

## T A N G E N T S

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Lighting Candles at Buddha Purnima.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## At Buddha Purnima

**B**UDDHA Purnima is the most important religious day for Buddhists all over the world, including those in Bangladesh. It commemorates three important events in the life of Lord Buddha: his birth, his enlightenment and his death.

I have come to the Dharmarajika Buddhist Complex in Kamalapur to photograph the ceremony. On the street, I notice vendors selling candles and incense sticks, which I smell as I enter the compound. A band party is playing boisterously.

Devotees have started here early. Inside a single-story shelter built around a large Bodhi tree, they offer prayers and make *maanot* (requests) on subjects ranging from world peace to their personal health. The candles and incense sticks are lit while making the *maanot*.

In one corner a couple sits solemnly reading from a holy book. Parents teach their children rituals of the prayers.

Over in the main building, a large room has a stage with a statue of the Buddha. Every family has brought food this morning. This includes fruits, vegetables, rice, cookies, and cooked fish. It is arranged in several large platters, which are carried over to the statue in a ceremonial march. The food, called "swain", is offered to the Buddha's statue, and eventually consumed by the attendees.

Inside the temple I watch an old woman worship with utter devotion. When she is done I ask her name. Suniti Borua Choudhury, over 80, lives in Dhaka with the younger of two sons. She hails from Patna, Chittagong.

"How long have you been coming here?" I ask.

"For at least ten or twelve years now," she replies.

A young couple with two children hover around us. He is the son, Abhijit; she is his wife, Subarna.

I ask Suniti why she comes here. She is flustered. "They bring me here," she points to her son. Avijit helps out. "It is our largest and most important religious occasion. And so we come here as a family," he replies for her. They also attend other Buddhist festivals, often held during full moon (Purnima).

The entire compound is dotted with monks wearing one-piece garments of yellow, orange, or red. They are all ages, and I am told that monks can start here at twelve. However, I am puzzled by the colour differences and wonder if the clothes have a colour code. I find three teenage monks, each wearing a different coloured sheet, sitting by the pond.

"So... do the different colours reflect seniority?" I ask them.

"No, no, we are all at the same level," comes the reply.

I am not satisfied. "So there is no difference between the colours at all?"

They confer among themselves. Finally, one says, "The red ones are Burmese and the yellow and orange ones are Thai." There, I had my answer!

In the afternoon, the crowd thins considerably. Children drag their parents to the mela in the street outside. I, too, take my leave, filled with wonder at the religious diversity of this nation.

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FAST UNTO DEATH AT BHASANI UNIVERSITY  
50 students fall sick

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least fifty students of Food Technology and Nutritional Science (FTNS) department of Maulana Bhasani University of Science and Technology fell sick till yesterday, the seventh day of their fast unto death, but the authorities still remained unmoved.

Of the sick students, Mainul Islam, a third year student, was referred to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Over 200 students of the FTNS department started their fast unto death programme at Shaheed Smriti Pouro Udyan in the town on May 14 for the second time to realise their two-point demand.

The demands are removal of the vice-chancellor of the university and providing BSc (Engineering) degree instead of BSc (Honours) degree to the FTNS students.

Meanwhile, guardians of the students held a token hunger strike programme in the town yesterday demanding to meet demands of the students.

Talking to the newsmen the guardians urged to the authorities concerned including the education minister to save lives of their meritorious children.



Nagorik Sanghati holds a programme titled "Condolence meeting for rivers" with coffins and incense sticks alight in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday protesting the government's reluctance in moves to save rivers.

PHOTO: STAR

## Negligence in saving rivers protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With coffins and incense sticks alight to symbolise the dying and well-nigh dead (unable to sustain life) condition of the country's rivers, Nagorik Sanghati held a programme in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

The programme, titled "Condolence meeting for rivers", was a protest against the government's reluctance in moves to save rivers.

Speakers at the programme alleged that politicians and influential quarters are encroaching rivers, canals, haors and water bodies.

The quarter is ignoring the government's direction and encroaching on the rivers while, in some cases, staffs of government agencies are helping them. The government on the other hand, on confusion, is obstructing the free flow of rivers, they added.

The speakers said around 158 rivers are now shrinking due to encroachment while navigability of most declined.

Despite government's steps to stop encroachment, river grabbing is still on, they said, adding that the government's efforts to free rivers from encroachment stirred controversy, says a press release.

The organisation placed some demands including introduction of "cleaner production" in factories to

stop emission of toxic chemicals and putting a ban on dumping solid waste from hospital and households into rivers.

They also demanded to end leasing out river shores and to dredge all rivers to ensure navigability and free flow of river water.

Sanghati General Secretary Sharifuzzaman Sharif presided over the meeting while Paribesh Bachao Andolan Chairman Abu Naser Khan and Ruhiin Hossain Prince spoke.

## Cancel new bus fare

Demands Citizens Rights Movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citizens Rights Movement yesterday demanded of the government to reinstate previous bus fare by canceling the new rates.

Speaking at a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city, members of the movement also demanded to stop the use of compressed natural gas in privately owned cars.

Though fuel prices were increased nine times and reduced twice in the last decade, bus fares were increased many times but did not decrease for once, said Tushar Rehman, the movement's secretary general.

The rise of bus fares in the excuse of rising fuel costs is not acceptable as the previous bus fare rates could bear the new fuel prices. New bus fares were being imposed on passengers since May 13 though it was supposed to come into effect from May 19, he added.

The movement's leaders also demanded to set up visible markings for kilometres on every road centring Zero Point and providing sufficient number of public buses.

Water expert Dr Muhammad Isamul Hoque, Ruhiin Hossain Prince of Communist Party of Bangladesh and Aminur Rasul Babul of Unnayan Dhara Trust also addressed the rally.



Citizens Rights Movement forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday demanding cancellation of the new bus fare rates.

PHOTO: STAR

PAHARI CHHATRA PARISHAD COUNCIL HELD  
Implement CHT peace accord  
immediately

Urge PCJSS, PCP leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Leaders of Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and left leaning parties yesterday strongly demanded immediate and complete implementation of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord and a stop to delays.

A deep conspiracy is being hatched for the expansion of Islam in CHT to make indigenous people small in figure and annihilate them, they said.

They were addressing a mass gathering held no Rangamati Gymnasium premises marking 16th Council of Pahari Chhatri Parishad (PCP) Central Committee.

PCJSS Chief and Chairman of CHT Regional Council Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, inaugurated the council.

Gono Forum Presidium Member Pankaj Bhattacharya, acting president of Communist Party of Bangladesh Haider Akbar Khan, Prothom Alo Assistant Editor Firoz Jaman, former president of central committee of PCP Udayan Tripura and Binoy Tripura, KS Moung, Tanvir Rosta, SM Siva and Gopal Barman also spoke.

Expressing grave concern over delay in

execution of the accord, the leaders said the government passed 29 months in power but no initiatives has yet been taken.

Ministers and lawmakers gave only false assurance of executing the accord's implementation.

Various "anti-peace" elements are emerging in the hills, creating terrorism, militancy and fundamentalism, they said.

The leaders said United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) is destabilising peace by killing PCJSS leaders and activists.

A vested quarter in the government is hatching conspiracy by backing UPDF leaders said.

Samo Odhikar Andolan, a platform of Bangalee settlers in CHT, is also hampering communal harmony through their different destructive activities while Bangalee settlers are grabbing lands of indigenous people.

"We want confirmation whether you will fully execute the deal or not within the period of your government this time," Santu Larma asked the prime minister.

Our staff correspondent adds: PCP celebrated its 22nd founding anniversary amid much enthusiasm amongst its leaders and activists on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

## NEWS IN brief

Teachers, employees place  
15-point demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Shikkhak-Karmachari Oikya Parishad yesterday placed a 15-point demand seeking to eliminate existing discrimination in salaries and allowances between the teachers and employees of the government and non-government institutions.

At a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity in the city, they also demanded to formulate a separate pay scale for the teachers and employees of both the teachers and employees of the government and non-government institutions.

Their other demands include immediate implementation of the National Education Policy-2010, cancelling the suspension order of timescale and establishing a separate education service commission.

The leaders also announced a series of programmes.

The demonstration programmes include holding of rallies, view-exchanging meetings and processions in upazila levels till June 6 starting from yesterday, similar programmes in district levels from June 7 to June 16, taking attempts to contact the prime minister, education minister and finance minister if the demands are not realised in the mean time and declaring greater movement if the demands are not met within June 16.

Oikya Parishad leaders Atiar Rahman, Dr Noor Mohammad Talukder, Shahjahan Alam Saju were present at the press conference.

## Nine snatchers held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police early yesterday arrested nine alleged snatchers in two separate incidents from city's Mirpur and Dhanmondi and seized two private cars and a microbus from their possession.

Police said they arrested three snatchers -- Harun ur Rashid, 35, Nur Islam, 37, and Mofizullah, 27, from Dhanmondi around 6:00am after a half an hour car chase from Mirpur.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Mirpur Police Station Kazi Wajed Ali said a patrol team of police gave chase after hearing the screams of a woman who was dragged by the three on a car in front of Soni Cinema Hall at Mirpur-1 around 5:00am.

Police managed to stop the car at Dhanmondi 27, he said, adding that the three threw away arms through the car's window during the chase.

Locals came forward after the car stopped and vandalised it. As per information of the arrestees, police arrested another youth Shahin, 35, who allegedly used to buy the snatched valuables from the gang, from Asadgate area, the OC added.

In another incident, locals informed Mirpur police of the presence of a gang of snatchers who were snatching valuables by barricading a road near Mirpur Stadium in Mirpur-2 with a car and a microbus.

Police rushed to the spot, arrested Mainuddin, 35, Atik, 30, Ibrahim, 28, Nur Alam, 25, and Dula, 23 and recovered three local made machetes and three knives from their possession, said the OC.

Police filed two separate cases in these connections.

## Five robbers arrested in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police arrested five members of an inter-district robbers' gang from Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Mirzapur upazila yesterday.

The youths are Kabir Khan of Barguna; Shahidul Islam, Fazlul Haque Noyon and Sabash Bepary of Manikganj; and Ratan Miah of Netrokona.

Police recovered some cash, mobile phone sets and several locally made lethal weapons from their possession.

## Re-fix CNG-run auto rickshaw fare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers formed a human chain in front of Chittagong Press Club yesterday demanding Tk 35 as minimum fare.

The human chain was formed around 11:00am.

They blasted the government's decision of increasing Tk 0.50 per kilometre (km) than the previous rate after first two km.

They demanded to fix Tk 35 for first two km distance and Tk 10 for next one km.

## Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thunderstorms accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over all the seven divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls at places are also likely, Met Office said.

Day temperature may rise by 2-3 degree Celsius over the country.

The sunsets in the capital today at 6:37pm and rises tomorrow at 5:14am.

Country's highest temperature 34.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Patuakhali and lowest 22.2 degrees also at Patuakhali.

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	32.2	24.5	70	61
Chittagong	31.8	23.0	74	76
Rajshahi	33.5	22.6	85	73
Rangpur	31.5	23.5	80	94
Khulna	32.4	22.5	76	62
Barisal	33.8	23.6	63	67
Sylhet	29.0	24.2	82	94
Cox's Bazar	33.0	24.0	79	