

HILL CUTTING

DoE publishes list of 190

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Department of Environment (DoE), Chittagong yesterday published a revised list identifying 190 individuals, organisations and business groups as responsible for illegal hill cutting in 134 areas of Chittagong Division and sent it to DoE head office in Dhaka for next course of actions.

A few names were dropped from the list prepared earlier after a field-level survey as specific information could not be collected, sources said.

The DoE has also started sending notices to the identified persons and organisations calling for all the relevant documents regarding their establishments.

"We will examine the documents to be provided and stern legal actions will be taken if

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Handle UK-based money transfers with extra care

BB alerts all NCBs

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday asked all commercial banks to take additional risk measures before doing business with the UK-based money transfer agencies.

In a letter, the BB also asked the Bangladesh High Commission in London to closely watch activities of the remittance houses there having transactions with Bangladesh and notify the central bank of any fraudulent activities by such houses.

Asked about the additional risk measures, a BB official said, "We asked the local banks to evaluate the reputation and accounting systems of the UK-based money exchange houses before signing any deal with them."

The BB directives came after London-based First Solution Money Transfer Ltd stopped business on June 27 and applied to the authorities there to declare it bankrupt, which created panic among clients both in London and Bangladesh. Owners of the agency immediately went into hiding.

The First Solution owes up to £2 million to some 2,000 creditors who had been sending money to Bangladesh from London.

The BB sent an inspection team to London last year to investigate activities of the London-based money transfer agencies that have transaction with Bangladesh. The team found that a number of agencies unlawfully publicised that they have BB approval.

The BB letter also asked the commercial banks to ask their money exchange partners in different countries not to use the central bank logo in advertisements or official papers since they are not authorised by the BB.

The central bank said many money transfer agencies are claiming to their clients that they have approval from Bangladesh Bank, which is totally untrue.

The BB letter said it is not necessary in the UK to take any financial regulatory body's approval for money transfer business. "It is possible to do remittance transfer business in the UK by registering with the HM Customs and Excise, UK," it said.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

This man begs in a wheelchair at Gulshan-2 roundabout in the capital daily when vehicles stop there. When the traffic light turns green, the beggar causes difficulty to vehicular movement and poses risk of a serious accident.

Boy killed, 3 others injured in landslide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A five-year-old boy died and three of his family members received injuries after a landslide engulfed their house at Gonarpara village in Cox's Bazar in the early hours yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Kalu's son Nurul Absar. The ones injured are the boy's mother Hosne Ara, 25, his sister Rijia Akter, 8, and his brother Osman Gani, 22, said police source.

Torrential rain caused the landslide that buried the tin-roofed house of the family while all were asleep.

Indiscriminate hill cutting is to blame for the rise in environmental hazards such as landslides in the area, experts said.

After visiting the affected area, an environmentalist, Prof

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NBR asks banks for account info of 54

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday asked different commercial banks to submit account information of 54 individuals including business tycoon Abdul Awal Minto, former AL lawmakers Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton, Rafiqul Anwar, Barisal Mayor and BNP leader Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, and their relatives, by July 12.

The Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) of the NBR sent separate letters to the banks seeking account details of these people.

Others include Dr Firoz Mahmud Iqbal, assignment officer

of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, Molla Abul Kalam Azad, a trade union leader of Bangladesh Water Development Board, and their relatives.

The letters directed the banks to provide the account statements of last 6 years till the last printout of the audit trial.

The banks will have to provide detailed information about transactions made through personal account, joint account, current account, foreign currency account, savings account, credit account, and credit cards, as per the directives.

Sources said that the revenue

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BAR ON EXPORT

Seven trucks of hilsha sent back from Benapole

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Complying with the recent government decree to ban export of hilsha fish for six months, customs officials at Benapole port yesterday sent back seven trucks containing hilsha consignments bound for India.

The seven trucks had arrived at the land port from Barisal on Wednesday night, customs sources said.

Hilsha exporters alleged that Benapole Customs House had not yet received any directive from the government in relation to banning of hilsha export to India.

ACC serves notices on 6 graft suspects

Asks them to submit wealth reports within 7 days

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday served notices on six corruption suspects including former ministers Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Lutfozzaman Babar and Rafiqul Islam, to submit their wealth statements within seven working days.

The ACC will serve notices on six more graft suspects on Sunday, a

source in the ACC told the news agency requesting anonymity.

Five notices were delivered to the inspector general of prisons to forward those to detained Altaf, Babar, Selim, Rafiqul, and CBA leader Abul Kalam Azad. The notice of Masudur Rahman, son of former Awami League lawmaker Maqbul Hossain, was delivered to his home address.

The other six corruption suspects who are likely to be served

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Fertiliser stock adequate, says industries adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Adviser for Industries Geeteara Safiya Chowdhury yesterday said the fertiliser stock in the country is more than it is needed to meet the demand during this year's Aman season.

"There is no fertiliser crisis in the country. The government is fully aware of the farmers' demand and determined to ensure proper distribution of fertiliser among them," she told the news agency at her office.

She said the present government is contemplating establishment of new urea fertiliser factories in the country to increase production and meet the farmers' demand.

Israeli forces kill 8 in Gaza raid

AP, AFP, Gaza City

Israel clashed with Hamas militants inside the Gaza Strip yesterday, killing eight in fierce fighting that drew in Israeli aircraft, tanks and bulldozers, and sent militants laying mines against troops.

The army said the shootout began after airmen backing troops on a routine patrol about 1 kilometre inside the Gaza Strip identified militants approaching the soldiers, and opened fire from the air. The militants then fired at the patrol, sparking a shootout on the ground, the army said.

Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida

said its fighters launched the clash by opening fire at an Israeli undercover unit.

The Israeli military called in two air strikes on the outskirts of the Maghazi refugee camp, killing four fighters from Hamas's armed wing and a fifth Palestinian whose identity was not initially clear, local medical sources said.

Israeli troops and tanks earlier pushed across the border into the central Gaza Strip as far as the Maghazi outskirts, where they became locked in heavy firefights with Palestinian militants, medical sources and the army said.

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PHOTO: STAR

Rehana Jalil, wife of Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, addresses a press conference at her Gulshan residence in the capital yesterday. To her left are their two sons.

UK house used as bomb factory: report

AP, London

Police searched for evidence yesterday in a Scottish house that may have been used to produce the makeshift bombs that failed to explode in three attempted terror attacks on London and the Glasgow airport, officials and news reports said.

Community leaders in Scotland appealed for calm after Glasgow police said there had been dozens of racially motivated incidents since the attack on the city's airport Saturday.

At least two of the eight suspects caught so far rented a house a few miles from the airport where two men crashed a gas-laden Jeep Cherokee into barriers outside a terminal the day after two car bombs failed to explode in London,

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Pak mosque chief asks students to surrender

Cleric captured while fleeing in burqa

AFP, Islamabad

The captured leader of Pakistan's besieged Red Mosque urged his followers to surrender yesterday, as the government said "terrorist" gunmen were holding women and children as human shields inside.

Abdul Aziz, who was seized on Wednesday trying to flee the complex in a woman's burqa, said in a bizarre television interview wearing one of the garments that about 1,000 male and female students remained in the building.

The pro-Taliban mosque has been under siege by troops and police since Tuesday when fierce street battles between its hardline devotees and security forces left at least 16 people dead.

"After coming out I saw the siege was massive and came to the conclusion that we should give up," he told state television. "The government has massive resources and I realised that people will not be able to

stay inside for long."

Aziz appeared in a black burqa under which his grey beard was partly visible. The interviewer asked him to take off the veil, which he then lifted to show his face.

"I have told them not to sacrifice their lives for me," he said.

President Pervez Musharraf's government, which has been under pressure to crack down on the mosque's Taliban-style vigilante activities, hailed Aziz's arrest as a major coup.

But security forces were still trying to dislodge his brother Abdul Rashid Ghazi and a diehard core of militants allegedly stopping people from surrendering.

Helicopter gunships again circled around the mosque as tension mounted.

"There are up to 30 armed terrorists holed up inside the mosque

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NHA forms committee to probe illegal allocation of govt plots

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Housing Authority (NHA) has formed a probe committee to dig out illegal allocations of government plots in the capital's Mohammadpur area.

Sources said the committee will scrutinise all allocations of government plots since 1968 in the area, examine eligibility of the plot holders and submit its report within 45 days.

Formation of the five-member probe body with the NHA member (land and asset management) as its convenor followed allegations of gross irregularities in the allocation process.

A former Awami League (AL) lawmaker and some vested interests in the area were allegedly involved in the malpractice.

Sources said the lawmaker, who headed a government plot allocation committee under the housing ministry during the AL rule, allocated many plots in the name of others or against fictitious names but those were actually owned by him. And he also built structures on some plots and rented those out secretly.

When contacted, NHA Chairman Md Abdul Quyum said the committee will just examine if there were any illegal allocations of plots in the area.

Blast at China bar kills 25

AP, Beijing

A blast ripped through a karaoke parlour in northeast China, killing 25 people and injuring 33 others, state media reported Thursday, the latest such incident in a country hit by poor safety standards and negligence.

Xinhua News Agency did not give a cause for the Wednesday night blast in Tianshifu township in Liaoning province.

Xinhua said the explosion caused the two-story building to collapse, burying several nearby cars.

It said the dead included the parlour's owner.

An official with the Liaoning provincial press office, who gave only his surname, Li, confirmed the blast took place, but gave no other details.

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