

DU looking for 29 militant suspects

DU CORRESPONDENT

After expelling six students, Dhaka University authorities are looking for another 29 students of Business Faculty for their alleged involvement with the banned Islamist outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Syndicate on Sunday expelled the six for life for distributing the outfit's CDs and leaflets on the campus. The outlawed outfit is trying to strengthen its position at DU as well as some private universities in the capital. Sources say members of the outfit are secretly or sometimes even openly campaigning on the campus. The leaders and activists of Hizb ut-Tahrir are mainly targeting students of a number of selected departments like those of the Business Faculty. The sources say some former and current students of this faculty spend huge sum for their organisational campaigning. Speaking anonymously, a student of management said, "They make friendly relations with the targeted students, especially the freshers, and provoke them to join their discussion."

Sometimes they distribute leaflets, books, CDs to not only students but also their teachers. In July last year, the proctorial team held Muhammad Sulaiman, a student of Business Faculty, and found a list of 26 students of the same faculty. "We are looking for 29 students of the faculty. The list shows only nicknames and pseudonyms. But as the names of their departments and batches are also listed, we are hopeful of identifying them," Proctor M Amzad Ali told The Daily Star. Of the students, 11 are from marketing, eight from management information system, four from finance, four from accounting and two from management. "Two smart-looking persons tried to engage me in discussion on Islamic rules as I am a religious person. After talking with them for several days, they urged me to join their group," said a student of marketing asking not to be identified. In July last year, the university administration identified five of its expelled students after verifying video footages of CCTV cameras installed at



A seven-member delegation of Saudi Arabia, led by Director of the General Intelligence Presidency of the Kingdom Khalid Bin Ali Al Humaydan, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

CJ's remarks won't affect 15th amendment

Says Ashraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday said Chief Justice SK Sinha's recent remark would not have any impact on the 15th amendment to the constitution that scrapped the provision for caretaker government. "What the chief justice said is not a court verdict. He made the remark at a seminar, and it does not have any significance. No other judges said anything in favour or against it," he said. Ashraf, also public administration minister, was speaking at a press briefing at the AL's Dhanmondi office after a meeting of the party secretariat. On January 19, Justice Sinha said some judges make unusual delay in writing verdicts, while others continue to write it even long after their retirement, which goes against the law and the constitution. On the occasion of the first anniversary of his taking office as the 21st chief justice, he said Supreme Court judges take oath to uphold laws and the constitution, but after retirement, a judge is not under the oath anymore and becomes a common citizen. Following the CJ's remark, the BNP renewed its claim that the judgment on the 15th constitutional amendment declaring caretaker government illegal was unconstitutional as ex-CJ ABM Khairul Haque wrote and signed it 16 months after his retirement. Yesterday, Ashraf criticised BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for her remarks on the number of martyrs in the 1971 Liberation War, and said the BNP would be thrown into the dustbin of history if it fails to accept the truth. "Khaleda Zia has never been a supporter of the Liberation War and can never be one. She cannot accept the creation of Bangladesh. Pakistan is her sacred place." He said the next general polls will be held in due time as per the constitution, and hoped BNP wouldn't make the mistake of boycotting election like

Precious topsoil burnt for bricks

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"Topsoil is the portion of soil that can be turned over by a ploughshare. Generally, top soil contains all the nutrients and organic materials plants or crops need to grow," said Khandaker Moeenuddin, director of Soil Research Development Institute. If topsoil is removed from a land, it would not grow any crop until the regeneration of topsoil there, he said. A cropland loses its fertility even if only top six inches of soil is removed. Brick kiln owners are taking away 18 inches or more of soil from croplands, he said. "Naturally, it may take up to 20 years for regeneration of topsoil, depending on the location of the land. The recovery of topsoil could be quickened by sedimentation process if it is a floodplain," he noted. Talking to The Daily Star, Mamunur Rashid, agriculture and environment coordinator of non-governmental organisation RDRS

Bangladesh, said farmers cannot expect optimum crop production without topsoil. Brick kiln owners in Lalmonirhat said topsoil from about 20 bighas is needed to manufacture around 12 lakh bricks. Each kiln makes between 15 and 30 lakh bricks a year. It is not possible to make bricks without topsoil, Sirajul Islam, owner of a brick kiln in Kaliganj upazila, told this newspaper. The removal of topsoil has other implications as well. For farmer Sohrah Hosaain of Saptana village, the kilns adversely affected irrigation of his land. "The level of land adjacent to the kilns went down after its owners sold their topsoil. Now we can't hold irrigation water on our land. We are also under pressure from the kiln owners to sell topsoil." Once brick kiln owners take topsoil from somebody's land, the owners of adjacent plots have no choice

but to sell theirs, he added. Sirajul, however, refuted the claims that farmers were forced to sell topsoil. "They sell it willingly," he said. Seeking anonymity, some agriculture department officials said they were aware of the problem, but could not save farmland because the kiln owners are very influential. Enamul Haque, agriculture officer of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said it is essential to protect topsoil of farmlands from kiln owners for achieving the crop production goals. Harun-ur Rashid Khan, professor of soil science at Dhaka University, said brick kilns are using topsoil not only in Lalmonirhat but also in many other areas of the country. According to a source at the Department of Environment, around 1,500 crore bricks are manufactured every year at 6,900 brick kilns in the country. At a recent seminar in the capital,

Md Abu Sadeq, director of Housing and Building Research Institute, said, it takes around 127 core cubic feet of soil to manufacture 1,500 crore bricks. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, told The Daily Star that the Brick Burning Control Act, 1989 (revised in 2013) prohibits the use of soil of any agricultural land where two crops are grown a year. This means brick kiln owners may use topsoil of land yielding a single crop. Brick kilns are destroying fertile agricultural land in different parts of the country and there is no government mechanism to monitor it, said the green activist. In India, collecting topsoil from agricultural land is prohibited. "They control the use of soil, not brick kilns. Our government should also take a similar approach to this issue," she added.

US ambassador meets Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat yesterday called upon all political parties to make their voices heard in a peaceful manner. "Bangladesh's commitment to democracy has played an essential role in the country's development. I encourage all political parties to make their voices heard in a peaceful manner," she said in a statement after meeting BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at the latter's Gulshan residence. "I appreciated the opportunity to hear Khaleda Zia's thoughts on the political situation in Bangladesh," added the envoy. Deputy Chief of Mission at the US embassy David Meale, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, senior leader Abdul Moeen Khan, and the party chief's advisers Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed were present. Talking to reporters last night, Moeen Khan said the country's latest situation in politics, economy, law and order and democracy came up for discussion at the meeting. He said a government, formed through a "voter-less election" two years ago, is running the country in a way where there is "no accountability and transparency". Democracy gets stronger where people have freedom of speech, but there is no such freedom in the country now, he claimed. MEETING WITH KRISHAK DAL LEADERS BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night alleged that the government retained its power by "committing killings, enforced disappearances, repression, filing false cases and using the police force". "They [government] are using the police to hang on to power. That's why police now think they're in control of everything. They are raising a slogan -- Hilsa is the king of fishes and police are the king of the state. What a slogan it is!" she said. The farmers can claim themselves to be the country's king as they grow food and feed people, said Khaleda while exchanging views with the leaders of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal at her Gulshan office.

Govt to carry out

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will be called "information cards", which will recognise the Rohingyas in Bangladesh as "Myanmar Muslims and not citizens of Bangladesh". Over the years, they have entered this country fleeing persecution in Myanmar. The cards will help the illegal or undocumented Rohingyas to get education, medicare and some other basic facilities and also protect them from harassment or arrest by law enforcers. Finance ministry sources said a Tk 21.75 crore project for conducting the census has already been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec). Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will carry out a survey in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Rangamati, Chittagong, Khagrachhari and Patuakhali under the project. A database, comprising pictures and general information, would also

be prepared. The census will identify the present addresses of the Rohingyas and their origins in Myanmar. Besides, it will collect their socioeconomic and demographic statistics. According to Planning Commission officials, there is no accurate statistics about how many undocumented Rohingyas are now living in Bangladesh, but it is estimated to be 3 to 5 lakh. Official sources say that despite strict vigilance in the border areas, on average eight to 10 Rohingyas infiltrate every day. These illegal Rohingyas have been settling in different areas, destroying forests. They are also getting involved in criminal activities, they said. The Planning Commission sources said these Rohingyas lead a very poor life, and the international community has for long been requesting Bangladesh to ensure the quality of life of the Rohingyas.

EC shows its helplessness

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the Election Commission during the polls, also alleged that he was threatened by the lawmaker for "not working in favour of the lawmaker-supported mayor candidate." Somebody threw bombs inside Paul's home and in front of his office in the evening on December 30 after voting was over. A day after the election, Sharif called Paul and threatened him, the official said. "He [MP] even threatened me that he will find me out wherever I go in the country." "In such a situation, my family members and I feel insecure," Paul said in the letter and requested the DC of Mymensingh to take necessary steps. The cabinet division on January 7 sent the complaint to the Election Commission, the office of the prime minister, and public administration affairs ministry for taking necessary actions in light of the complaint. These serious allegations of the alleged activities by Sharif are clearly unlawful according to sections 70 and 73 of the municipality election conduct rules. No persons can try to have assistance from any public servant to help the election of his candidate, take away ballot papers and resort to force, intimidation or obstruction to influence the election, according to the sections. If a person is found guilty of the offences, he or she can be punished with a jail term of a maximum of seven years and a minimum of six years. If we go through the returning officer's complaint, AL MP Sharif and his followers should be accused of committing electoral offences by their alleged activities and the EC should have taken legal actions accordingly. But the EC-led by Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad has not taken any legal steps against the MP in more than two weeks. Instead it made a puzzling move Sunday by drawing the attention of the prime minister and the Speaker to the unlawful activities of the MP. His actions stand in stark contrast to what the immediate past EC-led by ATM Shamsul Huda did in 2009. On instruction of the then EC, the district election officer of Sirajganj had filed a case against six people including the then fisheries and livestock minister Abdul Latif Biswas and his daughter Shoma Biswas for violating the Upazila election laws

in Belkuchi. The present EC on Sunday chose to complain to the prime minister and the Speaker against the AL MP Sharif. In its letters sent to the principal secretary of the Prime Minister's Office and secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, the EC said the activities of Sharif were regretful and harmful to the image of the government and the EC. The letter reads: "The commission thinks that the issue should be brought to your attention [the PM and the Speaker]." Neither the prime minister nor the speaker has anything to do in this case. Neither the constitution nor the rules of procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad, nor any other law give the prime minister or the Speaker any power to take any action against any person accused of criminal offences. Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury on Sunday told journalists that she has nothing to do as the incident took place outside of the parliament. It is only the judiciary empowered by the constitution and existing laws can hold trial of criminal offences. By shying away from the wrongdoers in Phulpur municipality polls, the EC has shown it cannot protect its official, the returning officer. The underlying messages of this incident are enormously significant. This single incident depicts the inability of the EC to function independently and also the helplessness of the field level government administration to take actions against wrongdoers if they belong to the ruling AL.

Dusty streets in city pose health risk

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Workers who engage with stone crunching without taking precaution are exposed to silicosis while those in the ship breaking industry may contract asbestosis, he says. Silicosis and asbestosis are also caused by ILD which reduces the amount of oxygen in the body and the effectiveness of lungs and can cause death, he adds. The specialist physician strongly recommends spraying water at construction sites twice a day. According to Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995, building owners must prevent noise pollution, dust spread or any other nuisance during construction. However, talking to a number of developers and building owners, it has been learnt that they do not take measures to prevent spread of dust as it "takes time and money". Director General of the Department of Environment (DoE) Raisul Alam Mondal says air is polluted by brick fields, vehicles and dust. Echoing Dr Bennoor, he says a huge amount of dust is generated every day at sites where buildings are constructed and roads are dug and dust spread is a major reason of health hazards in the city. Another DoE official, who has

spoken on condition of anonymity, says action will be taken against building owners for sound or air pollution if complaints are filed with the department. Wasa is now playing a major role in spreading dust as it is digging roads in different parts of the city to set up water pipelines. The construction work of Moghbazar flyover is another major source of dust pollution, as construction supervisors do not spray water around the site. Residents in the area have complained they are forced to inhale dust every day. Though the Mayor Md Hanif flyover is functioning for around the last two years, commuters who use the road under the flyover are exposed to clouds of dust every day as the condition of the road is very poor. Firoz A Mujahid, a resident of Rayerbazar, has been suffering from bronchitis for several years. He says residents of Rayerbazar have found themselves exposed to heavy dust as utility service organisations frequently dig roads and leave them unrepaired for long. Construction of residential buildings is another reason for the dust, he adds. Mujahid says all of the six members in his family are suffering from either bronchitis or dust allergy due to the

area's highly polluted air which is aggravated by tannery waste. His doctor, assistant professor Abdus Shakur Khan, chest and medicine specialist of NIDCH, has informed him that a good number of his patients come from Rayerbazar, Jhigatola and Hazaribagh. Sohul Ahmed, a resident of Gandaria, goes to Gulistan every day by rickshaw, using the road under the the Mayor Md Hanif flyover. He says he has already faced lung problems and his doctor has strongly advised him to wear mask outside his home and office. Rumana Sharmin, a student of State University and a resident of Lalmatia, says she is forced to use a scarf to walk down the road in front of Lalmatia Mahila College. "Wasa has been digging roads in different parts of Lalmatia since last month but there is no sign of repairing those," she says. DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokan at a programme on Sunday said it's the building owners' duty to spray water at construction sites. "We have taken initiative to purchase more water lorries and we will be able to solve the problem in the next three to four years," he said. About the poor condition of roads, the mayor said they would start repair-

NEGLECTANCE IN TREATMENT

Ctg doctor gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday granted bail to a doctor who is one of the three Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) physicians sued for negligence in treatment in two separate incidents. Metropolitan Magistrate Farid Alam passed the order after Dr Rana Chowdhury, an assistant registrar of the CMCH, appeared before the court, seeking bail in the case, said court sources. On Wednesday, doctors in Chittagong city stopped working at private clinics, chambers and diagnostic centres in the port city, protesting two cases against the three physicians alleging negligence. They called off their work stoppage on Sunday after Chittagong Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin assured them of "clearing up misunderstandings." On January 19, one Jebal Hossain, father of Nur Absar, lodged the case against Dr Rana on the negligence charge.

What steps

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and 8:00am every day and left dusts and waste at the roadside causing air pollution. Besides, waste materials are burnt sometimes, creating smoke that causes respiratory problems. As the petitioners prayed to the court to pass necessary directives in this regard, the HC issued a rule upon the authorities concerned and the city corporations to explain why their inaction should not be declared illegal. The court also asked the respondents to show cause as to why they should not be directed to remove deadly elements from the city corporation areas to protect people's health.