



PHOTO: STAR

A burnt human hauler lies on Nawab Sirajuddoula Road in Chittagong city's Dewan Bazar area after supporters of yesterday's hartal, enforced by four Islamist parties, torched it around 11:30am.

IBA INVITATIONAL DEBATE

Brac, Dhaka universities become champions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac University (BU) and Dhaka University (DU) became the champions of a debate competition among 19 universities yesterday.

The 20-day long Bangla and English debate tournaments were arranged by IBA Communication Club (IBACC). Defeating 23 teams, the BU won the English tournament while the DU won the Bangla one, in which 15 teams competed, says a press release.

Titled "IBA Invitational Debate 2012", the competition ended with a gala night yesterday on the premises of Institute of Business Administration (IBA), DU.

Sponsored by Manusher Jonno Foundation and Coats Bangladesh, the event was supported by the daily Prothom Alo.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the first death anniversary of Dr Syed Kamaluddin Ahmed, professor of Psychiatry at Holy Family Medical College and Hospital. Kamaluddin died of stomach cancer at the age of 58 at a hospital in the capital. He left behind his wife and a daughter to mourn his death, said a press release.

His family members request all to pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Sekander Husain Meah
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Today is the 23rd death anniversary of Sekander Husain Meah, a former lawmaker, businessman and social worker. On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his family graveyard at Pashchim Madarbari in Chittagong city, said a press release.

During his lifetime, Sekander was president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), chairman of Chittagong Club Limited and honorary consul of Republic of Korea in Chittagong.

His family members requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Isolated incidents mark hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apart from some stray incidents of vandalism and attacks on police, yesterday's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal, enforced by four Islamist parties, was observed peacefully.

Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir activists, backing the hartal, resorted to vandalism, set vehicles on fire and attacked police, said law enforcers.

Last week, 12 Islamist parties, most of which are mere names only, announced the hartal to counter a December 18 hartal, enforced by some left-leaning parties.

The December 18 hartal was called by the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Ganatantrik Bam Morcha, a platform of left-leaning parties, demanding, among others, a ban on religion-based politics.

In a last moment drama on Wednesday, eight of the 12 Islamist par-

ties withdrew their support for yesterday's hartal, and finally Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon-led the shutdown.

Except in Dhaka, Chittagong and Bogra, hartal was observed loosely and roadside shops and shopping arcades remained closed, report our correspondents. Rangpur City Corporation area was outside the purview of hartal for the polls to RCC.

During hartal in the capital, from 6:00am to 2:00pm, buses of long routes did not run. Police said they arrested two Jamaat-Shibir men who were pelting a police van with bricks near Mirpur Bangla College around 9:00pm and detained nine people over an attempted arson on a bus in Katabon area.

In Chittagong, hartal supporters torched a human hauler on Nawab Sirajuddoula Road around 11:30am, while Shibir activists vandalised two trucks at Tinmatha intersection in Bogra, said police.

Big flop for Bapex

FROM PAGE 1

Bapex found nothing useful there.

Right now, Bapex is busy recovering a drilling pipe that got stuck in that well during the operation. Within this week, upon recovering the pipe, the company would start "logging" that is making a detailed record of the geologic formations penetrated by the borehole.

"Upon completion of the logging, we would be able to decide whether we should further drill this well by another 500 metres or not. Without logging, we cannot understand the true nature of the geological structure down there," said a top official of Bapex requesting anonymity.

"There had been no sign of any big hydrocarbon reserve during the drilling. The structure was big. If there was any gas discovery, it would have been very big," he said referring to the previous forecast made by both Bapex and Petrobangla that there will be no less than 2 tcf gas in this zone.

This implies a huge blow to the government's energy plans that include installation of a massive 32-inch Bibiyana-to-Dhanua pipeline to increase gas flow to the national grid. The Gas Transmission Company

Limited had opted for a 36-inch 138-km pipeline instead of 16-inch or 20-inch to bring 300 mmcf/d gas from Bibiyana because of Petrobangla's suggestion that there would be huge gas in Sunetra which could be added to this pipeline.

Now that there won't be any 'big' gas supply from Sunetra, this pipeline, under tendering process, has become impractical.

In addition, the government's plans for some gas-fired power plants in the future and increase in gas supplies in 2014-15 will also be dismissed or affected.

The Bapex started drilling in Sunetra since late August. The Sunetra zone is located in the eastern part of block 11 which was awarded to Bapex.

It had initially targeted drilling 3,700 metres with a secondary target of 4,000 metres. As there had been no sign of gas discovery, the Petrobangla chief asked for further drilling to secure a success.

"If we ultimately find nothing, it will have a negative impact on Bapex's further exploration in block 11. This eastern part of the block had high prospects. The western parts have lower prospects," the source pointed

Robbers injure four in Keraniganj

UNB, Keraniganj

Robbers looted cash, gold ornaments and other valuables and injured four people at Kadampur in south Keraniganj of Dhaka early yesterday.

The injured were Arif, Zahidul, Shajib, and Rajib.

Police said a gang of robbers broke into the house of businessman Obaidul around 3:00am.

They looted cash of Tk 2.22 lakh and 11 tolas of gold ornaments keeping the house inmates hostage at gunpoint.

Hearing the hue and cry of the victims, locals surrounded the house and chased the robbers.

The gang exploded 8-9 bombs while fleeing the scene injuring four people.

The locals caught an alleged robber and handed him over to police.

INT'L WOMEN SME EXPO-2012

Anti-drug stall attracts visitors

SAIDUN NABI, Ctg

Aiming at educating people about the deadly consequences of drug abuse, four former addicts have launched an anti-drug campaign by setting up a stall at the month-long 6th Int'l Women SME Expo-2012.

The organisers say the stall is attracting nearly a hundred visitors every day since November 17 when the exposition began at Polo Ground in Chittagong city. On public holidays, as many as 500 people visit the booth.

The expo will continue till December 28. Monjur Hossain Pintu, who had been an addict for nearly 25 years, is leading the four-member team, carrying out the campaign for the first time under the banner of Ankur, a rehabilitation centre for drug users, and with support from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

Pintu said, "As I personally experienced how tragic a life an addict leads and what sort of stigma and discriminations s/he has to go through every moment in the family and society even after returning from the dreadful and self-destructive activities, a sense of responsibility grew in me to create public awareness."

Pintu, also chief executive of Ankur, said they were registering good response from the visitors during their campaign from 2:00pm to 10:00pm.

The campaigners provide visitors with leaflets narrating true stories of the lives of drug addicts, deadly effects of drug abuse, and social and familial problems it leads to. The stall is also showcasing awareness creating posters and banners of the DNC.

Some visitors, who have their near and dear ones dependent on drugs, receive guidelines from them on how to treat addiction.

Around 70-80 percent of the visitors are youths, most of them students, said Pintu, adding that they had a comment book, in which the visitors wrote down their opinions, suggestions, and wishes.

Both anti-drug activists and common

people hardly get such an opportunity to seek and share knowledge and experiences about drug addiction, Pintu said.

Asadujjaman Nur Tushar, a team member of Ankur, said, "A stronger social movement should be launched to stop the illegal use of drugs, as it is destroying a huge section of the young generation."

"It's also kind of a wake-up call against the negligence shown to the people, who are dependent on drugs, by society and even by their own family."

Tushar said with a view to changing that mindset towards drug users as well as those who gave up, they were telling the visitors how a little care, sympathy and guide could help the victims' comeback.

If the addicts get proper medication and counselling, they could recover, he said, advising parents and guardians to be more sympathetic towards them.

Chand Ahmed, a government official, visiting the stall, said, "Such initiatives are hardly taken in the port city, though a lot of people want to know about it."

"Even being a government official, I think that the government should play a bolder role by assisting such initiatives on a larger scale since the government steps for public awareness in this regard are not sufficiently visible."

Another visitor, Mehedi Hasan, who has a relative addicted to drugs, said he lacked knowledge about addiction and did not have any idea who to contact to learn from and share his views.

The message I have got here will help me in my work against drug addiction and help my relative wean off his dependence on drugs, he said.

Mukul Jyoti Chakma, deputy director of the DNC (metropolitan area), said they got involved in the initiative to let people know about the consequences of addiction and ways of medicating the addicts.

He termed the campaign a great opportunity to get closer to people and said such initiatives must be encouraged more.

Martial law is no law

FROM PAGE 1

In its judgment given in May last year, the text of which has recently been released, the apex court declared the imposition of martial law an act of high treason.

It has been sheer tragedy for the people of Bangladesh to witness their independent republic, born out of a twilight struggle against Pakistan, a state vulnerable to coups d'etat, in 1971, falling into a similar trap of extra-constitutional rule in August 1975. On August 15 of that year, a civilian elected government led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was violently overthrown in a coup led by Khondokar Moshtaque, who on August 20 placed the country under retrospective martial law.

The damage done by such a violent seizure of power was not only that constitutional government had been undermined but also that within weeks of the coup, an indemnity ordinance preventing any court of law from questioning the action taken on August 15 was decreed by the usurper regime. The ordinance was subsequently to be enshrined in the fifth amendment to the constitution during the time of the first military ruler, General Ziaur Rahman. It remains a matter of collective shame that military rule in the country ensured that the assassins of August 15 and, later, of November 3 (when four national leaders were murdered in Dhaka Central Jail) would not be brought to justice.

Those who imposed martial law in Bangladesh clearly had learnt a lesson or two from the legacy of military rule in Pakistan. General Ayub Khan's martial law in October 1958 served as the beginning of a dangerous new trend in Pakistan in that it placed clamps on democracy, through pushing leading politicians into prison and giving the regime the opportunity to impose its own brand of politics, Basic Democracy, on the coun-

The commission on Wednesday ordered the investigation team to arrest them.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of SNC Lavalin and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after the Bangladesh government agreed to the WB's terms and conditions, including conducting a fair investigation in the allegation.

try. In March 1969, Ayub's system subverted itself when it transferred authority not to the speaker of the national assembly but to the commander-in-chief of the army, General Yahya Khan, under a second martial law.

Martial law is a misnomer in that it is no law but rule based on arbitrary behaviour exercised by military officers successful in seizing power. Martial law stultifies democracy and, as General Zia once famously declared, makes politics difficult. The Zia period of martial law, camouflaged as the sepoy-janata revolution of November 7, 1975, successfully undermined the rule of law and had state institutions operate at the mercy of the regime.

More dangerously, the Zia martial law brazenly played havoc with the four fundamental principles of the state -- democracy, socialism, nationalism and secularism -- through prising out two of them from the constitution (socialism and secularism) and turning another (nationalism) into a farce. Worse was to follow. In the name of returning the country to democracy, the Zia martial law regime opened the door to political activities for rightwing politicians who had patently opposed, by word and action, the War of Liberation in 1971.

Since martial law respects no law, no institution and no individual, in April 1977, Zia removed President ASM Sayem, a former chief justice then holding, as well, the title of chief martial law administrator, from office and occupied it himself. He then had a questionable referendum confirming his assumption of the presidency. Zia's martial law dishonoured the state through sending the assassins of August-

November 1975 out on diplomatic assignments at Bangladesh missions abroad. It made no inquiries into the murder of General Khaled Mosharraf and his lieutenants, who had attempted, between

November 3 and 6, 1975, to restore the country to sanity and the army to a normal chain of command.

Spells of martial law often leave a class of politicians weakened in spirit and courage, to a point where they are afraid to say no to the demands made by ambitious soldiers. When army chief General HM Ershad demanded, at the end of 1981 and in early 1982, that a national security council be constituted comprising the chiefs of the armed services, newly elected President Abdus Sattar failed to take action against Ershad. The coup of March 24, 1982 against an elected government was to have bad consequences for the country. As with any martial law, parliament and the constitution were suspended and politics put on hold. Soon Ershad would move to undermine the judiciary by breaking up the High Court and removing from service four judges who had the gall to oppose his action.

Martial law weakens the state and its institutions. It forces democratic parties and politicians constantly into a struggle for restoration of pluralistic order. In the absence of politics, it presides over the emergence of a civil-military bureaucratic complex which seeks to keep normal politics at bay. In the end, it creates a class of political opportunists, sycophants, toadies and hangers-on who, even after their military mentors are long gone, try to prolong the legacy of darkness handed down to them by those who once seized the state power by an unashamed use of force.

There should be deterrents against future extra-constitutional acts against the state. One of them could be to round up those (still alive) who, in military service in 1975 and 1982, helped conspire against elected governments and eventually succeeded in overthrowing them.