

More than 30 held after Sudan protest: Opposition

AFP, Khartoum

More than 30 people were arrested yesterday when police fired tear gas at a mosque which has become a focus of Arab Spring-style protests in Sudan, a senior opposition figure said.

About 200 people were left inside the besieged Wad Nubawi mosque after many others fled from the tear gas, said Mariam al-Mahdi, a politbureau member of the Umma party linked to the mosque in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman.

"They hit them massively with the nerve gas," said Mahdi, daughter of former prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi who leads the party. There were "many casualties" because people were suffocating from the fumes.

The remaining group of 200 were later "beaten out" of the mosque, she said.

Security forces have responded with increasingly aggressive tactics, using gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition mostly fired into the air, since June 22 when small demonstrations began at the mosque after yesterday prayers, she told AFP in an interview this week.

Hundreds of youths, party members and others who held a sit-in at the mosque on July 6 were also besieged by security forces, she said.

Protests in Sudan began on June 16 when University of Khartoum students voiced their opposition to high food prices.

After President Omar al-Bashir announced austerity measures, including tax hikes and an end to cheap fuel, scattered protests spread to include a cross-section of people around the capital and in other parts of Sudan.

Bashir has played down the demonstrations as small-scale and not comparable to the Arab Spring uprisings, and has suggested that someone was behind the protests against his National Congress Party (NCP) government.

Sudanese proudly note that they have twice before toppled military regimes, in 1964 and 1985 -- long before the Arab Spring revolts against authoritarian rulers in North Africa and the Middle East began in December 2010.

Drugs, booze

FROM PAGE 20

Dhaka metropolitan BNP has also declared their support for the hartal.

The 18 arrested are local BNP member secretary Mohammad Nayeem, Jubodah president Md Nazrul Islam, Tantidial president Md Shafiqul Islam, BNP leaders Md Shah Alam, Abdul Gaffar, Sohail Bepari, Ahmed Hossain, Maminur Rahman, Tariqul Islam, Abdul Salam, Mohammad Selim, Elen Hossain, Kabir Hossain, Ibrahim Khalil, Abdul Malek, Chan Miah, Saiful Islam and Rafiqul Islam.

KM Nasir Ullah, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kamrangirchar Police Station, said police raided the launch after receiving a tip off. The boat, carrying about 300 people, was about to leave for the day long picnic from Kholamora Ghat at around 11:00 am when the raid took place.

"We recovered 12 litres of alcohol, 200 gram heroin, 500 gram cannabis and 144 cans of beer from the arrestees," he said.

The OC said clashes around the Ghat related to use of drugs have increased in recent times.

Meanwhile, BNP activists held rallies at different places in Kamrangirchar yesterday drumming up support for the hartal.

MA Gaffar, Chhatra Dal Kamrangirchar unit president, claimed the arrests were part of a conspiracy to weaken BNP's hold in the area.

"Although there were 300 people on the boat, police arrested only BNP leaders," he said.

A case was filed in this connection with Kamrangirchar Police Station.

Buet slips

FROM PAGE 1

vice-chancellor although Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday called for an end to the standoff through talks.

However, the teachers said, they can sit with the government high-ups.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Nazrul Islam said he was yet to propose talks with the agitating teachers. He will sit with them today or tomorrow.

Like the first two days, the students in the sit-in yesterday were passing time by singing, gaming and chanting slogans against the two administration bosses.

At present, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology has five batches although there should have been four, many students told The Daily Star.

A number of Buet students go to foreign universities for higher education after graduation. But they fear they would miss the March session at those universities, as their terms might not be complete in time because of a 44-day vacation announced by the authorities ahead of schedule.

They said the 2011-12 academic year students, who began their classes in May, are supposed to take their first-term final examination in the third week of September.

"But that has become uncertain. If the situation drags on, our exams are likely to end in December. But that too is not certain," said a student of 2011-12 session, preferring anonymity.

"In the other engineering universities, students of the same session have already completed their first semester."

The students said they have already been caught in session jam due to an unscheduled closure for 34 days following a clash in June 2010 and subsequent movement against Chhatra League in 2011.

Also, over a week's class boycotts by teachers early this year for extension of their retirement age to 65 years and a 28-day work abstinence from April 7 also hampered academic activities of the leading engineering university.

"And now the 44-day closure means further session jam for six months to one year," a student of civil

engineering department said.

The university was supposed to be closed from August 11 to August 24, according to the academic calendar. And after the vacation, there was supposed to be a two-week preparatory leave.

The students of 2007-2008 academic year are the worst sufferers. They started their classes on January 19, 2008 and their graduation was supposed to be in the first semester of fourth year.

Currently, there are two batches in the second year. The 2009-1010 session students, now in the third year's first semester, were supposed to be doing the third year's first semester. The 2010-2011 students, now in the first semester of second year, were supposed to be in the second semester of second year.

At the same time, the students of 2008-2009 session are now doing their second semester of third year although they are supposed to be in the first semester of fourth year.

Currently, there are two batches in the second year. The 2009-1010 session students, now in the third year's first semester, were supposed to be doing the third year's first semester. The 2010-2011 students, now in the first semester of second year, were supposed to be in the second semester of second year.

At present, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology has five batches although there should have been four, many students told The Daily Star.

A number of Buet students go to foreign universities for higher education after graduation. But they fear they would miss the March session at those universities, as their terms might not be complete in time because of a 44-day vacation announced by the authorities ahead of schedule.

They said the 2011-12 academic year students, who began their classes in May, are supposed to take their first-term final examination in the third week of September.

"But that has become uncertain. If the situation drags on, our exams are likely to end in December. But that too is not certain," said a student of 2011-12 session, preferring anonymity.

"In the other engineering universities, students of the same session have already completed their first semester."

Auto-rickshaw

FROM PAGE 20

The indefinite strike was enforced from Wednesday by two associations of the auto-rickshaw drivers and workers on their 10-point demand that include a stop to overcharging of daily deposits by the auto-rickshaw owners; cancellation of route permit system for auto-rickshaws; and setting up of necessary parking spaces.

Zakir Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka Zila Auto-Rickshaw Sramik Union, yesterday told The Daily Star they held demonstrations in front of several CNG garages in the city to persuade more auto-rickshaw workers to join the movement.

Asked about people's woes due to the strike, he said they were compelled to do so. "We went on the indefinite strike since the authorities concerned did not give us any assurance," he added.

Dhaka Auto-Rickshaw Sramik Union General Secretary Md Hanif told The Daily Star that the police detained at least 20 drivers and workers in different parts of the city including Rampura, Badda, Kafrul, Shyampur and Jatrabari when they tried to stage demonstrations there.

Shyampur and Rampura police admitted that the auto-rickshaw drivers and workers held rallies in the areas but denied having detained anyone.

The association leaders yesterday also protested the alleged police attack on their fellow workers on Thursday. "We hope the government will work out a solution to the problems immediately," said Hanif.

Meanwhile, the 48-hour countrywide strike enforced by Bangladesh Truck-Covered Van Transport Agency Malik-Sramik Oikya Parishad, demanding a halt to extortion and harassment by police, ended yesterday morning.

Since then, the prime minister has received an overwhelming response from people across the country and talked to them on various issues, said Mahbulul Hoque Shakil, prime minister's special assistant (media).

"Despite her busy schedule, she received calls whenever she got time," he added.

The premier feels much more confident after talking to people over the phone. She thinks the nation has got united again like it did during the Liberation War, said the prime minister's assistant.

Among the callers was the vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University. He said they would provide money for the bridge on behalf of the university.

Officers and employees of Barisal University said they would also contribute to the Padma Bridge fund.

The staff at Bangladesh's permanent mission in the UN said they would donate a day's salary to the bridge project.

Besides, people of Karpara union in Gopalganj district declared they would give Tk 2 lakh for the bridge fund.

Police in south-central Mexico found seven headless bodies Thursday in a vehicle parked by a highway, and later came upon their heads scattered across Morelos state.

The Morelos state prosecutor's office said that agents found "the piled up remains of seven decapitated men" inside an SUV that had been reported stolen and was abandoned on a highway near the town of Jojutla.

A message left with the bodies, which authorities did not divulge, indicated the murders were linked to organized crime, according to the statement.

More than 50,000 people have died since President Felipe Calderon deployed the army and federal police to crack down on the country's powerful drug gangs in December 2006.

Robbers

FROM PAGE 1

upazila of Chandpur. They went to Cape Town 18 months ago and jointly opened a department store.

This is the second incident of killing of Bangladeshi expatriates in South Africa within a week. Three Bangladeshi businessmen were shot dead by criminals on July 5 in the country.

The family of Thursday's victim came to know about the incident yesterday morning when an expatriate, Shipon, called them from Cape Town.

The armed goons stormed the shop around South Africa time 10:00pm on Wednesday (Bangladesh time around 3:00am on Thursday) and started shooting, said Rabiul's brother Zaidul Hossain quoting Shipon.

Rabiul was hit in the head and died instantly while Mizan was hit in the hand and was undergoing treatment at a hospital there, Zaidul added.

Produce

FROM PAGE 20

Bangladesh, Mohamed said they are working on it. "There will be some progress on the issue within next two months."

Bangladesh Commerce Minister GM Quader, who attended the function as special guest, said, "We strongly believe that there are potentials for more Bangladeshi products in the Malaysian market."

Though the Malaysian market is rather free, there are some non-tariff barriers in the form of import licensing or permit and standardisation requirements for agricultural and food products, he said.

"That is why our exporters are facing difficulties to tap the full potentials. We hope these barriers can be eliminated through negotiations," Quader told the function held at Merdeka Square.

The commerce minister called upon Malaysian investors to undertake new ventures of investment in Bangladesh's fast growing manufacturing, services and infrastructure sectors.

"Malaysia is one of the largest investors in Bangladesh... though 84 Malaysian companies have already invested in Bangladesh, there is still enough scope for further investment," he observed.

Quader said closer cooperation in investment and trade between the two countries would bring immense impact on the development of the two countries.

Bangladesh is keen to strengthen political, economic and commercial ties with Malaysia so that people of both countries benefit out of it, he added.

Bangladesh Environment and Forests Minister Hasan Mahmud, who was present at the function, said, "Bangladesh is an ideal place for Malaysia for further investment."

He also said strengthening people-to-people contact and business ties is important for mutual benefit.

Bangladesh Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia, Malaysia South-South Association, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation has arranged the three-day trade show.

India tests

FROM PAGE 20

of the Integrated Test Range at Wheeler Island off Odisha, defence sources said.

"The trial of the sophisticated missile with a strike range of 700 km was successful," a defence scientist said.

Agni-I missile has a specialised navigation system which ensures it reaches the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision, he said.

The trajectory of the missile was tracked by sophisticated radars and electro-optic telemetry stations located along the sea coast and ships positioned near the impact point.

Gas found in Comilla

FROM PAGE 1

at the well head when the field is ready for commercial production.

He said Bapex had resources almost ready to produce 25 to 30 mmcfcd of gas from December/January.

The country is now at least 500 mmcfcd gas short in supply which is affecting the power generation and burner usage in homes. This discovery is considered big, but it would not solve the crisis entirely.

This is the second gas discovery in the present government's tenure. The first one, discovered last year also by Bapex, is in Sundalpur of Noakhali. The small field has been producing 10 to 12 mmcfcd gas for the last few months.

The lone national exploration wing that presently produces 85 to 90 mmcfcd gas from different small gas fields, tried to find gas in Sriakal in 2005. But instead of gas, it found water and sand in the first exploratory well.

In 2007, Bapex conducted a seismic survey to understand the prospects better. Upon completion, it prepared a project to drill a new exploratory well.

Accordingly, it started drilling a well on May 5 this year and completed the task of drilling up to 3,214 metres on June 30, in less than two months.

220 killed in Syria

FROM PAGE 20

currently confined to Damascus because of mounting violence.

According to a detailed account by activists before news of the massacre, a convoy of 25 vehicles with army and security forces headed west after dawn on Thursday, with three armoured vehicles and five trucks towing artillery, passing through the town of Mubarda in the direction of the village of Tremseh.

"They blockaded the village from all four sides and began violently and randomly firing on houses as a helicopter flew overhead. As the attack happened the electricity and telephone lines were cut.

Residents gathered in the streets in a state of fear and panic. They were unable to flee because of the blockade from every side," the report posted on activist Web sites said.

Syrian state television said there had been fighting in Tremseh and accused "armed terrorist groups" of committing a massacre there, but gave no death toll. It said three soldiers had been killed.

If confirmed, this could be the worst atrocity in 16 months of fighting between rebels and the forces of President Bashar al-Assad.

ACCOUNTS VARY
Activists said the killing took place on Thursday, as the UN Security Council began negotiating a potentially crucial new resolution on Syria. Washington

Veggies too costly

FROM PAGE 20

80 yesterday, which was Tk 50 a week ago," said Majid.

Department of Agricultural Marketing said one kg green chilli was traded at Tk 40-70 yesterday.

To help boost supply during the month of Ramadan, the government on Monday imposed a ban on export of green chilli, brinjal, onion and garlic until August 31.

Meanwhile, despite a rise in supplies, sugar price also increased yesterday as demand rose ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Sugar, at retail shops, was traded between Tk 54 and Tk 55 a kg, which was 3.84 percent higher compared to the previous week, according to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Egg price, however, fell marginally and was traded at Tk 34-35 every four pieces instead of Tk 35-36 a week ago.

Woman 'raped' by husband, his friends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was allegedly raped by her husband and his friends in the city's Uttara area on Thursday.

Two suspects had been detained in this connection the next day, said Uttara police.

The victim, 22, of Mohadebpur in Naogaon District, said she married An Islam alias Monwar Hossain on June 5 this year divorcing her husband. She has a daughter with the former husband.

She told The Daily Star that she had met Monwar over the mobile phone. Within a few days of their marriage, their relationship went sour. On July 9, she filed a general diary with Mohadebpur Police Station stating that Monwar had been threatening to kill her.

"I came to Monwar's mess near Azampur rail gate in Uttara on Tuesday on his direction. On Thursday, he and four of his friends raped me," alleged the victim.

A case has been lodged in this connection and police are investigating the matter, said Khandokar Rezaul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Uttara Police Station.

Train derails

FROM PAGE 1

Mojibur Rahman and Indrajit Kuman Sarkar, driver and assistant driver of the train, and passengers Lipi Begum, Asma Aktar, Saiful Islam and Arafat Hossain were admitted to Gazipur Sadar Hospital and local clinics.

Around 500 metres of the dual-gauge rail line was damaged.

Rail communication between Dhaka and the western part of the country and Mymensingh was suspended until 3:00pm.

Ziauddin Sardar, station officer of Joydevpur Railway Station, said a relief train from Dhaka managed to drag the locomotive and the stricken carriages out of other trains' way around 2:45pm. A locomotive from Tongi station had towed away the serviceable carriages of the intercity train from Dhaka around noon.

Meanwhile, Communications Minister Obaidul Kader visited the spot soon after the incident. The minister formed two four-member probe committees and asked them to submit reports within four and seven days' time.

He asked the Railway Dhaka Divisional probe committee, led by Arman Hossain, the Dhaka divisional engineer, to submit its report within four days and the Railway Eastern Zone probe committee, led by Chief Engineer Mojammel Haq, to submit within seven days.

The minister also announced Tk 1 lakh for the victim's family from the railway fund.

Director General of Railway Abu Taher told The Daily Star last night that the lines were relatively new and were in good condition. Derailments there were very unlikely. He said it could be known why it happened after the probe bodies quizzed the locomotive driver and others.

Banani

FROM PAGE 20

told The Daily Star over the telephone from Dhaka Medical College Hospital that a truck rammed their microbus and a car on Airport Road-Kamal Ataturk Avenue intersection around 12:30am.

Shafiq said they were going to Shariatpur after receiving Kashem's son at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. All 12 people in the microbus were hurt but Kashem was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

Banani police said they had seized the three vehicles.

No love

FROM PAGE 20

40 from shopping alone and from using mobile phones outside.

They have also ordered women to cover their heads when outside.

Village heads say the measures are a response to cases of harassment, but PTI reports police are investigating.

The village council order was issued at a meeting on Wednesday, officials said.

The council also ruled that those marrying for love would not be allowed to live in the village, reports said.

Baghat district, which is where Asara village is located, is only about 40km (25 miles) from the Indian capital, Delhi.

Driver

FROM PAGE 1

Hossain.

A police patrol recovered the body from the car abandoned on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Sector-7 of Uttara around 4:30am, Abdur Rahim, sub-inspector of Uttara Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The victim's hands and legs were tied up with rope. Police suspect criminals might have strangled him, but they could not confirm the motive for the murder.

Contacted, victim's nephew Tyeb Sikdar said Hanif had been working as driver of Mojibul's car for four years.

"He went out of his employer's residence in Gulshan-2 around 11:00pm on Thursday for refilling CNG and didn't return. As far I know he didn't have any feud with anybody," mentioned Tyeb.

Law enforcers seized the car and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

A murder case was filed with Uttara Police Station in this connection.

Journalist gets 18 years in Ethiopia

AFP, Addis Ababa

An Ethiopian court yesterday jailed a journalist for 18 years for "terrorism" and 23 others, reporters and activists, for between eight years and life, after a trial condemned by rights groups.

Journalist Eskinder Nga was jailed for 18 years, while opposition member Andualem Arage got life because of "the heaviness of the case" after he was convicted of participating with an outlawed group, Judge Hussein Yimer said.