

4,000 likely to be freed

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"We are working to identify those who are imprisoned on charges of petty crimes in different jails," Inspector General (Prison) Brig Gen Zakir Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Responding to a question, he said the 'detainees on charges of petty crimes' refer to the people arrested on suspicion or allegations of crimes like theft and carrying bottles of phensidyl.

Of the 66 jails in the country, 11 are central jails in different districts, while others are district jails.

The country's jails with accommodation for only 27,000 in total are too inadequate for nearly 80,000 prisoners, said Deputy Inspector General (Prison) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui.

Dhaka Central Jail with the capacity for 2,682 prisoners is now facing serious troubles to accommodate around 9,000 prisoners, he noted.

He said officials are preparing the list of the detainees who are in prison on suspicion under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Discouraging the arrests under Section 54 of the CrPC, the advisory committee meeting on Wednesday said explanation has to be given for such arrests.

The move to release the detainees on petty charges has been initiated against the backdrop of the government's special drives to arrest the big guns in the career of crime and corruption.

Fake engine oil factory raided in Gazipur

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Joint forces, led by a magistrate, yesterday raided and sealed a factory off at Bhimbazar of Gazipur which used to produce counterfeit engine oil.

The law enforces, however, failed to arrest anyone in this connection.

The law enforces found hundreds of drums of used and counterfeit engine oil inside the factory, police sources said.

Sources said the owner of Siti International Abul Kashem used to mix colour and chemicals with used lubricants to make it look like fresh engine oil.

Kashem, manager of the factory Mukhlesur Rahman, and other workers had fled the area before the law enforcers reached the factory.

A security guard of the factory said the factory used to produce around 2,000 litres of counterfeit engine oil every day for distribution throughout the country during the night.

Locals claimed they had complained about the factory several times to the police but no action was taken.

However, Rafiqul Islam, office-in-charge of Devpur Police Station, said he had been transferred to the police station recently and he was unaware of such complaints against the factory.

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The Daily Star ran a report in this regard during that period and the then Rajuk chairman said, "Applying for allotment of the Gulshan-Banani land is open to all. But it is natural that we have to give priority to ministers, lawmakers and judges. And the number of plots is very limited."

Besides, the Rajuk authorities allocated hundreds of plots at Uttara third phase project without developing the lands. Most of the lands remain under water for most of the year.

"Only a few of the allottees have so far got formal letters from Rajuk about plot allocation and the others are yet to get those," said a top official requesting not to be named.

All past governments made plot allocations based on political considerations disregarding the principle of fairness, he noted. Besides the immediate past government, the Awami League

Tiger kills

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the forest department.

While they were collecting wood in Baikari forest area, the tiger swooped on Dhali and dragged him into the deep forest. Locals recovered the body from the deep forest at about 2:30pm.

Poetry festival

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Naser Hossain, Arne Johnson, Niklas Soderberg, Henrick C Enboham, Clara Diesen and Liakat Hossain.

The National Poetry Council President poet Rabib Hossain, General Secretary Samudra Gupta, convener of the festival's organising committee Habibullah Siraji, and Muhammad Samad, Aslam Sani and others were present at the press conference.

More arms

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personnel. Security sources said the den belongs to the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), an organisation of anti-peace campaigners in the CHT.

When contacted, UPDF central committee member Samari Chakma said UPDF men don't possess arms and ammunition. They have been campaigning only to protect the rights of indigenous people, she added.

Meanwhile, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized one AK81 rifle, the latest version of AK47, during a drive at Dighinala of the district on Wednesday.

6 JMB men

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know at what stage those are now," said Zakir. They are now waiting for the president's decision.

He also said there is no time limit for the presidential decision.

According to jail code, if the president rejects clemency prayers by the condemned, the jail authorities re-fix the date of execution within 21-28 days from the date of receipt of the copy of his decision, he mentioned.

The seven JMB militants were convicted and sentenced to death for killing two judges in Jhalakathi in a suicide bomb attack in November 2005. One of them, Asadul Islam alias Arif, is absconding.

Besides Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, the condemned militants are JMB Majlis-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal, Khaled Saifullah and suicide bomber Iftekharul Mamun.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were killed in the suicide bomb attack at Purba Chakdhati in Jhalakathi town in the wake of a series of bombings carried out by Islamist militants across the country.

He observed that when he talks about such a port many might think he is talking about Chittagong Port. "But the mega port I am talking about is anything but Chittagong Port," Dr Yunus made it clear.

With facilities for docking larger vessels the mega port could turn this region into a commercial hub of international standard benefiting all users, said the Nobel laureate.

Through opening the mega port for China, north-eastern states of neighbouring India and for landlocked countries like Nepal and Bhutan the wheel of the country's economy can be moved faster, he said.

The mega port could be run as a social business where the poor and underprivileged women could also be among the stakeholders like those in Grameen Bank, he added.

A highway linking the neighbouring landlocked countries will also be required to facilitate transport of goods from the mega seaport, Dr Yunus said.

He strongly suggested that setting up a mega airport with all sorts of facilities close to the mega seaport will also be required to benefit the business travelling frequently to and from Chittagong.

Such an airport will also be of greater use to different airlines operating flights on different international routes like Beijing and Tokyo, he observed.

Dr Yunus said Bangladesh was much ahead among the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries in many respects.

"We could go further ahead. But, we are getting stuck somewhere in our onward march," he said.

"We have to overcome the situation to keep up with the developed countries and to materialise our dream," he said.

Sangbadhara Parishad Convener Professor Muhammad Sikander Khan, who is also the president of the Chittagong chapter of Bangladesh Economic Association, presided over the ceremony where the parishad's Member Secretary Shamsul Hossain presented the welcome address.

Poet-journalist Abul Momen, who is also the resident editor of the daily Prothom Alo in Chittagong, read out the address of honour.

Dr Yunus' teacher Chitta Prashad Talukder, internationally reputed eye specialist Dr Robiul Hossain, renowned scientist Professor Emeritus Jamal Nazrul Islam, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, former chief engineer of Chittagong Port Authority Engineer Sultan Mahmud, and cultural activist Joushen Ara Rahman also spoke.

The Nobel laureate passed a busy day in his home town attending different programmes till late night since his arrival here at 7:00am.

He took the salute and inspected a parade of the members of Bangladesh National Cadet Core (BNCC), Girls Guide and Rover

Traffic congestion

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Kartripakha (Rajuk) has plans to protect Hatirjheel. Instead of closing it down, they would widen it, he said.

When asked about the already dying condition of the water body due to earth filling and encroachment on either side, the DCC official said the Rajuk could not start the protection work as the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecenec) has yet to approve the project.

He said the proposal might be raised at the next meeting of Ecenec, the highest government body that appraises and approves all development projects and programmes.

The elevated roadway too waits to get the go-ahead from the Ecenec. According to sources, Japan has already pledged to commit Tk 300 crore to it. In a number of letters, they have urged the Bangladesh government to get down to construction, the sources added.

According to town planners, the elevated roadway would be of little use if it does not let the water beneath flow unhindered.

The project plan should have the actual breadth of the wetlands estimated and measures to renovate and protect those from earth filling and encroachment, they observed.

The architects and city planners describe the project, which is not designed to be linked up with other elevated roadways, as a piecemeal solution.

"We have no objection if the roadway is built without affecting Hatirjheel and other canals in the area," observed Prof Nazrul Islam of Dhaka University, a noted urban expert.

He said the strategic transport plan (STP) recommends a flyover to reduce traffic congestion at Sonargaon point. It suggests that the structure should be built in such a way that composition of the existing waterbodies is not harmed.

Mega seaport in Ctg

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could bring about a revolutionary change in the country's economy, he said.

The future of the whole country is depending on Chittagong Port, which can hardly cope with the increasing pressure, when there is a huge prospect for setting up a mega seaport, he added.

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Demand to rid

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outside the party.

Like him, Shamsul Islam has a positive image among the leaders and workers. He had played an important role in the movement against the Awami League government between 1996 and 2001.

According to the BNP constitution, the standing committee can have at the maximum 15 members including the party chairperson. However, it has not had as many members since 1996. The party chairperson is expected to choose two more persons to fill the remaining slots.

Immediately after the general election of 1996, Majid Ul Haque resigned while barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah was relieved of his post.

Besides, Mustafizur Rahman, another member of the committee, died. These posts have long remained vacant.

On October 27 last year, Col (retired) Oli Ahmed, now executive president of Liberal Democratic Party, left the BNP.

The forces searched Abul Hossain Khan College at Krishnakuti village and seized 275 CI sheets of government relief fund.

Abul Hossain claimed over telephone that the ministry concerned allotted the CI sheets for the two institutions. He said other sheets were purchased from the open market and have valid documents.

He, however, refused to make any comment on the recovered sheets used in the BNP office.

Our Faridpur correspondent adds: The police filed a case against former BNP lawmaker Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar yesterday in connection with the recovery of 21 pieces of government relief CI sheets from his house on Thursday.

Two other cases were filed against BNP leaders Khandaker Rafiqul Islam Kamal and Ataur Rahman yesterday as the joint forces seized CI sheets of government relief fund from their business establishments.

Claiming innocence, however, Abu Zafar said he will surrender to the court. "I came to know the matter from newspapers. I will take decision after consulting with my lawyer," he told The Daily Star over mobile phone yesterday.

Our correspondent in Rajshahi reports: The police yesterday arrested Bazlul Haque Mantu, president of ward-23 unit of Jatiyabadi Judo Dal and an alleged godfather of

AL leader Jhontu

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the chairman of Rangpur municipality.

In 1996 general elections, he was elected an MP with JP ticket from Rangpur-3. In 2001, he joined the AL as JP dismissed his membership.

Shafuddin's brother Azgar is the district Zaker Party president and joint secretary of the central committee of the party.

Our correspondent in Barisal reports: Abdul Latif Khan, assistant commissioner (land) of Bakerganj, said the joint forces searched the home of Abul Hossain Khan, former BNP lawmaker of Barisal-6, but did not find any illegal item.

The forces searched Abul Hossain Khan Institute-named after Abul Hossain's father-and Abul Hossain Khan College at Krishnakuti village and seized 275 CI sheets of government relief fund.

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