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Lease, sale of govt land without tender declared illegal

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared unlawful any lease, sale or transfer of government land to any person merely on applications without following a transparent process like tender or auction.

The court asked the government to follow the order and convey it to all the ministries.

Disposing of a writ petition, a division bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Qamrul Islam Siddiqui passed the order.

Lawyers termed it a landmark judgment as many government lands were leased out or handed over to the vested interest groups and individuals in obscure processes.

In its order, the court said since the government lands are being leased out or transferred to individuals on mere applications and the

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Rab seizes Harris Chy's luxury SUV

Ex-BNP MP Salahuddin's super-costly car found parked at Morshed Khan's business office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday seized a luxury sport utility vehicle (SUV) owned by Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia, and arrested his two brothers-in-law along with the driver of the car.

Earlier on Sunday, joint forces seized an ultra luxury Range Rover imported by former state minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed from Pacific Centre at Mohakhali in the city - former foreign minister Morshed

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The expensive Infiniti QX56 car of Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former premier Khaleda Zia, seized by Rab yesterday.

AL for June polls after credible voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) at a meeting with the chief election commissioner (CEC) yesterday demanded holding of the parliamentary election by June after preparing a credible voter list with photographs instead of identity cards.

The Election Commission (EC) however at this moment is not thinking about declaring any time-table for holding the due ninth parliamentary election, which was earlier scheduled for January 22. It has rather emphasised massive electoral reforms for a credible election.

Opposing the idea of using voter identity cards in the next parliamentary election, the high-powered delegation of AL technical committee on elections argued that it would take a long time. Besides, no country has been able to issue identity cards to all the voters, they said.

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CONFISCATING PROPERTIES.

ACC list of 15 graft suspects sent to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sent a list of 15 graft suspects to the Cabinet Division and home ministry to initiate the process of confiscating their properties.

They failed to submit wealth statements to the ACC in time.

"As per the emergency power rules, the government will seek permission from magistrates to freeze properties of corruption suspects who have failed to submit wealth statements. The govern-

ment will now specify the authorities which will initiate this process," ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star.

The 15 are on the list of 50 graft suspects whom the ACC had asked to submit wealth statements within 72 hours that ended on Sunday.

They include Tarique Rahman's business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, Awami League (AL) leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah, former AL state minister Mofazzal

Hossain Chowdhury Maya, former AL whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja, former AL MPs Shamim Osman, Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, Haji Selim, Mockbul Hossain, Mirza Azam and Joyntal Hazari, Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Munshiganj AL leader Mohiuddin Ahmed, Bashundhara Group chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan (Shah Alam) and former National Board of Revenue (NBR) member Jahurul Haque.

Of the 15, seven AL leaders have

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Formalin fish back in city markets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The supply of fish from Myanmar to the wholesale markets in the capital has returned to almost "normal" just five days after the biggest ever drive against formalin-laden fish at three large fish markets.

It was learnt at the Sawarighat wholesale market yesterday that the supply of Burmese fish remained suspended for two days after Saturday's drive that saw seizure and destruction of 6.5 tonnes of fish.

Meanwhile, retailers' disinterest in buying Burmese fish has resulted in a 50-percent increase in the prices of local fish, especially ruhi and katla.

The presence of Burmese fish at the wholesale markets, however,

was not as much as before, and a few traders said it is because of the businessmen's cautiousness.

"Traders do not display Burmese fish openly in the market; they keep very few samples mixed with local ruhi and katla. They only sell it to retailers they know well," said a shrimp trader.

Another trader said they are facing difficulties in selling Burmese fish since most retailers are not willing to take any risk by buying them.

"As far as we know, importers have sent their imported fish to different cold storages and are waiting for the situation to become normal," said a businessman, adding, "We used to get supply of around 8,000-10,000kg fish every day, which has now halved."

On Saturday, a mobile court

comprising the joint forces destroyed around 6.5 tonnes formalin-treated fish and seized around 187kg jatka (small Hilsha) from the wholesale fish markets at Sawarighat, Kaptan Bazar and Waighat in the city. Lion part of the fish was imported from Myanmar.

None of the law enforcement authorities deployed any forces at the wholesale markets following the drive to check entrance of Burmese fish.

A senior army officer told The Daily Star that they are corresponding with the government departments concerned to stop import of fish as it is not possible to raid or deploy forces at every market.

Many wholesale fish traders claimed that they do not use formalin in fish and that the fish is

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BARAPUKURIA

Power plant chokes with imported coal

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

The country's lone coal-based power plant at Barapukuria is now facing difficulties in generating electricity due to use of imported coal with high sulphur content and excessive clay and sand, plant sources said.

The 250 MW plant was facing a crisis of coal as Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) repeatedly failed to resume production at the coal mine and supply coal to the power plant since October last year.

One of the two units of the plant remained out of operation for long due to coal shortage, and production in both the units started on February 25 using coal imported by the Power Development Board (PDB) from a neighbouring country.

The BCMCL had suspended

production at the coal mine in October for phase development and to shift equipment to another site. But the long delay in doing that forced the power plant to opt for imported coal, PDB officials in Dinajpur said.

BCMCL sources however said although coal production was suspended in June last, partial production continues since then.

As production at the coal mine did not resume in time, mine officials had verbally informed the power plant authorities about this, and urged them to arrange alternative coal supply. The PDB then went for coal import to maintain smooth power generation during the current IRRI-Boro season.

Meanwhile, China Machinery Company (CMC) that built the power plant has informed the PDB

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Crack develops in burned building ntv chief dismisses rumour of sabotage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A crack was found yesterday on the ninth floor of Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) Bhaban after a devastating blaze burned the 11-storey building two days ago at the teeming Karwan Bazar in the capital.

Although two government bodies probing the fire incident could not ascertain any reason for the fire, Enayetur Rahman, managing director (MD) of ntv, located on the sixth floor, dismissed the rumour of sabotage. The ntv and Rtv will move to another building to resume operations, he added.

Staffers of the ninth floor noticed the crack in the floor at the

western side of the building when they were allowed to visit their offices yesterday.

The discovery of the crack caused alarm among the staffers of the eighth and ninth floors. However, a fire service official who is probing the fire incident said there was no reason to panic.

Even though security personnel cordoned the building off, they allowed workers and employees of offices inside the building to visit their work place for a short period around 11:00am yesterday.

The security officials received lists of staffs of each of the 23 offices and let them in. A number of staffs were allowed to move papers and

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500 more CI sheets of relief seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces arrested two local leaders of BNP and its youth wing Jatiyatabadi Jibbo Dal for possessing corrugated iron (CI) sheets meant for relief in Netrokona and Lalmonirhat and recovered 497 such sheets from across the country yesterday.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 1,683 others who include 42 convicted in different criminal cases, 976 wanted criminals and 19 others accused in arms and explosives acts in 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday, said a home ministry press release.

Members of the armed forces arrested 52 people including 35 criminals during the period.

In Khulna, the joint forces recovered 300 government CI sheets for relief from BNP leader

Motiur Rahman Moti's sawmill behind Bakali Cinema Hall in Khalishpur.

In Netrokona, the joint forces recovered 113 CI sheets from Madan and Purbadhala upazilas on Tuesday night.

Of the sheets, 83 were seized from the house of BNP leader Azizul Haque of Balali village in Madan upazila and arrested him.

The forces also seized 22 CI sheets from BNP leader Abdul Master's house in the same village and another eight pieces from BNP leader Motahar Hossain's house at Shaldiga village in Purbadhala upazila.

In Narayanganj, security forces recovered 39 CI sheets of government relief and 18 poles abandoned by local BNP leader and Dhuptara Union Parishad Chairman Ruhul Amin.

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Fake \$8 crore in 100-dollar notes seized in city

UNB, Dhaka

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered some 8,00,000 fake 100-dollar notes along with dollar-minting materials at SA Paribahan counter in the capital's Mohakhali area last night.

Acting on a tip-off, an intelligence team of the elite force raided the counter at about 8:00pm and made the huge haul of counterfeit foreign currency notes.

They also recovered two packets of white powder, a pair of hand gloves and other materials stuffed in two briefcases.

Rab team leader Captain Masud told UNB that they suspect these materials are used for counterfeiting dollars.

The Rab men arrested counter manager Wasim and its staff Kiron and later handed them over to Shilpachal Police Station.

Army foils bid by Mamun's brother to withdraw Tk 1cr from bank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The army yesterday foiled an attempt for drawing Tk 1 crore from a bank account of arrested former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim with Dutch-Bangla Bank at Siddhirganj off the district.

Sources said a man on behalf of Hafiz Ibrahim, one of the 50 corrupt suspects listed by Anti-Corruption Commission, had deposited an account payee cheque to Dutch-Bangla Bank's Shimrail branch.

The cheque had signature of former BNP lawmaker, also elder brother of Giasuddin Al Mamun and a business partner of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, on it.

Receiving the cheque, the bank authorities contacted army personnel in Dhaka regarding drawing

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PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka University Chancellor President Iajuddin Ahmed formally confers the honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Prof Muhammad Yunus at the 43rd convocation of the university yesterday.

Yunus tells of new goals for students

Receives honorary degree at DU convocation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged Dhaka University students to be more original in their thought and be more innovative in finding ways to take advanced technology to the poor.

The Nobel laureate also called for a separate stock exchange for 'businesses for the good of the people' that would cater to investors willing to buy shares of locally designed

innovative organisations run by students to eradicate poverty.

Yunus made these comments while speaking at Dhaka University's 43rd convocation after receiving an honorary Doctorate of Law from the university for winning the Nobel Peace Prize along with his brainchild Grameen Bank.

"I think the new spaces of knowledge can only be created by protecting the students' individuality. If students completely mould

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President for steps against harmful sides of student politics

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday urged the politicians to build up a knowledge-based society by taking steps against the harmful sides of student politics.

"It's time to take steps against the harmful sides of student politics. This is important to build up a knowledge-based society. And to make that happen, sincerity and sympathy of our political parties are needed. I would like to draw attention of the politicians in this regard," he said.

The president was addressing the 43rd convocation of Dhaka

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Gias Kamal blasts the powerful for looting relief

Tries to justify allotment of land to Huda's wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting President of The Bangladesh Society For The Enforcement Of Human Rights (BSEHR) Gias Kamal Chowdhury yesterday blasted some powerful people of the immediate past government for 'taking undue money and looting relief materials'.

At a press conference organised by BSEHR at its central office in the capital, Gias, however, tried to justify the controversial allocation of 0.2460-acre land of Bangladesh Railway to BSEHR in 2003 when Nazmul Huda was the communications minister.

Huda is the founder of the organisation while his wife Signa Huda is its general secretary.

The central office of the BSEHR is also established on the

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Chief justice retires with controversy at heels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a number of controversies surrounding him, Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain retired yesterday without receiving a traditional farewell from the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

A group of pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat-e-Islami lawyers, government law officers including the attorney general, and the High Court (HC) and Supreme Court (SC) judges, however, accorded a farewell to Mudassar.

Five HC judges did not attend the farewell function held at the Chief Justice's Courtroom yesterday morning.

This was for the second time that the SCBA refrained from according farewell to a retiring chief justice. Earlier in 1989, the

highest ranking association of the country's lawyers refrained from giving farewell to the then chief justice AFM Munim.

SCBA President barrister Amir-ul-Islam said, "When we discussed among ourselves the issue of giving [Mudassar Husain] the farewell, senior lawyers said they did not find any reason to laud him at the farewell function. So, why give him a farewell?"

Barrister Amir rather levelled charges against the outgoing chief justice, saying, "In the last five years, the chief justice did not even attempt to stop the [alliance government's] bid to politicise the judiciary. Instead, he did whatever the government had asked him to do."

Citing different instances of controversial actions, Amir said, "The Supreme Court has given the

country important guidelines whenever the country faced a crisis. When there was such a crisis in the country and people resorted to the court for guidelines during Mudassar's tenure, he posed as a hurdle against justice."

Amir alleged that there are several instances where the chief justice dissolved certain benches that had given verdicts on sensitive cases and even curtailed the powers of some benches that dealt with similar sensitive cases.

"He did not let the judges work independently. He also hampered the judges' rights in conducting judicial works - this is a violation of the constitution," said Amir-ul-Islam, one of the most senior and eminent lawyers of the country.

He welcomed new Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin, saying,

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Newmooring terminal to be operated under SOT system

BSS, Dhaka

The council of advisers yesterday decided to operate the Newmooring Container Terminal at Chittagong Port under SOT (service, operation and transfer) system.

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