

Law soon to 'wipe out' polybags from Mar 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to enact a new law to ban production, marketing and use of all types of polythene shopping bags in the country from March 1.

Official sources said the Ministry of Environment and Forest has already prepared a draft of the law and is expected to place it in tomorrow's cabinet meeting for approval.

The enactment of the proposed new legislation is being pursued on an urgent basis as production and marketing of polythene shopping bags has continued unabated despite a ban on marketing and use of thin polybags in Dhaka City already in place since January 1.

Officials said producers continued massive production and marketing of slightly thicker bags that have flooded the markets.

Sources said the Environment Ministry in its draft of the law will be proposing amendments to the existing environment-related laws and adding new articles to permanently stop production, marketing and use of polybags all over the country.

The ministry in the draft proposes both jail and fine for production, marketing and also use of polybags with a maximum 10-year jail term for production and marketing along with a huge fine, and a token fine of maximum Tk 500 for use of polybags. The draft law has also proposed setting up mobile courts for summary trial on the spot.

After cabinet's approval, the draft will be sent to the Law Ministry for formulation of the law and placed in the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

However, there will be no restriction on other polythene as well as plastic products. Also polybags produced solely for export will remain outside the purview of the ban.

A study of the Environment Ministry said around 129 million polybags are produced in the country daily. Since polythene bags are not biodegradable, they remain intact in the ground for a very long time and destroy soil fertility.

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Khaleda for political consensus on socio-economic issues

UNB, Dhaka

Political parties may have differences but none of them should indulge in or promote activities, that are likely to disunite the people and divide the nation, said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday.

In a passionate appeal she said, "Let us remove the sick environment of estrangement and hostile rivalry in our domestic spheres, foster national unity and co-ordination."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a discussion on "Towards a Liberal Political, Economic and Cultural Order Perspective," organised by the weekly Holiday at Hotel Sheraton.

Pointing to the rapidly changing world of multi-cultural interaction, Khaleda Zia said, "With united

strengthen, we can establish our due place in the comity of nations."

"Our social development and economic progress will be ensured if we remain united and strong," she said adding that the world is moving faster today than any time in the past. "Our success and failure as a nation and state depends on our keeping pace with others."

The Prime Minister told the journalists and members of the intellectual community that they could best help in forging national unity by their writings. They should tell the nation that people could maintain national unity overcoming instigation of division, conflict and chaos.

Eminent economist Debapriya

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Don't wail to cover up own failures: Kibria

UNB, Dhaka

Former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria said his successor could formulate a revised budget instead of finding faults with the current one presented by Awami League government and "wailing publicly to cover up his own failures" in managing the economy.

"What stopped him from submitting a revised budget for eight months?" Kibria asked, reminding M Saifur Rahman of the new budget submitted by him (Kibria) in August 1996 revising the interim budget prepared by the preceding caretaker government.

Kibria was talking to UNB when it approached him for comments on

the observations of the Finance and Planning Minister that the 2001-02 budget, prepared by Awami League government, is "totally false" in the eyes of lending agencies.

Listing lapses on the part of his successor in the changed situation Kibria referred to absence of corrective measures to cope with post-September 11 global changes, negotiations for conditional loans from IMF and failure to prepare a homegrown plan for structural reform.

The ex-finance minister warned that Saifur would have to bear the consequences of dragging the country into deeper economic recession.

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Clarification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The IFIC Bank yesterday issued a clarification on a news item headlined "BAC detects alleged smuggling of US dollar 14 lakh in Narayanganj" published in The Daily Star on January 31.

The clarification said that on January 30, the Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) filed case not against IFIC Bank but against the importers and guarantor.

The bank has all the required documents which prove that it was not at all involved in any kind of irregularities in connection with the alleged incident, it said.

"IFIC Bank did not violate any Bangladesh Bank regulations or any other law and also did not undertake any irregular transactions", it added.

Five abducted schoolgirls rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five schoolgirls abducted allegedly for trafficking abroad were rescued by police from a shanty in the city's Lalbagh area yesterday.

The victims -- all aged around nine years of class five at a school in Savar.

An unidentified woman collected the minor girls from their village and brought them to the city. An organised gang of traffickers is behind the mischief, police suspect.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Lalbagh police headed by officer-in-charge Ruhul Amin raided a shanty beside the embankment at Shahid

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Top PBCP leader held with arms in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Phultala thana police arrested Mostafa Karikar alias Mosto, 38, a top leader of the Tapan group of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) on Friday and recovered a shutter gun loaded with a cartridge from his possession.

Mostafa was arrested while coming out of a mosque at Noapara under Abhoynagar thana of Jessore.

OC of Phultala thana Md. Shah Alam said Mostafa is an accused in seven murder cases recorded with Phultala thana.

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Malibagh incident Ex-MP Dr Iqbal granted anticipatory bail

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to former Awami League MP Dr H B M Iqbal for three months.

Dr Iqbal yesterday surrendered before a division bench of the High Court and submitted a petition praying for anticipatory bail.

A division bench comprising Justice A K Badrul Haque and Justice Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed granted the bail and issued a rule asking the government to show cause why the petitioner should not be granted permanent bail.

An incident of clash took place when two processions of Awami League and BNP met each other at

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Dipu Chowdhury gets bail in abduction case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday granted bail to Sajedul Islam alias Dipu Chowdhury, son of former state minister for shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa granted bail in one of the three criminal cases.

The court passed the order upon a bond of Tk 30,000 with two guarantors.

In its order, the court mentioned that the charges brought against Dipu were not primarily proved and the complainant of the case did not mention the name of Dipu Chowdhury in the FIR. So, the petition for bail is granted.

The defence lawyers submitted

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Two asthma patients receiving treatment at the Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (IDCH) at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

Gasping for air ...

Lone asthma hospital limping: Most patients don't get treatment

NAIMUL HAQ

Eighty-five-year old Nurul Haq has been suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or acute asthma for the last one year and a half and his condition has deteriorated this winter.

Now he cannot breathe normally and has to depend on life saving drugs and oxygen mask almost regularly for survival.

Nurul Haq is one of the large number patients, mostly above 70, who suffer like him and almost two thirds of them go without proper medicare, said doctors at the Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (IDCH) at Mahakhali in the city. It is the only hospital for treatment of asthma.

Experts say about seventy lakh people in the country suffer from asthma. They suffer badly during the winter, as cold triggers narrowing of smaller wind-pipes of the lungs, resulting in breathing problem. There are other factors also, but cold is the major one.

Patients at the IDCH now do not get required drugs, mostly inhalers, from government supply and have to

buy those on their own.

The Asthma Centre run by the Asthma Association of Bangladesh with government support arranges a limited supply of 'short prion' inhalers. A small number of poor patients at the hospital are given those free of cost.

Nurul Haq, who hails from Faridpur district, was brought to the hospital on Wednesday as his condition turned critical. For temporary relief, he was given oxygen, hydrocortisone injection and nebuliser solution to enable him to breathe.

"In fact, there are no emergency treatment facilities at the hospital for those who suffer from acute asthma or COPD. Life saving drugs are also not available regularly at the intensive care unit of the hospital," said one doctor seeking anonymity.

He went on, "Asthma and COPD patients regularly require preventive steroid drugs like Asmacort, Beclofort, Beclomin, Seritide, Decomit, Tylade, Intal and solutions Respolin and Nebuliser. But we get no supply of the drugs from the government."

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