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Your Right to Know

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"If we do not respond to climate change, we will continue to have these emergencies on our shores."
NEW ZEALAND PM JACINDA ARDERN AFTER DECLARING CLIMATE EMERGENCY



"To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election".
US ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR



"... We see Malaysia sometimes positive but see them pushing back Rohingya boats. I think whole international community should work together."
EU AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH RENJSJE TEERINK ABOUT THE ROHINGYA CRISIS



ROHINGYA RELOCATION TO BHASAN CHAR

All set with UN views put aside

UN says it has not been involved in preparations, has 'limited info' on the overall relocation exercise



PORIMOL PALMA

While the United Nations and other development partners still wait for an independent assessment of the Bhasan Char housing project, the government prepares for relocating some 2,500 Rohingyas to the isolated island within a couple of days.

The move has triggered concerns among the UN and the development partners.

Talking on the issue, experts said relocating Rohingyas to Bhasan Char without the UN consent could risk the good reputation Bangladesh earned by sheltering the Rohingyas.

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NATURAL DISASTERS

Work going on for 5-layer protection

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Bhasan Char

Uri grass is growing naturally along the shore of Bhasan Char. This type of grass provides protection to the shore and only grows in areas where there is no possibility of erosion, according to officials of the housing project there.

The project officials, however, are not merely relying on this protection. They are now working to put in place a five-layer protection system to save the island from natural disasters.

The Bangladesh government has spent around Tk 3,100 crore to develop the island, build infrastructure and a protection system against extreme climate events under a project delegated to Bangladesh Navy.

A number of international non-government organisations questioned the safety and

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Bhakurta canal in Keraniganj has been orange for the last two years as water from Dhaka Wasa's iron removal plant has been getting into the waterbody. Local fishermen say they cannot get a decent catch in the canal anymore. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

People like PK Halder must face music: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

However powerful the corrupt and money launders like Proshanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder are, they must be brought to book, and they cannot be spared under any circumstances, the High Court observed yesterday.

The court also said the government agencies concerned are bound to protect public properties in accordance with the law and the country's constitution.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the observation while virtually hearing a suo motu rule issued by it questioning the inaction of the authorities concerned in arresting Halder and bringing him back to the country.

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SONARGAON RESORT, ECONOMIC ZONE

HC raps 2 firms for grabbing wetlands

Says earth-filling by Unique Group concerns illegal, orders wetlands be restored in 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday slammed two private companies owned by businessman Md Noor Ali for grabbing and filling up water bodies, wetlands and farmlands to set up a resort and an economic zone in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila.

In the verdict on a writ petition, the HC observed that the land grabbing by Unique Property Development Ltd (UPDL) and Sonargaon Economic Zone (SEZ) in six moujas near the banks of the Meghna was unfortunate. It was done bypassing the relevant laws and directives from the HC and the Supreme Court.

The court declared illegal the activities of the two firms in the six moujas of Sonargaon and ordered the Department of Environment (DoE) and the local administration to take steps to restore the wetlands and farmlands there in six months.

Citing from government documents,

it said the firms -- both concerns of Noor Ali-owned Unique Group -- filled up water bodies, wetlands and agricultural land in Pirojpur, Jainpur, Chohoyhissa, Char Bhabonathpur, Batibandha and Ratanpur moujas, first in the name of setting up a resort and then a private economic zone.

Noor Ali is a freedom fighter and the nation does not expect this from him, mentioned the HC bench of Justice Md Ashraf Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil.

The court directed the DoE and the local administration to probe the incidents of land grabbing and earth filling by the UPDL and the SEZ or any other organisation or individual and also give compensation to the affected land owners.

It noted that 2,350 bighas of farmlands and wetlands have been grabbed in the six moujas.

A company has to apply to Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) for establishing an economic zone in line with

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Cabinet okays direct vaccine purchase

DGHS starts antigen testing from Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved in principle a proposal of the Health Services Division to procure Covid-19 vaccine directly from any organisation through negotiations without following any bidding process.

"The cabinet body approved a proposal of the Health Services Division [under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare] to procure Covid-19 vaccine worth over Tk 5 crore by applying the direct procurement method," said Abu Saleh, additional secretary of the cabinet division.

He was briefing reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee.

Abu Saleh, however, said, "This committee has just given the approval in principle to meet the emergency needs of the state. But when any procurement deal will be final, it'll come to the Cabinet Committee on Public Purchase for its final approval."

He said the approval was given in

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Vaccination starts next week in UK

Britain clears Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine for use in world first; EU warns against hasty decisions

AGENCIES

Britain approved Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine yesterday, jumping ahead of the United States and Europe to become the West's first country to formally endorse a jab it said should reach the most vulnerable people early next week.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the medicine authority's approval as a global win and a ray of hope amid the gloom of the novel coronavirus which has killed nearly 1.5 million people globally, hammered the world economy and upended normal life.

Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted emergency use approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which they say is 95% effective in preventing illness, in record time - just 23 days since Pfizer published the first data from its final stage clinical trial.

The world's big powers have been racing for a vaccine for months to begin the long road to recovery, and getting there first may be seen as a coup for Johnson's government, which has faced criticism over its handling of the crisis.

"It's fantastic," Johnson said. "The vaccine will begin to be made available across the UK from next week. It's the protection of vaccines that will ultimately allow us to reclaim our lives and get the economy moving again."

The European Union's drug watchdog and lawmakers warned against hasty approvals of Covid-19 vaccines yesterday, after Britain granted emergency authorisation to the experimental shot of Pfizer and BioNTech.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA), which is in charge of approving Covid-19 vaccines for the EU, said its longer procedure to approve vaccines was more appropriate as it was based on more evidence and required more checks than the emergency procedure chosen by Britain.

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Legal action if rallies held sans permit

Says DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police has imposed a ban on organising assemblies, rallies, mass gatherings, and use of loudspeakers at these programmes in the capital without prior permission.

A DMP press release yesterday said legal actions would be taken against any violation of the ban.

The ban came at a time when different religious groups held public rallies opposing establishment of Bangabandhu's sculpture in the country.

"It is being noticed recently that various socio-political and religious organisations are announcing programmes like assemblies, rallies and public gatherings in Dhaka without permission from the authorities concerned. Movement of traffic is being disrupted due to various obstacles created on roads because of these programmes," says the release.

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People try to straighten a crumpled truck cab and free the driver trapped inside at Ghoramara in Sitakunda on Dhaka-Chattogram highway yesterday. The truck had rear ended another truck on the highway. The driver suffered injuries, including a broken leg.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

23 YRS OF PEACE ACCORD

CHT still plagued by myriad ills

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The hills have remained restive due to land disputes, extortion, killings and feuds between and within the region's political parties 23 years into the peace accord in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Officials and a section of locals blame this on regional political groups trying to establish supremacy in the hill tracts. Rights organisations and another section of locals, meanwhile, see the treaty not being fully implemented as the reason.

They also said when the peace accord was signed, people of the hilly districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban thought their lives would change for the better and the bloodshed would come to an end.

"The core issues of the treaty were not implemented. That's why frustration among people of the hills is growing and the law and order situation is deteriorating," Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, told The Daily Star.

He said implementation of the provisions of the peace accord would improve the law and order situation and also reduce the frustration.

When asked about the violence by armed groups in the hilly districts, he said, "It is the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies to check it."

There has been a spate of killings -- 115 -- since the start of 2019 till October this year, along with 49 abductions during the same period, according to information obtained from the security forces and various intelligence agencies.

Most of the people killed were members of the four regional parties -- Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati

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