

Cambrian students barred from joining Shahbagh protests

Guardian alleges, authorities deny

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The father of a student of Cambrian School and College has alleged that its chairman and principal administered corporal punishment to some students for seeking permission to join the Shahbagh movement.

Anwar Hossain, father of tenth-grader Arafat Hossain, filed a general diary with Gulshan Police Station on Wednesday against the duo, said Gulshan police.

"Chairman MK Basher and Principal Dilruba Parvin beat up some students of classes VIII, IX and X of Baridhara campus-5 for applying to the principal seeking permission," said Anwar.

He also complained that the authorities issued a transfer certificate (TC) to a student and broke the cell phone of another one.

Contacted, Cambrian School and College Chairman MK Basher last night said three students were punished as per the institution's rule. But no one was served with TC.

"That's not over the Shahbagh movement. One student was punished for his long hair, one for not carrying books in his bag and the other for carrying a mobile phone which is strictly prohibited," he said.

"As far as I know, no one sought permission to go to Shahbagh," added Basher.

Gulshan police yesterday said they will seek permission from a court to investigate into the matter.

Unity comes

FROM PAGE 1

spirit of the Liberation War from their predecessors.

About four thousands pithas (cakes made of rice flour) made by the villagers were distributed around 2:00pm among protesters.

Asked about the thoughts behind the effort, Fazlur Rahman, headmaster of Kisholy Kindergarten of the village, said the youths were now out on the streets and so could not yet eat traditional pitha in this spring.

"Pitha is part of our seasonal heritage. So we have sent them to express solidarity."

Villagers made those pithas from four mounds of flour in three days at the school premises, Fazlur, who had not come to Dhaka, said.

To the surprise of the initiators and other contributors, the headmaster said, six-year-old Manoshi, a student of class-I of the school, gave away all her savings for the programme.

This correspondent met her at the school. She said she had had Tk 2,300 in her earthen pot. She had also taken Tk 700 from her mother for making pithas for Shahbagh protesters.

"I have heard many stories about the war [for independence] and Rajakars. I am very lucky to do something for them [protesters]."

Most of the villagers are poor but came forward with whatever they had to be part of the initiative. Akhteruzzaman Talukder, Johurul Islam and few other social workers of the village coordinated the whole thing.

The youths, who continued the agitation at Shahbagh for the 10th straight day yesterday, were happy to see the unique gesture of solidarity, said Efaz Sarkar, general secretary of Bangladesh Astronomical Society, who hails from Enayetpur and regarded as an educated person by the villagers, over the phone.

Youths have waged the movement to free the country from its enemies -- war criminals, said Akhteruzzaman.

"We, village people, wanted to do something for them in expressing solidarity. We collected Tk 30,000 and all are spent on making pithas and carrying those to the capital."

SPELLING BEE

Contest entering online round

SHAHNOOR RABBANI

Champs21 teams of The Daily Star Spelling Bee visited Jhenidah Cadet College and two schools in the capital yesterday for its activation rounds and conducted its zonal activation in Narayanganj and Kushtia.

The top spellers from Jhenidah Cadet College were Ahnaf Tahmidul Haque of Class VIII and Md. Nazmus Sakib Arif, Hasan Abdul Quaiyum and Navid Newaz Fahim from Class X.

From Cambrian School and College, Md. Saad of Class VIII, Hossain Piyas of Class IX and Sadman Rafi Khan of Class X entered the divisional rounds while Afra Nawar of Class IX and Alisha Kabir and S. M. Tanzeem Junayed of Class VII were the top spellers from Bangladesh International School and College.

From Narayanganj, only nine out of 90 students made it through to the next round. Adarsha School basked in success as four of its students-- Shahrir Rakib of Class IX and Rizvy Ahmed, Sharif Mohammad Tasnim Islam and Mostakim Ahmed of Class X—qualified for the divisional round.

The others include Shapnil Roy (Class IX, Morgan Girls School), Tashfia Tahsin Raisa (Class VIII, Philosophia), Joyaria Hossain Rafa (Class X, Narayanganj Government Girls' High School) and Shaira Mubasshira and F. M. Zakaria students of classes VIII and X from National Ideal School.

The top spellers from Kushtia Zilla School were Rohan Rafat (Class VII), Tahseen Islam Sujon (Class IX) and Tanvir Anjum and Md. Raqibur Rahman of Class X. Nur Ferdous of Class VIII was the sole qualifier from Sun Up International School.

Students of classes VI to X can take part in the contest by registering and playing the Spelling Bee game on champs21.com. The bulk of the qualifiers will be selected via the online game. Contestants can play the game as many times as they want and only their best score will be considered. The top scorers in the online game will qualify for the next round.

The online round ends on February 28.

The winner of the Spelling Bee gets Tk 5 lakh worth of education insurance from MetLife Alico and an all-expenses-paid trip to the USA. The second and third runners-up will get Tk 3 lakh and Tk 2 lakh worth of education insurance respectively.

For more information, log on to www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh.

Valentine's Day

FROM PAGE 1

the crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971. They were singing patriotic songs and having national flag wrapped around their heads in a sign of love for the country.

Many also had their hands and cheeks painted with slogans like "Razakar er Fashi Chai" [capital punishment for war criminals], "Joy Bangla" and others.

"We have come here being driven by conscience as we love our country, our freedom fighters and our independence," said Bushra, student of a private university, who came to Shahbagh with her boyfriend Sazzad.

Echoing his girlfriend, Sazzad said, "We want to strengthen the movement with our love, spirit and vigour. That's why we have joined the demonstration to spread our love among the protesters."

The demonstrators started the protests at Shahbagh on February 5 hours after Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Mollah was given life imprisonment in a war crimes case.

The Shahbagh movement has been demanding capital punishment for Mollah and other war criminals since then.

A number of couples said they were giving priority to take part in the demonstrations instead of celebrating their "special day" on their own.

"We will get more opportunities to celebrate the Valentine's Day in future, but we may not get another

BNP activists

FROM PAGE 20

Awami League, filed on December 13 last year over a clash in the town.

The High Court had earlier granted bail to all the 44 till February 16.

Yesterday, 40 of them appeared before the magistrate's court and sought bail. Furious at the denial of bail to six of them, the accused vandalised furniture in the courtroom.

The six include Jubo Dal Bogra district unit President Shipar Al Bakhtiar and General Secretary Arafatur Rahman Apele, Svecchhasebak Dal district unit President Shah Mehedi Hasan Himu, Jubo Dal town unit Joint Secretary Adil Shahriar Gorky, Assistant Secretary Mohram Ali Tofin and activist Shah Alam.

Court Sub-Inspector Emdadul Bari told this correspondent a case will be filed against the vandals.

Hasan claimed that DMP had not put any obstruction on the BNP-led alliance's rally in front of the party's central office.

opportunity to conduct movement in favour of our Liberation War. That is why we have come here," said Arnab, an employee of a private organisation.

Some other youth said they had dedicated this year's Valentine's Day to the country and the ongoing demonstrations.

"Every year we dedicate the day to our special ones. But this year I have dedicated this day to the country and the country's independence," said Taslima Snigdha, a BBA student at Dhaka University.

Some couples were seen wearing green and red dresses matching with the national colour.

"The national flag is the symbol of our independence, sovereignty and national identity. We have put on dress matching the national colour to express our spirit of the Liberation War that we nurture in our heart," said Shila and Joy who went to Shahbagh from Dhanmondi.

BNP discards

FROM PAGE 1

Jamaat at Shahbagh's "Projonmo Chattar", the main opposition felt it safe to disassociate itself with Jamaat, party insiders told The Daily Star.

A group of senior leaders including BNP's Dhaka city unit Convener Sadeque Hosain Khoka told the party's chairperson Khaleda Zia that it would give a bad impression if Jamaat leaders addressed the rally.

The party is in a "great dilemma" centering the historic movement across the country demanding a ban on Jamaat-Shibir politics, said a top policy-maker of BNP, wishing not to be named.

Earlier on February 7, the alliance made the decision of holding a rally in the capital on February 9, at its secretary general-level meeting.

Hours later, the BNP standing committee in a meeting headed by its chairperson endorsed the programme.

However, the decision was postponed after a group of bloggers and activists waged demonstration at the Shahbagh intersection.

Talking to reporters on the following day, BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed blamed the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) for not giving them permission to hold the rally, a blame which was refuted by Mehedi Hassan, additional deputy commissioner, Motijheel Zone.

Hasan claimed that DMP had not put any obstruction on the BNP-led alliance's rally in front of the party's central office.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until February 17. SQ Chowdhury is supposed to cross-examine the witness on that day.

POWER PLANT REPAIR Clarification, our reply

The Power Development Board (PDB) issued a clarification on The Daily Star report headlined "Unsolicited, 3 times costlier, PDB goes for a deal to fix Ghorashal Power Plant" published on February 10.

The PDB said that to repair the Ghorashal plant, it invited offers from three companies through a restricted tender in December 2010 -- but that tender was found non-responsive.

In December 2011, the PDB went for an open tender and in July last year, it awarded a contract to IED Holdings of Russia. But as the company failed to fulfil bid obligations, the contract was cancelled.

"Till now no decision has been taken to award the contract in favour of M/S Swati Energy & Projects (P) Ltd India for repairing of the sixth unit of Ghorashal power plant," the clarification said.

OUR REPLY
The PDB board on December 1 last year at its special meeting decided to send its proposal to the power ministry to award the overhauling and repair job to Indian company Swati Energy and Projects on "an urgent basis" and under the Quick Increase of Power and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act of 2010.

We, therefore, stand by our report.

SQ Chy

FROM PAGE 20

picked them out?" In tears, the 62-year-old said, "As Salauddin Quader Chowdhury pointed them out, the Pakistani army took them to an army camp and killed them."

SQ Chowdhury is facing 23 charges for allegedly committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War. The incident categorised as charge-8 says that he had direct complicity in abduction and murder.

The witness said he learnt from his other brother Anwar and uncle Ali that on that day when his father and Alamgir had been returning from Raozan upazila in a car, Pakistani army personnel halted them at an intersection in Hathazari.

Alamgir's wife Umme Habiba Sultana and aunt Momtaj Begum and two others were with them.

After checking the vehicle, the army personnel were about to let them go when SQ Chowdhury along with his associates reached the spot, the witness said.

SQ Chowdhury asked the army personnel to hold the car, the witness said quoting Anwar.

SQ Chowdhury and the army personnel got Murshed's father and brother out of the car and took them to an army camp, he said.

"My aunt Momtaj Begum asked them where they [Murshed's father and brother] were being taken. In reply they said my father and brother would be questioned and then freed," the witness said.

A few minutes later, Momtaj Begum and others learnt that Murshed's father and brother were arrested.

Murshed with the help of a retired Pakistani army officer later searched inside the camp and the cantonment but could not find the two.

SQ Chowdhury's father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury was a relative of Alamgir's mother-in-law. She went to Fazlul's home Goods Hill for information.

Fazlul told her that Sheikh Mozaffar Ahmed and Sheikh Alamgir might have been killed, the witness said.

The witness yesterday submitted six news items published in dailies and a photograph before the tribunal.

The defence began cross-examining him.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until February 17. SQ Chowdhury is supposed to cross-examine the witness on that day.

Candle-lit

FROM PAGE 1

"jagoron sobabesh" to be held at Shahbagh at 3:00pm today. Organisers urged all to join the rally, saying that a declaration of the next course of action will come from the programme.

Preparations for the scheduled candlelight vigil began in the morning. Organisers said they bought more than 50,000 candles for Shahbagh alone.

The countrywide candlelight vigil was part of the nonstop movement demanding capital punishment to all war criminals, including Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah.

Thousands of demonstrators marched to the protest venue from different parts of the city with torches, chanting slogans. The crowd grew bigger and bigger as the evening fell.

Rows of lit candles on the roofs of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University added to the surreal aura of the area. Protesters drew Bangladesh maps and national flags and wrote "1971" with their glowing candles.

On footpaths, footbridges and roofs and balconies of homes, offices and hospitals, people stood in solidarity. More than 100 lawmakers lined up in the south plaza of the parliament building in support.

The flames of Shahbagh spread all over the country. According to reports sent by our district correspondents, people in Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna, Bogra, Narsingdi, Feni, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Dinajpur responded to the call for the candlelight vigil.

Organisers said they hoped the amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973 would be passed by Sunday, keeping the provision for appeal by the victims or the government to challenge inadequate sentence, thus meet-

ing one of their six demands. The movement began on February 5, hours after a war crimes tribunal sentenced Quader Mollah to life term in prison for crimes against humanity during the 1971 war.

Rejecting the verdict, Bloggers and Online Activist Network initiated the protest that soon turned into a mass movement. Within a few days, it spread to other parts of the country.

Yesterday's candlelight vigil at Shahbagh was joined by people from all walks of life. The number of students -- boys and girls alike -- was overwhelming, many of whom took position at the protest venue soon after 10:00am, chanting fiery slogans.

The day's programme began at 6:30am through the singing of the national anthem.

Protesters said they celebrated the Valentine's Day by offering their unwavering love for the country. They also gave a title for this year's Valentine's Day -- "Nil Bishader Chhoa" (The blues).

Students of Fine Arts were seen distributing copies of a speech written by Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam against the collaborators among the people.

Prof Mohammad Farasuddin, former governor of Bangladesh Bank, prominent actor Subarna Mostafa, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Ghulam Rahman and singer Haider Hossain, among others, joined the protest to express their solidarity.

Sammilita Muktiyoddha Forum also joined the movement in the morning. "We all want capital punishment to all the war crimes suspects through proper judgement," said Amir Hossain Mollah, chief adviser of the forum.

"To protect people from being misguided and to foil Jamaat-campaigns, we have launched the war," said Kajal. "We are also motivating people to join the movement."

Recently, an article titled "Laws of passion: the Shahbagh protests" spoke against Shahbagh movement.

Posted on opendemocracy.net, it calls the Shahbagh protests a rally of "hate and revenge" but did not mention genocide, rape and other crimes against humanity committed by war criminals in 1971.

The cyber soldiers unleashed a torrent of comments against the piece.

"Everyone working here has separate accounts on different blogs," said Bappi Nahid. "As we see any post or write-up that goes against the Liberation War or the movement, we all together swoop on it."

JS panel
FROM PAGE 20

The proposed changes to the act would be considered effective from July 14, 2009, when some other changes, including the provision for appeals, were introduced through amendments in the law.

Hours after the bill was tabled and sent to the committee for scrutiny on Wednesday, the parliamentary body gave consent for passage suggesting some changes.

While it approved the provision in the bill that allows the state and complainants to appeal against any verdict of the war crimes tribunals, the committee rejected a proposal to empower any "aggrieved people" to make such appeals.

The government moved to bring changes to the law in the wake of the ongoing mass movement at Shahbagh in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

People burst into protest on February 5 when a verdict delivered by a war crimes tribunal sentenced Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah to life in prison. The protesters feel Mollah was handed down a lenient sentence and that he should be awarded the death penalty.

No classes, exams at JU

Teachers abstain from work for VC's resignation

JU CORRESPONDENT

Classes and examinations in most of the departments of Jahangirnagar University were not held yesterday, as the JU Teachers' Association observed work abstention demanding resignation of its Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain.

On Wednesday afternoon, following a meeting with the teachers' association, Prof Anwar had declared to quit as the VC, but late in the night he backtracked from the decision saying the education minister and students had requested him to stay on.

In the meantime, the teachers' association had given him 72 hours to officially place the resignation. It had also announced to go for work abstention until the VC officially resigned.

They alleged that the VC had failed to ensure security on campus and was spoiling the academic atmosphere by falsely claiming that Tuesday's violence on campus after the death of a student was led by Islami Chhatra Shibir, a pro-Jamaat student body.

On Tuesday, fourth-year statistics student Md Malek,

who suddenly fell ill, died allegedly due to negligence of the medical centre of the university. Later, when he was rushed to a nearby hospital, the doctors said he succumbed to cardiac arrest.

The news had created tension on the campus. Agitated students vandalised the residences of the VC, treasurer and some other teachers, and the JU central gate and the registrar building.

After the violence and also in the meeting with the teachers' association on Wednesday, Prof Anwar Hossain had claimed that the attackers were Shibir activists.

Yesterday students of statistics department at the university distributed leaflets on the campus identifying certain lapses for Malek's death. They include poor management at the medical centre, use of expired-date medicines and saline, and scarcity of ambulances.

The students also demanded the university authorities provide a befitting job to one of the family members of Malek, since he was the only breadwinner for the family.

Jamaat, Shibir

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka-Rajshahi highway by setting fire to tyres around 10:00am, reports our Rajshahi correspondent quoting witnesses.

They chanted slogans against the ongoing trial of war criminals.

As police tried to remove the barricade, the Jamaat-Shibir men blasted at least 15 handmade bombs triggering the clash.

Police fired around 500 rubber bullets, 20 sound grenades and 30 teargas shells to disperse the troublemakers, said SM Moniruzzaman, commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP).

Of the injured, Officer-in-Charge SM Abdus Sobhan of Motihar Police Station and two constables Mohammad Polish and Mahub sustained injuries from bomb blasts. They received treatment at Rajshahi Police Lines Hospital.

Law enforcers detained 12 Jamaat-Shibir activists from the spot.

Traffic on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway remained suspended for two hours from 10:00am due to the clash.

In Chittagong, police picked up 11 Jamaat-Shibir men after a chase and counter-chase between the two sides on the city's Station Road, said Mirza Sayem Mahmud, assistant commissioner (Kotwali) of Chittagong Metropolitan police.

About 150 Jamaat-Shibir men brought out a procession on the road around 1:45pm.

Being obstructed by police, they hurled brickbats at the law enforcers. Police retaliated by firing 10 rubber bullets.

In Sylhet, police yesterday arrested 10 Shibir activists on charge of attacking a bus of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

At least 10 students were injured in the attack. The bus came under attack in Madina market area near the university on Wednesday night when the students were returning to the campus after joining a protest rally at the Central Shaheed Minar in the town.

Thousands of people staged protests there for the 10th consecutive day yesterday, demanding capital punishment to the war criminals.

In Lalmonirhat, police detained Abu Taher, office secretary of Shibir's central committee, around 9:30pm on Wednesday when he was phoning fellow men for a meeting at Jongra village of Patgram upazila.

The arrestee was later sent to jail through a local court.

People in Bogra caught a Shibir cadre with sharp weapons at Chapapur bazar area under Adamdighi upazila early yesterday.

Later he was handed over to police.

In the capital, 238 leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir were arrested yesterday on charges of vandalising vehicles, assaulting policemen and blasting handmade bombs.

Different police stations of the city produced them before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka with remand prayers for different terms.

Cases were filed against the arrestees with Paltan, Motijheel, Jatrabari and Shahjahanpur police stations.

Famous letter

FROM PAGE 1

found distributing copies of the letter among Shahbagh protesters.

Jahanara Imam, mother of martyred freedom fighter Rumi and the one to initiate the movement for the trials of war criminals, had written the open letter to countrymen on her deathbed. She died of cancer on June 26, 1994, at the age of 65.

"For the last three years, you have been fighting against the killers of '71, including war criminal Ghulam Azam and the evil forces that opposed the Liberation War," the letter continues. "The deadly cancer is showing me no mercy. But I have kept my promise. I never left the streets. But none can alter the course of death. So I am bidding good-bye and reminding you of your oath once again. You must keep your promise. Remain united until the end. Even if I am not there, I would know that cores of my children are living happily with their sons and daughters in the free golden Bangla."

"The movement still has to go many rough miles. People from all walks of life including politicians, cultural activists, freedom fighters, women, students and the youths are with this movement. I know the people are the ultimate trustworthy. The people are the source of all power. So I bestow the responsibilities of bringing Ghulam Azam and other war criminals to justice, and implementing the spirit of the Liberation War upon you, the people of Bangladesh. I am sure, victory shall be ours," ends the letter.

In 1992, the country's civil society began an unprecedented movement under the leadership of Jahanara Imam with the banner "Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee" [Committee for Eradicating the Killers and Collaborators of '71].

Fine Arts student Sinthia Arefin said they had decided to distribute the letter to convey to the people the message of the Shaheed Janani.