

Biswa Ijtema's second phase begins today on banks of Turag in Tongi

Lakhs of devotees from home and abroad are scheduled to arrive on the banks of the Turag in Tongi today amidst an ongoing blockade of the BNP-led 20-party alliance marking the beginning of the second phase of Biswa Ijtema, the largest congregation of Muslims after hajj.

Carrying winter clothes, blankets and cooking utensils, tens of thousands of the faithful from the remaining 32 of the country's 64 districts have already gathered till Thursday night seeking divine blessings.

Arriving with 29 others, Mohammad Abul Kalam of Comilla said despite the apprehensions over safety, they managed to arrive on Wednesday at the three-day event, scheduled to conclude on January 18 following the final supplication, Akheri Munajat. The first phase was held from January 9 to 11.

Obliquely referring to BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami, State Minister for Home

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at a views-exchange meeting in the capital yesterday said, "According to detective reports, they wanted to do something in the last Ijtema. But we were alert. We will also remain alert now so that they can not create such a situation."

Gazipur Superintendent of Police Md Harun Or Rashid said they intensified security measures, arranged in five tiers, compared to the first phase and strengthened traffic management.

All preparations are almost complete with thousands of volunteers working round the clock to prepare the 160-acre venue while Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation and Bangladesh Railway have arranged special services. Tablig Jamaat has been organising the event since 1946.

The Ijtema features sermons on fundamental issues of Tablig and prayers for spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim community.

Chhatra union demands abolishment of PSC exams

DU CORRESPONDENT

Left leaning Bangladesh Chhatra Union yesterday demanded abolishment of primary school certificate examination saying that it puts extra pressure on young children and hampers their creative growth.

The union also announced rallies and demonstrations across the country from today to raise mass awareness.

In a written statement, Lucky Akhter, general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, made the announcement on the Dhaka University campus.

"Public examination for students of class V is totally unacceptable. Students are taking on extra burden and hampers their creative growth," Lucky said.

It has organised a mass signature campaign today for realising the demand.



Defying hartal and indefinite countrywide blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from home and abroad gather on the bank of the river Turag at Gazipur's Tongi yesterday as the second phase of Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation for the community, begins today. The three-day event will conclude on January 18 through the final supplication, Akheri Munajat. Law enforcers say security measures have been intensified at the 160-acre venue. Tablig Jamaat has been organising the event since 1946.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

US assistant secretary due on Jan 20

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Anne C Richard will



come to Bangladesh on January 20 for a four-day visit to hold discussions with government, international and NGO officials on the Rohingya refugee issue.

According to a media note of the US State Department yesterday, Richard will meet with district and local officials, undocumented Rohingya and registered refugees in Cox's Bazar.

Richard, who is in Myanmar at the moment, will visit Rakhine State to meet state and local government officials and representatives of the Rohingya and Rakhine communities, and international and non-government organisations.

ETV chief reporter, three others fired 'for covering Tarique'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ekushey TV authorities yesterday sacked two journalists including the chief reporter and two high officials allegedly for their involvement in live-televasting BNP Senior Vice Chairperson Tarique Rahman's speech from London on January 5.

The dismissed are Mahatir Faruqi Khan, the chief reporter; Zahidul Islam, a director; Kanak Sarwar, a special correspondent; and Jamal-e-Bashir, an assistant manager.

Managing Director Ashraf Alam Tutul made a verbal announcement yesterday afternoon in this regard, said an ETV staff.

"Although the authorities didn't mention the reasons behind the dismissal of the four, everybody in the house believes that the action was taken for broadcasting Tarique's speech," a senior staff told The Daily Star, preferring anonymity.

The step followed the arrest of ETV Chairman Abdus Salam on January 6. The day before, cable operators, mostly loyal to the Awami League, allegedly stopped transmission of the private TV channel for giving live coverage to Tarique and relaying it several times.

Police implicated the ETV boss in a pornography case filed with Cantonment Police Station two months ago.

Special Correspondent Akhil Poddar was made the chief reporter immediately.

ETV Senior Reporter Sajed Romel said, "Our channel is still not available in the whole country. Around 30 districts remain out of our coverage."

He said the other staff were not worried about the authorities' decision.

MANIK SHAHA MURDER: Jounos want immediate trial completion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Journalists of Khulna yesterday demanded that the trial for killing Manik Shaha, a reporter of the daily Sangbad, who died in a bomb attack near Khulna Press Club on January 15, 2004, be completed immediately.

The trial started in June 2008. Three of the 14 accused were killed in "a gunfight" with law enforcers, four were sent to jail, while the others are absconding.

Marking Manik's 11th death anniversary, journalists yesterday at a discussion at the press club also urged the government to finish the trials for killing their fellows, including Humayun Kabir Balu, Harunur Rashid Khukon and Sheikh Belal Ahmed, and Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Runi, through a speedy tribunal.

Manik Saha, former president of the press club, also worked for the English daily New Age, Ekushey TV and the BBC.

Driver not alone responsible for Zaglul's road death

Probe body finds negligence of police, doctors

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Reckless driving and negligence of police and doctors were responsible for the death of eminent journalist Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, said a government probe report.

The driver and helper of the bus forced Chowdhury to get down at Sonargaon intersection which is not a bus stop. As soon as he put a foot on the road, the driver hit the gas abruptly. He fell and was injured, on November 29 last year, the report added.

It further said on-duty traffic police requested pedestrians to take him to hospital instead of taking him there themselves. No official from nearby Kalabagan Police Station reached the spot in time.

A number of onlookers took him to nearby Mohona Hospital, which has no government approval, but there were no on-duty doctors at its emergency unit.

A doctor at the hospital's operation theatre wasted around 30 minutes in the name of diagnosis, though the hospital did not have the necessary

treatment facilities. They eventually sent him to Comfort Hospital on Green Road with an oxygen mask, as the doctor claimed the victim was alive at 8:41pm.

However, on-duty doctors of the intensive care unit (ICU) at Comfort Hospital claimed that Chowdhury was already dead when he was taken to them.

Former chief editor of state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, also an international affairs analyst, was on his way to attend a programme at a private television channel that evening.

The road transport and bridges ministry the next day formed a five-member probe body headed by Mashiar Rahman, director (administration) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, to investigate the incident.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shyamol Dutta, a member of the body, said, "I think Zaglul Chowdhury could have survived had on-duty police promptly sent him to a better hospital."

However, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner (Traffic-West) Imtiaz Ahmad, another member of the committee, disagreed with this allegation and signed the report with a note of dissent.

He claimed police had extended all-out cooperation to take the victim to hospital within the shortest possible time.

The probe body has recently submitted its report to the ministry, said Shyamol Dutta, also the editor of Bhorer Kagoj.

Contacted, Deputy Secretary Mehedi Hasan of the ministry told The Daily Star, "We have already sent letters to different ministries and departments concerned to take necessary actions against the persons responsible."

The report also came up with a 15-point recommendation to avoid similar accidents in future.

The recommendations include arranging adequate bus stops and law enforcers' strict monitoring so that buses cannot stop at non-designated places and that bus doors cannot be opened at non-designated stops.

WAR CRIMES TRIAL

Siraj Master, Akram, Latif killed my father

Prosecution witness tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that war crimes accused Sheikh Sirajul Haque alias Siraj Master, Khan Akram Hossain and Abdul Latif Talukder killed his father after taking him away from their home in Tengrakhal village in Bagerhat on November 22, 1971.

The 13th prosecution witness, Subhan Sheikh, 55, said his father Hashem Ali Sheikh was killed because he assisted freedom fighters.

He further said that their family also fought for independence during the

Liberation War.

Narrating how his father was killed, Subhan said on November 22, four Razakars, auxiliary force to the Pakistani occupation army, came to their village and took his father to the Kochua Razakar camp.

"I followed them there," the witness said.

One of the Razakars ordered Subhan to leave the camp and hit him with a stick. The witness left the camp and went to the bank of the river Bhairab.

"Sometime later I heard gunshots," he added.

"That night I learned that Siraj Master, Abdul Latif Talukder and Khan Akram Hossain with other Razakars shot dead my father," said Subhan.

"A villager, Shibu Sheikh, brought my father's body, which had been floating on the river, to our home," he said.

Sarwar Hossain, defence counsel of Abdul Latif and Akram, cross-examined the witness, while Siraj's lawyer declined to cross-examine him.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned till January 25.

Sirajul is facing six charges, while Abdul Latif and Akram are facing three charges in the war crimes case.



Prof Anupam Sen, vice chancellor of Premier University, Chittagong lights a candle inaugurating a two-day competition on the Liberation War organised by the Research Centre for Bangladesh Freedom Struggle and Liberation War Trust Chittagong at Zila Shilpakala Academy in the port city yesterday. The contest features inter-school debate and quiz, photography, poster, short film and idea generating rounds. A total of 16 schools are taking part in the quiz while 18 in the debate.

PHOTO: STAR



Finance Minister AMA Muhith speaks at 'Engage Dhaka 2015' yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Nazmul Huda comes up

FROM PAGE 3

ousted by Abul Kalam Azad, BNF's current chairman.

Huda's new alliance includes Bangladesh Republic Party of Haji Mohammad Nasirullah, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Baksal) of Mahub Alam, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Party of Salam Mohammad, Sammito Nagarik Party of Manuel Sarker, and Swadhin Party of Md Samrat.

None of these are among the 41 parties

registered with the Election Commission.

When asked, Huda said he did not believe in registration.

Huda launched his second political party, Bangladesh National Alliance, on May 8, 2014, and yet another front, Bangladesh Manabadhikar Party, on November 29 the same year.

Yesterday, he lambasted both AL and BNP, observing that dialogue is the only way out of the ongoing political crisis.

19 senior

FROM PAGE 3

Anwar Kamal and Md Shahrir were posted to Marine Police, and Nawroz Hasan Talukder and Sarder Nurul Amin were transferred to Tourist Police.

Another such official Sarder Rakibul Islam was made the SP of Narail district while its outgoing chief Mohammad Abdul Kader was transferred to PHQ.

SP Sazzadur Rahman of PHQ was transferred to Police Training Centre in Rangpur while Assistant Inspector General Sayeed Tariquul Hasan of PHQ was made the SP of Rangamati district.

Stop attack on vehicles or face

FAROM PAGE 3

unions' leaders across the country and announce tough programme, if the situation does not improve," said Osman, also general secretary of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation.

Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners'

Association President Faruk Talukder Soheli, Bangladesh Truck Covered Van Owners Association General Secretary Rustam Ali and Bangladesh Sark Paribahan Samity Vice President Abul Kalam were present.