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Indian SC bans discharging factory waste into Jamuna

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: India's Supreme Court today banned thousands of factories from discharging untreated industrial effluents into the Jamuna River in New Delhi and the neighbouring state of Haryana, reports AFP.

Judges BN Kirpal and S Rajendra Babu said river pollution in north India had reached an 'alarming proportion' and had to be checked.

"We direct every industry in Delhi not to discharge their effluents either into the river or into drains leading to the river which have the effect of polluting the river."

The judges added that factories in the neighbouring state of Haryana would also have to heed the ban.

State-run pollution control boards welcomed the move.

"It is a major victory for us," said RC Trivedi of the Central Pollution Control Board, which has been waging a three-year-old campaign to reign in factories polluting the Jamuna, one of the main rivers in north India.

"We supplied the apex court with studies to show the dangerous level of toxins released into the Jamuna every day by some 15,000 to 20,000 factories in Delhi alone," said the senior scientist.

Trivedi said small to medium size soap and detergent, textile, electroplating, small engineering, and auto factories were the main culprits.

"Tests conducted in our laboratories on water samples collected from the Jamuna show that toxin levels are dangerously high and as a result, the water unsafe for drinking."

Rajat Banerjee, from the Centre for Science and Environment said the ban would give "more teeth" to pollution-control agencies.

"State pollution control boards and the police can now crack down and seal thousands of hole-in-the-wall workshops and factories that are spewing poison into the Jamuna," said Banerjee.

"It cannot be business as usual for them. This ban, if seriously implemented, will force businessmen of medium size factories to invest 500,000 rupees (11,820 dollars) to 100,000 rupees in water effluent plants."

Banerjee, however, said implementation was the tough part.

"It will not be easy to track down small-scale industries who discharge effluents slyly into municipal drains. Their whole business is covert," said Banerjee.

"Most of them are not registered establishments so they can close shop for a month or so if there is a crackdown and resurface later when the heat is off."

India's Water Act, 1974 has been amended several times to give government agencies powers to deal with growing river and ocean pollution. Almost all Indian rivers are polluted by untreated factory and human waste.



Non-government primary school teachers continued their sit-in at Osmany Udyan in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Bangabandhu Murder Case Death references to be moved Sunday

The Bangabandhu Murder Case is expected to be moved in the High Court next week as the prosecution revised its plan at the last moment to follow the normal practice of the court, prosecution sources said yesterday, reports BSS.

Prosecution lawyers said they have revised their plan in pursuance of the normal High Court practice and for more preparations and decided to move it before a High Court Bench on Sunday next.

Court officials said according to the usual High Court practice, "death references" are moved in the High Court on Sunday.

Since it is not Sunday today, we have now decided to "mention" it on the first day of the next week, in line with the normal practice," Special Public Prosecutor Anisul Huq said.

Judicial experts said the hearing on the "death reference" and the appeals of the convicts were likely to be held simultaneously in the same bench.

The prosecution last week moved the case before a High Court bench comprising Justices Kazi Ebadul Huq and Justice Sikdar Mokbul Huq, which had advised it to "mention" the matter to another bench since it was likely to be reconstituted before it could dispose the case.

The bench broke on Thursday last with the elevation of its presiding judge Ebadul Huq to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

After 149 days of hearing, Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golam Rasul, now retired, sentenced the 15 out of 19 accused to death on November 8, 1998 for killing Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on August 15, 1975.

But only four of the convicts, former lieutenant colonels Syed Farook Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and Muiyuddin Ahmed and ex-major Bazul Huda, are now in jail awaiting the higher court judgement in person. The rests including a key plotter sacked lieutenant colonel Khondokar Abdul Rashid fled Bangladesh soon after the 1996 general elections.

The four convicts appealed to the High Court against the lower court judgement.

But court officials said the defence so far did not appear in the High Court to seek hearing on their appeals.

Knife used in killing Nikunja recovered

By Staff Correspondent

The CID recovered yesterday a knife from old part of the city which they suspect was used in the killing of joint secretary Nikunja Bihari Debnath.

The knife was found hidden under a pile of bricks near a tinshed house in Hosneydalan area, sources said. A pack of syringe was also found there.

The knife was recovered on the basis of Rana's statement, police said. Rana, one of the suspects in the murder case, is on CID remand.

Debnath, 55, joint secretary of the ministry of LGRD, was stabbed to death by muggers near the Struggle for Independence Sculpture on the road intersection between the SM Hall and Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University in the morning of January 11.

Shukur Ali, also a suspect in the murder, had already made a judicial statement admitting that he and eight others killed Debnath.

The CID is now interrogating six people including Mujib, Rana, Sobel, Din Islam, Shahinor and Morshed on the basis of Shukur Ali's confessional statement.

Shahinor and Morshed were taken on a fresh four-day remand on Monday. The rest will be produced before the court today with prayers of further remand, police said.

FM tells newsmen on return Barbed wire fencing by India to affect ties

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said erection of barbed wire fence along the border by India would "affect the relations between the two neighbouring countries," reports UNB.

"I will find out why it is being done," he said refusing to elaborate further.

Bangladesh and India have a border stretching more than 4,000 kilometers. India said last week that it was fencing parts of the border to stop cross-border smuggling and trespassing.

The Foreign Minister was addressing a press conference in his office on return from Oman where he attended an extra-ordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation.

He said he had talks with his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh in Muscat who expressed the desire to lead his country's delegation to the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission meeting in Dhaka, which has not held during the last 3 years.

"We agreed when we met in Oman that the commission should meet immediately in Dhaka at a mutually convenient time," Azad said.

On SAARC Summit that was postponed late last year at the behest of India, Azad said, "some uncertainties looms large". However, Bangladesh and other members were trying to find ways to hold the summit.

Constitutionally the summit can only be held with participation of all the seven member states. The situation in Pakistan is a matter of discussion. Both United Nations and Commonwealth have condemned the military take over there, Azad said.

"We cannot wait for much time, and we are trying to find out ways on the basis of the SAARC constitution... This will not be a permanent deadlock," he added.

The Foreign Minister said the signing of extradition treaty with Canada is underway to bring back the killers of Bangabandhu who are absconding there.

Discussions were held with USA to bring back the killers who are absconding there also, Azad said.

Asked if Dhaka and Washington will sign extradition treaty before President Clinton's visit, Azad said, "let's see. They are examining. We gave our proposal and are working on this."

At least two former army officers condemned to death along with 13 others, are believed to have been staying in USA.

Opposition to observe 'Democracy Killing Day' today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will observe "Democracy Killing Day" across the country today to mark the introduction of BKSAL system.

On this day (Jan 24) in 1975, the then Awami League government had introduced one-party BKSAL system abolishing all other political parties and closing down newspapers, excepting four 'national dailies'.

To mark the day, the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya dote will organise separate discussion meetings in the city.

Mainstream opposition BNP will hold a discussion meeting at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium at 3 pm. BNP central leaders and professionals will address the function.

JP will organise a discussion meeting at the party's central office Kalabagan at 7 pm today. City JP president Saifur Rahman and general secretary Taibur Rahman in a statement have asked party's leaders and activists to attend the programme.

Jamaat will arrange a discussion meeting at its city office at 4:30pm today. Jamaat secretary general Matiuur Rahman Nizami will address the function as chief guest.

IOJ will organise a discussion meeting at its Pura Paltan office premises after the Asr prayers today. Central leaders will speak at the function.

Shikdar case Spl court starts functioning today

By Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 24: The Special Court set up for trying all murder cases against notorious terrorist Ershad Shikdar and his accomplices will start functioning tomorrow.

The District and Sessions' Judge, Khulna has given necessary instructions to other courts to transfer all the case dockets to the Special Court, enabling it to start the trial from tomorrow.

"According to a source, 400 cases were under trial till January 23 in the Additional District and Sessions' Judge (first court). Of these, trial of only 30 cases are at final stage."

The District and Sessions' Judge, Khulna has also ordered for transfer of all but the 30 cases to other courts.

Business bid fails

From page 1

natives to its hartial and road barricade programmes, which affect business in the country.

Khaleda Zia said BNP had first offered dialogue on its four-point demand, but the government ignored it and unilaterally held Chittagong City Corporation polls and is planning to go ahead with other local body polls.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said the ruling party has now offered dialogue as it has become isolated from the people and is sensing its imminent fall. "The government has lost its credibility because of its acts and we have no confidence on its dialogue game."

Khaleda Zia also blasted the FEDCI leaders for taking any initiative for dialogue earlier. "Why you are asking us to sit for dialogue now... Why didn't you say anything earlier... Are we responsible for the present crisis?"

There can be no dialogue with this government because it has kept over 10,000 BNP activists in jail, filed false cases against 70,000 leaders and workers and killed another 300 in the last four years. We can not sit for dialogue keeping our party men in jails."

She said there is no necessity of holding dialogue on the one-point demand because there are provisions in the Constitution how to resign and hand over power to a caretaker administration.

The Opposition leader said dialogue can only be held with the caretaker government. There are many issues including reorganisation of the Election Commission and appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner to be settled.

The BNP Chairperson and ministers and AL leaders and activists speak indecent and use vulgar words. Their language both on streets and in parliament is vulgar. They have not changed their habit and culture. Even their chief speaks indecent," she said.

One of the reasons for Opposition's abstention from attending parliament session is their "indecent and vulgar language," she added.

The BNP Chairperson said hartal is called because the Opposition is not allowed to speak in parliament and stage demonstrations on streets to protest government's "anti-state and anti-people activities".

Awami League, while in opposition, had called 175 days of hartal and kept the port closed for over a month, she claimed.

"We do not want to follow them. We believe in democracy. But what we can do if we are not allowed to speak either the parliament or on the street?"

The former prime minister said the government has signed the Gages Water Sharing Treaty and the CHT agreement "against the interest of the country" and is now "conspiring to give corridor facility to India ignoring people's opposition". India will definitely transport arms and ammunition and troops to its seven North Eastern states to suppress independence movement there, she alleged.

"Bangladesh's security will be at stake if India is given corridor, and as leader of the Opposition, I can not keep mum," she added.

Referring to businessmen's suggestion for 'long march', road march, hunger strike and public rallies, she said BNP's long march convoy towards Chittagong Hill Tracts was halted by ruling party men "at Kanchpur for about ten hours and attacked at Peni and other places. They also raped women robbed stranded passengers, she alleged.

The government had also obstructed BNP's road march towards Panchagarh near the Jamuna Bridge on the plea that BNP might demolish the bridge. "Can you (businessmen) imagine this? We have constructed the bridge and is it possible for us to demolish it? Only terrorists can think of it."

Presided over by FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo, the conference was also addressed by BNP leaders M Saifur Rahman MP, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP, M Shamsul Islam MP and Redwan Ahmed.

Business leaders including former FBCCI presidents Yusuf Abdullah Harun and Salman F Rahman, BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha, MCC President Latifur Rahman, DCCI President Aftabul Islam and Chittagong Chamber President Kamaluddin Ahmed also addressed the conference. Parliament members, politicians and large number of businessmen attended the conference.

Showcouse on Biman, govt By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed Bangladesh Biman authorities and the government to show cause why the orders terminating First Officer Yasmin Rahman and giving retirement to Captain Ishfaqur Rahman should not be declared to have been issued without any lawful authority.

The HC also ordered stay of the order for retirement of Captain Rahman.

Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice MM Hoque and Justice Md Abdur Rashid passed the orders upon two separate writ petitions.

Yasmin Rahman in the younger sister of Col (ret) Faruq Rahman who has been sentenced to death in the Bangabandhu murder case and Captain Ishfaqur Rahman is her husband.

Biman authorities terminated Yasmin on January 4 with notice pay instead of serving three months' notice on her.

On the same day, her husband was given retirement with all benefits as he completed 25 years of service.

Hasina to attend One Asia Assembly in Kuala Lumpur

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been invited to attend the One Asia Assembly to be organised by the Press Foundation of Asia (PFA) in January 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reports UNB.

The PFA, based in Manila, has been organising the One Asia Assembly once in a decade since 1970 to bring together leading journalists, entrepreneurs, economists, scientists and political leaders of Asia-Pacific countries to promote better understanding of Asia's urgent problems and issues.

Khairul Bashar, the newly-appointed Secretary General of the PFA, extended the invitation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when he, along with a delegation of PFA, called on Prime Minister at her Sangsaddhaban office yesterday.

The Prime Minister has accepted the invitation to attend the fourth One Asia Assembly in Kuala Lumpur early next year, which will be inaugurated by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, said a PFA press release. She thanked the PFA Secretary General for inviting her.

Hasina appreciated the activities of the PFA and assured it of all cooperation in implementing PFA's programmes in Bangladesh for the improvement of journalism.

Other members of the PFA delegation were, Editor of Desh Magazine, Calcutta Amitabh Chowdhury, Independent Editor and President PFA Bangladesh Chapter Mahbubul Alam, Observer Editor and General Secretary PFA Bangladesh Chapter Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Treasurer PFA Bangladesh Chapter Chapal Bashar.

BSS added: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was happy to know that Khairul Bashar was the second media personality from Bangladesh to have become chief executive of the PFA after late SM Ali, who served the organisation as its chief executive from 1978 to 1982.

The Bangladesh Chapter of PFA was launched on Sunday evening at a function at a city hotel.

A reception was also accorded to Khairul Bashar and Amitabh Chowdhury.

State Minister for Information Prof. Abu Sayeed, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami, Chairman of Press Council Justice Habibur Rahman Khan, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Deb Mukharjee, Vice Chairman of Bar Council Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim and Director General of Bangladesh Betar MI Chowdhury were present.

Among the editors and senior journalists, Barrister Moazzam Hossain, AZM Enayetullah Khan, A Toab Khan, Mahfuz Anam, Rahat Khan, Atiqullah Khan Masud, Bazul Rahman, Zakaria Khan, Haroon Habib, Sayed Kamaluddin, Golam Tahaboor, Moazzem Hossain, Zahiduzzaman Faruque, Farid Hossain and Benzir Ahmed attended the reception.

BCL activist shot in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 24: A BCL activist of the Islamia College unit in the city, was shot here this evening, police said.

Manik Das came under attack by the assailants at Sadarghat area at 7 pm today while he was returning home, police added.

He was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The attack was a sequel to an intra-party rivalry, police sources said.

However, tension mounted at Sadarghat area after the incident, sources said. Additional police force was deployed there.

Hons exam held peacefully

By Staff Correspondent

The 1998 honours part-III examination under National University was held peacefully yesterday, despite threats from certain students to foil the exam.

"According to the information we have received, the first day of the honours part-III examination held peacefully all over the country," said Amal Kanti Sen, an examination section official.

About 25,000 students from 131 honours colleges took part in the exam, which was held at 90 centres across the country.

The exam was supposed to be held on Nov. 11, 1999, but was rescheduled to December 11 after protests by students who wanted more time to prepare.

The students claimed they didn't have enough time to prepare, since the results of the previous honours part-II examination were published on December 23.

Authorities at the National University decided to hold the Honours part III examination in June 2000 to give more time to the less prepared students.

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