

BANGABANDHU CORNER

JS body formed to probe graft in procurement

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary watchdog yesterday formed a sub-committee to investigate alleged widespread corruption in purchasing books for setting up Bangabandhu Corner at all government primary schools.

The parliamentary standing committee on primary and mass education has asked the four-member sub-committee, headed by ruling Awami League MP Nazrul Islam Babu (Narayanganj-2) to submit its report before the committee within a month.

The other members of the sub-committee are AL MP Ali Azam (Bhola-2), JSD's Shirin Akhter (Feni-1) and BNP's Mosharraf Hossain (Bogura-4).

At the beginning of the meeting -- held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, a number of MPs including Shirin Akhter and Mosharraf Hossain raised the alleged irregularities in purchasing books for around 65,000 primary schools across the country.

They demanded that the parliamentary body form an investigation committee to inquire into the matter and identify persons involved in the massive corruption. Other

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A mobile court of the monitoring and enforcement unit of the Department of Environment yesterday fined MM Accessories in Mirpur's Pallabi area Tk 2 lakh, for setting up a plastic factory in a residential area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

INT'L CONFERENCE ON 3YRS OF EXODUS

Continue pressure on Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingya: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marking the third anniversary of the latest round of massive Rohingya exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh, ActionAid Bangladesh in collaboration with, Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS), University of Dhaka; Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ), Brac University organised a two day long international e-conference titled, "Connecting the Rohingya Diaspora: Highlighting the Global Displacement."

The inaugural session of the conference started at 6 pm on Tuesday. Manzoor Hasan OBE, executive director, Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University, made the opening remarks in the session.

Foreign Secretary Masud bin Momen was present in the conference as chief guest and Chemo Marenah, solicitor general and legal secretary at Gambia's ministry of justice was the guest of honour.

"By connecting the Rohingya diaspora living all over the world, we can learn how they can step in to fight the systematic persecution and injustice against Rohingya people. To exert pressure on Myanmar and to ensure justice for the Rohingyas, the world needs to hear more from them. The Rohingya diaspora can serve as the voice of the refugees who fled from genocide and are now leading measurable lives in the refugee camps," said Chemo Marenah.

Foreign Secretary Masud bin Momen appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingya refugees.

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EC Mahbub now opposes separate law for party reg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar is now opposing Election Commission's move to have separate law for political parties getting registered.

The EC prepared the draft of "Registration of Political Parties Act-2020", repealing the chapter VIA of the Representation of the People Order-1972.

The RPO until now deals with the process of registration of political parties.

In a "note of dissent", Mahbub Talukdar yesterday differed with the EC's move saying that if the separate law was made, RPO 1972 would turn into a "handicapped law".

"I am utterly opposing the move to make a separate law by repealing the chapter VIA of the Representation of the People Order-1972. This is a thoughtless decision," Mahbub said in the note.

The "note of dissent" was submitted at an Election Commission meeting yesterday, held at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon with Chief Election

Commissioner KM Nurul Huda in the chair.

The meeting was held to discuss the draft of "Registration of Political Parties Act-2020".

Mahbub said that RPO 1972 is a historically important document, and unique memorabilia of the country's independence. If the separate law was made RPO would lose its organ and turned into a cripple one.

RPO can be amended if necessary, he said, adding that "proposal of new position and position holders at the draft law was unnecessary and there are some debates on the issues".

Mahbub said working paper of yesterday's meeting cited that draft was prepared on the basis of decision of an EC meeting held earlier.

There were differences of opinions within the Election Commission regarding the law in the primary discussion. Further discussion was needed. Two large political

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MISAPPROPRIATING Tk 45 LAKH Shahed placed on six-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed on a six-day remand in a case filed against him on charge of misappropriating Tk 45 lakh from a house owner.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Masud-Ur-Rahman passed order after Md Farukuzzaman Mollick, a sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station and also the case's investigation officer, produced him before his court with a 10-day remand prayer.

In the remand prayer, the IO said the accused on May 8, 2016 rented four floors measuring 16,148 square feet for running his "Regent Hospital Limited" in Pallabi area in the capital.

The house-rent was fixed at Tk 2,50,000 per month. But the accused did not pay house-rent which stands an amount of Tk 45,5000 from May 8, 2016 to March 12 this year.

So he needs to be remanded to find out more information about his fraud and to know whereabouts of the others responsible for committing such offences, the IO added.

On the other hand, the defence submitted a petition along with cancellation of the remand prayer.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate turned down his bail petition and issued the remand order.

Tk 504.31 cr KCC budget focuses on development

No fresh taxes imposed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque yesterday announced a Tk 504.31 crore budget for the current fiscal year 2020-21, without imposing fresh taxes.

In the budget, revenue expenditure has been estimated at Tk 166.95 crore while the expenditure for development sector from government allocation and development partners at Tk 337.35 crore.

In the last 2019-20 FY, the budget target was Tk 865.54 crore and the revised one Tk 582.71 crore.

While announcing the budget at KCC's Shaheed Altaf Auditorium, the city mayor said no new taxes have been imposed, considering the present pandemic situation.

He said the budget focused on development of roads and drainage system, waste management, parks, religious places, educational institutions, expansion of civic amenities, mosquito control,

coronavirus prevention, improvement of backward people's living standards, and modernisation of various departments of KCC.

In the proposed budget, Tk 39.49 crore has been allocated for the revenue sector, Tk 12.15 crore for infrastructural maintenance, Tk 6.95 crore for conservancy sector and mosquito eradication.

The bulk allocation for the annual development programme is Tk 70.28 crore of which Tk 42.25 crore is for construction, Tk 50 lakh for the veterinary, Tk 10.2 crore for the public health and Tk 15.8 crore for conservancy sectors.

Sheikh Mohammad Gausul Azam, chairman and councillor of the Standing Committee on Finance and Establishment of KCC, presided over the programme. KCC panel mayors, councillors, civil society representatives, business leaders, government officials, senior KCC officials and media representatives were present.

GRAFT CASE BDnews24 editor-in-chief Khalidi gets anticipatory bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of online news portal bdnews24.com, for eight weeks in a corruption case.

The Bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman passed the order after hearing a bail petition. He appeared before the HC bench during the hearing.

Mahbub Shafique, a lawyer for Khalidi, told The Daily Star that the HC granted bail to his client considering the argument that his client has not committed any corruption.

Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said ACC will move an appeal

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Stay vigilant to protect our natural resources

Says Prof Anu Muhammad marking Phulbari Day

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Development projects that negatively affect people's livelihoods and harm the environment should not be allowed anywhere, and people have to remain alert to protect the country's natural resources, said speakers yesterday.

They said this at an event in Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur, marking 14th anniversary of Phulbari Day.

National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports organised the programme, participated by activists, residents of Phulbari and members of left-leaning organisations.

This year, however, the programmes were held on a limited scale due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

On August 26, 2006, people of Phulbari and its surrounding upazilas brought out a procession, protesting the proposed open-pit Phulbari coal mining project. Law enforcers opened fire on the protesters, killing at least three people and injuring more than 200.

Since then, people of Phulbari upazila have been observing the day as a "black day".

Yesterday, residents began the day by placing flowers at the memorial built in remembrance of the day on the riverbank of Small Jamuna in Phulbari town. Later, they held a rally there around 10:30am.

As representatives from the national committee could not be present physically, a written speech by Prof Anu Muhammad, member secretary of the committee, was read out at the gathering.

In the note, Anu Muhammad said, "People of the country are owners of its resources. Projects in the name of development that are harmful to people and the environment will not be allowed to be implemented anywhere."

He said not just people of Phulbari, they are all in this fight together.

Anu Muhammad alleged that the government has plans to implement the Phulbari coalmine project by hiring a Chinese company. The letter urged people to take lessons from the day and stay alert and united to protect natural resources.

Speakers at the event also urged the government to implement the six-point demand signed 12 years ago on August 30

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Right underneath a sign of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Traffic (North) division clearly stating "No rickshaws to stand here", a group of rickshaw pullers have parked their vehicles, waiting for passengers. Vehicles often have a hard time taking a turn on the road under the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover, due to the chaos created by the blatant disregard for rules. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

'Nothing else left to grab, so rivers have become the target'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) was formed to protect rivers, but it doesn't have the executive power to punish those who are grabbing and polluting rivers, speakers at a webinar said yesterday.

Non-government organisations Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), Aranyak Foundation, Waterkeepers Bangladesh and Brotee jointly organised the programme titled "Implementation of court order 2019: National River Alliance".

Supreme Court lawyer Manzill Murshid explained the court order. He said the Supreme Court declared the NRCC the legal guardian of rivers.

"The court declared a river as a person and a living entity and NRCC as the legal guardian, so when a river will become polluted, the river can stand as a petitioner; and it's a landmark verdict," said the lawyer.

"We have many strong laws and regulations, but the main problem is non-implementation. If we can implement the laws, it's absolutely impossible to even create pollution, let alone grabbing," said Prof Asif Nazrul, a teacher of law at Dhaka University.

Noted jurist Shahdeen Malik said there is nothing left to grab around the country, so rivers are now the prime target.

Chief guest of the webinar, NRCC Chairman Dr Muzibur Rahman Howlader admitted that they have a number of limitations.

"It is true that we do not have any statutory power of implementation, but what we can do is instruct various authorities to enforce the law."

He said authorities do not feel encouraged to take action against grabbers and polluters in many cases, because they are politically powerful and influential. UNOs, assistant commissioners (land), even DCs fear that if they take action against the grabbers, they might be transferred. He asked especially MPs and DCs to exercise their authority to conserve the rivers.

At the event, organisers delivered presentations about grabbing scenario of Khoyai, Tista, Boral, Andharmanik and other rivers.

The webinar was conducted by Sharmeen Murshid, founder of Brotee. General Secretary of Bapa Sharif Jamil, executive vice-president Md Abdul Motin, Naripokkho member Shirin Haque and executive director of Sheba Sayeda Rokhsana Khan attended.

MONEY LAUNDERING Suspended DGHS official Abzal sent to prison

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent Abzal Hossain, a suspended accountant of the medical education department under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), to jail in connection with two separate money laundering cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Abzal surrendered before it seeking bail in the cases.

On June 27 of 2019, ACC deputy director Md Towfiqul Islam filed the two cases with ACC Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka, accusing the couple of committing the corruption.

UNIPAY2U FRAUD

HC questions authorities' failure to refund Tk 3.05cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the authorities' failure to refund Tk 3.05 crore to a depositor of multilevel marketing company unipay2u Bangladesh Limited in line with a trial court verdict.

In response to a writ petition, the HC issued a rule asking the respondents to explain in four weeks why their inaction and failure to refund the money to depositor Md Mazur Hossain should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court also asked the respondents to show causes why they not be directed to refund the money including its interest since 2010 to Manzur Hossain.

Secretaries to the ministries of finance, law and home, governor of Bangladesh Bank and the head of its money laundering prevention departments, chairman of unipay2u Bangladesh Limited and representatives of Brac Bank, City Bank and NCC Bank, where the money has been deposited, have been made respondents to the rule, writ petitioner's lawyer Saifuzzaman Tuhin told The Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali came up

with the rule following the writ petition filed by depositor Manzur Hossain, seeking necessary directives on the respondents to refund his money deposited to unipay2u.

Saifuzzaman Tuhin said a Dhaka court on January 23, 2019 sentenced six officials of unipay2u, including its chairman and manager, to 12 years' rigorous imprisonment each in a case filed for laundering around Tk 1,351 crore through multi-level marketing sham.

The trial court also directed the authorities concerned to take steps to refund the money to the depositors. But, the respondents are yet to take any step to refund the money, he added.

In the verdict, the Dhaka court has also fined them around Tk 2,702 crore and directed them to pay the fine in favour of the state within 180 days, in default legal actions will be taken against them.

On January 25, 2011, Taufiqul Islam, an assistant director of Anti-Corruption Commission, filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against the officials of unipay2u, a so-called multilevel marketing company, for amassing money by cheating people.

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DU STUDENT RAPE Charge framed against accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A tribunal in Dhaka yesterday framed charges against Md Majnu in a case filed over the rape of a Dhaka University student in the capital's Kurmitola area.

Majnu, now in jail, pleaded not guilty after Judge Quamrunnabar of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-7 of Dhaka read out charges to him through videoconferencing.

The tribunal fixed September 9 for starting trial of the case.

On March 16, Detective Branch Inspector Abu Bakar Siddique, also the case's investigation officer, submitted the charge sheet against Majnu, the lone accused in the case, to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka.

On January 5, the student was raped while walking from Kurmitola in the capital.