

Keep Ctg port under national control

Protesters urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Leaders of labour, student, and professional groups in Chattogram yesterday warned against any move to lease out terminals of Chattogram Port, including the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT), to foreign companies.

Speaking at a protest rally, they threatened intensified action if the government proceeds with the plan.

The demonstration, held at Agrabad Badamtoli intersection under the banner "Bondor Rokkhay Chattogramer Sramik-Chhatra-Peshajibi-Nagorikbrindo", drew sharp criticism of the administration.

Speakers alleged that despite the port's profitability and operational capacity, a conspiracy is underway to transfer control to multinational corporations and foreign powers, undermining national interests.

They also claimed that the government has imposed a one-

month ban on rallies and public gatherings in the port area to suppress opposition and facilitate the signing of "anti-national" agreements.

Freedom fighter and Gonomukti Union President Raja Miah presided over the rally, which was addressed by Trade



Union Centre President Khorshed Alam, SKOP Joint Coordinator Rizwanur Rahman, Shafi Uddin Kabir Abid of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist), Chattogram Bondor Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal General Secretary Ibrahim Khokan, and Dock Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal General Secretary Akhtar Hossain Selim.



Imran Howladar arranges aluminium motorboat propellers on display in his shop for sale to fishermen. Available in various sizes, the propellers are priced between Tk 150 and Tk 400. The photo was taken in Barishal Sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Man held for brandishing 'dummy rifle' in procession

STAR REPORT

Police have arrested a man in Dhaka's Turag area for brandishing a "dummy rifle" during a procession.

The arrestee is Mujahidul Islam Chowdhury, 49, confirmed Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

According to police, a patrol team, based on a tip-off, learned that a group of people had gathered near Khalpar Police Box area in Turag and were brandishing weapons to create panic and disrupt public order around 1:50pm Friday.

As police approached the spot, the group fled. Later, the investigators identified Mujahidul through video footage captured by locals and subsequent questioning.

Around 4:30pm on the same day, a police team from Turag, with the help of Uttara West Police, conducted a raid at a house in Sector 12 of Uttara and arrested Mujahidul with the dummy rifle.

A case was filed against him under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009, police added.

Fishers set sail

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district has around 65,000 hilsa fishermen. "The ban has been fully successful. Fishermen will resume fishing tonight," he added.

A similar scene was witnessed in Cox's Bazar.

Syed Ahmed, a fisherman from Maheshkhali upazila, said, "The last 22 days were very difficult. I had to borrow money to run my family and repair my boat. Since I don't know any other work, I have to remain in this profession."

Cox's Bazar has around 5,000 fishing trawlers, most of which have already been prepared to resume operations.

Nazir Ahmed, president of Shahapur Island Fishing Trawler Owners' Association in Teknaf, said, "Around 100 trawlers from our dock will set sail tonight."

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, in a special weather bulletin, said a low-pressure area over the southeast Bay of Bengal has intensified into a depression.

[Our Patuakhali and Cox's Bazar correspondents contributed to this report.]

Parties eager

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of social fascism still persist, warning that without fostering dialogue and connections among the streams of Islam in the country, the state would continue to face uncertainty.

He added that though 90-92 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, the community is divided into different tariqas (orders).

Political leaders, Mahfuj said, have done little to promote unity among them. "Instead, some have aligned with Qawmi groups and others with Sunni groups, using religious institutions as instruments of politics."

He further said several people had been arrested in connection with the attacks on multiple mazars (mausoleum or shrine), and that surveys would soon be carried out to facilitate their renovation.

Urging the management committees of attacked mazars to file cases, the adviser warned that if the current culture continues, one group's version of Islam could target another's places of worship.

"Today it is the Sufis;

tomorrow it could be the Qawmi community."

Mahfuj acknowledged a sense of frustration over the lack of progress over the past year, warning that retaliatory actions driven by such resentment would yield no positive outcome.

"Over the past 15 years, an alliance of convenience developed between Sufi circles and the Awami League, despite their earlier ideological differences."

The understanding, he said, was that the AL would offer protection while the Sufis would support the party at the polls. "This dynamic has kept religious politics stagnant."

Mahfuj also observed that the Qawmi groups were no exception, as different political parties have also used them for their own benefit.

He said there have been claims of people being removed from mosques. "This is not unique to the interim government. It has been happening for the past 50 years," he added, pointing out that mosque committees, as well as the Islami Foundation's governing body, tend to change whenever a new government comes to power.

North Korea is 'sort of a nuclear power': Trump

AFP, Aboard Air Force One

US President Donald Trump said Friday that North Korea was "sort of a nuclear power" as he left the United States for Asia on a trip that could include a meeting with Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un.

Asked aboard Air Force One whether he was open to North Korea's demand to be recognised as a nuclear state as a precondition for dialogue with Washington, Trump replied: "Well, I think they are sort of a nuclear power."

"When you say they have to be recognized as a nuclear power, well, they got a lot of nuclear weapons, I'll say that."

Trump is expected in South Korea on Wednesday for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum.

US media have previously reported officials from his administration have privately discussed setting up a meeting between Trump and North Korean leader Kim, who he last held talks with in 2019.

Trump has said he hopes to meet Kim again – possibly this year.

Kim said last month he had "fond memories" of Trump and was open to talks if the United States dropped its "delusional" demand that Pyongyang give up its nuclear weapons.

On Friday, South Korea's unification minister Chung Dong-young said he believed there was a "considerable" chance that Trump will meet Kim during his visit to the peninsula next week.

But a senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters in a call Friday that a meeting "is not on the schedule for this trip."

While no official announcements of the duo's meeting have been made, South Korea and the United Nations Command halted tours of the Joint Security Area (JSA) from late October to early November.

Kim and Trump last met in 2019 at Panmunjom in the JSA in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the

two Koreas – the only place where soldiers from both sides face each other on a regular basis.

Minister Chung said North Koreans have been spotted "sprucing up" areas near the JSA for the first time this year – cleaning, pulling weeds, tidying flower beds and taking photos.

Kim met Trump three times for high-profile summits during the US leader's first term.

The duo's last and impromptu meeting at Panmunjom was hastily arranged after Trump extended an invitation to Kim on Twitter a day prior.

That event saw the two leaders shake hands over the concrete slabs dividing North and South before Trump walked a few paces into Pyongyang's territory – becoming the first US president ever to set foot on North Korean soil.

But talks eventually collapsed over just how much of its nuclear arsenal the North was willing to give up and what Pyongyang would get in return.

RMG belt caught

FROM PAGE 1

League operatives, it is now largely controlled by local BNP leaders. The industry produces around four lakh tonnes of jhut annually.

A factory manager in Tongi said his factory generates jhut worth Tk 50 lakh a month, but is forced to sell at half the price. In Narayanganj, a trader said medium-sized factories produce jhut worth Tk 20–22 lakh monthly, yet political leaders pay only Tk 2–4 per kg, far below the market rate of Tk 40.

Control over jhut ensures a steady monthly income, fuelling violent turf wars. Media reports say 30 people were injured in 15 clashes over jhut trade in Gazipur, Narayanganj and Savar between August 5 last year and October 8 this year.

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 65 BNP leaders and activists were killed and 2,962 injured in internal clashes nationwide in the 12 months till August 5 this year—many linked to jhut disputes.

FACES CHARGE, EXTORTION CONTINUES

Factory owners say extortion has become more localised. "Previously, it was centrally controlled; now it's area-based," said Nazmul Kabir, managing director of AR Jeans Producer Ltd in Savar. "We manage and move forward, hoping law and order improves."

In Savar, financial transactions have shifted from central AL leaders to local BNP operatives. In Gazipur, BNP factions reportedly use crude bombs, firearms and arson, while in Narayanganj, intimidation is more discreet.

Taskeen Ahmed, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said political figures pressure businesses for "contributions".

"Even scrap materials must be sold at half the market price. Refusal means shutdown. One group left, only to be replaced by another," said Taskeen, who owns a factory in Savar.

Echoing him, businesspeople said extortion persists despite changes in political faces.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed admitted extortion has increased since August 5 last year. "We are not a political government, so we cannot take harsh actions. Extortion rates have gone up from Tk 1 to Tk 1.5 or Tk 2," he told journalists on September 30.

BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan said such problems intensify after regime changes. "Compared to a year ago, the situation has improved. Though incidents still occur, they are less frequent."

A survey by Innovision Consulting found 56.6 percent of respondents – mostly urban youth and high-income groups – believed extortion had risen in the six months till September 21.

BNP insiders said many grassroots leaders, previously in hiding during AL's 15-year rule, saw an opportunity to profit from jhut trade after the regime change.

Abu Al Yusuf, member secretary of Narayanganj BNP, alleged that Chhatra

League and Jubo League leaders are now collaborating with some BNP members to extort and intimidate businesspeople, tarnishing the party's image.

NOT ALL FACE ACTION

Industrial Police Additional Inspector General Gazi Jashim Uddin said no formal complaints have been received. "Some owners avoid filing complaints to stay out of trouble. We've asked them to contact us immediately if they face problems."

In a Facebook post on September 18, acting BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman said over 7,000 members faced disciplinary action, with many expelled for "corruption, extortion, and misconduct".

Yet, not all complaints lead to action. On August 23, a Swechchhasebak Dal leader dumped 20 vanloads of garbage into a factory's drainage in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila after failing to extort Tk 50,000, according to the statement of a case filed over the incident.

Later, he and several others allegedly assaulted the factory's assistant general manager. The case was filed with Sreepur Model Police Station, naming the Swechchhasebak Dal leader and four others, with 21 unidentified accused. Police have arrested one suspect so far.

The factory official who filed the case said, "These goons always have political backup. The Swechchhasebak Dal leader is backed by a local BNP leader seeking MP nomination. I've survived only because I'm a former army officer."

Two months on, no party action has been taken against the Swechchhasebak Dal leader. The Daily Star's attempts to reach him failed.

Eight other factory owners in Gazipur told The Daily Star they faced similar threats but remained silent out of fear.

Political analyst Mohammad Mojibur Rahman said BNP's weakened chain of command caused by Khaleda Zia's illness and Tarique's London-based leadership has led to a leadership crisis.

"Many expect BNP to form the next government. That's why businesspeople and police avoid confrontation, allowing grassroots leaders to act without restraint," said Mojibur, professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research.

BNP Vice Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo admitted some members were involved in extortion.

"I won't say BNP leaders and activists are not involved. But many things are unfairly blamed on us," he said. Such incidents will persist without an elected government, though the party has expelled many found guilty of extortion and threats."

BNP Standing Committee member Ahmed said the party took action whenever there were allegations of irregularities against any party member. "We are taking the toughest possible stance on these matters."

"Law enforcement agencies should also take legal action regarding such irregularities. We have already told them to take necessary steps," he added.

Police, admin

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Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) of Narsingdi Abu Taher Md Samsuzzaman, who served as acting municipal administrator during the leasing period, claimed he did not issue any new tenders.

"I did not sign any new contract. I only reaffirmed previously approved spots. Anyone collecting tolls beyond those terms is violating the agreement," he said.

Asked how seven more stands were designated for toll collection despite having only two approved terminals, he said, "Those were determined before my tenure. False allegations cannot be accepted as facts."

Additional SP Anwar Hossain said, "The HC order is very clear – no toll can be collected from roads or highways that do not have approved terminals."

Contacted, current municipal administrator Md Monowar Hossain said his predecessor finalised the locations while he was on leave.

"A three-member probe committee has been formed to review the matter in line with the HC directive. We are preparing to suspend all toll collection from public roads permanently."

Mamdani defends

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New York is to expect indignity, but indignity does not make us distinct. There are many New Yorkers who face it. It is the tolerance of that indignity that does."

Mamdani, who is currently a member of the New York State Assembly, said that while he had tried to focus his election campaign on his core message of affordability, his opponents in recent days had shown that "Islamophobia has emerged as one of the few areas of agreement".

His speech also came a day after his top opponent, former New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo,

laughed after radio host Sid Rosenberg said that Mamdani "would be cheering" if another September 11 attack occurred, reports Al Jazeera online.

Cuomo, who is a member of the Democratic Party but lost the Democratic primary election to Mamdani in June, responded in agreement with Rosenberg: "That's another problem."

Basim Elkarra, the executive director of Muslim advocacy group CAIR Action, described Cuomo's appearance on the radio programme as "despicable, dangerous, and disqualifying".

First Ban-Pak JEC

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exporting way more to Bangladesh than what Bangladesh exports to Pakistan. We would try to boost exports to Pakistan," he said.

In fiscal 2024-25, Bangladesh imported goods worth \$787 million from Pakistan and exported goods worth only \$80 million.

Dhaka will seek greater duty- and quota-free access for Bangladeshi products to Pakistan, the ERD official said.

Pakistan's Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik may also call on Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Adviser Tuhid Hossain.

Earlier this year, Bangladesh and Pakistan held foreign office consultation after 15 years.

Besides, since August

last year, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi visited Dhaka.

During this period, Bangladesh's Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain also visited Islamabad. "We want a normal relationship with Pakistan. Such visits are part of a normal relationship," Foreign Adviser Tuhid Hossain told reporters last week.

Dhaka wants economic cooperation with Pakistan, which had been somewhat unilaterally stalled for a long time.

"It is in our interest to establish normal relations, especially in the economic field, with Pakistan, and we think we are proceeding that way," Hossain said.

Kamaruzzaman, SQ Chowdhury

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well as BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, were sentenced to death in "false" cases over crimes against humanity committed in 1971.

Recalling the post-Liberation War period, he said the media, particularly the press, faced severe repression.

About 60 lakh political leaders and activists faced false cases, about 20,000 were killed and 1,700 others were victims of enforced disappearance during the 'fascist rule' of the Awami League, he said.

"After the establishment of Baksal in 1975, all newspapers were shut down. I remember that many journalists became unemployed and some even worked as hawkers in front of Baitul Mukarram as there were no newspapers left."

After the political changeover in 1975, BNP founder President Ziaur Rahman was the first to move away from the one-

party system and introduce multi-party democracy, ensuring press freedom.

"We must not forget that the key reforms began during his [Zia's] time and were later carried forward by former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia," Fakhru added.

At the same event, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday warned that the nation will not forgive political parties if fascism returns to Bangladesh because of their divisions.

"If our disunity and divisions ever open the door for the return of fascism, the nation will never forgive us. We must, therefore, stay united."

All parties must stand together and close every door to the return of the fascist Awami League, he said.

"I hope in the coming days we will all remain united despite our differences of opinion

and ideology when it comes to the country, its democracy, independence and sovereignty."

It is a sacred duty for all to build a strong democratic state and society for future generations.

Recalling his personal struggles, Salahuddin said: "For writing a few columns, I had to live in exile for nearly nine and a half years, endure torture at Aynagar and spend time in prison."

Sharing a memory, he said: "Once, Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman and I were kept in separate prison cells at PG Hospital. He was on a hunger strike then. I tried to convince him to break his fast, telling him that if he died, Sheikh Hasina would be happy. Later, senior leaders intervened and he broke the strike after six or seven days."

Salahuddin went on to urge the media to play a constructive role through their writing in building a democratic state.

His ideals still relevant for post

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Salimullah Khan said placing excessive expectations on any single figure, including Sher-e-Bangla, obscures the larger structural forces that shape history.

He reminded that Fazlul Huq was also a journalist and publisher who launched Nabajug, where Muzaffar Ahmad and Kazi Nazrul Islam once worked. Beyond politics, his reforms in education and peasant debt relief left lasting impacts, he said.

Salimullah said the

unresolved constitutional question – between a federal and unitary state – lay at the heart of both partition and the 1971 Liberation War.

Without precision in language and honesty about history's constraints, he warned, "Bangladesh risks repeating old errors under new names."

Academic and historian Professor Perween Hasan said Sher-e-Bangla's life shows that compromise is not weakness but a necessity in leadership. "No

society can move forward without some level of give and take," she said.

Writer Tarun Yousuf said the recent mass uprising had raised hopes of justice and inclusion, but those hopes remain uncertain.

"Sher-e-Bangla becomes relevant whenever the rights of the marginalised remain unfulfilled," he said.

The Daily Star journalist Shamsuddoza Sajen delivered the welcome speech, while the session was moderated by journalist Emran Mahfuz.

PRAYER TIMING	
OCTOBER 26	
Fazr	Zohr
4:50	12:45
Asr	Maghrib
5:32	7:15
JAMAAT	5:25
1:15	4:15
5:35	7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION	