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No discrimination against women commissioners

HC cancels ministry circular disallowing them from taking part in census, issuing certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday asked the government not to discriminate between women ward commissioners and their male counterparts in delegation of authority and voided a ministerial circular that it called contrary to the constitution.

The verdict came after 10 women ward commissioners from reserved seats of Khulna City Corporation filed a writ petition last year, challenging the local government and

rural development ministry's circular that did not allow the women commissioners to take part in census or issue nationality certificates or reference letters.

Justices ABM Khairul Haque and Miftah Uddin Ahmed also asked the authorities to comply with the constitution and city corporation ordinances in assigning work and authority to the women commissioners.

Abdul Matin Khasru, filing lawyer of the writ petition, said the verdict would apply to the six city

corporations and in principle other local government bodies. Barrister Sara Hossain and Barrister Tanjib-Ul Alam also moved for the petitioners.

Attorney General AF Hassan Arif who moved for the government told newsmen that the government would take a decision on an appeal against the verdict after getting a certified copy of the order.

The writ petition said the circular violated their constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights to equality and gender nondiscrimination and the right to be treated in line with the law.

Earlier, an HC division bench of Justices Hamidul Haque and Zinat

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parts from general seats. The commissioners from reserved seats were also receiving less remuneration for attending meetings than general-seat commissioners.

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Earlier, an HC division bench of Justices Hamidul Haque and Zinat

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Cabinet okays women's JS seats election bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved a bill on the Jatiya Sangsad reserved seats for women that proposes an election mechanism and empowers the Election Commission (EC) to proportionately distribute 45 seats among political parties.

The bill says the EC will seek lawmakers' lists from the political parties or alliances and will distribute the women's seats among them on a pro rata basis.

The House is set to pass the bill in its next session and the election to the reserved seats is likely in September, sources said.

For proportionate distribution, the 45 reserved seats will be divided by 300 seats in parliament, which means 0.15 women's seat for one elected seat to be multiplied by the number of seats of each party or alliance.

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Plans for central bonded warehouse, textile funds rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday unanimously rejected the National Co-ordination Council's proposals to set up a central bonded warehouse and float a special investment fund of Tk 3,000 crore for the textile sector.

The cabinet committee, however, asked the council to make necessary changes to the other proposals made in the council's report in line with the guidelines the committee laid out in yesterday's meeting and place those before it by September 31.

"The cabinet committee believes

textile sector's local value addition is high and the investors in the industry have pumped Tk 400-500 crore into their businesses. If the central bonded warehouse is set up, it will affect the flourishing textile industry," Finance and Planning Minister M. Saifur Rahman, who presided over the meeting, told journalists.

"... (Setting up) a central bonded warehouse means foreigners will come here and open shops and start selling goods... The textile sector is getting some government incentives but the benefits are not reaching people. If it continuously fails, the government will withdraw the incentives in two years' time," Saifur

added. On special investment fund, he said the government cannot ask the banks to create such a fund, it is the affairs of the banks and loan is disbursed on the basis of banker-client relationship.

The National Co-ordination Council, formed on April 1 at the directive of the prime minister and headed by her principal secretary, placed its report to the prime minister on July 10. The prime minister directed the council to immediately place the report before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for a final decision.

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BADC runs dry on seed, little hope for flood-hit aman

MIZANUR KHAN

Full recovery of the loss of aman paddy in the month-long devastating floods might not be possible as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) does not have any seed stock of the crop for distribution among the farmers, agriculture experts said.

Agriculture ministry has decided to buy seeds and give that to the flood-affected small and marginal farmers but experts fear it will not help them because there is not enough time for aman cultivation. "We gave all our seeds before the floods, which have already been damaged," said Mohammad Ismail, chairman of the BADC.

Dr Asaduzzaman, an agriculture economist and director of research at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), came up with a solution to the problem, saying farmers should be given aman seedlings instead of seeds in view of the shortage of time.

Akbar Mia, a farmer in Kanta Gola village of Saturia upazila in Manikganj, said, "I am not sure about my next aman crops as I have no seeds. Standing beside his flood-ravaged field, he said with a blank look, 'I went to the block supervisor (of Department of Agricultural

Extension, DAE, which distributes the seeds) and asked for seeds but he told me to wait. We are really running short of time."

"If I do not get seeds in time, what shall I do with them?" a frustrated Akbar asked.

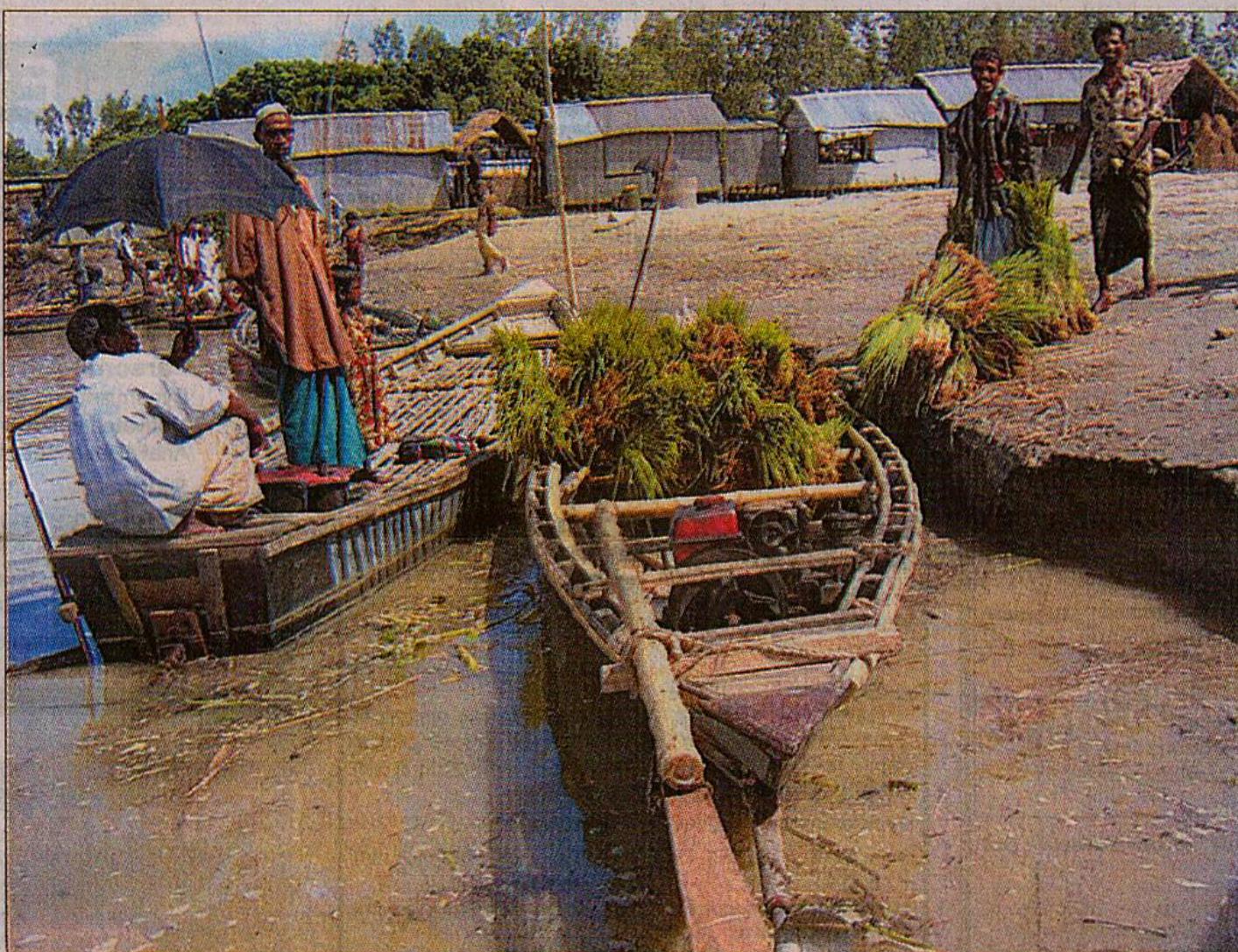
Mostofa, a small farmer in the same village said, "We have heard the government announcement on seeds over radio and television many times but we do not know how and from where we have to collect them. Block supervisors never come to us."

Like them, more than 46.50 lakh flood-hit farmers in 46 districts are longing for aman seeds while the government has decided to provide five kg seeds of different crops to 26.65 lakh small and marginal farmers free of cost by November.

Distribution of aman seeds among farmers has already started in many districts and ends on August 25 while seedlings will be distributed till September 10. They will also be given 25 kg of fertiliser against one bigha of land.

Some agriculturists however claimed there would be no seed shortage in the country because farmers do not wait to get seeds from the government. "If you go to villages now, you will see farmers are

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Farmers carry aman seedlings on boat yesterday from Kahalu to flood-hit Dhunat in Bogra.

SYLHET BLASTS

Investigators clutch at 2 suspects for clue

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The clueless investigators of the recent bomb and grenade blasts at two cinemas and Awami League meeting venue in Sylhet city now rely totally on suspected carriers of the explosives Soleman and Anwar for leads as mystery still shrouds the blasts.

The investigators brought the two to Dhaka yesterday for interrogation by the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) after failing to extract any confessional statements or significant information from them, sources said.

Sylhet police, meanwhile, arrested listed criminal Bidhan Saha Saturday night and are hunting for others with record of bomb-making, who are now on bail, to find clues to

the explosions.

Bidhan was on bail in 12 cases filed on different charges including bomb-making and blasting, and killing.

Locals caught Soleman from Monica Cinema Hall and Anwar from Rangmahal in the heart of the city while they were lying injured minutes into the August 5 blasts there.

A street urchin was killed and over 30 were injured when two powerful bombs went off at the two cinemas. Police also recovered an unexploded bomb from Abakash Cinema Hall.

Witnesses said they found a cable in Soleman's hand as he fell on the ground and Soleman threw it away as locals tried to catch him.

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Sylhet DIG withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, Sylhet Range, has been withdrawn in the wake of repeated blasts in the district where a bomb hoax yesterday panicked people of Bangladesh Overseas Centre (BOC).

DIG Ali Imam Chowdhury has been ordered to join the police headquarters in Dhaka, while AKM

Mahfuzul Haque, additional DIG of Chittagong Range, will replace him, police sources said.

The DIG's transfer orders followed hard on the heels of repeated blasts in the holy city of Sylhet. Four officers-in-charge (OCs) of as many police stations were transferred in the last three days.

Similarly, the superintendent of

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Private infrastructure schemes won't get subsidy, tax break

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Private infrastructure investment projects will not get subsidy and tax break, according to a draft proposal the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved in principle yesterday.

Toll rates for bridges and flyovers would be fixed on the basis of competitive bidding, says the draft proposal.

Machinery and processing plant projects run on a build-own-transfer basis have to be transferred in about 30 years and the time limit for transfer of bridge, road and port projects has been set at 40 years.

The infrastructure projects, most of which will run on foreign funds, are to be taken up weighing foreign exchange risks including high interest rates on foreign loans and pressure on foreign exchange reserve.

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Cops beat man dead over son's release

Mob attacks Keraniganj police camp in protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police allegedly beat dead an owner of a rickshaw garage at Keraniganj yesterday, prompting locals to attack a police outpost in a show of protest.

Denying the allegation, police claimed the 65-year-old from Chunkutia village in Shuvaddha Union died of cardiac arrest in custody.

But locals and relatives of the victim, Bashir Uddin, said he went to the police camp at around 9:00 am for release of his son Khalil, whom police arrested in the morning for

Humayun Azad's family asks DU to bury him beside Nazrul

DU CORRESPONDENT

The family of Dhaka University (DU) professor and eminent writer Humayun Azad yesterday demanded of the university authorities to bury Azad on the premises of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's grave.

They sent letters to the DU Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Chairman of Bangla Department Prof SM Lutfar Rahman stating the demand.

"We have made the demand to bury Prof Azad on Nazrul's grave premises so that the future generations of the university can remember him," Azad's wife Latifa Kohinoor told reporters at a press conference.

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No fresh floods in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No fresh floods are likely in a week, although monsoon rains sent some upstream rivers swelling, experts said yesterday.

Earlier, the experts forecast a fresh spell of deluge for mid-August after monsoon-triggered floods swamped much of Bangladesh, killing about 500 people.

The situation will be very normal for the next seven days. Nothing is to worry about, although river water is rising at some points upstream," said Selim Bhuiyan, director of the Flood Forecasting

and Research Institute. China has won a total of 11

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