



The Daily Star



COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIV No. 153

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 24, 2004

www.thedailystar.net

ASHAR 10, 1411 BS • JAMADIUL AWAL 4, 1425 HIJRI • 16 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: Tk 10.00

DEBATE OVER PETITION BY JUDGE

AL MPs demonstrate in House over mic turn-off

SQ Chy prompts speaker to bar Suranjit from countering Moudud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday staged an unusual demonstration in the House to protest switching off microphone of a senior fellow lawmaker who tried to counter the law minister's statement on a writ petition filed by a district and sessions judge.

The judge in his Tuesday's petition to the High Court complained of tremendous executive pressure on him for granting bail to some hardened criminals ahead of the Dhaka-10 by-polls, and that, as he

refused to cave in to the pressure, he suffered a hasty transfer.

The House was in disorder for about five minutes when the main opposition lawmakers, leaving their seats, gathered in front of the speaker and shouted protest at the turning of the microphone of AL lawmaker Suranjit Sen Gupta off.

Opposition lawmakers termed the speaker's act as partisan and accused him of cutting off Suranjit's microphone upon instruction from Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, parliamentary affairs advisor to the prime minister.

Responding to an opposition point of order on the judge's writ petition, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told the House the judge was transferred by the Supreme Court as a routine one and the government had no hand in it.

When Suranjit started to speak countering Moudud's clarification, Chowdhury stood up and protested in a loud voice the speaker's allowing the AL lawmaker to speak, shouting, "It cannot be a point of order." Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar immediately switched off the AL lawmaker's mike and gave floor to

Chowdhury. The AL lawmakers then cursed Chowdhury pointing at him and shouting "Fie upon you... fie upon you", "Shame on you... shame on you" etc.

As soon as the speaker switched off Suranjit's microphone and allowed Chowdhury to speak, the AL lawmakers protested and demanded to allow Suranjit to complete his speech. The speaker ignored the demand and went on with budget discussion, giving floor to Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker.

Following this, the AL lawmakers

Moudud bins judge's pressure allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday rejected a district and sessions judge's allegations in a writ petition of government pressure on him to set free notorious criminals before Dhaka-10 by-polls and termed the petition politically-motivated.

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PPs to sue judge

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two public prosecutors yesterday said they would sue Judge Shaikh Jahangir Husain, who filed a writ petition Tuesday against alleged government pressure to free some criminals before the Dhaka-10 by-election, had earlier made a series of complaints of threat and obstruction to work.

He also sought the Supreme Court protection and help from the government, say his letters to the Supreme Court registrar, law secretary and law ministry solicitor. Tuesday's petition to the High Court, which was unheard-of in recent years, came after he did not get a response from them, his law-

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Ignored complaints led judge to go to court

He wrote about intimidation to law ministry, SC in May

STAR REPORT

District and Sessions Judge Shaikh Jahangir Husain, who filed a writ petition Tuesday against alleged government pressure to free some criminals before the Dhaka-10 by-election, had earlier made a series of complaints of threat and obstruction to work.

He also sought the Supreme Court protection and help from the government, say his letters to the Supreme Court registrar, law secretary and law ministry solicitor. Tuesday's petition to the High Court, which was unheard-of in recent years, came after he did not get a response from them, his law-

yers said.

Husain in a letter on May 30 requested the law ministry to remove Special Public Prosecutor Mohammad Moinuddin and ask Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdullah Mahmud Hassan to stop unwarranted interference in judicial work.

In the wake of his petition, the judiciary heated up with leading lawyers raising questions whether the lower courts can carry out their responsibilities unhindered.

They claim the petition proves the lower judiciary is blatantly controlled by the government and forced to pander to the wishes of ruling party high-ups.

But Law Minister Moudud

Ahmed termed Husain's petition as politically-motivated. The public prosecutors, accused of lobbying for the release of criminals, denied the allegation.

The hearing of the petition has been adjourned until Saturday. Barrister Amir Ul Islam on behalf of the petitioner yesterday submitted to the High Court a prayer for the adjournment, seeking more time for submission.

LETTERS
The May 30 letters to the Supreme Court registrar and the law ministry secretary and solicitor highlighted a series of problems, including insecurity, he was facing.

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Kidnapped trader rescued from Aliya Madrassah hostel, 3 JCD men held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested three Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists for their alleged involvement in kidnapping a businessman.

Police rescued the businessman, also a JCD activist, from an Aliya Madrassah hostel at Bakshibazar yesterday according to the statement of the arrestees.

A gang of kidnapers abducted Mohammad Manik, a manpower businessman, from in front of the Motijheel police station at about 7:00pm on Tuesday. Manik was forced into a black taxicab and taken to Allama Kash Gari hostel.

Immediately after the abduction, the gang called Manik's friend Mizanur Rahman and demanded Tk 1 lakh as ransom. Mizan informed it to Motijheel police who told him to contact the abductors over his cell phone. When contacted, the kidnapers asked him to wait in front of Khodder Market at Gullistan in the city.

As Mizan appeared in the market, Sub-inspector Sirajul Islam

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Khaleda sees new high in ties with Singapore



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, right, and Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong wave to a crowd at Zia International Airport after the Bangladesh leader received her Singapore counterpart yesterday.

Red carpet rolled out for Goh Chok Tong

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the visit of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong would provide fresh thrust in raising Bangladesh-Singapore relations to new heights, especially in the fields of trade and investment.

She was speaking at a banquet hosted by her in honour of the visiting Singaporean prime minister at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

The banquet was attended, among others, by Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, ministers, judges, MPs, politicians, businessmen, academics, journalists, entourage of the visiting dignitary and senior civil

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Rejoinder and our reply

The water resources ministry in a rejoinder to a report carried by The Daily Star on Sunday under the headline 'Waste Extravaganza at Water Ministry' yesterday claimed the report contained factual errors and presented facts out of context.

It said: "The report seems to be based on an earlier version of the Project Concept Paper (PCP) and not the recast PCP prepared after the cost rationalisation exercise undertaken by the IMED and the manpower requirement determined by

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Rivers run over danger mark at 9 points

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water levels in most rivers continued to rise as monsoon rains swept many areas across the country.

According to a bulletin of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), out of 85 monitoring centers, 45 river points registered rise, 10 recorded fall in water level

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GUANTANAMO PRISON Rumsfeld okayed prisoner torture

AGENCIES, Washington

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld approved the use of stress positions, hoods, forced nudity, and dogs to instil fear during interrogations of prisoners at a detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in December 2002, memos made public showed.

The techniques, which Rumsfeld rescinded the following month after complaints from military officers, were eerily reminiscent of some of the abuses of Iraqi prisoners that surfaced earlier this year at Abu Ghraib.

The techniques were detailed in a series of memos released by the White House on Tuesday that tracked exchanges between commanders, Rumsfeld and the Pentagon's general counsel over interrogation techniques to be used on suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners held at Guantanamo.

President George W Bush said he has never ordered the torture of Iraqi or al Qaeda prisoners. "Let me make very clear the position of my government and our country. We do not condone torture. I have never ordered torture. I will never order torture," Bush said shortly before the memos were released.

The White House release of a thick file of newly declassified papers tried to demonstrate that Bush and his top aides, in setting policy on interrogation methods, insisted that detainees at Guantanamo Bay be treated humanely.

But Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont accused the White House of releasing a "self-serving selection" of documents. "The stonewalling in the prison abuse scandal has been building to a crisis point," he said.

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Thai Airways to manage Ctg airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee yesterday approved appointment of Thai Airways as the foreign private management for Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport.

Thai Airways will pay the government Tk 52 crore in the next 10 years. "In the first three years, the Thai Airways will be paying Tk 3.5 crore a year," Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister M A Mohammad Nasiruddin told the press after yesterday's committee meeting where the approval came from.

Civil aviation sources said the

airport now incurs around Tk45 crore in loss a year.

"No officials or employees of the airport will be retrenched. The new management will absorb them," explained Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, who chaired the meeting, told the press later.

The committee also approved a Tk 40 crore toll management contract with a private company for the Meghna and Meghna-Gumti bridges. The company will set up toll collection equipment at the bridges, collect tolls and deposit them with the national exchequer. The com-

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Mirza Abbas claims speakers' houses followed Kahn's plan

LAB chief urges PM to protect Sangsad Bhaban design

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB) President Mubashar Husain has appealed to the prime minister and the people to protect the national parliament complex, which he said is considered worldwide as an architectural monument.

Husain contends, by appealing against the High Court's ruling, the government is denying that the parliament complex, designed by world renowned architect Louis I

Kahn, is a modern-day 'wonder of the world'.

A High Court (HC) bench on Monday ordered the government to protect the parliament complex and declare it a national heritage site. The court also declared construction of official residences of speaker and deputy speaker on the site illegal.

The government has appealed against the HC verdict claiming the construction of the residences has

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SHANKHARI BAZAR TRAGEDY Owners start razing down risky buildings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scared of Shankhari Bazar building collapse, some owners of old and vulnerable houses in the old Dhaka neighbourhoods have decided to demolish the structures voluntarily.

The demolition process yesterday got underway with partial wrecking of a building next to the collapsed six-storey one.

"We've decided to demolish the house my grandfather had set up, as authorities noticed us to do so considering the risk of living there," said Raghunath Sen, 50, one of the owners of the house No. 80 in Shankari Bazar. Owner of the building No. 83 has also decided to destroy his building, which got damaged when the No. 81 collapsed on June 9. "We're waiting for a festival. We'll demolish the house once the festival is over," said Ranju, house owner's son.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources said they are planning to find a way out of helping the owners of the risky buildings to this end.

"It's not possible to demolish all the buildings at once. The process will soon be started and we have to do it by phases," said Tapan Das Gupta, chief of the DCC Planning and Design section.

Shankhari Bazar still mourns for the June 9 tragedy that took a toll of 19 lives. Black banners were seen yesterday carried at different shop corners to express the grief.

The Dhaka mayor yesterday visited the area and handed over Tk 6 lakh as compensation to the victims' families.

"The mayor gave us Tk 28,000 for four killed family members. My mother-in-law has got Tk 95,000 as she lost two sons, one daughter-in-law and two grandchildren," said Minati Rani Nag, a survivor of the tragic accident.

The survivors of the family, however, are still floating, as they

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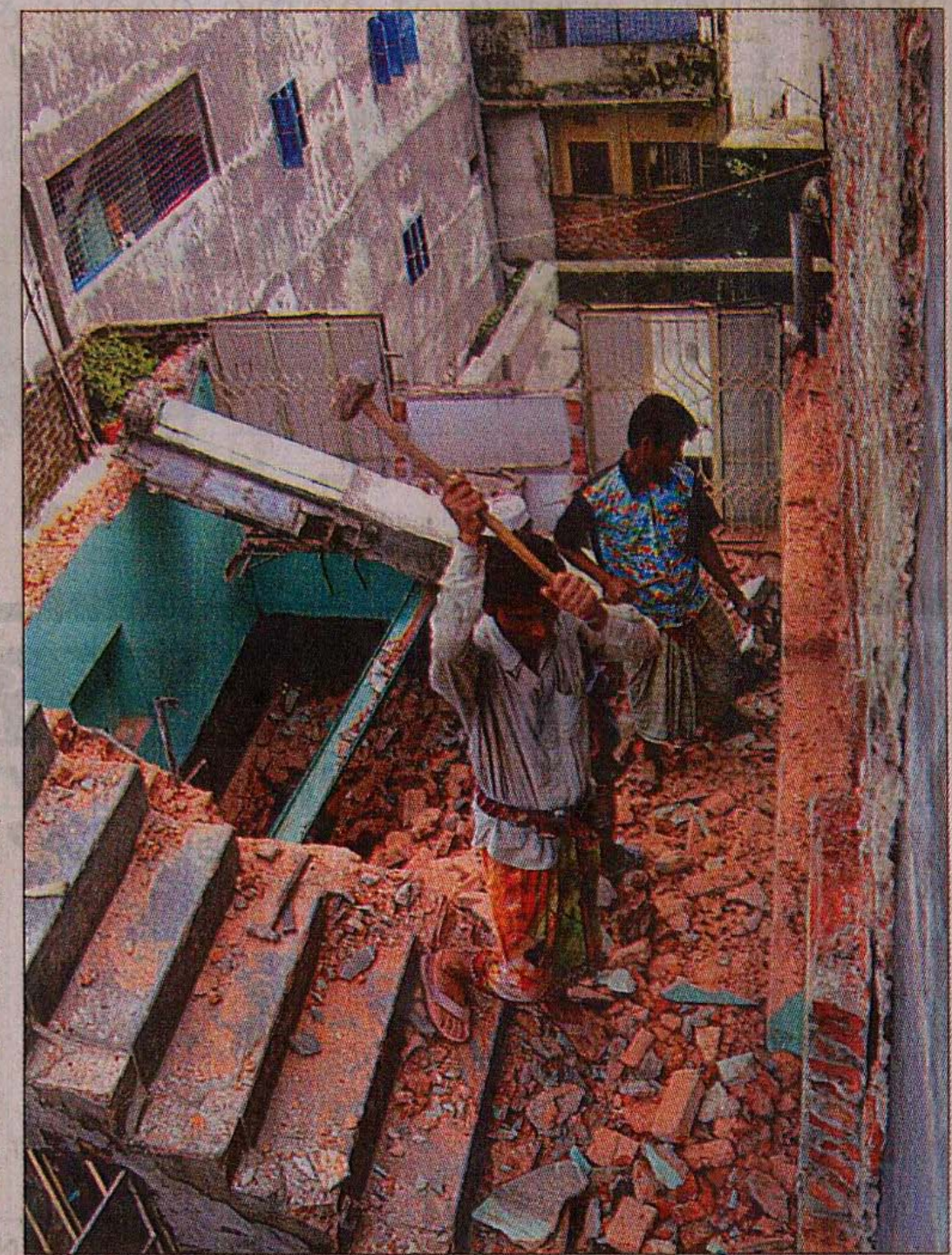


PHOTO: STAR

Workers, employed by the owner, demolish an old building at Shankhari Bazar in Old Dhaka yesterday. The building was damaged when a nearby century-old building collapsed on it on June 9 and killed 19 residents.

Hasina blasts govt for 'gathering criminals' to rig by-polls

AL observes 55th founding anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the ruling alliance of gathering 'hardened criminals' from across the country to ensure victory of its candidate in the Dhaka-10 by-election.

Before leading a huge procession to mark the 55th founding anniversary of her party on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday afternoon, the Awami League chief alleged the government is gathering criminals to rig the by-poll and a judge was even unjustly transferred for

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PHOTO: STAR

Activists of Awami League parade through a Dhaka road in procession yesterday, marking the party's 55th founding anniversary before terminating at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.