

SC stays HC order on Titas to pay Tk 5 lakh for each victim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed till December 1 a High Court order that asked Titas Gas Ltd to give Tk 5 lakh as initial costs to each family of the victims, who died and suffered burn injuries in the Narayanganj mosque blast.

Chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division passed the order following a petition filed by Titas, seeking stay on the HC order. The judge also sent the stay petition to its full bench for hearing.

Titas Gas lawyer AM Amin Uddin told The Daily Star that his client does not need to give Tk 5 lakh to each victim following the order.

During the hearing, he told the SC that the HC has delivered the order without hearing Titas' arguments. It has not been determined whether Titas is responsible for the explosion, as no probe report is yet to be found, he argued.

Titas' another lawyer Mejbahur Rahman also made similar remarks.

Following the petition filed by SC lawyer and a resident of Narayanganj Marum Khondaker, the HC on September 9 directed Titas to give Tk 5 lakh as initial costs in seven days to each family of the victims.

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These drums by the footpath, with water-taps attached at the base, were installed in the capital's Kamalapur for nearby garment workers to wash their hands before entering the factory. Sadly, as people are getting increasingly desensitised to the health crisis, these remain there virtually unused for the whole day. This photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Third time's the charm?

Road transport ministry issues same old directives over field-level officials not attending office regularly

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Amid growing allegations that many project and field-level officials of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) are not attending field offices regularly, the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry has come up with almost similar directives it issued earlier to stop the malpractice.

The ministry issued the order hours after Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader had expressed serious discontent over the issue at a meeting with top officials of RHD and SASEC 1 and 2 projects on Thursday.

However, the ministry had issued almost similar directives twice in the last two and half years, and it seems that such directives did not work at all.

Meanwhile, the minister also raised serious questions about the necessity of huge number of project offices in the capital and asked the officials concerned to inquire about the necessity of permanent buildings for projects while preparing those.

As per the Thursday's order, all project and field level officials must attend their respective offices regularly.

Additional chief engineers of all zones must take permission from the chief engineer before leaving work station and also inform the additional or joint secretaries who are responsible for monitoring the particular zones, read the order.

Also, officials at the sub-division, division and circles must have to take prior permission before leaving stations. The order would come into action immediately, it added.

"It has been noticed recently that officials involved in different projects and field level works are not remaining present at office regularly. For this

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Helping defaulters secure loans with fake NIDs

5 including election office operators held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They are data entry operators of election offices.

Having access to the NID database server, they -- in collusion with some others -- created a gang that provide fake National ID cards, helping defaulters secure bank loans using those.

The two operators used to enter the fake ID in the central NID database, making it difficult for the banks to identify the loan defaulters.

Detectives shared the information yesterday after they arrested five members of the gang, including the duo.

They were arrested during a drive in Mirpur Zoo area around 8:30pm on Saturday, said Razib al Masud, deputy commissioner (Lalbagh division) of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Twelve fake NID cards were seized from their possession.

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Private A-level examinees demand no physical exams

Students want predicted grades due to health risks

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A group of private A-level examination candidates urged authorities concerned to not hold exams amid the pandemic, as it will put students in severe health risks.

They demanded cancellation of the October-November exam session in Bangladesh, and asked for results based on predicted grades, as was done during May-June session for school students.

The students asked for the government's intervention to reach the international boards responsible for arranging O- and A-level exams, as they believe a state party will be able to relay their demands assertively.

Private candidates have been staging a virtual movement on social media. They have also contacted Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, and will contact other officials of the ministry, seeking their intervention.

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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The decades-old Balaka Cineworld, one of the top spots for cinephiles of the capital, has been asleep for over six months, as has every other movie theatre in the country.

Silver screens still grey

Despite announcement of govt assistance, film theatre owners stare down the barrel

SHARMIN JOYA, Arts & Entertainment Desk

Cinema halls across the country, much like most countries of the world, have had their lights out for six months now owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, and those few still involved with the industry can only see bleak days ahead.

Single-screen theatres have seen a drastic decline in numbers over the last two decades, and the 70-odd in the country that were in operation, have missed out on the three big occasions where mainstream movies makes business -- Pehela Baishakh, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha -- as people were confined to their homes to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

A beacon of hope for them came late last month when the government recently floated a plan to form a Tk 700 crore fund to help the industry, but some industry insiders are still sceptical.

However, owners of theatres have doubts about whether these plans will truly help sustain them.

Iftakhar Uddin Naushad, owner of the capital's Modhumita cinema hall, said, "If we cannot produce good quality movies, can we truly expect people to support our content? We can't even bring foreign movies, and under such circumstances, it will be impossible to keep the market alive in the long run."

He also noted that if the allocated government fund does not reach the right people, then all these plans will go to waste.

The news that the Bashundhara City outlet of Star Cineplex -- the first multiplex in the country -- was shutting down, generated a buzz in the media earlier this month. However, the decision was later reverted, much to the rejoice of cinephiles in the capital. However, there is still no news on when they can actually visit the theatre to catch their favorite films on the big screen.

Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, senior manager (media and marketing) at Star Cineplex, said they have been eagerly waiting to resume operations. "We have the movies lined up. We are just waiting for the government's instructions for reopening," he told this newspaper.

If the halls are given the green signal to reopen by the end of this month, Star Cineplex plans to have a premiere of "Wonder Woman 1984", one of the most-anticipated Hollywood releases of the year.

Similarly, authorities of Balaka Cinema Hall said they are also waiting for an official notice from the government.

While a number of local films are awaiting their theatrical releases, owners of cinema halls are concerned about maintaining the moviegoing culture and drawing audiences back to the theatres, as people are turning to streaming services more than ever to watch movies at home, and with the threat of the coronavirus still very much present, the question of survival looms large over the cinema theatres of the country.

SEDITION CASE

SC upholds bail of CU teacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that granted bail to Anwar Hossain Choudhury, an assistant professor of Chattogram University's sociology department, in a sedition case.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed "no order" on a government petition seeking stay on the HC order of bail.

The HC order that on August 20 this year granted six weeks' bail to Anwar Hossain in the case will remain effective following the apex court order, Anwar's lawyer Motaheer Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star.

He said former Fatikchhari upazila Chhatra League convener Asaduzzaman Tanvir filed the case with the court of metropolitan magistrate in Chattogram on May 17, 2018 following a news published in Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj translating the observations Anwar made on the Liberation War, Bangabandhu Sheikh

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No battery-run rickshaws to ply DSCC roads: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh has announced they have started taking legal action against all battery-run motorised vehicles from yesterday.

The mayor termed all non-motorised vehicles which were motorised using batteries as illegal. "We will take legal action against rickshaws or rickshaw-vans that were turned into motorised vehicles with batteries if they are found running inside DSCC areas," he said while inaugurating the renewal process of rickshaw, rickshaw-van, pushcarts and horse carts at Nagar Bhaban on Saturday.

"All non-motorised slow moving vehicles like rickshaws will be brought under new registration and renewal process with a view structure their operations," he said.

"We have already started conducting a study to find out the effectiveness of vehicles on city roads," the mayor said. After the study, DSCC will be able to determine which roads should be allocated for motorised vehicles and which roads for non-motorised ones, he added.

Taposh said this will be his first move to make Dhaka a movable city, which was one of his election pledges. He also announced the start of a process

to fix distance-based rickshaw fares.

Responding to a question about new registration of rickshaws which may put bad impact on city roads, the DSCC mayor reminded that there has been no registration process for rickshaws for the last three decades so the ones plying the roads now are doing so illegally. The registrations are thus a way to formalise their operations.

He said many artists and literary people call Dhaka city a "City of rickshaw" as it is a tradition of the capital city.

Meanwhile DSCC has already published a public notice asking interested people to take application forms from Nagar Bhaban or its zonal offices for changing ownership, renewal or registration for a new non-motorised vehicle.

Interested persons will have to pay Tk 100 for an application form and will have to submit it to the DSCC authorities.

DSCC will give registration or renewal after scrutinising the documents and will charge a certain amount of fees.

The registration, which started on September 13, will continue till September 27.

DSCC currently has 52,712 non-motorised registered vehicles, most of which are rickshaws, though many more are running illegally.

Establish value-based healthcare system

Says chairman of Intel, Medtronic at Rotary Club Dhaka event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to establish a proper healthcare system in the country, importance must be given on awareness, infrastructure and specialised training, said Omar Ishrak, executive chairman and chairman of the board of Medtronic PLC and chairman of the board of Intel Corporation.

He said this while speaking as chief guest of the 38th Annual Installation Ceremony of the Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka (RCMD), a part of Rotary International, organised virtually on Saturday.

Speaking on post-Covid-19 healthcare facility needs for Bangladesh, he said, "Value-based healthcare means the provider should get paid when the outcome is reached. Today, when a patient goes to hospital or to a doctor, s/he has to pay to get the treatment. If the treatment does not work, or someone makes a mistake, the patient has to go back to the hospital and pay for the treatment again."

"So, there is no financial accountability on the provider's part to ensure that the services they offered reached the result which they had promised," he added.

"When people do provide treatment for a purpose that someone will get better, there are ways of telling how you will get better and when you will get better. And, if you can formalise the process, you will be able to create a system which will be far more accountable," he said.

Ishrak also said three things are required to establish a proper healthcare system in Bangladesh: awareness, infrastructure and specialised training.

"Awareness means more general training about the healthcare -- knowing that certain conditions can be treated and certain conditions have these symptoms."

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This road in Jurain Railgate area of the capital has become a virtual human hauler stand, and for good reason too. The dilapidated carpeting on the road with puddles all over has left it unfit for vehicular movement. Locals say the situation has been like this for a long time.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CPB (Marxist) to besiege jute ministry tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist) yesterday announced to besiege the Ministry of Textiles and Jute tomorrow to realize a three-point demand including jute minister's resignation for his "failure" to protect the industry.

The two other demands are reopening of all closed jute mills, and reinstatement of jute mill workers and payment all of their arrears.

CPB (Marxist) General Secretary MA Samad announced the programme through a release.

Instead of modernising the jute mills and stopping looting and irregularities in the jute sector, the government has decided to close down state-run jute factories which is not acceptable, Samad said in the release.

He also said thousands of workers in this sector have become unemployed as a result of closure of jute mills. Besides, millions of workers in other sectors are unemployed today due to the impact of coronavirus. Unemployed workers are also returning from abroad. "But the government has no headache in this regard."

He said there is no alternative to wage movement against the government to protest such injustice.