

‘Dhaka Declaration’ on defending media freedom launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Declaration on Defending Media Freedom, Journalists’ Protection and Citizen’s Rights was launched yesterday, containing signatures of over 140 rights activists, rights organisations, journalists, legal experts and professors.

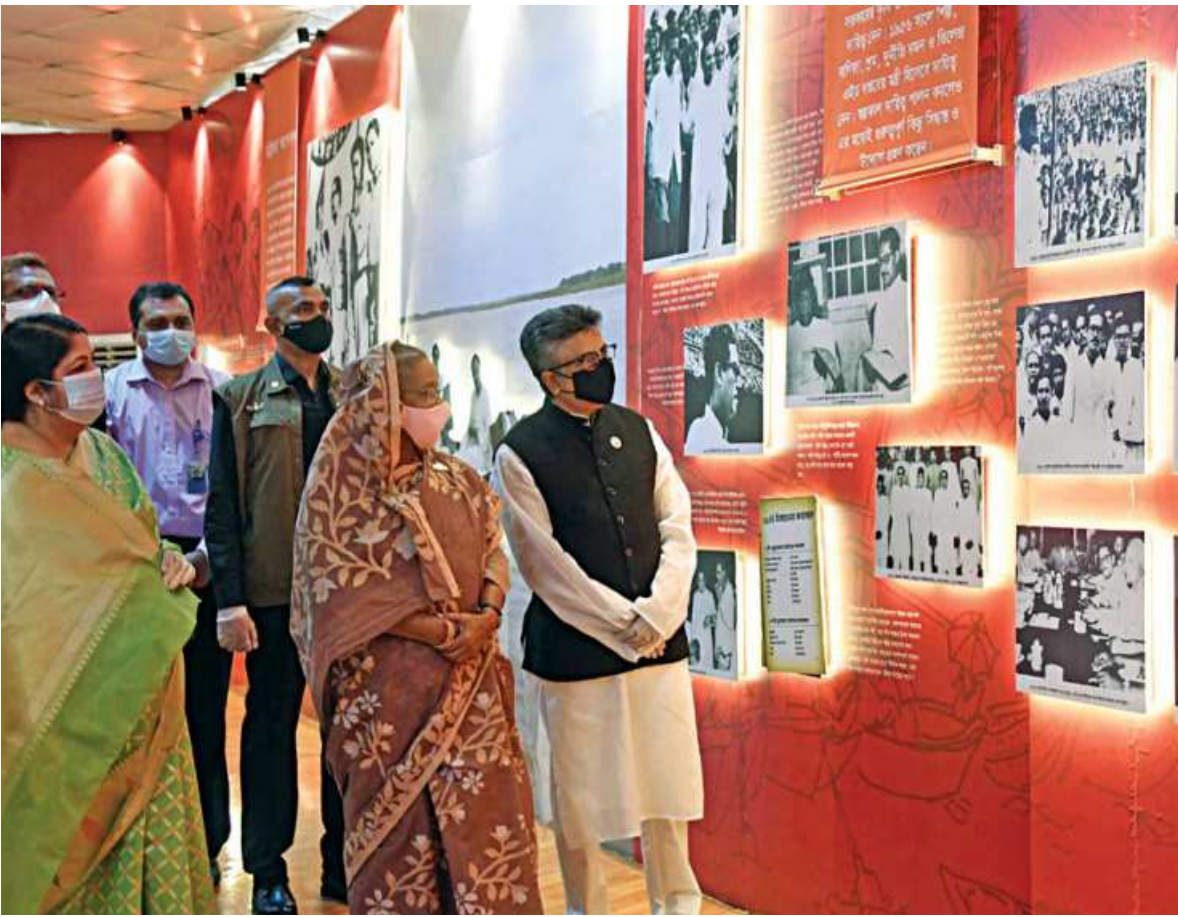
The declaration pledges to take a stand against “laws, policies, and government directions that directly and indirectly limit press freedom.” Signatories of the declaration pledged to abolish such legislation.

The signatories also formed a platform that will ensure journalists get a safe environment to work in, and that female journalists get harassment-free workplaces.

The Dhaka declaration will also work to increase youth participation in civic-engagement.

The pledges were formulated based on recommendations made at a conference organised by Article 19 early this month, funded by the Canadian high commission and the British high commission.

The Dhaka declaration will be presented at the Second Global Conference for Media Freedom-2020 on November 16.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attends an exhibition on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the South Plaza of the parliament yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Coast Guard can help govt tap into potential of blue economy: PM

Its manpower to be increased to 15,000

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh Coast Guard will be strengthened so that they can play a role in helping the government tap the potential of the blue economy.

“Keeping in mind the blue economy and Vision 2030 and 2041 for the coast guard, the government has planned to increase its manpower from 4,781 to 15,000 gradually,” she said.

Blue economy is the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health.

The prime minister was addressing the commissioning programme of two offshore and five in-shore patrol vessels, two fast patrol boats and BCG Base Bhola. The programme was held at Coast Guard Berth Patenga. The premier joined the event virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

Hasina asked the coast guard members to discharge their responsibilities with patriotism, honesty and faith.

“You will pay a special attention [to your duties] so that the good image of the coast guard remains unharmed always,” she said. The prime minister also assured the force of all-out cooperation from the government.



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Another 15 arrested over torching of buses

Road Transport Workers’ Federation demands punishment of perpetrators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested 15 more people in connection with the cases filed over arson attack on buses and subversive activities in the capital on Tuesday.

With them, so far 47 people have been arrested since the incidents, said Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner, media and public relations of DMP.

Police filed 16 cases with different police stations in Dhaka on Tuesday and Wednesday after about 12 buses were torched and several crude bombs were exploded in the city on Thursday, the day of polling in the by-polls to Dhaka-18 parliamentary seat.

Police in the cases mentioned that BNP activists were attempting to foil the election.

The charges brought against several hundred accused, mostly BNP men, includes attempted murder by torching buses, sabotage attempt, exploding bombs and possessing explosives.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Road Transport Workers’ Federation yesterday staged demonstration protesting the torching of buses.

Dhaka city unit of the federation organised a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club where federation’s acting president and Awami League lawmaker

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Bridges obstructing water vessel movement to be demolished: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (LGRD) Minister Tajul Islam yesterday said the bridges around Dhaka which are creating obstacles in plying of water vessels will be demolished and new bridges will be built there.

Tajul, also chairman of the master plan committee to free river, prevent pollution and increase navigability, said 90 percent of the rivers around the capital have been freed from grabbing, but there are still complications in some places due to construction of religious establishments.

“Anyone illegally occupying rivers and canals will be evicted and (waterbodies) will be freed from encroachment,” the minister said.

Tajul was briefing reporters after a meeting of the master plan committee at

the local government department of the ministry.

The minister said the government has taken up the project aimed at connecting the capital’s canals. There will be walkways on both sides of the waterbodies and water transport for people, he added.

On completion of the master plan, the minister said work has already started and the 10-year plan will be completed in the designated timeframe.

Tajul said many projects have been taken up by various ministries, departments and agencies for the development of the capital, including freeing the rivers, preventing pollution and increasing navigability.

A committee will be formed to check whether there is more than one project for the same work. “There is no alternative to coordinating with all organisations

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WRIT AGAINST DSCC’S DOG RELOCATION SC adjourns hearing as lawyer ill with Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday adjourned for a week the hearing on a writ petition that sought a stay order on Dhaka South City Corporation’s (DSCC) move to relocate stray dogs.

Actor Jaya Ahsan and animal welfare organisations – Obhoyaronno and People for Animal Welfare (PAW) – submitted the writ petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on September 17, requesting it to stay the DSCC move to relocate stray dogs and dump them in the Matuail landfill.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali was scheduled to resume the hearing on the petition yesterday.

However, the hearing was adjourned as Mustafizur Rahman Khan, principal counsel for the writ petitioners, was not in the position for placing arguments before the court, Saqeb Mahbub, the filing lawyer of the petition, told The Daily Star.

He said lawyer Mustafizur Rahman Khan has been infected with Covid-19 and therefore, he could not attend the hearing.

Replying to a query, Saqeb Mahbub said the DSCC has not informed the writ petitioners about its latest decision over relocation of stray dogs.

At a hearing of the petition on October 12, the bench said DSCC should not continue relocating stray dogs until further hearing. Attorney General AM Amin Uddin had told the HC on that day that a discussion between DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and stakeholders was ongoing.



DANGEROUS GAME ... Children jump on and off trains at the Tejgaon rail intersection as some kind of an “adventure sport”, but this could turn into a fatal tragedy in a moment. There seems to be no monitoring to prevent such perilous activities. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Two jailed for torturing 10-year-old girl in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Two people were sent to jail on Saturday for torturing a ten-year-old girl at Nilganj in Bakerganj of Barishal.

Abul Kalam, officer in charge of Bakerganj police station, said the girl’s father Bashir Haoladar lodged a case against five people on Friday.

The complainant said in the case statement that his daughter was playing at the yard of her grandmother’s house on Thursday afternoon when a group led by two men, Sahabuddin Sagor and Altaf Choukidar, abducted her and confined her in a toilet. They beat and tortured her claiming that she stole a cellphone.

The girl was later rescued by locals and she was given treatment at the Upazila health complex before being shifted to Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital on Friday evening.

Sahabuddin and Altaf were sent to jail while another accused, a 14-year-old, was put in his family’s custody under supervision of the Upazila social welfare probation officer.

Police are trying to arrest other two accused, officer-in-charge of the police station said.

ARMS CASES Erfan Salim, bodyguard denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the bail petitions of former ward-30 councillor of Dhaka South Mohammad Erfan Salim, also son of Dhaka-7 lawmaker Haji Salim, and his bodyguard Zahidul Mollah, in two arms cases filed with Chawkbazar Police Station.

Metropolitan Magistrate Nivana Khair Jesie passed the orders after lawyer Pran Nath moved two separate bail petitions.

On November 8, the duo was placed on five-day remands each in four cases filed under the arms and narcotics control acts.

Police in a drive on October 27 seized foreign liquor and a pistol with bullets from Erfan; 406 yaba, a pistol and bullets were seized from Zahidul.

Man held with 11,200 pieces of banned painkiller

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested a man with a consignment of 11,200 pieces of Indian painkiller Tapentadol, which has been considered as a narcotic in Bangladesh for the last six months, in Rajshahi city on Saturday.

Rubel Hossain (30) from Char Majhardiar area was held in the city’s Bosori area around 4pm when he crossed the Padma river from Char Majhardiar frontier, said SM Masud Marvez, officer-in-charge of Kasiadanga Police Station.

Police found the latest consignment in a plastic shopping bag with Rubel.

Police said the government in June labelled Tapentadol as a category-2 drug under the section 65 of Narcotics Control Act-2018. The addicts were using it as an alternative drug for its narcotic substances.

As the authorities asked pharmaceutical companies to stop producing it, smugglers started bringing those from India, said the law enforcers.

Rubel named one Anwar Hossain from the city’s Nawdapara who employed him for carrying the drug. He also told the police that he was one of Anwar’s carriers who carry such drug for Tk 1,000 per trip, said OC Masud Marvez.

Rail Day observed for the first time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time in railways’ 158-year-old history, railway authorities yesterday observed “Rail Day” to mark the installment of rail line in territory of the then Bengal on this day in 1862.

Railways ministry and Bangladesh Railway (BR) jointly organised a discussion at Rail Bhaban yesterday, to celebrate the day.

Rail transport in Bangladesh began on November 15, 1862, when 53km rail line was opened between Darshana in Chuadanga and Jogotee in Kushtia.

Speaking at the programme, Railways Minister Nulul Islam Sujan said it is important to know the history and tradition, otherwise it is not possible to move forward. He said among all other organisations, railway is the richest historically.

He said railway played a significant role in social and economic development of the country.

During the Liberation War, Pakistani occupation forces damaged the railways largely and after the war, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had started restoring it. But railways lagged behind due to the faulty policies of successive governments, he added.

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‘Stop sale of weapons used in Liberation War’

ZI Khan, ASK file writ petition with HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday challenging the government’s move to sell the arms and weapons used during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

ZI Khan Panna, a Supreme Court lawyer, and Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a leading rights organisation, jointly submitted the writ petition as a public interest litigation based on a report published on the daily Prothom Alo on October 5 saying that the government wishes to sell the arms and weapons used during the country’s Liberation War in 1971.

In the petition they sought necessary directives from the HC on the authorities concerned of the government not to sell or transfer the weapons to other parties and to preserve them as national heritage for the future generations..

In the petition, they said the Liberation War, which led to the birth of Bangladesh, embodies the totality of the nation and its people.

“It is not only a mere emotion, it is more than emotion. It is us, our existence, our recognition and our breathing. It is what we are now and what we will be in future. The arms and weapons used during the Liberation War bear the marks of our struggles, fights, fear and sufferings. It will keep the spirit of the Liberation War alive from generations to generation,” the petitioners said in the petition.

They stated in the petition, “These are not mere arms and weapons, these are the symbols of our national spirit. These are of high importance and value to every Bangladeshi person. The respondents being the custodian of the Republic cannot take any arbitrary decision which goes against the will of the people. Our liberation is the will of the people. People don’t want the arms and weapons used in 1971 to be sold. They want to preserve these arms and weapons as national heritage.”

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Leaves coated with dust on a plant along the Mohammadpur Link Road in the capital bears testament to the rising air pollution, as winter arrives in the city. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON