

Judge Chunnu meets ministers, wants voluntary retirement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the High Court's order to refrain from judicial activities for two weeks, Dhaka Divisional Special Judge Rezaul Karim Khan Chunnu is now lobbying the influential ministers to ensure his smooth voluntary retirement.

Sources close to Chunnu said he is visiting the ministers to make sure that the law ministry does not create any trouble in his retirement procedure. It was learnt that Chunnu met five senior ministers over the last couple of days.

Chunnu is almost certain to get BNP ticket for contesting from Kishoregonj-3 in the upcoming elections, the sources added.

The High Court injunction barring Chunnu from judicial activities came on February 13 following a writ petition filed by lawyer Khairul Alam.

Industries care little for waste management

BBS survey reveals

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

The industrial units and establishments in the country spend very little amount of money for the management of wastes, which pose serious threat to human health and environment.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in a survey report revealed that the country's industries last year spent only 0.11 per cent of their production cost for waste management.

An official of the Department of Environment (DoE) said the existing law has no clear-cut indication of the amount of money an industrial unit is supposed to spend for waste management. It just asks the industries to take care of their wastes and there is a provision for filing case for non-compliance of

the law. A DoE source said around 200 cases have been filed while cases against 2,000 industrial units in Dhaka alone are under process.

The owners of the industries, however, do not bother about the cases as they know that the cases will take years to be resolved, complained the DoE official.

Sources said a committee headed by the joint secretary to the environment ministry has been formed to amend the weaknesses of the existing laws.

Another DoE high official said some industries that earn foreign currencies have often been spared as taking action against them would destroy the country's reputation apart from their own. But these industries have been given enough time and they will also be brought

under it as soon as the new law is framed, the official noted.

Mobile courts are there to instantly punish an offender of food adulteration or the owner of a vehicle emitting black smoke, but there are none to take action against the industrial units neglecting proper waste management, alleged the sources.

According to the BBS survey, the production cost of the industrial units was Tk 9,238 crore last year while the amount spent for environment protection activities was Tk 11 crore only.

Of this Tk 11 crore, around Tk 5 crore was spent for protection of ambient air, Tk 3.4 crore for waste water and sewerage system, Tk 56 lakh for non-hazardous solid waste management, Tk 40 lakh for

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Butenis likely to join soon

Senate body passes her nomination as US envoy in Dhaka

REZAUL KARIM

The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed the nomination of Patricia A Butenis as the ambassador to Bangladesh by a unanimous voice vote.

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Load-shedding mounts as 10 power units remain closed

UNB, Dhaka

Although yesterday was a weekend, the country experienced a load-shedding of about 1,000-MW, as operation in more than 10 power generation units remained closed.

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A house built entirely with remains of the ancient Bengal capital of Gour in Chapainawabganj although these should be preserved for their historical value.

PHOTO: STAR

Energy adviser for crackdown on fuel smugglers

BSS, Dhaka

Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday called for immediate crackdown on smuggling of fuel from northern bordering districts, saying it is an artificial problem while the overall supply situation throughout the country is quite satisfactory.

On his return from a visit to the northern districts on Friday, Rahman told the news agency yesterday that smuggling is draining all potential supply to the region and it must be stopped.

The law enforcement agencies must take steps to check smuggling. Otherwise, fuel supply, mainly the supply of diesel, cannot be ensured to farmers in this peak farming season, Rahman said.

He said the country has enough reserves and all other regions except the northern region bordering India is not facing any supply

shortage. The press is not highlighting it, rather it is misleading the people, telling about a so-called supply crisis, he said.

Rahman said he visited at least 50 depots and dealers' stations during the visit. At Hilli, he saw dealers were selling diesel at Tk 30-50 per liter.

The adviser said he could see for himself how gang members linked to smuggling syndicates are collecting diesel from dealers in border areas.

Rahman said he saw Indian trucks in Hilli town and he was told that these trucks regularly carry petroleum products to India. "The issue is smuggling, not inadequate fuel supply," he said.

The energy adviser said navigation problems to reach fuel to major oil installations in the northern districts have been resolved at the very beginning. The BPC

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Rural women return home after collecting fallen leaves from the forest at Chandra in Gazipur to use those as fuel for cooking.

PHOTO: STAR

2 on bus top die after hitting archway for Saifur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two people were killed and at least six others were seriously injured yesterday as they hit a low archway while travelling on the roof of a bus near Moulvibazar.

Sources said the Moulvibazar bound bus from Shamsnagar

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10 injured, 3 vehicles burnt down in fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 10 people were hurt and two passenger buses and a tank lorry burnt down in a fire in Park petrol pump at Kazipur intersection in the town yesterday.

The fire broke out around 8:00pm but its origin could not be known immediately.

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Pakistan, India restore rail link after 40 yrs

REUTERS, Zero Point

Pakistan and India resumed a train service across the Thar desert yesterday, 40 years after it was suspended following the second of the three wars between the two South Asian rivals.

Sitting on camels, paramilitary troops patrolled the desert as the train carrying around 250 passengers arrived at Pakistan's southern border village of Khokhropar for its onward journey to Munabao in India's Rajasthan state.

Many passengers burst into tears and shouted "Long Live Pak-India friendship" as the Thar Express halted at Zero Point, the last stop on the Pakistani side of the border.

Dancers wearing traditional dresses danced to the beat of drums to greet the train, decorated with colourful bunting.

"I was 13 years old when I came here. Now I am going to my home

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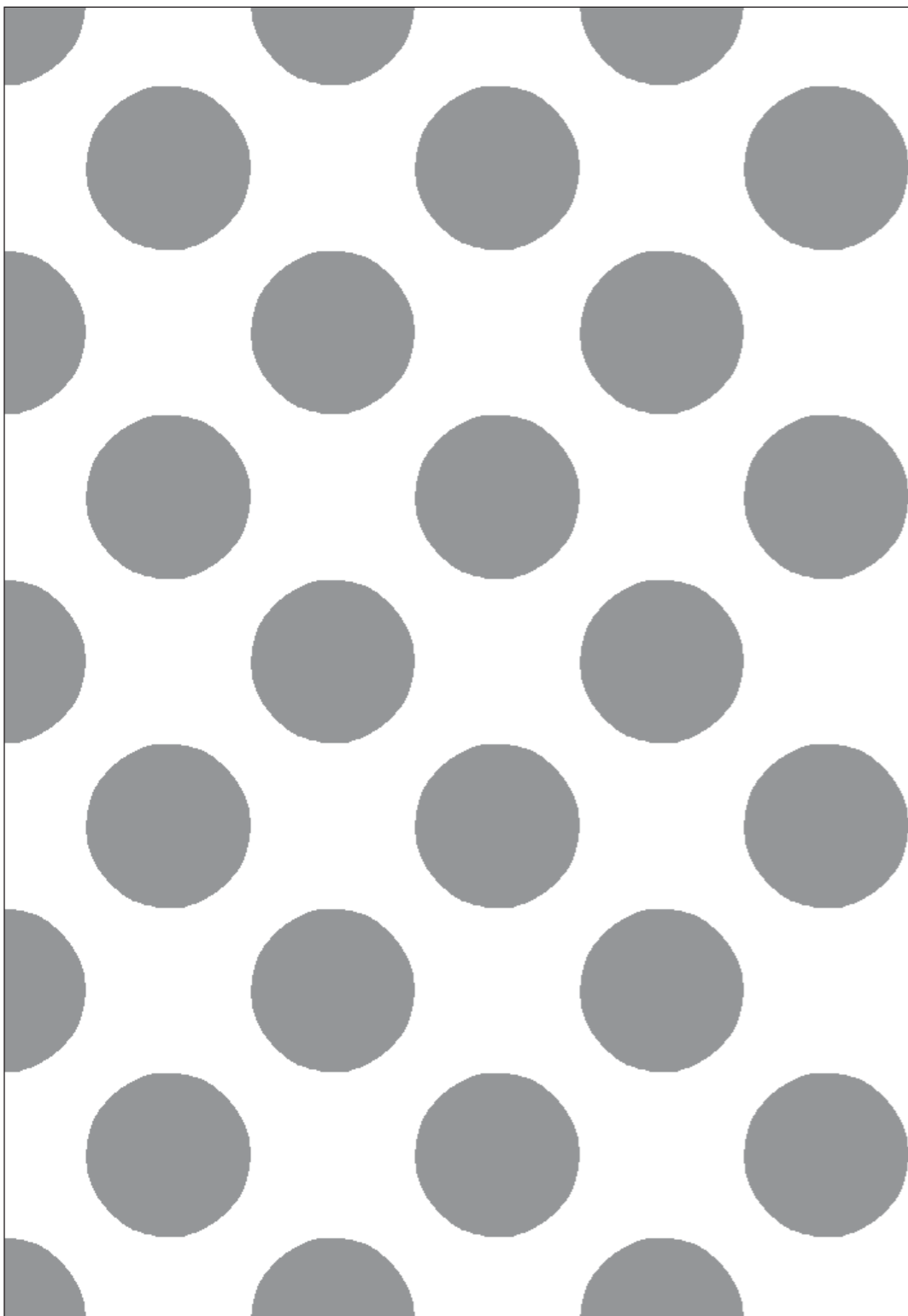
for the first time after 58 years," said Mohammad Ali Azhar, whose parents migrated to Pakistan to escape bloodshed that killed hundreds of thousands of people following partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

Ladhi Singh Sodho, a Hindu Pakistani engineer, was making his first visit to his in-laws since he and his wife married in 1992.

"We belong to this desert. This sand does not distinguish between Hindu and Muslim. This is sand of my own people," he said, his voice filled with emotion.

"Resumption of the Thar train and other such steps will definitely promote love and friendship between the two countries."

Up to 12,000 people bade farewell to the train when it stopped at the southern Pakistani city of Hyderabad on Friday night on its way to Khokhropar.



Hopes for survivors fade fast

Philippines landslide toll may cross 1,800

AP, Guinsaungon

Rescue workers held little hope yesterday of finding more survivors from a devastating landslide that killed an estimated 1,800 people, saying this farming village in the eastern Philippines was swallowed whole by a wall of mud and boulders.

The search was focusing on an elementary school amid unconfirmed reports that relatives of some of the 250 children and teachers had received cell phone text messages from survivors.

On Saturday, 11 other villages in the area were evacuated out of fear of further landslides. Guinsaungon, on the southern part of Leyte island, has been swamped with 27 inches

of rain over the last two weeks.

The US military dispatched two warships and 1,000 Marines to the area.

Many blamed persistent rains and illegal logging for Friday's disaster.

The logging "stopped around 10 years ago," Roger Mercado, a member of Congress who represents the area, told Manila radio station DZBB. "But this is the effect of the logging in the past."

Soldiers were being shuttled to the disaster zone in the shovels of bulldozers that carried them across a shallow stream. With the mud estimated at 30 feet deep at some points, they were given sketches of the village so they could figure out approximately where the houses once stood.

Farnacio estimated the death toll at about 1,800 nearly every man, woman and child who lived in Guinsaungon, about 400 miles east of the capital, Manila.

Some "1,800 are feared dead," a grim Farnacio said as search efforts resumed Saturday in a drenching rain and high winds.

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Hamas takes control in Palestinian parliament

REUTERS, Ramallah

Hamas took over as the dominant party in the Palestinian parliament yesterday and named its leader Ismail Haniyeh as the Palestinian Authority's next prime minister.

The new parliament paves the way for Hamas to form a government amid calls by major world powers for a boycott of the militant Islamist group over its official

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India reports first bird flu case in chickens

AFP, Mumbai

Indian state government officials yesterday said that a laboratory had confirmed the country's first outbreak of the deadly H5N1 bird flu virus in chickens.

"Fifty-thousand birds have died. We have sent dead birds to the highest level laboratory in (the city of) Bhopal," said Anees Ahmed, minister for animal husbandry for western Maharashtra state.

"They have confirmed H5N1 bird flu" in chickens, he told AFP.

Ahmed said the outbreak was at a chicken farm containing 200,000 birds at Nandurbar near the border with Gujarat state.

India has just under 500 million heads of poultry, according to the most recent livestock census.

"We have sent in the report (on the birds) to the government," in New Delhi, H.K. Pradhan, director of the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory in Bhopal, told AFP.

He said federal government

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| Prayer Timing | | |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| February 19 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-05 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-00 | 4-15 |
| Maghrib | 5-30 | 5-35 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation