

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) brings out a silent procession on the campus yesterday, protesting the recent attacks on teachers at Islamic University in Kushtia and Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur.



PHOTO: STAR

Drives to free Turag barely work out

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

A three-day drive against encroachers did not yield expected results for the Turag as heaps of sand were still being piled up on the river's foreshore.

The Dhaka district administration and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) on Thursday seized 1.8 lakh cubic feet (cft) of sand and sold it in auction. But more sand was still left piled up in the area yesterday, the concluding day of the drive.

The eviction drive was mainly limited to one single point while similar cases of encroachment were seen elsewhere, but the authorities took no action against those.

On the second day of the drive, BIWTA officials seized and sold more than 18,000 cft of sand in auction from another point adjacent to Sinnirtek landing station. But removal of the sand did not start as of yesterday.

"We have given the buyers four days from Saturday to remove the sand," Mohammad Shahidullah, deputy director of BIWTA, told The Daily Star.

Huge piles of sand were kept on both banks, but the drive was conducted only in Sinnirtek area, one of the largest trading centres for construction sand in the capital.

"They [the government officials] were busy at this particular point. Mysteriously, they did not touch the other mounds of sand. They might have been convinced through underhand dealings," said tea-stall owner Delwar Hossain.

Selim Hossen, executive magistrate from the district administration, said, "We have found a total of 11 similar points from Sinnirtek to Tamanna Resort [a stretch of around three kilometres] where mounds of

sand are piled. "It is not possible to evict all those overnight. We have a plan to launch several drives in phases in this month to remove those," he added.

Some unscrupulous traders have initiated housing projects grabbing the western foreshore of the Turag, just opposite the Sinnirtek landing station of BIWTA. But no eviction drive was conducted there.

Deputy Director Mohammad Shahidullah said several cases had been filed earlier against the housing project initiators.

Traders have grabbed around 60 to 70 feet foreshore on the west and more than 100 feet on the east of Sinnirtek area, he said.

Locals are sceptical about the result of the drive. They allege the sand traders always appear within a few days after the drive. "The traders remain silent for around a week after the drive. Then they start sand filling on the foreshore again by managing the administration," said Quayum Miah, a resident of the area.

Speaking anonymously, a BIWTA official alleged police posted in the area always remain silent against the grabbers in exchange of bribe.

"As the grabbers remain unpunished, they dare to commit the offence repeatedly," Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan Joint Secretary Sharif Jamil told The Daily Star yesterday.

Over the last few years, sand traders, many of them having strong ties with the ruling parties, have gone to the extreme of filling up the rivers, canals and other water bodies in and around the capital.

Occupying rivers or any wetland is a punishable offence under the environment law.

English teaching trade kills learning

Says academics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The "business" of English Language Teaching (ELT) is "killing" the learning of English in Bangladesh, said eminent academics at a conference in the capital yesterday.

Popularity of ELT in the country has enabled some teachers and experts to profit from it, while the move away from teaching grammar and English literature to new ELT methods has caused harm to the quality of English teaching in the country, they said.

Textbooks produced by ELT practitioners lacks creativity, they highlighted.

They were speaking at debate session on the second day of the 6th international conference on "The Multiple Realities of English: ELT and Beyond" at National Academy of Educational Management (Naem) in the capital.

Prof Fakrul Alam of Dhaka University (DU), Dr Hamidur Rahman of the State University of Bangladesh, Prof Dr Arifa Rahman of DU, Kathryn Kelly, English language advisor of British Council, took part in the debate.

Prof Arifa Rahman argued that the ELT is helping to millions of students and teachers in Bangladesh.

The ELT textbooks focus on the real life contexts of the country, such as child labour, flood and women's issues, instead of Chaucer and other elusive concepts, she said.

"Texts have to be relevant to the students and the exercises have to be interesting so that the student feels involved," she added.

Kathryn Kelly said the age-old method of learning English through grammar and literature was elitist way of understanding a language.

In reply to the criticism that ELT was a business in Bangladesh, she said, "Let us not be embarrassed about it... We have a business that allows us to communicate with each other."

The debate was one of the highlights of day-long events that consisted of workshops, talks and presentations on a wide range of topics.

The international conference is a forum for teachers, administrators, trainers, researchers, textbook writers and others from different countries to exchange ideas, discuss the challenges and issues of English teaching and seek new directions.

Ijtema ends today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second phase of Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation of Muslims after hajj, concludes today with thousands of devotees expected to participate in the final supplication, Akheri Munajat, on the banks of Turag river in Tongi.

The second phase passed its second day yesterday with tens of thousands of devotees from home and abroad thronging the 160-acre Biswa Ijtema grounds and its adjoining areas on the outskirts of the capital.

The Ijtema is being held in two phases for the last three years. The first phase this year was held on January 11-13 and the second one began on January 18.

The mammoth congregation includes delivery of sermons by Islamic scholars from different Muslim countries on fundamental matters of Tablig, prayers for the spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim Ummah and recitation from the Holy Quran and Hadith.

A number of dowry-free marriages were conducted on the Ijtema grounds yesterday to encourage and raise awareness among

people to shun the social menace.

Five more devotees died on the Ijtema grounds yesterday. Meanwhile, a mobile court sentenced 36 people to imprisonment on different terms, up to two years, on charge of cheating devotees in different ways.

Executive Magistrate HM Anwar Pasha, who led the mobile court, said 18 of the convicted were jailed for two years, five for one and a half years, three for one year and 10 for three months.

More than 25,000 devotees from over 100 countries, including China, USA, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UK, are taking part in the Ijtema, being held for the 48th time.

Tablig Jamaat has been organising the annual congregation, also called the World Muslims' Congregation.

The first Ijtema was held in 1946 at Kakrail mosque near Ramna Park in the capital and the second one in Chittagong in 1948.

After being held in Pagar of Tongi in 1966, the venue was shifted to the eastern bank of the Turag as the grounds at Pagar was not large enough to accommodate the increasing number of devotees.

'Third force' can't end political crisis

Says Dr Akbar Ali Khan

UNB, Dhaka

Observing that emergence of a "third force" is not a solution to the country's existing political problems, former caretaker government adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday stressed the need for practising democracy among the political parties.

"I do not think the emergence of a third force is the core condition to bring changes in the current political culture; rather we want to see changes in the two feuding political parties," he said.

Akbar told a roundtable titled "Upcoming Parliamentary Polls of 2014: People's Empowerment" organised by Deshpremik Janagan Mancha at the Jatiya Press Club.

Portraying a contrasting figure between the politics and economy, he said the country's politics is going backward while the economy forward. With Ganotantrick Bam Mancha Convener Engineer Md Anamul Haque in the chair, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury and Engineer TAM Nurul Bashar, also spoke at the event.

User-friendly goods stressed for senior citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday stressed the need for user-friendly goods and services for the wellbeing of senior citizens.

Even though the elderly are living longer, they are not necessarily in good health or state of mind, said Naeema C Quayes, president of Age Well Foundation Bangladesh.

The meeting titled "Caring for Vulnerable and Ageing People" was organised by the foundation at Dhaka Club in Shabbagh. Cultural Affairs Ministry Abul Kalam Azad also spoke at the event.



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Integrated plan required for urbanisation

Says Hossain Zillur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An integrated plan involving economists, architects, town planners, geographers and environmentalists is a prerequisite for planned urbanisation, said Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, adviser to a former caretaker government, yesterday.

He was addressing a book launching programme and seminar on "Flourishing through Ages: Chittagong Shines to Become a Global City" held in the seminar room of BGMEA Bhaban in the port city.

Bangladesh Institute of Planners, Chittagong chapter, and PPRC Chittagong Research Initiative jointly organised the seminar.

Dr Zillur said Bangladesh is being urbanised at a rapid speed but plans and ideas required to build an urbanised country are absent.

Unplanned urbanisation would pose a big problem for Bangladesh, he said, adding, "If we do not start 'integrated thinking' regarding the matter, then we will be in big trouble."

Architect Zarina Hossain said many building-owners and developers do not abide by the rules and the concerned authority do not look into these irregularities and are not performing their duties properly.

Regarding urbanisation of the port city, she said, "How can we expect to build tunnels and flyovers and many such public amenities, when there are no footpaths on many of the roads?"

Engineer Ali Ashraf said many issues of the port city like drainage and waste management, a part of planned urbanisation, are still not addressed properly.

Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) can only meet one-third of the demand of water in the city, he said, adding that research should be undertaken about different issues of urbanisation of Chittagong.

Vice-chancellor of East Delta University Prof Dr Sikander Khan, among others, was also present at the programme.

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