

HC orders end to earth filling at Ashuliya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Jamuna Builders Ltd. to immediately stop earth filling in Ashuliya flood flow zone on the outskirts of the city.

The directive followed a writ petition filed by the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA).

The BELA petition said the earth filling in Ashuliya by Jamuna Builders and other developers for housing projects was not approved by the RAJUK.

This was also violation of RAJUK's Master Plan for Dhaka city and the Conservation of Open Space and Wetland Act, 2000 which aims at protecting open space and prohibits filling up of flood flow zones.

The Act also prohibits activities that would change the nature of water bodies including flood flow zones, BELA said.

The petition was moved by Dr Kamal Hossain with advocates Syeda Rizwana Hassan, Tanjib Alam and Iqbal Kabir on behalf of BELA.

BJC properties up for sale to NRBs

UNB, Dhaka

The government has offered special rebate to expatriate Bangladeshis for selling properties of the defunct Bangladesh Jute Corporation in foreign currencies.

The buyers can set up industries or housing estates, said an official handout yesterday.

It said local entrepreneurs could also buy the lands through tenders and avail of the rebate by making payment at one go.

The fresh offer was finalised at a meeting yesterday presided over by Jute Minister Major (rt) Hafizuddin Ahmed that made the policy amendments for sale of BJC's 182 properties in different parts of the country.

Under the amended policy, the properties sold would be handed over to buyers after full payment.

The amendments were made for implementing the commitment made by the prime minister to expatriate Bangladeshis living in Australia.

A list of properties and other information will be made available in Bangladesh missions abroad for the convenience of the expatriates.

State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Kamrul Islam and secretary of the ministry Dalil Uddin Mondal, Jute secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal and representatives from Finance Ministry attended the meeting.

15 clinic staff fall sick after taking sweets

CU CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 staff including nurses of a clinic in the port city fell sick after taking sweetmeats bought from a shop Friday afternoon.

Five of them in critical condition were admitted to the clinic -- Sarjicop Clinic - near the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Sources said an employee of the clinic bought the sweetmeats from a fast food and sweetmeat shop -- Amman Foods -- and distributed those among the staff members. Soon after taking those, at least 15 of them fell sick.

The reason behind this and other details could not be known immediately.

Doctors at the clinic said those who fell sick are 'now out of danger.' They also said 'some substances' might have been mixed with the sweetmeats, but those were not 'poisonous.'

The director of the clinic was not available for comment.

No case was filed in this connection.



PHOTO: STAR

Death in waiting...an open 11,000-volt power transformer stationed at Tallapara in Rayar Bazar may cause fatal accidents anytime, be there the 'Danger' sign or not.

Flood worsens as major rivers rise

STAR REPORT

Rise in the water level of major rivers at different points yesterday has worsened the flood situation in the country.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the Brahmaputra and the Jamuna rose at all points and the Padma at Goalanda. The Mohananda registered slight rise at Chapai Nawabganj.

Water flow in the Brahmaputra basin could cross the danger level at six points very soon, said an expert.

The water level of the Jamuna would also cross the danger level at the Aricha point within a few days, he added.

However, the expert ruled out a severe flood in the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins this year.

Minister for Water Resources LK

Siddiqui at a press conference yesterday echoed a similar sentiment.

The Brahmaputra rose by 13 centimetres at Noonkhawa and 17 centimetres at Chilmar.

The Jamuna rose by eight cm at Bahadurabad, 11cm at Sirajganj and 10cm at Aricha.

However, according to latest flood forecast bulletin, water level of all the rivers in the southeastern hill basin and most in the Meghna basin marked significant fall.

The Surma level fell by 14cm at Kanaighat and 7cm at Sylhet.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that flood has affected over two lakh people of the Monirampur Upazila in Jessore and many of them are starving, as relief is yet to reach them.

According to local administration, 252,000 people in 209 villages

of Monirampur have been marooned due to continuous downpour.

Over 4,000 men, women and children of 493 families have been rendered homeless.

Our correspondent from Rangpur reports that flood situation across the northern region has aggravated due to rise of all major rivers following heavy downpour.

Local Water development Board (WDB) officials said although the Brahmaputra, Dharla teesta and Ganges were flowing below the danger mark, they might cross it any moment if onrush of water from upper stream continued.

Fresh areas in Gaibandha district have also been inundated and seven Upazilas in the district have been affected by the current flood.

Maheshkhal bus plunge toll rises to seven

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The death toll from Friday's bus plunge into the Maheshkhal canal in Bandar thana area rose to seven with recovery of four more bodies yesterday.

The ill-fated bus was salvaged but no body was found inside, police said.

Divers of Bangladesh Navy recovered two bodies from Karpaphuli river, where the canal flows into. These are of Shahaj Parveen Lucky,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Former ward commissioner succumbs to bullet wound

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abul Kashem, former ward commissioner of ward No. 51, who was shot and injured in the city's Sobhanbagh area on June 3, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Kashem was injured when an armed youth shot him in the chest and back while he was taking a morning walk around 6:30am on the day.

Critically injured, Kashem was admitted to the DMCH. His condition however, continued to deteriorate. After struggling for 40 days, he succumbed to his injuries at about 8:45pm yesterday.

Sources said, Kashem had rivalries with some of his relatives over land properties at the Sobhanbagh area.

Zafar Iqbal, the victim's brother-in-law, took away the body from the DMCH morgue at 2:30pm after an autopsy was completed.

Split gas body avoids marking priorities

STAR REPORT

The National Committee on Utilisation of Gas will submit its report without prioritising the options as its members have become sharply divided over the export issue.

The committee's chairman -- former secretary Azimuddin Ahmed-- is likely to place the report in the next meeting of the committee next Saturday for comments by the members.

Meantime, at a meeting yesterday's, the members argued about the country financial ability to purchase gas produced by the international oil companies (IOCs) under production sharing contracts (PSCs), and whether or not Bangladesh can export gas to India.

The rift among the members surfaced at a crucial meeting last week when one of the members -- Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya of the Centre for Policy Dialogue -- presented an economic analysis with a set of

prioritised options for gas utilisation.

The analysis contradicts projections by the IOCs and the donors and shows that Bangladesh can pay for the IOC gas without much difficulty.

It also suggests that all current gas discoveries by both Petrobangla and the international oil companies (IOCs) should be retained for domestic energy consumption as there would be an acute energy crisis in the near future. Pipeline export should be considered in the future only if a new gas field is discovered, which saturates demand.

The analysis showed that the government would have to pay around two to three per cent of its revenue budget for the IOC gas till 2020. This would have little impact on the country's balance of trade contrary to the claims of the IOCs. For, the IOC gas payment would account for between 0.6 per cent and three per cent of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Commercial wings abroad to get new feathers

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is bringing changes to the commercial wings of different missions abroad to increase the volume of exports.

Some officials have been recalled as their tenures ended recently. Others have been called back for poor performances, according to sources.

Of the 17 commercial wings in Bangladesh missions, changes will take place in at least eight.

The Ministry of Commerce will appoint new officials to the post of first secretary in charge of commerce and as commercial councilors to the missions. They will look after trade related issues with the countries concerned.

According to sources three officials posted in the commercial wings of London, Kolkata and Kuala Lumpur, in 1997, have already been recalled. The process to replace them has started.

The commerce ministry official in Ottawa, posted as first secretary, has also been recalled. He had taken a two years extension during the care taker government.

The government is planning to close a commercial post in London and open a similar one in Agartala, India, for the increasing commercial importance of the area to the country.

When contacted a high official in the commerce ministry admitted that some changes are taking place

in the posts in Bangladesh Missions abroad, but adding it was a routine work of the government.

He claimed only the officials who have completed their tenures have been called back.

According to sources the commerce ministry has already called 24 officials for an interview to replace those posts which would be vacant.

The interview would take place on July 16, according to the sources. The commerce ministry sources said the appointment would be given on the basis of seniority and efficiency in handling trade related issues.

They said the commercial off

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Arafat starts talks with US

Letter to Powell outlines 100-day reform programme

AP, Washington

Yasser Arafat wrote a long letter about democratic change to Secretary of State Colin Powell, beginning a discussion with the United States three weeks after President Bush had demanded the Palestinian leader's ouster.

A US official familiar with the letter said Arafat described a 100-day reform programme he'd put in place, but told Powell that Israel's military thrust in the West Bank limited what he could do.

Arafat asked for US help to implement further reforms, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Powell, in a brief interview with al-Jazeera, a satellite television station based in Qatar, said he found the letter interesting.

The secretary reiterated that he wouldn't deal personally with Arafat, whom the Bush administration has accused of being involved in corruption and terror, but he said the State Department intends to respond to the letter in some way.

Bush, in an interview Friday with Polish journalists, said terrorism must be stopped before the vision of a Palestinian state can become a reality. "It's going to be impossible to achieve that vision if terrorists are allowed to have a free run and blow up the process," he said.

He said the Arab world has a responsibility to help develop a Palestinian security force.

"A security force, by the way, which must exist to enforce security, not enhance the status of a single person," he added.

Arafat has blamed Israel's military forays into Palestinian-held areas for wrecking the Palestinian security apparatus.

Bush said Israel has a responsibility, too. As security improves, he said,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Ban on Matir Moina to go

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the appeal board formed to reconsider the censor board's decision regarding the film Matir Moina have given their views in favour of withdrawal of the ban on it.

However, they would advise director of the film Tareque Masud to change a few scenes of the film, sources said.

The board members saw the film on June 25 and submitted a report to its chairman Dr Kamal Siddiqui.

Tareque Masud told The Daily Star he hopes to get censor certificate soon. "I have not been informed specifically about changes of the scenes the board is seeking. But I think those would be some minor changes which would not affect the structure of the film," he said.

Matir Moina could not be screened in the country because a ban was imposed.

However, the film got an award at the Cannes Film Festival and it was also appreciated in France and some other countries. Besides, there has been an invitation to screen it at the International Film Festival at Marrakech in Morocco.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 14		6-49 pm
July 15	5-19 am	

Prayer Timings		
July 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation