

BANKING SECTOR Petition seeks formation of commission to look into graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rights organisation yesterday filed an appeal with the Supreme Court seeking its directive on the government to form a commission to look into the irregularities and corruption in the banking sector in the last two decades.

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) submitted the leave to appeal petition to the office concerned of the Appellate Division of the SC praying to the apex court to stay a part of the High Court directive that ordered the Bangladesh Bank to constitute a nine-member committee to find out the loopholes in sanctioning, distributing and recovering the loans.

HRPB lawyer and its president Manzill Murshid, who submitted the leave to appeal petition, told The Daily Star that his organisation had filed a petition as a public interest litigation with the HC in February last year seeking its directive on the government to form a commission.

But, the HC did not pass any such directive. The HC ordered the Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



As the threat of Covid-19 transmission grows stronger amid a lack of social distancing on waterways transport, staff of this launch at Barishal River Port were seen yesterday demarcating space using ropes to keep passengers apart from each other, as well as spraying disinfectants. When the waterways opened on May 31 after months of suspension, launches on Dhaka-Barishal route saw people crowd the vessels, inset.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

UNITED HOSPITAL FIRE SC stays HC order to pay Tk 30 lakh to victim families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed till August 16 a High Court order that asked United Hospital authorities to pay Tk 30 lakh as initial payment to the families of the four victims, who were killed in a fire at its isolation unit on May 27. Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division of the SC Justice Md Nuruzzaman passed the order after virtually hearing a petition filed by the United Hospital authorities, seeking a stay on the HC directive.

The apex court judge also sent the stay petition to the full bench of the Appellate Division for hearing on August 16.

Barrister Kazi Ershadul Alam, a lawyer for the United Hospital, told The Daily Star that his client need not pay the money to the four families till further order of the SC.

The SC stayed the HC order on grounds that the HC issued the directives for payment without issuing any rule and giving any opportunity to the United Hospital authorities to place their explanation, he added.

Following five separate writ petitions, the HC on July 15 directed the United Hospital authorities to pay Tk 30 lakh to each of the four victims' families.

The hospital authorities had been directed to pay the money as an initial payment in 15 days of receiving the copy of the HC order.

The United Hospital authorities filed a petition with the SC on July 20, seeking a stay on the HC directive. Niaz Mohammad Mahboob, who moved one of the writ petitions, told The Daily Star on July 15 that the family of Monir Hossain, one of the five victims who were killed in the fire, had already been paid Tk 20 lakh as an initial payment by the hospital as a compromise.

The five victims were Vernon Anthony Paul (75), Riyajul Alam (45), Khodeja Begum (70), Monir Hossain (75), and Md Mahub (50).

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, Barrister Tanjib Ul Alam and Barrister Mustafizur Rahman Khan appeared for the United Hospital while Advocate AM Amin Uddin, Barrister Hassan MS Azim, Barrister Aneek R Haque, Advocate Muntasir Uddin Ahmed and Advocate Niaz Mohammad Mahboob argued for the writ petitioners yesterday.

Determined for a cleaner M'singh

BD Clean volunteers keep up weekly drive for 4yrs

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

With a view to keeping Mymensingh clean, a group of volunteers has been working relentlessly for the last four years.

Under the initiative "BD Clean-Mymensingh", they conduct drive once a week, said organisers.

As part of its regular operation, the volunteers removed all sorts of rubbish from the city's Kachari Ferry Ghat to Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrohosha on July 17. "That day, we found around 5,000 discarded plastic items, mostly one-time tea cup, scattered the area stretching 1km on the Brahmaputra riverbank," said Ali Yusuf, a volunteer.

He said they also clean the premises of different educational institutions, offices parks and roads.

The service has already drawn people's attention as the organisation also conducts motivational programmes at different educational institutions and open spaces mostly on holidays.

With slogans, "Let cleanliness start with myself" and "A dream for clean Bangladesh", the move started with 85 volunteers, mostly students, in 2016, said its divisional coordinator Advocate Motiur Rahman Foisal.

Now, the number stands at 1,500, which include professionals, students, teachers, doctors, lawyers and businessmen, said Foisal.

"I started 'BD Clean-Mymensingh' having been inspired by 'Dhaka Clean', a cleaning initiative in the capital," said Foisal, adding that their volunteers are presently covering the whole Mymensingh division comprising four districts -- Mymensingh, Netrakona, Jamalpur and Sherpur.

Utsab Singh Sagor, district coordinator of the organisation, said they emphasise students' involvement in their initiative. "At schools, we administer oath so that they keep their campuses clean. Their teachers also join them," he said.

Teams at 20 educational institutions -- including Mymensingh Zila School, Premier Ideal High School, Bidhyamoyee Government Girls' High School, Nasirabad Collegiate School, Mymensingh College and Krishi Biswabidyalaya College -- in and outside Mymensingh city are assigned to keep their premises clean, said the coordinator.

Samia Jannat, team leader at Bidhyamoyee school, said, "We enjoy the work."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Explore new markets for apparel sector'

Momen urges Europe envoys to work towards export earnings

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has asked Bangladesh diplomats in Europe to explore new markets for the country's apparel sector, apart from maintaining the current market that has been affected amid coronavirus pandemic.

Following the pandemic, orders of readymade garments worth over \$3 billion has been cancelled, which means joblessness of thousands of female workers. The US and Europe are the major importers of RMG that fetches annually \$34 billion. The sector employs about 40 lakh workers, mostly women.

"Please work relentlessly to maintain the export earnings and explore new markets," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told the Bangladesh ambassadors in European countries in a videoconference, according to a foreign ministry statement yesterday.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, BGMEA President Rubana Huq, Bangladesh ambassadors in the UK, Italy, France, Sweden, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Austria attended the videoconference on Monday.

Momen said Bangladesh's RMG factories continued their production maintaining the safety regulations of the World Health Organization and International Labour Organization.

He said Bangladesh has been able to innovate quickly and manufacture huge amount of personal protection equipment. After meeting domestic demand, the country exported 65 lakh pieces of PPE to the US market, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

DAMAGING RAJSHAHI HERITAGE SITE

Not enough fund to acquire land: mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton yesterday said they were knocking down the boundary wall of Rajshahi Government College for expanding a road due to lack of funds to acquire land.

"We couldn't manage funds for acquiring land for the road expansion works, that's why we're displacing the college's boundary wall on the basis of verbal consensus with the college authority," the mayor said.

Mayor Liton was exchanging views with Rajshahi-based journalists at the auditorium of Rajshahi Nagar Bhaban.

The Daily Star published a report on July 21 titled 'Development at cost of heritage', regarding Rajshahi City Corporation's (RCC) move to knock down the structure.

The news reported that the corporation was expanding a road and installing a drain by tearing down the 147-year-old boundary wall, a colonial-era architectural heritage.

Referring to the report, the mayor said RCC's plan was to tear down the entire boundary wall, but after discussions with college authorities, they decided not to touch the boundary wall in front of the college's administrative building.

"Our work shall remain limited to only the part of the wall in front of the Great Queen Hemanta Kumari Hindu Hostel and

its adjacent Muslim Hostel," he said.

"In order to conserve the heritage, we will erect a same boundary wall some yards inside the college premises before dismantling the old one," he said.

He said RCC would consult archaeological experts and officials before the dismantling process, and involve those skilled in working at archaeological sites. The mayor said the expansion of the road was essential, as it is the city's main road and the traffic on it causes suffering for city commuters.

"When expanded, the road with footpaths on both sides will beautify the city," he said, adding that most of southern side of the 800-metre road from Moni Chattera to Varendra Research Museum is owned by the college, while its opposite side was owned by a number of government and private authorities.

"Therefore, expanding the road on its northern side is difficult and time-consuming," he said.

Liton also shared plans to protect Dutch heritage site Bara Kuthi. He added that RCC's plans were not progressing for non-cooperation of Rajshahi University authorities, who have left it uncared for a long time.

The mayor also shared several other of the city corporation's development plans with journalists at the meeting.



A WET, WEARY DAY

Once again, rain brought back the old waterlogging woes to the capital and nearby areas yesterday. Roads got submerged with murky and filthy water in some places due to garbage containers left unattended.

Though city life was disrupted, resilient residents such as RMG workers braved the inundated roads and went about their destinations, wearing masks and wielding umbrellas. Traffic police remained alert to avert accidents while some rickshaw-pullers called it a day and stayed put. Meanwhile, people from low-income groups or those who seek alms on streets had no choice but to continue their struggle for survival amid the inclement weather. But not all was doom and gloom, as some youths still managed to make the best of this situation, playing football in the rain.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN, FIROZ AHMED, RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN