

Proposed Persian centre DU urged to change site, not to chop down trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some eminent citizens yesterday asked the Dhaka University authorities to change the site for a centre for Persian studies from the open space between the central library and the DUCSU building.

Addressing a solidarity rally organised by the 'Students Unity Against Unplanned Installation' (SUAI) on the campus yesterday, they said if the centre is built on the proposed site, it would damage the environment of the campus.

Dr MM Akash of the economics department of the university said, "We cannot allow construction of a building on the campus by chopping down trees."

"A big project has been taken to construct the proposed centre. But what is the necessity of it?" he asked. "We need to consider its social, economic and environmental necessity."

Prof. Mozaffar Ahmed said the natural beauty of Dhaka University is now at stake due to unplanned and unnecessary constructions on the campus.

"A section of the authorities is desperately trying to construct buildings haphazardly, putting at

stake the existing environment-friendly atmosphere of the campus," he alleged.

He said the DU authorities should seek opinions both from the teachers and the students before construction of any building on the campus.

Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury said a centre should not be constructed just because fund is available.

"We are not against the centre, but it should not be constructed haphazardly," he said and urged the DU authorities to select an alternative site for the proposed building.

Student leaders addressing the rally said they want to see more trees, not brick blocks on the campus.

They also termed the idea of constructing the centre 'anti-environmental' and urged the authorities to shift site elsewhere.

They said hundreds of students use the green space for leisure and studies during their stay on the campus.

The university authorities selected the open space last month for the Centre for Persian Studies and decided to cut down 19 trees.

Mayoral candidates

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is no congenial atmosphere for polls," Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman told The Daily Star last night.

Alleging that the Chief Election Commissioner not a neutral person, zillur said no election under him can be free and fair.

Since the announcement of polls schedule on March 12, aspirants in the four party alliance were lobbying hard to confirm party tickets both for the mayoral posts and the posts of word commissioner in the three metropolitan cities.

Mayoral candidates have to submit nomination papers with security deposit of Tk 5,000 each and those for the posts of commissioner have to submit nomination papers with security deposit of Tk 2000 each at the office of the respective returning officers (ROs) between 9 am and 4 pm.

The ROs will scrutinise those tomorrow and prepare draft lists of candidates. The Election Commission (EC) will announce the final lists of candidates after withdrawal of candidature on March 30.

The candidates would be allocated election symbols on the basis of their application or through lottery if more than one contender ask for the same symbol. The contestants will get 24 days for election campaign.

Earlier, the BNP-led four-party alliance had announced that it would contest the local body polls under one banner and that candidates for mayoral posts would be from BNP.

Housing and Public Works Minister and BNP leader Mirza Abbas and former FBCCI president Abdul Awal Minto also were DCC mayoral aspirants from the party.

Officially, elections of local bodies take place on non-party basis, but in reality the candidates take part in the race with the blessing of the party they belong to.

Since the main opposition AL and some other parties would not be in the polls race, aspirants from the ruling alliance think they would come out victorious once they get nomination.

Jatiya Party faction led by Nazir Rahman Manju and Jamaat-e-

Islami, two components of the ruling coalition, are likely to get alliance support in the polls race for a number of posts of ward commissioner.

There are 151 wards in three city corporations -- 90 in Dhaka, 31 in Khulna and 30 in Rajshai. Besides, there are 50 wards 30 in Dhaka and 10 each in Khulna and Rajshahi -- reserved for women commissioners, where direct election is taking place for the first time.

The Election Commission is now busy making preparations for the city corporation polls, being held more than three years after the expiry of tenures of the elected representatives. Elections were suspended due to court orders over fresh delimitation of some of the wards in the three city corporations.

The legal complexities were over a month ago as the court was informed of a government notification that nullified fresh delimitation.

Jatiya Party faction led by former president H M Ershad and some other small parties are participating the polls while Communist Party of Bangladesh and an alliance of left-leaning parties criticised the EC announcement of election schedule without any dialogue with the political parties.

Elephant

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trade in ivory.

Anwar Faruq, chief conservator of forest, told The Daily Star that he had given permission to kill the elephant on the basis of the 1997 order.

He also admitted that the forest department does not have specialists to declare an elephant rogue.

IUCN elephant expert Anisuzzaman Khan, who studied elephants in the early 1980s at Teknaf under a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) project, said before killing an elephant, careful study of its behavior must be done.

It should be captured with the help of tranquilliser gun, treated and then put back to its natural habitat.

Agargaon slum

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The area also attracts several hundreds of office-goers, who work for the Islamic Foundation, University Grants Commission, Passport and Immigration Office, Radio Bangladesh, National Orthopaedic Hospital, SPARSO and LGED.

Neither the slum dwellers nor the office-goers feel secured in the area. There is always the fear of falling prey to one crime or the other. "We can build up a strong resistance against the hoodlums if we get support from the law enforcers," many slum dwellers told this correspondent, who visited the area last Friday.

They believe that police can stop illegal drug trading and make the slum terrorist-free in only 24 hours, if they want to. But first, according to some, they have to stop taking bribes from the hoodlums.

All the secret agencies supposedly keep a 24-hour watch on the slum with a view to checking illegal drug trade and criminal activities.

However, this correspondent found that phensidyl was selling openly and there was nobody to check that.

A teashop owner said that anybody could come here to have drug.

Police swoop on buyers and sellers only after a crime incident takes place in the area, he complained.

"We are tortured by both the police and the criminals," he said. "While the criminals force some of us to work for them, police harass us in the name of raid."

Hundreds of youths visit the slum

everyday to buy phensidyl. They are also tortured by the law enforcers.

"Police arrest us instead of the sellers," one of the phensidyl buyers told this correspondent.

Several hundred residents of Agargaon recently brought out an anti-terrorism rally in the area demanding immediate stop of illegal drug peddling.

"We don't want to see anymore killing or mugging in the area. We also want to see the end of illegal drug trading for good," said Mizan Mollah, a resident of the area.

Moyeen Khan

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They alleged that Khan's portfolio was changed following pressure from a section of BNP leaders, particular those who have close link with the Hawa Bhaban, the election office of the BNP.

These BNP leaders brought allegations that files did not move at the information ministry during Khan's tenure and that he was also 'reluctant' to bring about changes in the ministry.

Meanwhile, after Monday's cabinet meeting, Khaleda made a note of Khan's absence, BNP sources said.

A number of ministers, including Information Minister Tariqul Islam, who replaced Khan, talked to him and asked him to take charge of the new portfolio. But Khan refused.

Despite repeated attempts, Khan could not be contacted for his comments. Family sources said he now spends most of his time at his constituency in Narsingdi.

Bangabandhu Murder Case referred to CJ

BSS, Dhaka

The prosecution prayer seeking hearing on the leave to appeal petitions of the defence in Bangabandhu Murder Trial was referred to the Chief Justice yesterday with recommendations for formation of an Appellate Division bench to hear the case.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin referred the petition to the Chief Justice with the recommendation following a hearing of the petition, filed last week by special public prosecutor Anisul Haque.

Four convicts of the case retired lieutenant colonels Syed Farook Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and Mohiuddin Ahmed (Artillery) and retired major Bazul Huda filed separate petitions for leave to appeal before the Appellate Division.

Hearing of the petitions could not be held for want of necessary number of Appellate Division judges.

Recently two more Judges were appointed in the Appellate Division, paving ways for hearing the case.

Doctor nabbed for alleged rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A doctor was arrested last night for his alleged involvement in rape in the city.

Dr. Ahsan Hafiz, 35, son of Abul Kashem and a resident of Uttar Pierbagh, allegedly raped a 17-year-old girl at Kamal Molla's slum in the same area on Friday night.

Last night, the victim filed a case with Mirpur Police Station against the doctor under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000.

The investigation officer of the case, Rawshan Ara, arrested the accused within an hour of filing of the case.

Ahsan Hafiz worked at the Nariya Health Complex in Shariatpur.

Sheltech

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rise buildings should be reviewed, updated and properly monitored. That will lead to well planned and orderly development of high-rise buildings. Such buildings would be able to cater to the growing demands of the city without affecting the environmental balance.

"The photographs published in the newspaper included Sheltech Tower at Panthapath. We would like to point out that this building has been constructed with proper RAJUK approval and in total compliance with the existing rules and regulations regarding high-rise construction. It would have been better if the reporters had known existing RAJUK regulations, some of which are inadequate. We would also like to point out we would definitely like to contribute to review, amendment and addition to these regulations, along with the bodies concerned (RAJUK, REHAB etc) and interested groups like you.

Our Reply:

According to the Managing Director of Sheltech, the Tower has a total of 14 residential apartments on seven top floors with 2,100 square metres of floor space. And the lower five floors of the 12-storey building have a commercial floor space of 1,400 square metres.

But according to our investigation, all the 14 car park facilities in the Tower's single basement are reserved for the 14 apartment owners of the building. The commercial part of the building does not have any parking facility and therefore most of the time visitors are forced to park on the road and footpath in front of it.

AL conspiring

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Sangsad as it might be feeling shy with its number of seats reduced to 57 in the last elections. She said in the October 1 general elections people have given reply through the ballots to the AL's five years of terrorism, plundering and misrule.

She said AL had let loose a reign of terror by distributing illegal weapons to its party men and these weapons are still being used by them.

Seeking cooperation of all, she said her government is determined to establish a terrorism-free Bangladesh as per its election pledge. She said anybody grabbing other's property would not be spared even if he happened to belong to her own party.

The prime minister said her government believes in communal harmony as the country was liberated through collective efforts of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. She said nothing happened in Bangladesh despite the recent incidents in India.

The Prime Minister said the focal point of development of her government would be the villages and with that purpose Gram Sarkar would be revived for development of the rural areas.

Separation of judiciary

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point court order to separate the judiciary, the government on March 17 sought a six-month extension of the deadline.

Commenting on whether any quarter was hindering the implementation of the 12-point directives, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday told the BBC, "No-one is hindering the implementation of the court order."

Separation of the judiciary was a complicated issue and there might be some administrative complications, which should be addressed beforehand, Moudud said justifying the government's repeated plea for extension of the deadline.

Countering Moudud's statements, ex-chief justice Mostafa Kamal told BBC that the government was clearly 'killing time' by forming a committee. "The government could have formed this committee when the court gave the verdict (in 1999)," said Kamal, who was chief justice when the verdict was given.

Kamal further noted that the government would gain nothing by killing time. A section of bureaucrats that has always kept the government away from the people has been delaying the whole process, he said.

The former chief justice believes that implementation of the 12-point order was not at all difficult. "I think they in fact have not read the verdict," he commented.

Six out of the seven members of the two-bench Appellate Division heard the government petition yesterday.

Attorney General AF Hasan Arif said the government has taken initiatives for separation of the judiciary and accordingly, a committee is now scrutinising the issue. "The matter is under implementation," he said, seeking a time extension.

Opposing the attorney general's submission, lawyer Dr. Kamal Hossain argued, "The government is compelled to implement the court order. There is no scope for re-fixation of a deadline."

Yesterday's court order said the government has formed a cabinet committee apparently to scrutinise the issue of 'separation of judiciary' although the court order did not ask it to separate the judiciary. Rather, it asked the government to implement a specific set of 12 directives.

Legal experts told The Daily Star that the full separation of the judiciary would require an amendment to the constitution. But the 12-point

Nasim may be quizzed

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before the court in order to satisfy that he has not been physically tortured.

The Court had also directed the authority to allow two of Nasim's nearest relatives and two lawyers to meet him in the jail hajot and also to form a medical board for him.

An affidavit was filed yesterday on behalf of the government saying Bahauddin Nasim has not been physically tortured nor given to police remand since he was produced before the CMM Court.

It further said a 3-member medical board headed by Prof Abu Mahmud was formed to examine Nasim following the court order. The board found no marks of physical torture on Nasim. It found his condition normal except minor problem in his spinal cord, which it termed a disease.

Barrister Tania Amir appearing for Nasim expressed concern that he (Nasim) has not been produced before the court as per court order of March 10.

The court desired for expeditious hearing on the rule in presence of Nasim and advised the counsel to file petition for its urgent hearing.

Meanwhile, the family members of Nasim have decided will go on hunger strike if he is not released immediately.

Nasim's wife said this while talking to reporters after the family members and relatives formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Police, however, obstructed

them while forming the human chain demanding unconditional release of Bahauddin Nasim.

About 100 people including women and children took part in the 20-minute programme.

"Police tried to foil our peaceful protest," Dr Sultana said adding "This is also violation of human rights."

One murdered at Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man was murdered at the Mirpur-1 bus stand in the city last night.

Mohammad Babul, 28, son of Bazlu Ali Sikder of North Bishil, was found slain at the bus stand at about 8:45pm.

"I found him lying in a pool of blood and some local people forced me to take the body to the hospital," Sagar, a local youth, said at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The young man, however, could not say anything more about the incident.

The DMCH doctors declared him dead on arrival and the body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

"We don't have any information about homicide," the duty officer of Mirpur Police Station said at 10.00 last night.

5.2 revised growth rate

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Bangladesh Bank (BB) in its annual report released yesterday put last fiscal's GDP growth rate at 5.2 per cent against 5.9 per cent in fiscal 1999-00.

The BB in its report also mentioned that the GDP growth rate was according to the revised provisional estimate of the BBS, done in February 2002.

The GDP growth rate in fiscal 2000-01 "touched 5.2 per cent" because of "satisfactory agriculture growth and increased industrial activities, bypassing the hesitancy of the previous year," the BB annual report said.

On future growth prospect, the BB apprehended that GDP growth in current fiscal (2001-02) would decline due to global recession that has cast a negative impact on the country's export and industry.

There is also doubt that growth rate in agriculture sector would continue as it mostly depends on

favourable natural condition, the BB said.

Apart from the export slump, there are weaknesses in the import sector, which indicate decrease in revenue collection from this source, the BB said. "If steps are not taken to squeeze government expenditure, the scale of budget deficit will increase."

It said, "In the wake of weak growth probability, if domestic credit supply is not tightened significantly, the downward trend in net foreign asset (and gross foreign exchange reserve) will be intensified, further accelerating balance of payment imbalance and crisis," the BB said.

The central bank opined that the domestic credit tightening measure should be for the government's unproductive and low priority sectors, without hurting productive private sector activities and government's poverty reduction activities.

However, the BB said, "Impact of the credit tightening measure will

definitely would virtually separate the judiciary, and it would require no constitutional amendment.

Yesterday's order noted that as per Article 112 of the constitution there is no way out but to implement the directives.

"Since November, 1999 the government is taking time on this plea or that for implementation of the directives. Now it is submitted that already one of the directives as regards financial power of the Supreme Court has been implemented and on the other directives three other rules have been drafted and these are being examined by a committee," it said.

"...When the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs has already drafted the rules and the proposed amendment, seeking of six months' extension cannot be found to be a reasonable time when the order was passed in November 1999. But as already a committee has been formed only to look into the matter of separation of judiciary from the executive wing we are of the view that there cannot be any impediment in implementation of other directives," the court order added.

Fire kills 3 in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

Three people including a woman were burnt to death in a devastating fire at Narayanpur village in Daudkandi upazila in the early hours yesterday.

The victims were identified as Rabeya Khatun, 51, Shafi Alam, 18, and Abu Sadek, 16.

Police said the fire broke out at the house of one Mostafa Mia at about 2 am and quickly spread to nearby houses. Mostafa's two sons Alam and Sadek and aunt Rabeya died on the spot.

Neighbours rushed to the spot, extinguished the fire and recovered the bodies from the debris.

The cause of the fire could not be known immediately. A case was filed with local police.

On the same night, 12 shops were burnt to ashes and some others damaged partially in another fire at Bangra Bazar in Muradnagar upazila.

Hasina

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autocratic rule'.

"That day is not far away when we will see the end of the fascist regime", she said.

The countrymen should launch an all-out mass movement like that of 1971 to oust the 'terrorist government', she said.

Girders of rest of footbridges safe, claim builders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Girders of the eight under-construction footbridges in the city, except the two already removed from the one at Science Laboratory crossing, are safe and need not be pulled down, the builder said yesterday.

Two of the 11 girders were removed from the Science Laboratory footbridge on Monday night as those were yet to be placed in 'pockets' in the overhead structure, said Abdul Gafur MP, owner of the construction firm, Surma International.

The rest of the girders there and in other under-construction footbridges "are properly placed in pockets and pose to danger", the ruling party lawmaker said.

But if the government decides that pre-stretched technology (used in construction of the eight footbridges) will not be used at all, all the structures will have to be dismantled, he said.

The ministries of communication and LGRD and the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) are investigating Thursday's collapse of a girder from the Science Laboratory footbridge in which two persons were killed. The government will decide the fate of the footbridges and the construction firm after the reports are submitted to the respective authorities, possibly tomorrow, sources said.

DCC engineers however said earlier that the accidents on Thursday and on November 26 at

Uttara took place due to "total lack of professionalism and gross negligence" by the construction firm.

They had said that the two 60-ton girders which collapsed were "kept loose and totally unattended for over three months". This was a "criminal offence" by the firm because it ignored repeated warning letters from DCC engineers.

Gafur however suspected that the two accidents could be acts of sabotage.

"The slabs fell because someone made those flexible. There is no doubt about it", he told the newsmen at his Dilkusha business office.

He also said that negligence by technicians and supervisors might have caused the accidents.

He appealed to all concerned to refrain from making comments and statements which will create confusion and fear among people.

Replying to the question, he said three persons of his firm have been suspended following the accidents.

About the nine warning letters issued by DCC, Gafur said, "Contents of the letters were not true. They just told us that some slabs were risky, but did not complain about the quality of the work".

He said he has already spent about Tk five crore in the project and will incur a huge loss if the project is cancelled. Bringing down the slabs is also a very expensive and risky work, he said.

Alamgir remanded

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Police said Alamgir assured the investigators that he would "give more information regarding his involvement". But Alamgir denied this. He had left the country shortly after the October election.

Seeking his bail and cancellation of the remand prayer, the defense lawyer said,

"Alamir was implicated in the incident as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically. Police failed to bring any specific charge against him till yesterday".

Alamgir told the court, "Airport police took me on a two-day remand but they kept me at the cantonment illegally".

He said he was kept in the custody for more than 24 hours and was not given any bed sheet or pillow. He was not given diabetic medicine kept in his briefcase. Asked about the reason, the investigation officer told him of directive from higher authorities, Alamgir told the court.

"I left the country on October 4 last year for Singapore for treatment of diabetes. Later I went to USA to meet my two sons. I returned home from there", Alamgir said.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petition and proposed his remand. Hearing both the sides, Magistrate Kazi Meraj rejected the bail petition and placed him on two days' remand.

Police detained Alamgir on his arrival at Zia International Airport at 10.30 on Friday night. He was then taken to the office of Special Branch of police and was kept there till he was produced before court on

New Naval base

FROM PAGE 12

Chittagong, BNS Titumir in Khulna, BNS Haji Mohsin in Dhaka, BNS Shahid Moazzem in Kapitai and BNS Bhatiani in Chittagong.

Earlier, on her arrival at BNS Parade Ground, the PM was received by Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Abu Taher and Khulna Area Commissioner Commodore H Rashid. A smart contingent of Bangladesh Navy presented her with a guard of honour. She inspected the guard and took salute.

The PM unveiled the plaques of the Naval Base BNS Mongla and nameplates of the two vessels.

Commissioning pendants, Bangladesh national flag and naval ensign were hoisted at the mast-head of the ships as a mark of their induction in Bangladesh Navy.

The Prime Minister formally handed over the commissioning forms to commanding officer of BNS Mongla Commander ATGM Sarker, Commanding Officer of BNS Agradoot Lt. Commander MA Ahad and Commanding Officer of BNS Salam Lt. Commander M Waluillah.

Khaleda Zia said the naval force advanced one step ahead through addition of this naval base and commissioning of the two ships.

She said the new base aimed to prevent smuggling in this region, protect the Sundarbans, check piracy, extend assistance in the overall activities to Mongla seaport and provide logistic support to the patrolling ships in the western sea boundary.

The Prime Minister hoped that naval officers and sailors would work sincerely to attain the goal.

Saying that the country's huge sea area is abundant with

resources, Khaleda hoped that BNS Agradoot will play a remarkable role in researches related to exploring gas, hydrocarbon and other sea resources.

The commissioning ceremony over, the Prime Minister went to the Mazar of Hazrat Khanjahan Ali in Bagerhat, offered feteha there and prayed for peace, welfare and progress of the people and the nation.

Later, she laid the foundation stone of Muniganj Bridge over the river Bhairab in Sadar upazila.

Ahad murder

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abducting since the incident.

Sergeant Ahad was shot dead when he tried to nab a gang of dacoits near Shapla Chatter under Motijheel thana in the city on October 28, 1999.

Sub-Inspector Mesbahuddin filed a murder case with Motijheel thana accusing 7 people including Kangali Jakir and Kana Jakir the same day.

The Investigation Officer of the case submitted a chargesheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka against 13 people including Kangali Jakir on June 13, last year. In the chargesheet 33 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

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