

Greens against leasing out Tanguar Haor

Says handing over the wetlands to an investor will have far-reaching consequences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of top environment experts has warned about serious and far-reaching environmental consequences of a reported government move to hand over Sylhet's Tanguar Haor to an investor.

Urging the government to cancel any such plan, they said the wetlands, the country's lone Ramsar site, should rather be declared a protected area preventing all kinds of commercial activities deemed harmful to its ecosystem.

The environmentalists have drawn up a memorandum in this regard to be submitted to the Prime Minister's Office as well as different ministries concerned.

"We will submit it in a day or two. The government should consider the proposal for the sake of maintaining a sound ecosystem of the Tanguar Haor," said Rizwana Hasan, director (programmes) of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (Bela).

Signatories to the memorandum are Ruby Ghuznavi, managing director of Aranya, Dr Atiq Rahman,

Housewife dies of burns at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife, who suffered severe burns on March 12, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital Friday night.

Yasmin Akhter, 25, was allegedly burnt by her husband and in-laws in Keraniganj for dowry. She struggled for life seven days with 90 percent burns.

Her father Abul Hares filed a case, accusing seven including her husband Ali Ahmad and Omar Ali, under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Keraniganj Police Station on March 14.

According to the FIR (first information report), the accused, who are absconding since the incident, committed the crime as Hares declined to send Ali abroad.

Mongla Port strike on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An indefinite strike at Mongla Port continued for the second day yesterday paralysing normal activities including cargo handling at the port.

The strike was called by local leaders of the ruling four-party alliance to protest the killing of Bagerhat district Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal President MA Baten on Thursday.

Leaders and supporters of 18 labour organisations brought out a procession at Mongla yesterday protesting the murder.

Meanwhile, Captain Masum Billah, leader of the joint forces camp at Mongla, has been replaced by captain Ashfaq.

Alliance leaders demanded his withdrawal for opening fire on protesters on Friday.

Three persons arrested as suspects in the murder were sent to Bagerhat district jail yesterday.

No case was filed in connection with the murder of Baten till filing of this report in the evening.

It forces nab commissioner of KCC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Joint forces in Khulna yesterday arrested a Khulna City Corporation commissioner and recovered arms and ammunitions from his shrimp farm early yesterday morning.

Mohammad Shaikh Mosaddek Hossain Babul (40), the commissioner of ward no 13, is an activist of Khalishpur unit BNP. Following an intense interrogation, the joint forces recovered an US made double barrel gun, a pipegun, a pistol, 16 gun cartridges and four revolver bullets from his shrimp farm at Charerhat under Khalishpur thana.

Police said, Babul, who joined BNP from Jatiya Party in 2000, is linked with the Janajuddho faction of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

Meanwhile, Babul's family alleged the arms recovered were planted earlier by party rivals.

2 rocket launchers recovered in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Armed forces members yesterday recovered two abandoned rocket launchers from the deep forest of Longdin Rangamati.

Being tipped-off, troops of 16 Bengal raided Manikypara and found the two sophisticated arms at around 8:00am, sources said.

The rocket launchers were taken to local army headquarters.

More judges to be recruited soon for quick case disposal: CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain said a number of judges will be appointed soon to end the slow disposal of cases.

The Chief Justice, while addressing the members of Sylhet District Bar Association yesterday at the Hall of the bar, also stressed the separation of judiciary from the executive to ensure the independence of the former.

Syed Mudassar Husain urged the lawyers to come forward to ensure justice, saying, along with the judges, the lawyers also have a very important role to play in prompt disposal of cases.

The Registrar of the Supreme Court Quamrul Islam Siddiqui, and Additional Registrar Farid Ahmed Shibli accompanied the chief justice.

Among others, the District and Sessions Judge of Sylhet Mohammad Ismail Miah and General Secretary of the Sylhet Bar EU Shahidul Islam addressed the meeting, which was chaired by the President of the Bar Abdul Hai Khan.

The president and general secretary of the bar in their speeches demanded construction of new court building under the Judicial Capacity Building project at the earliest.

They said the accommodation problem in the Sylhet court-house turned acute due to delaying of the authorities concerned.

The chief justice, who is also the chairman of the Judicial Capacity Building project, said the problem would be resolved soon.

4 killed, 30 hurt in bus crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Four people were killed and 30 others injured, ten of them seriously, in a road accident on the Dhaka-Rangpur Highway in Mithapukur upazila early yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred at about 4:00am when a Kurigram bound night coach from Dhaka fell into a roadside ditch at Al-faruke, killing four of its passengers on the spot and injuring 30 others.

Two of the dead were identified as Ershadul, 30, and Shahidul, 28. Both hailed from Nageswari under Kurigram district. Identity of the rest two could not be known till the filing of this report at 7:00pm.

The seriously injured, Babu, 30, Solaiman, 33, Monzurul, 35, Nazrul, 38, Abu Bakker, 25, Saju, 22, Belal, 21, Moznu, 35, Zoinal Abedin, 60, and Abdul Karim,

Taher

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Khaleque and BCL cadres Nurul Azim Babar and Nurullah. They were also fined Tk 50,000 each.

The court acquitted nine others as charges brought against them were not proved.

After the verdict, Taher said he would move the higher court against the judgement.

Taher was the main accused in the sensational Nurul Islam murder but he was acquitted of the charge.

According to the prosecution, Kamaluddin, district BNP leader, and secretary of Rickshaw Sramik Union of Laxmipur was stabbed at the union office on August 31, 2000. He succumbed to his injuries at Laxmipur General Hospital on September 2.

Alaudin, father of the victim, filed a case against 14 people, including Abu Taher and his two sons, on October 31.

After investigation, police submitted the charge sheet against 16 people on April 6, 2002. The case was transferred to the tribunal on November 11, 2003.

Naikhyangchhari

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wire, one coil of safety fuse insulator, 40 battery-connectors and a large quantity of gunpowder.

The joint forces in those operations also recovered one binocular, 11 telephone circuits, three solar panels, one set of radio antennae, two butcher knives, 20 empty magazines and three sets of military uniforms.

Government sources said Naikhyangchhari, the southern-most upazila of Bandarban hill district, is a sensitive area due to its geographic proximity to about half of the 173-km Bangladesh-Myanmar land-border. For strategic reasons, some powerful arms-trafficking syndicates active in China, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar have been using this remote hilly area as a transit point and a safe haven, they believed.

These crime syndicates have built up heavy armouries in the area to safeguard their trafficking operations, the sources said, adding border security forces of both Bangladesh and Myanmar could not check their cross-border infiltration effectively due to absence of a clear-cut border marking.

Local residents allege that various armed groups often set up camps in the area. Among those, Rohingya Socialist Organisation and newly formed Rohingya Nationalist Organisation are the most active, they said.

Though these groups do not collect tolls or otherwise terrorise them, their mere presence instils fright in them, locals added.

PM accuses AL

FROM PAGE 1

League (AL) chief, Khaleda referred to her tacit support for the military rule after the removal of the then BNP government and said she (Hasina) was once again cherishing the wishful thinking.

"That thinking will not come true this time around," the prime minister said.

Addressing a huge public meeting near Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, she asked the schemers to immediately stop their 'unholy activities' and engage in constructive politics to keep up democracy and ensure development.

"Otherwise you will face people's wrath," she warned.

Referring to the political parties demonstrating to unseat the government, Khaleda said they would not be able to force the government from power using anarchy, indiscipline and mindless hartals. She criticised the opposition for 'setting fire to public and private property and preparing coffins before any casualty'.

"We'll not step down in the face of threats or hartals," she said, adding: "Don't jockey for power now...we've passed only two and a half years in office and you have to wait for another two and a half years for the polls."

Tens of thousands of people from Mirpur, Pallabi and Kafrul under Dhaka-11 constituency converged on the ground to listen to the prime minister.

She said: "The plotters, the enemies of democracy, are trying to make Bangladesh subservient to others because they like slavery."

"We are both in power and in the street...we will face the conspiracy by taking people with us."

The premier observed that the conspirators isolated from people for long were also trying to mislead people by tellings lies.

On Hasina's promise to separate the judiciary, Khaleda said the party that curbed courts' independence taking office after independence and brought out a stick processions and put up a slum in front of the High Court last time, should not make such statements.

She also alleged that the past AL government did not separate the judiciary from the executive, but tried to infringe on the judiciary.

Taiwan president

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commission to seize and seal all ballot boxes," he said, adding that he wanted a recount.

With more than half the vote counted in official results, Chen had taken a lead that made it almost impossible for his opponent to win, the Central Election Commission (CEC) said.

Default Loan

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Samity, which is not a government entity. But the name falls in the government borrower category, as local government and finance ministries are the guarantors for a total of about Tk 60 crore loan that it took from three NCBs.

"This is a political loan," alleged a source, "the samity really doesn't need Tk 60 crore for anything."

Explaining the reason for the huge amount of loan defaulted by the food ministry, banking sources said the amount has piled up over the years as the ministry borrows money to import foodgrains but does not pay back properly afterwards.

Top private sector loan defaulters, on the other hand, get away through legal loopholes, prompting Law Minister Moudud Ahmed to ask officials last week to investigate why the High Court so frequently issues stay orders on lower courts' verdicts upon the loan defaulters' petitions.

"As a result of the tough Money Loan Court Act, a number of small and medium-level private defaulters in recent times did show up to repay their loans," said a high official of Sonali Bank. "But the big defaulters get away using their money and political clout in the courts and the government."

The central bank has been persistently and increasingly hammering the NCBs to recover default loans and clean up their books, giving way to the recent special initiative undertaken by the banks concerned.

HC stays freeze

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Chittagang to freeze the accounts of Major (ret'd) MA Mannan.

Accordingly, Standard Chartered Bank has frozen the accounts of Delta Fashion and Eastern Fashion Industries, United Commercial Bank the accounts of Sunpack while Commercial Bank of Ceylon the accounts of Sunflower Garments and Quasem Saewhan Company, all in the name of their owner Major Mannan.

A division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice Syed Refat Ahmed also issued rule upon the DCT and others, returnable in three weeks, to explain why the notice freezing the accounts of Major Mannan should not be declared illegal and void.

The order came upon separate writs filed by Mannan, owner of the companies, challenging the validity of the DCT notice.

Barrister Rafique-Ul-Huq, counsel for Mannan, submitted that the notice was issued with a mala fide intention to politically harass him as he resigned from

On women's reserved seats in parliament, she said that the AL proposed to reserve 30 seats under the previous provision that gave all the membership to the ruling party.

But her government decided to raise the seats to 45 and introduce proportionate distribution of the seats among parliamentary parties.

She listed her government's development programmes and sought people's support from their realisation.

Presided over by local legislator SA Khaleque, the rally was addressed, by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Housing Minister Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Dhaka city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Home Minister Atif Hossain Chowdhury, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and State Minister for Labour and Manpower Amanullah Aman.

Juba Dal President Barkatullah Bulu, Dhaka city BNP General Secretary Abdus Salam, JCD President Shahabuddin Laltu and city BNP leader Eklashuddin Mollah spoke on the occasion, among others.

Senior ministers and leaders including Information Minister Tarique Islam were present.

DCC seeks

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carry out the drive throughout the year.

Besides, 1170 hand spray machines, 48 wheel-mounted sprayer machines, 340 fogger machines, 3 ULV (carried on vehicle) machines, and 15 portable ULV machines equip the DCC for going after the mosquitoes of the city.

Still cleanliness drives on ponds, canals, ditches, and wheels stand as a very important means of keeping the mosquito menace under control, a DCC source said.

The chief executive officer (CEO) of DCC said various public agencies like Rajuk, Dhaka WASA, Public Works Department, Bangladesh Railway, Roads and Highways, and many others often do not discharge the responsibility of cleaning the land, wetland, and residential areas on their own, contributing to the sufferings of the people.

Magistrates to get involved in loan recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to amend the Money Loan Court Act, 2003, to engage magistrates to give physical control of the mortgaged property of loan defaulters to auction buyers.

Under the proposed amendment, banks and financial institutions can take help of district magistrates to establish control over mortgaged property and hand over the property to the buyers, leaving no scope for encroachment.

This step will encourage people to buy such property at reasonable prices, sources pointed out.

Approved by the cabinet last week, the amendment proposal was placed in the Jatiya Sangsad and it was referred to the standing committee on the law, justice and parliamentary affairs for scrutiny.

Under another proposed amendment, the defaulted loan ceiling for filing cases with the money loan courts will be increased to Tk 5 lakh from Tk 50,000. The amendment is proposed to help small farmers, who usually take small amounts of loan and face cases in the money loan courts based at the district headquarters.

When the amendment is passed by parliament, farmers may face certificate cases at upazila headquarters for defaulted farm loans.

The law ministry recently convened a meeting with the high officials of banks and financial institutions to review the Money Loan Court Act, 2003 that came into force on May 1 that year. The meeting proposed the two amendments to make the law more effective.

BGMEA slates

FROM PAGE 1
worried about hartal, being enforced by the opposition, which disrupts production.

The BGMEA meeting called for law and order as a prerequisite for productivity and trade and commerce.

"Any kind of terrorist attack on the apparel industries creates panic among the foreign buyers, lowering their confidence in the Bangladesh garment exporters," observed the Board of Directors of the BGMEA.

If such attacks continued, they cautioned, international buyers of Bangladesh's readymade garments might shift elsewhere.

They urged the government to maintain law and order so that the garment exporters can carry out their business deals without any hindrance and fear.

BGMEA First Vice-President Abdus Salam, Vice-President (Finance) Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury and Directors Kazi Moniruzzaman, SM Nurul Haque, M Zinnat Ali Mia, Shafiqul Islam, Farooq Hasan, Hafizuddin Chowdhury, ANM Safiuddin, Syed Ahsanul Haq, Ishiaq Rahman, Ferdous Parvez, Golam Kabir Chowdhury, Shahidul Islam, Shafiqul Islam and ABM Shamsuddin were present at the meeting.

New JU VC appointed

JU CORRESPONDENT

Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman of economics department has been appointed vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University (JU) for a four-year term.

Chancellor of the university President Iajuddin Ahmed made the appointment yesterday under 11(1) of 1973 JU Act after a month of the VC panel election held on February 19.

Prof Rahman took over yesterday at around 3:00pm after receiving his appointment letter signed by acting Education Secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam through fax.

Teachers, students, officers and employees of the JU accorded a reception to Prof Rahman at seminar room of the central auditorium at around 4:00pm.

Born in Brahmanbaria in 1949, Prof Rahman completed his BA (Honours) and MSc in economics from Dhaka University and Islamabad University in 1969 and 1970 and obtained MA and PhD degrees from Essex University of England in 1974 and 1979.

He joined the university as a lecturer in economics in 1971 and also served as dean of the Faculty of Social Science, chairman of economics department and member of the Finance Committee.

DU classes resume today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Regular academic activities at Dhaka University (DU) resume today after 22 days, as the DU Teachers Association (DUTA) has withdrawn its indefinite class boycott programme.

The withdrawal decision came at an emergency meeting chaired by DUTA President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique on March 18, following assurance from DU authorities that Azad would be sent abroad for treatment soon.

The DUTA started an indefinite class boycott on February 28 demanding immediate arrest and punishment of real attackers of eminent writer Prof Humayun Azad, resignation of the home minister and sending Azad abroad for treatment. Assaults stabbed Azad with butcher's knife in front of Bangla Academy at about 9:00pm on February 27 when he was returning to his campus house from the Ekushey Book Fair.

DUTA General Secretary Dr Mohammad Akhteruzzaman said they will continue demonstration until their others demands are met.

Undercover cops nab 349 in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 99 armed plainclothes police teams comprising police, members of Detective Branch (DB), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Rapid Action Team (RAT) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested 349 alleged criminals on the third day of their anticrime drive in the capital Friday.

The plainclothes police teams held 124 people while the joint forces of the BDR, Armed Police Battalion and police nabbed 125 others in Motijheel, Kotwali, Gulshan, Mirpur and Pallabi Police Station areas. However, they failed to arrest any top criminal or seize firearms during the crackdown.

The police teams have been asked to arrest killers, extortionists, listed criminals, members of organised gangs and car lifters and recover illegal arms, drugs and stolen vehicles.

Pak forces

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with their hands tied, who were sitting under heavy guard in the back of a military truck in Wana, the main town in the tribal South Waziristan region, where the battle was raging.

The army also displayed the body of one suspected militant wrapped in a white blanket.

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Anti-war protesters

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extremists killed 202 people and led to the downfall of Spain's pro-US government in elections three days later and rocked the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Some 60 Spanish political groups have urged Spaniards to turn out en masse for Saturday's protest.

Protest rallies were also scheduled in Italy, where a majority of people favour pulling out Italian troops from Iraq at the end of June, as well as in France, Germany and the United States.

In France, an early opponent of the Iraq war along with Gremany, anti-war rallies were planned in several cities, including Paris, Marseille, Lyon and Toulouse.

In the United States, protest organisers said they hoped their ranks might be swelled in the aftermath of the Madrid train bombings.

In Australia, thousands of anti-war activists also staged rallies to mark the first anniversary of the US-led war. Speakers at the rallies called for Australian troops to be sent home from Iraq and attacked Prime Minister John Howard's conserva-

Jamaat leader killed in Naogaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Alleged operatives of the banned Islamic outfit Jama'atul Mujahidin hacked to death a local Jamaat-e-Islami leader in Niamatpur upazila in Naogaon on Friday night.

Maulana Abdur Rahman, 35, a Rokon of Jamaat, died from his wounds on the way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital after being attacked by a gang of 10.

The assailants swooped on him at around 7:30pm when he along with his five-year-old son Asaduzzaman Nur were returning home from Adda Bazar in Gomostapur upazila in Chapainawabganj by bicycle.

A local police officer said before his death Abdur in writing accused Azimul, Palash, Yahya, Salim and Matibur of attacking him.

Police arrested Tozammel Hossain in connection with the killing.

Jamaat Ameer Matiuur Rahman Nizami and local leaders of the party condemned the killing.

Zama'atul Mujahidin has a history of terror attacks in different areas.

Left parties

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occupation of Iraq by not protesting or condemning these.

Expressing solidarity with the Iraqi people, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesh Workers' Party (BWP), Jatiya Samaj-tantrik Dal (JSD) and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) held rallies in front of their offices. Later they brought out processions chanting slogans like 'Quit Iraq' and joined other protesters at Muktangan.

Addressing the CPB rally, party General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim called the US president the top terrorist in the world and said, "The invasion and occupation of Iraq has made the world more insecure."

The ruling BNP is not protesting the US action for fear of being thrown out of power with US backing and the main opposition Awami League is also keeping mum fearing loss of Anglo-US support, he said.

BSD Convenor Khalequzzaman said at the party rally the US forces during their one-year occupation have killed 60 thousand Iraqis.

The BWP condemned the "genocide in Iraq by the Anglo-US alliance."

4th Indo-Pak ODI

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now we need to pull the next two. I want the team to be more clinical and play well in pressure situations," he said.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will host the last two games of the one-day series that kicked off India's first full tour of Pakistan in 14 years.

Today's day-night contest will be followed by the final one-dayer on Wednesday, before the three-Test series gets underway in Multan on 28 March.

Wright feels India's under-strength attack - which is missing Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Ajit Agarkar and Ashish Nehra - must improve if they are to keep the series alive.

"Pakistan have a better balance in their attack," Wright said. "Their three fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar, Shabbir Ahmed and Mohammad Sami have Abdul Razzaq to back them."

But India have been heartened by the progress of Zaheer Khan, who looked