Unit, says a press release.

Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri chalked out a number of programmes to observe the day.