

SERIES OF PROGRAMMES BEGIN AL allies demand fair paddy price

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The series of nationwide street programmes called by some allies of the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance to demand fair prices of paddy and rice began in the capital yesterday.

Jatiya Krishak Jote, an associated body of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), organised a human chain programme in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday to press home the demand.

Meanwhile, Workers' Party of Bangladesh will block the Jessore-Khulna Highways today and the deputy commissioner's office in Narail on June 13 to voice the demand.

The series of blockade and human chain programmes were being organised in different districts against the backdrop of low prices of paddy and rice across the country.

According to farmers of the country's southern districts, the price of paddy is currently Tk 500 to Tk 550 maximum for 40kgs, which does not even cover the farmers' production costs.

On May 27, leaders of the AL-led 14-party alliance expressed their resentment over the fall in the prices of paddy and jute and urged the government to ensure fair prices to the farmers.

"We want to keep pressure on the government ahead of the national budget so that the government sincerely ensures fair prices of paddy and rice to save the farmers," said JSD General Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia, referring to purpose of the ongoing programmes.

Reviewing the production costs of paddy found that the cost ranges from at least Tk 650 to Tk 700, he said.

Food ministry officials said they have started buying paddy and rice from the farmers at Tk 18 and Tk 28 respectively per kilogram.

JSD and Workers' Party leaders said the government fixed rate would not be a fair price to the farmers, who would not get this just price due to the different intermediaries and party men involved in the process of collecting paddy and rice from the farmers and millers.

"We want the government to buy paddy and rice from the farmers at prices higher than the fixed rates," said Sharif.

He cautioned that lack of measures by the government in this regard could have a negative impact on the rice production next year as more and more farmers would not be interested in cultivating rice considering its low price.

Besides, there will also be a negative impact on the livelihoods of the farmers across the country if they do not get fair price, said the JSD leader.

SM Golam Kibria, senior information officer of food ministry, said the government will buy 9 lakh metric tonnes of rice and 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of paddy from the farmers within August this year.

Nishat relaxes at home Wasfia yet to return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Returning home after about two months, Nishat Majumder yesterday spent the day with family while another mountaineer Wasfia Nazreen, who has been staying in Kathmandu since Sunday, is yet to finalise the date to return home.

"I passed the day gossiping with family members and relatives and have no programme scheduled today. I am in a relaxed mood after many days," Nishat, first Bangladeshi woman to conquer Mount Everest, told The Daily Star last evening.

Dhaka Wasa, Nishat's working station, will accord a reception to her today [Tuesday] at the capital's Wasa Bhaban, Nishat said adding that the State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowhury is scheduled to visit her residence to greet her.

However, her fellow mountaineer MA Mohit, the first Bangladeshi to scale up the mountain from both sides, could not be contacted over phone yesterday.

Nishat started the expedition on April 9 under the campaign 'Because I am a girl' by Plan Bangladesh, an NGO. She reached the peak on May 19.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Embassy in Nepal yesterday accorded a reception to Wasfia Nazreen, who conquered the mountain on May 26 as the second Bangladeshi women.

"We have accorded a reception to her (Wasfia) at noon at the embassy's hall room," Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal Prof Nim Chandra Bhowmik told The Daily Star last evening.

A facebook update of Wasfia yesterday said that Nepal Tourism Board is also scheduled to accord a reception to her.

"Wasfia will surely return home by next week although the date is still not fixed," said Korvi Rakshand, spokesperson of Bangladesh on Seven Summits' campaign, which arranged her trekking.



Farmers at a human chain programme, organised by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) before the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding pension scheme for card-holder farmers above 60 years as well as hiking paddy price purchased from them.

PHOTO: STAR

ATTEMPTED MURDER

41 policemen sued

Judicial probe ordered

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered a judicial inquiry into an attempted murder case hours after it was filed against 41 policemen, including the former deputy commissioner (DC) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Khurshid Alam.

Metropolitan Magistrate Joynab Begum passed the order after a pro-BNP lawyer Hossain Ali Khan Hassan filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka yesterday morning.

Hossain accused the policemen of attempting to kill him on the court premises on May 16 and mentioned the names of six police officials including the former DC of DMP (Lalbagh Division).

The five others are Additional Deputy Commissioner of Lalbagh, Maruf Hossain, former assistant commissioner Rajib-al-Masud, former officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Police Station Salauddin Khan, the station's current OC Mahabubul Alam and its sub-inspector (SI) Mohammad Azad.

The complainant said in his statement that he was one of the counsels for the 33 BNP leaders and activists, accused of torching a vehicle near the Prime Minister's Office during hartal hours on April 29.

After the hearing on their bail petitions, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Erfanullah ordered sending the BNP leaders and activists to jail, Hossain said.

However, while Hossain was standing on the court premises SI Azad, on receiving orders from the police officials, started hitting him with a baton "with an intention to kill him", Hassan claimed.

Seriously injured, the lawyer was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.

After May 16, the government transferred Khurshid while Rajib and Salauddin were withdrawn from their posts and attached to Rajarbagh Police Lines on June 2 following the abuse of a young woman in front of Dhaka magistrate's court last week.

Exhibition on Safiuddin Ahmed begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In remembrance of late printmaker and painter Safiuddin Ahmed, a 12-day exhibition begins at Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts in the capital.

The exhibition titled "Tribute to great master Safiuddin Ahmed" will be inaugurated at 6:00pm today. It will remain open from 12:00pm to 8:00pm every day.

Safiuddin Ahmed, a pioneer of modern art movement, passed away on May 20.

His son Ahmed Nazir was reminiscing about his father's ardent devotion to work at a press conference organised by Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts at its gallery café yesterday.

Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University Prof Abul Barq Alvi and Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts Director Subir Chowdhury also spoke at the event.

Explain state of OSD officials: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to submit a report before it within eight weeks on how many officials were made officer on special duty (OSD) in public administration in last 10 years.

In response to a writ petition, the court asked the public administration secretary to mention in the report the tenures of keeping the officials as OSD in last 10 years and how much money was paid for them during that period.

The court in a rule also asked the secretary to explain in eight weeks why the government action keeping the officials OSD for unlimited period without specific reasons and spending state money for paying their salaries should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court also asked the secretary to explain why the government should not be directed to make a guideline on keeping the public servants OSD.

The HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by former secretary Mohammad Asafuddin Chowdhury challenging the existing system of keeping officials OSD without any reason for unlimited period.

During hearing, petitioner's counsel Aneek R Haque told the court that paying salaries to the OSD officers are unconstitutional, since no body can enjoy unearned money as per the article 20(2) of the constitution.



Participants hold up colourful banners and umbrellas at a procession in front of National Museum in the capital yesterday. The Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Department of Environment organised the programme marking World Environment Day today.

PHOTO: STAR

Acid attack on couple in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A couple fell victim to acid attack allegedly by some of the woman's former colleagues at Khilgaon in the capital yesterday.

The victims, Sheikh Asadul Haque, 38, and his wife Lailun Nahar, 33, were undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Asadul told The Daily Star that the criminals threw acid from a microbus onto them while they were going to their East Goran residence riding a motorbike at around 3:30pm.

"When I turned my motorbike to Khilgaon from Shahjahanpur near the flyover, a microbus overtook us and I heard my wife's screaming due to burning sensation," he added.

Hearing their cry, locals rushed them to a local hospital and later shifted them to the DMCH.

Sources said about 10 per cent of Nahar's body has been burnt while Asadul got one per cent burn injuries.

Nahar, who worked as a sales representative at a pharmaceutical company, claimed that she saw around five of her former colleagues in the microbus.

Her husband is a sales representative of another pharmaceutical company.

Nahar said some of her former senior colleagues tried to violate her on March 26 this year and she filed a case against them with a Dhaka court on April 2.

Lawmakers' opinion ignored in budget

Allege some ruling alliance MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling alliance lawmakers yesterday expressed their frustration over how the national budget is passed in parliament, saying their opinions are almost ignored in preparing the budget.

Against this backdrop, Deputy Speaker Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali said revised budget is violation of the country's constitution.

"The constitution says not a single penny will be sanctioned to the government for expenditure without the prior approval of parliament. But, in fact, the government takes approval of the House after expenditure while passage of the revised budget," Shawkat said at a discussion at the ministers' hostel of the parliament building.

All party parliamentary group organised the discussion titled "Budgetary allocation for deprived people of haor areas".

M Israfil Alam, an Awami League (AL) lawmaker and chief of the parliamentary standing committee on labour ministry said: "I know what is needed for my constituency in terms of economic and social development. But in the budget there is no reflection of it."

Over 18 lawmakers took part in the discussion. Sohrab Ali Sana and Nani Gopal Mondal of the AL, Ziaul Haque Mridha of the Jatiya Party, Shah Jikur Ahmed of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal also spoke.

'Try Chakma village attackers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday demanded immediate trial of attackers who attacked a Chakma village at Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar early hours on May 30, leaving 11 indigenous people injured and nine homes damaged.

They also demanded to ensure security of all affected indigenous families in the area as panic gripped the entire village following the attack.

Bangladesh Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad (BACSP) organised the rally before the Jatiya Press Club in the capital. They also formed a human chain.

BACSP President Pari Chingtham presided over the programme while its General Secretary Ananta Dhamai and Hill Women Federation President Chanchana Chakma spoke among others.

No utility services for home-based workers

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home-based workers in the city slums face difficulties in earning their livelihood due to shortage of electricity, water and gas supply in their living areas, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

The workers, mostly women and children, act as supplementary wage earners of their families but 43 per cent of them cannot get enough job orders to work 2-5 hours per day due to the shortages, they added.

The seminar styled 'Favourable Urban Services for the Home-based Workers in Dhaka City: Reality, Challenges and Way Forward' was organised by OSHE Foundation in collaboration of HomeNet South Asia held at BIAM auditorium in the capital.

Organisers defined home-based workers as the people living in low-income areas who work independently at home like handicrafts, broom making, tailoring, and sewing.

"Normally the slums are built on government or low lands. These makeshift houses

have no holding numbers and for this reason Dhaka City Corporation can not provide them gas, water and electricity connections," said Engineer Anwar Hossain Patwary, former slum development officer of DCC.

He said that though the slums have no legal power, gas and water supply, the dwellers managed to get those services illegally.

"Some local goons and influential bodies manage them the services from the supply line at a higher price. But these services are not sustainable," he said.

Patwary said some projects run by the City Corporation and NGO's are underway in several slums to solve these problems but they were not proven effective.

A study on home-based workers of urban areas also revealed that most of them earn less than Tk 1000 per year, which is spent on basic survival needs.

Officials of OSHE Foundation and HomeNet South Asia and some workers were present.

**WEATHER
TODAY**

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions and the regions of Jessore and Kushtia in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Moderate to severe heat wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the regions of Tangail and mild heat wave is sweeping over the regions of Faridpur and Madaripur and it may continue, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:44pm, rises tomorrow at 5:11am.

Country's highest temperature 42.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 21.0 degrees at Sylhet.

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	35.5	29.5	76	72
Chittagong	32.6	29.0	86	84
Rajshahi	42.0	28.9	74	33
Rangpur	33.3	26.1	86	79
Khulna	38.8	30.0	82	71
Barisal	35.2	29.7	77	76