

Allotment of govt property to Zia's family not okayed by JS, says AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday blamed the government for issuing the 'inaccurate statement' that the decision to allot government property to the family members of the late president Ziaur Rahman was approved by parliament.

"A decision on the matter in the Jatiya Sangsad was not possible as there was no discussion on it," AL Presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP said while addressing a press conference at the party office.

Selim wanted to know in which session of the Jatiya Sangsad it was decided that the two houses and other facilities would be given to Khaleda Zia.

The cabinet division in a handout on Monday said the houses at the Dhaka Cantonment and Gulshan were allotted to the family of the late president Ziaur Rahman as per a unanimous decision of the Jatiya Sangsad and as such it is pointless to raise any question on the issue settled long ago.

The AL press conference said government officials should keep themselves out of such political debates.

The press conference also raised the question whether the prime minister would return the houses, the current market value of which is over Tk 60 crore.

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim said he raised a question in the Jatiya

Sangsad on February 18, 1987 on the facilities given by the government to the family of the late president Ziaur Rahman.

"While replying to my question, then leader of the House Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said that a government decision of June 6, 1981 permanently allotted a house on a 2.72 acre plot in the Dhaka Cantonment area to Khaleda Zia and her two sons against a premium of Tk 1 and a yearly tax of Tk 1", Selim said. "The then (1981) market value of the property was over Tk 6 crore and 69 lakh," he added quoting Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

The allotment did not seek permission of the Cantonment Board which was sole authority to allot cantonment property, he said.

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Kazi Zafnullah, Mukul Bose, Sultan Mohammad Mansur, Abdur Rahman and Abdul Manan Khan also attended the press conference.

Kulaura tea estate files lawsuit to evict Catholic welfare mission

ROVING CORRESPONDENT, Kulaura

A Catholic mission long engaged in social welfare services in Kulaura is faced with the grim prospect of losing its land following a lawsuit filed by a neighbouring tea estate.

The mother, who also has a son, narrated this tragic story to a group of journalists who visited her yesterday at Durgapur Health Complex where doctors washed her stomach.

Local people said they rushed them to Ujan Khalshi Community Hospital. Mitu died on way to the hospital at around 10am and Moni died at the hospital about three hours later.

Their mother was shifted to the health complex Tuesday evening.

"Why do you want to save my life. I do not want to live... We do not have food and clothing... Why should we lead such a life?" Dukhmin shouted at journalists at the health complex.

Elias Miah said he had bought the land in the 70s from Nawab Ali Yawar Khan, whose family owned the then Rangchhara Tea Estate. The Khan family later sold the estate to one Rashida Islam.

Elias Miah said he had made regular land tax payments and later sold the land to the mission.

Bijoy D Cruz, a priest of the Catholic Mission, alleged that the tea estate authorities were involved in a conspiracy against the mission and trying to grab its land by filing a false case.

Rose Tea Estate authorities have filed a case against Elias Miah, one Muhib Miah and Father Joseph of the Lakshmpur Catholic Mission.

"We are here to serve local people. The land they are trying to occupy is used for the welfare of orphans and local people know it very well," Cruz said.

However, the government is formulating a policy to evaluate the performance of educational institutions before taking measures like delisting from the MPO, said Education Minister Dr M Osman Faruk yesterday.

The minister said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has directed the ministry to slash budgetary allocations in case the institutions fail to live up to the expectations in a year.

The ministry had served show cause notice to 1,400 institutions last year for the educational downside.

Statistics show the government had spent more than Tk 50 crore in the education sector during the last two years.

BNP urges

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oriented, productive, qualitative and free of criminals and black money.

The BNP leader said the prime minister has already come forward to build a national consensus by honouring Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the Independence Award and with the proposal for hanging the portrait of national leaders in government offices. The proposal is still valid and the BNP is waiting for a response from the opposition parties, he said.

Regrettably, Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina's stinging criticism of the PM's recent call for political reforms, he said, "Let's build a healthy political atmosphere together... Many of our neighbouring countries moved ahead of us by reforming politics."

Shyamal said the AL had vowed not to call hartal when it was in power, but it has forgot about that promise fast finding itself in the opposition.

He urged all parties to join his party's roadmap for national development by responding positively to the prime minister's call for political reforms.

River vessel workers threaten agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaders of Bangladesh Nujor Sramik (river vessel workers) Federation (BNSF) yesterday declared to go for agitation if the government and launch owners failed to ensure safety of passengers.

The organisation held a rally yesterday in memory of the deceased passengers of MV Nasrin-1, its Master Jasimuddin and owner Mamun Khan.

They demanded of the government implementation of existing laws that hold owners and workers responsible for launch mishaps due to overloading.

They also urged the government to ensure compliance of the rules of building vessels so that structural problem does not cause accidents.

The MV Nasrin-1 incident should be thoroughly investigated, said another speaker.

Presided over by Golam Maola, president of BNSF, the rally was addressed by Chowdhury Asif Ali, general secretary of BNSF and trade union leader M Asif.

MV Nasrin-1 drowned at the confluence of Padma, Meghna and Daka with about 750 passengers on July 8. More than five hundred passengers died in the mishap.

When death

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Mahmuda Manik Mitu, 8, and Monisha Moni, 6.

She bought a bottle of 'Furadhan' pesticide from a shop at nearby Golaghar area, went to Yusufpur-Alipur road and asked her daughters if they were willing to die with her. Then she fed them biscuit and the pesticide and took the same herself. All the three were then screaming in pain.

The mother, who also has a son, narrated this tragic story to a group of journalists who visited her yesterday at Durgapur Health Complex where doctors washed her stomach.

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Her son Shahru, 14, is a student of class seven at Alipur Madrassah. Manik and Shahru were not found at their village.

Sub-inspector Majharul Islam of Durgapur then filed a case against the mother.

Result debacle

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2001 and 2002.

These include 230 madrassahs, 39 schools and 21 colleges.

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Flood condition betters

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300 families homeless in the last 48 hours in three upazila -- Kazipur, Beluchi and Chouhali in Sirajganj district.

A BSS report says 155 structures including the official residence of the upazila nirbahr officer of Louhajang in Munshiganj were washed away overnight as the Padma continued to erode its banks.

Experts blamed indiscriminate withdrawal of sands from near the Mawa Ferry Terminal area for flood this year in Munshiganj, the worst in a decade.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), both the Brahmaputra and the Ganges registered further fall at all points and are likely to fall further. The rivers around Dhaka also registered fall.

The FFWC said the Brahmaputra-Jamuna is flowing below the danger level at all points except Aricha. The Ganges-Padma also registered fall at all points, but the river is still flowing above the danger level at Goalundo and Bhagyalak.

Most of the rivers in these basins

registered further fall. The rivers in the Meghna and the South Eastern Hill basins also registered fall. Out of 85 monitoring stations, six points recorded rise and 40 points recorded fall and two points remained steady. The rivers were flowing above the danger mark at nine points during the last 24 hours.

With the recession of floodwaters, diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases have broken out in several north-western districts. Our correspondents reported that diarrhoea claimed at least six lives in Sirajganj and Kurigram and several hundred people contracted the disease.

Local sources claimed that four people, including two minors, died in the last two days at Tarash, Aricha and Uzirpur upazila of the district. Two other minors died at Nageswara upazila in Kurigram, one of the worst affected districts.

Hospital sources in Kurigram and Sirajganj said over one thousand people have contracted waterborne diseases. Health officials recorded more than 200 cases of diarrhoea in the last 24 hours in Kurigram alone.

Twenty-five villages of Khanzapur and Barthi unions under Gournadi upazila have also gone under floodwater.

The civil surgeon offices in the affected districts claimed that there were adequate stock of medicines to treat diarrhoea patients and mobile medical teams have started visiting the affected areas.

Flood victims in different areas, particularly in greater Rangpur district, are passing through a grave crisis because they are unemployed. Local sources said poor people in these areas are borrowing money on high interest and many day labourers are selling their services in advance at a much lower rate.

But our Barisal correspondent reports that the flood situation is worsening in the district.

According to the local administration, new areas have been flooded in Agailjhara, Gournadi and Uzirpur upazila of the district. Ten villages including Basail, Batra and Bahadurpur in Razihara union and four villages including Ambari and Madar in Bakal union under Agailjhara upazila have been flooded.

The prices of plots, which vary in size as per requirement, have been estimated at Tk 4.75 lakh per katha, Tk 95 lakh per bigha and Tk 287 lakh per acre.

The Park will have a central effluent treatment plant on five acres, to be built by the processing industry.

Besides, there will be a multi-storyed administrative building with floor spaces for banks, insurance companies, post office and T&T office, cafeteria, shopping centre and medical services.

The meeting yesterday, also attended by ministers concerned and leaders of the textile sector, discussed all aspects of the PCP, including sharing of the cost between the government and the private sector.

It was proposed in the meeting that the project cost should be shared equally by the government and the private sector. It also discussed the modalities for allotment of plots -- whether these would be leased out or sold outright.

Police produced Russell Ahmed alias Bhutto in the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court seeking a seven-day remand.

After hearing both sides, the court granted a three-day remand.

Kotwali police arrested Bhutto, a close associate of notorious criminal Shahid in the city, in the early hours of Tuesday.

Anu, 40, a joint secretary of the Supratup unit of BNP, was shot dead by armed miscreants at Johnson Road in the old part of the city on July 17.

CPA confce in Dhaka Oct 4-12

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The decomposed body of a missing BNP leader was recovered from a sugarcane field at Keshabpur village of Bagha upazila in Rajshahi on Tuesday.

The victim, Dulal Sheikh, 45, was a member of the convenor committee of the district unit and former general secretary of Pakur union BNP.

There were several injuries in the body with the eyes and nails gouged out, police said.

Dulal was last seen returning home by a motorcycle from Narayanganj bazar in Bagha at around 10.00pm Saturday.

The motive behind the killing could not be known. But the police suspect it was a pre-planned murder.

Local BNP leaders, however, blamed Awami League (AL) for the incident.

The AL leaders denied the allegation and claimed it was the result of the internal conflict in local BNP.

Besides, the BTV will linkup the inaugural session through the Asiasat so that the people of Commonwealth countries can enjoy the programme by using satellite.

The meeting was held in the conference room of Press Information Department (PID) with Information Minister Tariq Islam in the chair.

The PID has been given the responsibility to coordinate among the local and foreign journalists who will cover the conference.

The meeting decided to make documentaries on Bangladesh and present those to the foreign delegates for projecting the positive image of the country abroad.

The information minister directed the authorities concerned to work on a priority basis to ensure appropriate media management during the conference.

An acid crime tribunal here yesterday charged three people to life imprisonment for throwing acid on a housewife in 2002, which eventually led to her death.

The convicts are Zabed Ali, Golam Rasul and his son Abdur Razzak, all from Sherpur Upazila of Bogra District.

The additional district and sessions judge of Bogra who handed down the verdict also fined the convicts Tk 60,000 each, in default of which they would have to serve an additional three years of rigorous imprisonment.

The court instructed the deputy commissioner of Bogra to realise the amount from the convicts and pay the sum to the victim's family.

Two of the convicts, Golam Rasul and his son Abdur Razzak, are absconding.

The prosecution story in brief is that the three men threw acid on Bikilis on the night of August 19, 2002 while the housewife was asleep with her aunt Ayesha Begum. Both women were critically injured in the attack.

Later on September 14, Bikilis died at a clinic in Dhaka where she was undergoing treatment.

Bikilis' father Sarker Uddin Pramanik filed a case with Sherpur Police station.

Charge sheet against the accused was filed on October 10, 2002. BRAC provided legal support to the prosecution against those responsible for the incident.

The female students also alleged that JCD workers and the hall authorities are harassing them.

Opposition Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) brought out a candle procession from the Central Shaheed Minar in the early hours of yesterday. Police stopped the procession on its way to