

Remove illegal structures on Karnaphuli banks within 2 months: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to remove all illegal structures along the Karnaphuli river at Lal Dariarchar area in Chattogram in the next two months.

The officials concerned have been directed to disconnect the water, gas and electricity lines of the illegal structures if those are not evicted by this time.

During hearing a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC said the officials concerned will be directed to appear in person before this court if they don't comply with the order.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali also fixed March 9 next year for further hearing and passing order on the issue.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police's commissioner, its deputy commissioner, Chattogram

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Workers of Dhaka North City Corporation are busy painting Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in Mirpur, ahead of December 14, the day commemorating some of the most brilliant minds of this country who were brutally murdered by the Pakistan army during the Liberation War. Many of the historic memorials in the city are not very well-maintained round the year, and it is only when such occasions are near that authorities hurry to spruce up the landmarks.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ONLINE CASINO 'KINGPIN' SALIM ACC clears charge-sheet, says he made Tk 57.79cr illegally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved the charge-sheet of a graft case against online casino "kingpin" Salim Proddhan, which accused him of amassing about Tk 57.79 crore illegally.

The commission brought another charge of laundering about Tk 22 crore to Thailand and the US.

A three-member committee gave the approval, confirmed ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya yesterday.

Salim came to the fore last year when law enforcers conducted a drive against illegal casinos. He allegedly amassed the wealth from online casino business, say investigators.

ACC filed a case against him on October 27, 2019, accusing him of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 12.27 crore. ACC Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Proddhan was assigned to investigate the case.

Later in the investigation, it was found that the Salim accumulated about Tk 57.79 crore illegally.

In his 2011-12 income tax return, Salim mentioned that he owns 40 percent shares, worth about Tk 6.9 lakh, of Japan Bangladesh Security Printing and Papers Ltd.

However, the company, in its 2011-12 income tax return file, mentioned that Salim's paid-up capital was Tk 69 lakh and his share money deposit was worth about Tk 23.55 crore.

"Salim concealed information of Tk 23 crore in his tax return file," sources said.

Salim disclosed that he invested Tk 11.31 crore in FDR, share market and savings certificates but could not show the money's source.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Rabab Fatima elected VP of 3 UN agencies

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations, has been elected vice president of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS executive board at the elections held in New York yesterday.

The ambassador of Bulgaria was elected president of the board, while the other vice presidents are ambassadors of the Netherlands and Gambia.

"This will enable Bangladesh to work closely with other board members and the leaderships of these three vital UN organs and provide them strategic guidance to their work," said a statement by the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN.

The UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have specific mandates to advance UN's development agenda in the field level. UNDP is the largest UN agency with primary focus on poverty

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Trawler owners' body seeks amendment to Marine Fisheries Act

Says some provisions could cause huge losses to the fishing sector

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Marine White Fish Trawler Owners Association has demanded amendments to the new "Marine Fisheries Act-2020". They claimed the law is creating obstacles for fishing in the Bay of Bengal.

They said this during a press briefing held at the Chattogram Press Club yesterday.

During the briefing, general secretary of the association Tajuddin Taj said, "Several sections and sub-sections of the new Marine Fisheries Act-2020 are creating obstacles to fishing in the Bay of Bengal. If these laws are not amended there will be huge losses in the fishing sector."

Reading out a written statement at the programme, Taj said the government has published the gazette last month after revoking the Marine Fisheries Ordinance-1983. However, due to the rigidity of the new act, trawler operators are now in a state of panic and have suspended netting fish.

He said "The law contains a provision that empowers the authorities to impose fines ranging from Tk 8 lakh to Tk 25 lakh in the event of a violation of fishing rules, without leaving any room for self-defense. The new act would create opportunities for dishonest marine fisheries officials to indulge in corrupt practices."

He alleged that the law was legislated without any prior consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Contacted, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director of Marine Fisheries Department Chattogram office, said "We are taking action against fishing trawler owners and sailors for violating various sections and sub-sections of the new law."

"Recently, they have been demanding amendment of this law. We informed the concerned department on behalf of trawler owners and sailors about their demand," he said.

"Since the law has been passed in the parliament, it is our responsibility to enforce it," he said. "Amendment or cancellation depends wholly on the government," he added.

Meanwhile, all skippers and sailors of fishing trawler under the Marine Academy Ex-Cadet Association have halted fishing in the Bay since December 5, in protest of the new law -- that was passed in parliament in November.

Govt instigating fundamentalism: Mirza Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The current government is instigating fundamentalism, claimed BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir while talking to reporters at his Thakurgaon residence yesterday morning.

"If there is anybody responsible for the rise of fundamentalism, it is Awami League," said Mirza Fakhrul.

He further said that Awami League always blames BNP and seeks excuses to destroy the opposing party. "This is dirty politics that harms the country," he said.

BNP has nothing to do with fundamentalism but it believes in religious freedom, claimed Mirza Fakhrul.

"I don't think there are any militants in Bangladesh. However, there is fundamentalism and it is the Awami League that is indulging and inciting fundamentalism," he continued.

In response to a question, Fakhrul said, "I don't want to talk about sculpture at the moment. Democracy is the bigger issue for us [having] it in the country is my right. It is a matter of importance to establish this constitutional right."

"Instability is prevailing in the country as there is no democratic government here. Foreign investors do not think Bangladesh is safe. The reason behind this is that the environment of the country is not investment-friendly," said Fakhrul.

"Those who come from abroad to do business have to pay bribe to get gas and electricity connection. The ruling party people also take toll from them. All this has had a negative impact," he added.

"Recently, six sugar mills in the country have been shut down. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a section of the working class are becoming unemployed. At this time, pushing the sugar mill

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh no country for communal forces

Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said communal forces will not be given any scope to strengthen their footing in the country that attained independence through the Liberation War in 1971.

"Defamation of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's sculpture is an assault on the hearts of millions of Bangladeshis who believe in the spirit of the Liberation War," the minister told a press conference at his secretariat office in the capital.

Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, said vandalism of Bangabandhu's sculpture is a challenge of the radicals to the country's Liberation War and its achievements. Those who are patronising and funding from behind the scene to carry out such incidents will be found, he added.

Quader said many conspiracies were hatched against Bangabandhu, his family and the Liberation War in the past and conspiracies are still ongoing. Those who are making evil attempts to create instability in the country centring Bangabandhu sculptures will be resisted with an iron hand, he added.

Investigation is going on to look into whether there is any local or international political conspiracy behind the issue, he said.

Mentioning that the unity of the pro-liberation forces is very firm, the minister said they along with people of the country will resist all evil efforts unitedly.

Quader said communal forces are using religion in their evil acts against the spirit of the Liberation War.

By giving support to the evil activities, BNP has cleared its stance and the party has already proved that they are the patrons of anti-liberation forces, he added.

About the construction of Bangabandhu's sculptures at different places, he said some sculptures have lack of similarity with Bangabandhu's picture and in some cases, the designs have some flaws. He urged everyone to refrain from constructing Bangabandhu's sculpture without taking permission from the Bangabandhu Trust.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Latifur Rahman Naturenomics Award' launched

Balipara Foundation honours Transcom Group founder

CITY DESK

The Balipara Foundation has recently introduced "Latifur Rahman Naturenomics Award" -- a special award to memorialise the late founder chairman of Transcom Group, one of the leading figureheads behind ethical business in Bangladesh.

This award will focus on Sylhet, CHT and the Sundarbans-Khulna on creating a thriving ecosystem and livelihoods and will be instituted from 2021 in Bangladesh, said a press release.

The award was launched by Victor Banerjee, who delivered a touching memorial on Latifur Rahman, who worked tirelessly for creating social sustainability while maintaining the highest ethical and moral standards in the Eastern Himalayas.

The award was introduced at the eighth edition of the Balipara Foundation Awards, following a four-day virtual edition of the eighth Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics Forum 2020 on December 1-5.

The forum brought together global leaders and experts to discuss the theme of "Ecology is Economy".

The awards recognised the extraordinary visionaries of the Eastern Himalayas and their indomitable contribution, who continue to live in harmony with nature and adopt sustainable methods for greening the economy, added the press release.

Bringing together the award winners in a virtual avatar, the event began with words of encouragement from Indian actor Adil Hussain.

This year's national "Lifetime Service Award" went to Dr Parimal Chandra Bhattacharjee, an academic and a retired

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'ANTI-STATE CONTENT' Block online portals, social media pages of Kanak Sarwar: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to immediately block all the online and digital portals of Kanak Sarwar, a Bangladeshi journalist who is now abroad, including his Facebook and YouTube channel for running "anti-state distorted contents" through the platforms.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why spreading such anti-state and distorted contents should not be declared illegal.

The bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice Md Mahmud Hassan Talukder came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Imtiaz Uddin Ahmed Asif seeking necessary directives on this issue.

He filed the petition as a public interest litigation on November 17 saying that Bangladeshi journalist Kanak Sarwar broadcast an interview of Liberal Democratic Party President Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed on September 17 through his (Kanak) YouTube channel.

In the interview, Oli Ahmed claimed that Ziaur Rahman was the first acting president of Bangladesh, though Syed Nazrul Islam was the first acting president.

Oli Ahmed also made some derogatory comments about Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his interview which are distortion of the history and also against the state, he said in the petition.



"Who knows where we'll end up from here? Better take some selfies," said Munmun, one of the four young women pictured here. As they were automatically graduated from higher secondary school with HSC exams halted due to the pandemic, the four friends haven't gotten to see each other in eight months. They visited their alma mater, Viqarunnisa Noon College, yesterday to collect their HSC exam admit cards, considering the document may come in handy for university admissions.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

GRAFT CASE

HC questions legality of Khalidi's bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of a lower court order that granted bail to Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of online news portal bdnews24.com, in a corruption case.

The court issued a rule asking the state and Khalidi to explain in 10 days why the lower court order that granted him bail in the case should not be scrapped.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the rule following a revision petition filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) challenging the lower court order of bail.

The ACC on July 30 filed the case against Khalidi, for allegedly depositing Tk 42 crore with no "legal source" to different banks.

Gulshan Anwar Pradhan, deputy director of the anti-graft watchdog, filed the case with ACC's integrated district office Dhaka-1, saying that Khalidi earned the money through illegal means by creating "fake documents". Khalidi, however, has denied the allegations of corruption against him.

A Dhaka court on October 20 granted bail to Khalidi in the case.

The ACC on December 6 filed a revision petition with the HC seeking cancellation of the lower court order that granted him bail.

Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan argued for the ACC while Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state during virtual hearing on the revision petition yesterday.