



Begum Bazar mosque was built by Murshid Quli Khan in 1700-1704 AD. The mosque was also known as Kortolob Khan's mosque one of Murshid Quli Khan's other names. This is one of the important mosques built in Dhaka during the Mughal period.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"As the government is hiding the condition of the president, question has arisen whether the president has been kept under house arrest"

-- Sheikh Hasina
Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President
Said at a meeting with the party's grassroots level leaders of Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts at the party's Dhanmondi office, on Thursday.
Source: The Daily Star

"Politics is a game. And we like to play attacking game to win it."

-- Barrister Nazmul Huda
Communications Minister
Said about his party (BNP)'s efforts to expand the ruling coalition, on Friday.
Source: Prothom Alo

"Of course there is corruption. But question arises on the intensity of corruption."

-- SM Jahurul Islam
Secretary, Local Government Division
Said at a press conference dismissing the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Corruption Database Report 2005 that incriminated LGRD as the most corrupt sector in the country, on Wednesday.
Source: The Daily Star

"The killings of Yunus and Taher already made me afraid. I am now thinking of leaving Rajshahi"

-- A senior teacher
Rajshahi University (RU)
Told reporters seeking anonymity as RU Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) President Mahbubul Alam Salehi, a key suspect of Prof S Taher Ahmed murder, returned to the campus, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"It is not my business to see whether anybody submitted the required documents or not with the applications to be listed as voters"

-- Harun-Ur-Rashid
Assistant Registration Officer (ARO)
Told reporters when he was asked why he received six applications without the required documents AROs in the capital, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

"We see military interference in every single activity in the hill districts"

-- Shaktipada Tripura
A member of Rangamati Headmen's Association
Said at the sixth regional dialogue organised jointly by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Channel i in Rangamati, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

"I will disconnect cable lines in all homes in the area. If Argentina can not play, no one can watch other teams playing either"

-- Ibrahim
A supporter of Argentina football team
Told reporters after the team was defeated by Germany at the Fifa World Cup, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

FIGHT AGAINST ACID CRIME

Slow legal process delays justice for victims

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts have stressed the need for speeding up legal procedure to ensure justice in the acid throwing cases to reduce the alarming trend of such crime.

Speaking at the dialogue in the city on Saturday, they said justice is delayed in these cases due to absence of proper monitoring and skilled investigation agency.

Acid Survivors Foundation organised the dialogue titled "fate of the acid throwing cases: studies of appeal in the higher courts," which was participated by judges, legal practitioners and NGO activists.

Monira Rahman, executive director of the foundation, suggested that a monitoring cell can be formed to make regular follow-up of the cases pending in the higher courts.

Citing a study report, she said the trial courts between 2000 and 2005 convicted 282 acid throwers in 116 cases. A total of 1,601 incidents took place during the period.

Of the convicts, 43 were



Children have not been spared from this heinous crime either.

awarded death penalty while 121 were sentenced to life term. All the convicts of death sentence have appealed to the higher court and

they cannot be executed unless the higher courts confirm their sentence.

possible to compare between the rate of conviction and the number of incidents took place during the period as the convictions are from

Whatever is the reason for the delay in the delivery of justice, it is obvious that this delay causes sufferings to the victims and their families. Lengthy legal procedure also causes economic loss to them, participants in the dialogue said

the past incidents. "It gives a general idea about the rate of disposal by the trial courts."

the cases, lawyers told the meeting that the lower courts are now completing the trials within shorter period of time compared to the past, but the cases remain pending for long in the higher courts.

Earlier, investigators had to complete investigations of acid throwing cases within 90 days of filing under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 1995. But the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 made it mandatory for investigators to complete investigations within 60 days.

The trial courts can now complete the entire trial process of a case by a year, which was three to four years in the past, Supreme Court advocate Fawzia Karim Firoz said.

Fawzia however said the sessions courts do not set any time-limit for completion of the investigations and the trial usually starts after a long time of the occurrence.

She said a large number of government attorneys are

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Faulty launch, high fare

CITY CORRESPONDENT

As thousands of launch passengers flock to Sadarghat launch terminal every day, one disturbing thought invariably bugs every passenger boarding a vessel. Will they safely make it to their destination?

With launch accidents taking place at regular intervals, most passengers availing water transports from river ports are naturally fearful of travelling, especially during flood season when the rivers are turbulent.

Although around 6 crore people in Bangladesh use waterways as the main means of transport every year, the government's negligence to this sector is putting their lives at a constant risk, said speakers at a meeting organised to observe Safe Waterway Day on Saturday.

An inspection team from the Ministry for Shipping in 2002 started a fitness grading for the vessels and found that 20 passenger launches were 'totally unfit and vulnerable while 22 others needed immediate repair.'

However, the inspection was mysteriously wrapped up after

three months leaving the task incomplete.

Every day about 200 motor vessels carry up to 50,000 people from Dhaka's Sadarghat, the largest river port in the country, to different destinations. Many of these launches are unfit to ply.

The speakers blamed the government for not taking necessary steps to lessen the risk of launch accidents. They also said that half of the 2,000 passenger carrier vessels have no licence and are made with faulty design.

"In the last 29 years (1976-2005), 501 launch accidents took place and 70 percent of these launches had faulty design," said Aminur Rasul Babul, national co-ordinator, Nirapad Nouparihahan Bastabayan Jote (NBNJ).

He said there is no allotment in the national budget for 2006-07 to buy launch or steamer for the people of coastal area although there was a budget of Tk 10 crore in the previous year's budget.

NBNJ observes July 8 as Safe Waterway Implementation Day. The date has been fixed commemorating the victims of the fatal accident of MV Nasreen take

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Overcrowded launches continue to be a common scene at Sadarghat launch terminal.

Right to water is a life-saving entitlement



Despite protests and demands, authorities have failed to provide regular supply of water in most areas.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Government must not turn water into a commercial commodity because of pressure from international trade bodies or multinational companies, said speakers at a roundtable discussion on 'Right to Water as Legal Entitlement: WTO Regime and People' last Saturday.

It must protect peoples' right to water as a life-saving entitlement enshrining it explicitly in the constitution, they said at the discussion organised jointly by Odhikar, a rights group, and Actionaid, Bangladesh at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

"Water is gradually being turned into a commercial commodity globally," said Farhad Mazhar, writer and advisor to Odhikar.

"Both the state and international community are moving from a human right perspective that water is a life-saving entitlement," he said in his presentation, adding: "As if, state has no responsibility to ensure the life-saving entitlement of the people."

A few multinational companies are emerging prominently in privatisation and commercialisation of water with huge capital investment, he said, while on the other hand, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is putting enormous pressure on the governments of countries like ours to allow the service sector for open market delivery.

Farida Akhter, executive director of Narigrantha Prabantana and a woman activist, said that soft drink companies are inclining towards bottled water business, as the latter is currently more

profitable.

"It is unfortunate that the country's constitution does not make any mention of water as a fundamental right in Article 15 on fundamental principles," said Prof. Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University (DU).

"One cannot hold the government responsible for having failed to ensure the right to water as a fundamental entitlement," he added.

The water policy of 1984 focuses only on the usage of water but as a right, he said.

"Right to water is implied in the right to life and livelihood in the constitution," said additional Attorney General Fida M Kamal. "Legislations may be enacted to ensure the right but it is not necessary to incorporate it separately in the constitution," he added.

Making water a mere fundamental right will hardly make a

difference unless an integrated management of available surface water, rainwater and ground water is ensured, said Dr. Mahmudur Rahman of Dhaka Community Hospital.

"Privatisation of water may be accepted only if the government can ensure it will not distress the common people," he said.

Termining water as a declining resource, M Asafuddowlah, editor, Bangladesh Today, said that constitution should not guarantee something, which cannot be implemented practically.

Water crisis is man-made that has to be settled with the UN intervention, he said. "We have to first establish our national right in the water of transboundary rivers to make water a fundamental entitlement," he added.

"It is impossible to make water a fundamental right enforceable

by constitutional guarantee," said Law Minister Moudud Ahmed.

The nation has to first establish its rightful share in the water of transboundary rivers, as 54 rivers carry 80 percent of Bangladesh's total water of the country, he said.

The minister underscored the need for a body with massive mobilisation of world opinion to settle water disputes over transboundary rivers.

Government cannot escape its responsibility to ensure water as a right just arguing that a mighty neighbour denies Bangladesh's due share in the water of international rivers, Farid Hossain of Associated Press.

Right to water has to be considered from a human right perspective, he said, government has to ensure integrated management of available water resources, he added.