

Khaleda slandered PM at court: Obaidul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's unabashed slandering of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh Awami League before the court was against political etiquette and her language was also inappropriate, Obaidul Quader, AL general secretary, said yesterday.

The issues she raised at the court were purely political and her remarks will create confusion in the political arena, he also said while talking with reporters prior to attending a women's rally organised by Kabirhaat upazila AL at the residence of Ekramul Karim Chowdhury, MP, also the general secretary of Noakhali AL.

Khaleda Zia on Thursday told a Dhaka court that Sheikh Hasina had been lucky as she, unlike her (Khaleda), never had to appear before a court.

Obaidul, also the road transport and bridges minister, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was the opposition leader during the one-eleven period, had been humiliated and dishonoured in the way she was taken to the court during the time.

Khaleda Zia, on the other hand, was taken to a house that was converted into a sub-jail after ensuring all modern amenities in it, he added.

"We came to learn via newspapers and television that Khaleda Zia has cried in the court. My question is how many people she had made cry. Thousands of men, women and children were killed during her [Khaleda] regime. She [Khaleda] had burned hundreds of common people including drivers, school teachers and police constables to death. She is now crying in the court to win people's sympathy."

Ekramul Karim Chowdhury, MP; Mahbulul Alam Talukder, deputy commissioner of Noakhali; and Mohammad Ilias Sharif, superintendent of police in Noakhali, were present among others.

Goods transport strike called in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 48-hour goods transport strike in greater Chittagong from tomorrow was declared by transport owners and workers yesterday.

"Ponyo Paribahan Malik-Sramik Oikya Parishad" called the strike in a press release to press home their five point demands.

Their demands include reversal of the exorbitant hike in the road use tax collected by Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), start issuing driving licences under heavy vehicle category, building separate terminals for heavy trucks or prime movers and lower custom duty on imported vehicles parts.

Abu Bakkar Siddik, member secretary of the oikya parishad, told The Daily Star that the CCC has set the road use tax at Tk 10,000 for each vehicle -- a 20-fold hike compared to Tk 500 during the tenure of the last mayor.

Under the new overload charge, to be enforced from November 1, transport owners will have to pay between Tk 3,000 and Tk 12,000. The charge was Tk 2,000 previously.

Raising these taxes and charges are not only unreasonable and oppressive, but will also create a burden on end users with high prices of commodities, he explained.

"All type of transport vehicles including trucks, prime movers, covered vans and tank lorries will remain off roads and highways to press home our five point demands," Abu Bakkar also said.



Growers busy sorting hog plums (amra) after plucking them from trees. The photo was taken recently in Pirojpur's Swarupkathi upazila.

PHOTOS: SUSHANTA GHOSH

High yield brings no smile

SUSHANTA GHOSH, back from Jhalakathi, Pirojpur

Barisal division is known for amra (hog plum). Enriched with vitamins, this sweet-and-sour fruit can be eaten raw, cooked in a curry or as pickles. The nutritious seasonal delicacy grows in abundance in Barisal, Jhalakathi and Pirojpur districts.

While visiting the orchards and markets in the districts recently, this correspondent saw growers and wholesalers were passing a busy time plucking, packaging and selling the popular fruit during the ongoing peak season.

Flowers appear in the trees in the Bangla months of Magh and Falgun (mid-January to mid-February) and the fruit is plucked from Ashar to Ashwin (mid-June to mid-September).

According to the Department of Agricultural Extensions (DAE), around 1,339 hectares of land is used for hog plum cultivation in the three districts while around



An amra orchard in Jhalakathi Sadar.

19,847 metric tonnes of fruit has so far been produced this year.

This year's yield is much higher than last year's, said Ramendra Nath Barai, deputy director of DAE, Barisal.

However, many growers said the high production has lowered the market price. They said they were selling per maund at Tk 900 to Tk 1,000 to the local wholesalers; almost half the

price they got last year.

Gokul Majumder, a grower in Jhalakathi's Jindakathi area, said, "Last year, I made around Tk 15 lakh after selling the fruits grown on three acres of land. This year, it was less than Tk 10 lakh."

Hog plum grower Santosh Mandal of Kurinana village under Pirojpur's Swarupkathi upazila echoed him.

Many of the local wholesalers

also said they were unable to make a profit this year.

Alamgir, a wholesaler of Swarupkathi upazila, said, "Due to the high yield, we are also selling the fruit at a lower price."

Faridul Alam, another wholesaler of the upazila, said they were selling the hog plums at Tk 1,500 to Tk 1,600 per maund, which was much less compared to last year's. "We also have to add transport cost while sending the fruit to other areas such as Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet," he added.

Meanwhile, many of the growers alleged that some "middlemen" were controlling the markets by buying the fruit in bulk from them in advance. They requested the authorities concerned to take initiatives to cut the middlemen out and help them get fair prices.

Contacted, the deputy director of DAE, Barisal said they were planning to establish a market where the hog plum growers would be able to sell directly to the buyers.



One of the weighbridges inside the Tamabil Land Port. The much-awaited port was inaugurated yesterday in Tamabil of Gowainghat upazila in Sylhet. The port is expected to boost the country's business with Indian states of Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland and Assam.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Tamabil Land Port officially opens

In 2002, Tamabil Customs Station was upgraded to a land port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The much-awaited Tamabil Land Port was inaugurated yesterday in Sylhet.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan inaugurated it around noon in Tamabil of Gowainghat upazila in the district.

Tamabil is an important land port for importing coal, limestone, stone, fruits and exporting cosmetics, bricks and processed food. It is the first land port in Sylhet division.

In January 2002, Tamabil Customs Station was upgraded to a land port. But in 2015, 13 years after the upgradation, the authorities completed the land acquisition and after that, the construction work began.

The land port was supposed to open in 2016 but a slow work pace delayed the

opening.

At a cost of Tk 69.26 crore, the land port was built on 23.72 acres of land; of which 1,09,330 cubic metres were developed, 2,500 metres of wall was built, and 8,180 square metres long internal road was constructed.

The authorities also created 27,000 square metres (sqm) of open stackyard, a warehouse (744 sqm), 2,000 metres of drain, an office, dormitory, barrack and five watch towers in the port area. The land port also has two weighbridges and two weight scales, each with a capacity of 100 tonnes.

Imran Ahmed, lawmaker of Sylhet-4 constituency; Nojibur Rahman, chairman of the National Board of Revenue; and Abdus Samad, secretary to the shipping ministry, were also present during the opening ceremony.

A wish unfulfilled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ratna Begum's last wish was to see her husband.

The 18-year-old newly married woman was groaning in pain with 46 percent burns and eventually lost her battle for life at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Her husband Tofayel Ahmed, 25, is still not aware that he will miss his wife Ratna forever.

With similar injuries, Tofayel was undergoing treatment just a floor above in the same hospital.

Four days ago, a fire took its toll on the couple and six of their family members in the capital's Demra area. They were asleep in their Konapara house.

The other six injured were undergoing treatment at the hospital, said doctors.

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Three lives lost in two days

STAR REPORT

Three men were killed in road accidents in three districts in the last two days.

In Dinajpur, a rickshaw van puller died after a speeding truck hit his vehicle in Ghoraghat upazila on Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Sanaullah 60, resident of the upazila's Kashigari village.

Four people were killed in separate road accidents at the same spot in the last one week.

In Bagerhat, a motorbike rider was killed when a Mongla-bound bus hit the motorcycle in Fakirhat upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased is Pijus Das, 50, a resident of Bataga village in the upazila.

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Society needs people like

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Chandraboti Academy arranged the event in Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad Auditorium of Bangla Academy in the capital.

Sharing his experience, Prof Anisuzzaman said whatever he could do for the country was possible because of the support he got from his family members, colleagues, students and well-wishers.

He said his involvement in left-leaning politics after the 1952 Language Movement was crucial in shaping the rest of his life.

Prof Anisuzzaman particularly mentioned the support of his wife, Siddiqua Zaman, who he said freed him from family burdens.

Speaking as the chief guest, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said Prof Anisuzzaman is one of those rare personalities who could be termed a "lighthouse". The society needs people like him, said the minister.

Former University Grants Commission chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said he [Prof

Anisuzzaman] always gave importance to learning in the mother language.

Rights activist Sultana Kamal said Prof Anisuzzaman made a major contribution to the 1971 Liberation War.

Bangla Academy Director General Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan, women's rights activist Maleka Begum, litterateur Selina Hossain, Liberation War Museum trustee Mofidul Hoque, educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, and Bangla literature Prof Golam Mustafa of Chittagong University also spoke.

A book titled, "Anisuzzaman Shammanana Grantha", published by Chandraboti Academy, was launched at the event.

Prof Anisuzzaman wrote on a wide range of issues including national identity, education, religion, history and social reconstruction.

Some of major works are Muslim Manash O Bangla Sahitya, Swarup Sandhane, Purno Bangla Gadya, Bangali Nari: Sahitye O Samaje, Kal Nirabadhi, and Ihajagatikata O Anyanya.

China wants media to take it forward

FROM PAGE 4

Bangladeshi audience can now listen to CRI Bangla programmes in Dhaka and Chittagong.

CRI is a state-owned radio station based in Beijing which runs programmes in 65 languages, including Bangla.

The media delegation comprising repre-

sentatives from national newspapers, private news channels, a news agency and a radio, also visited Beijing University and Beijing Exhibition hall yesterday.

Teachers and students of School of Foreign Languages took part in a cultural programme showing rich Bangladesh-China cultural heritage.



A bus crosses an under-construction box culvert without side railings on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway. With the rush of vehicles, and no safety measures such as cautionary signs at the spot being taken, an unwanted accident could take place in no time. The situation might turn fatal during the night. The photo was taken in Karnaphuli area of the port city yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS