

Relocation of polluting tanneries in limbo

Businesses demand compensation

WASIM BIN HABIB

The much-awaited relocation of tanneries from Hazaribagh to proposed 'leather estate' in Savar is facing various complications as the government and the industry owners have yet to settle several issues even three years after inauguration of the relocation project.

Tannery owners are reluctant to shift their businesses until the government provides them with compensation and other facilities.

However, the government is apparently not much willing to meet these demands. Complexity in setting up the Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) is also hindering the process, said sources.

Meanwhile in the five years after the launch of the project named "Dhaka Tannery Estate Project" (DTEP), the Buriganga river experienced further pollution. Moreover, residents in the western part of the capital are set to face onslaught of toxic liquid waste in the coming days as the tannery waste is still

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The filth of nearby tanneries and garbage dumped at this lagoon of Hazaribagh in the capital keep property values low and the area pretty much secluded. The photo was taken yesterday.

CA likely to address nation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed is expected to address the nation today in which he will give specific directives on lifting the state of emergency and restriction on indoor politics and announce a schedule for the much-talked-about political dialogue.

In his speech, the chief adviser will also provide detailed directions about creating a climate of trust among all, holding a meaningful general election and ensuring qualitative changes to politics, Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

As reporters insisted for a specific date of the CA's address, he said, "I told you earlier that the chief adviser will address the nation in a week and the time is ending tomorrow. I believe you are good at mathematics."

After the chief adviser announces the date of the political dialogue, the political parties will be formally invited.

"The dialogue will take place after the chief adviser's speech. Invitation letters will be sent to political parties from the chief adviser's office," Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader told the reporters.

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EC to collect records of war criminals' trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the commission will collect records of war criminals' trials under the now defunct collaborators act, in a bid to permanently disqualify war criminals from contesting in any election.

Between 1972 and 1975, 752 persons were convicted of war crimes and the government has the records. Soon after the country's independence, 37,000 persons were detained on charges of war crimes, 26,000 of whom were released on a general amnesty in 1973, keeping 11,000 still in jails on specific charges of murder, rape, arson, etc.

But after 1975, the collaborators act was scrapped stopping the trials and leading to release of all convicted and detained war criminals.

In its electoral reform proposals, the Election Commission (EC) said an individual will be permanently barred from contesting in parliamentary elections if that person was convicted of war crimes by any national or international tribunal. The same provision is likely to be proposed for local

government elections too.

Besides, according to a Supreme Court order, a contesting candidate will have to submit an affidavit of personal information of eight categories including one for criminal cases filed against that person, and the verdicts in those.

"Returning officers will need the war crimes trial records to scrutinise the nomination papers, for finding out whether any of the prospective candidates has suppressed information about war crimes cases filed against him or her," the CEC told the Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) yesterday at a meeting in the commission secretariat.

The CEC said if any candidate is proven guilty of suppressing information in the affidavit submitted to the commission, even after the person is elected to an office, that election will be cancelled.

"But we need the trial records and other documents since the Election Commission does not have any pertinent information," the CEC said.

Leaders of SCF, a platform of commanders who led the country's liberation war in eleven sectors, told the CEC that all records and evidence of war crimes have

been lying on government shelves.

The forum placed a five-point proposal to the EC including one for barring war criminals from contesting in polls, and another for disqualifying anti-liberation organisations including Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League, and Nezam-e-Islam from being registered as parliamentary political parties.

SCF also proposed for a provision in the electoral law, asking candidates to submit affidavits of personal positions during the liberation war, and their whereabouts after the liberation war.

The veteran freedom fighters said war criminals and anti-liberation political forces should not be allowed to be in politics of the independent country under any circumstances.

"We fully agree with the proposals. We will do our best within our abilities, and make recommendations to proper authorities on matters beyond our jurisdiction," the CEC told the SCF delegation.

In response to the proposals, Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussain said the EC agrees with the SCF proposals '100 percent'. "But a legal

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BNP's FACTIONAL FEUD

Saifur, Mannan add new twist

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

A group of former BNP lawmakers, who are known as Saifur loyalists, yesterday in a meeting blasted their Acting Chairperson Saifur Rahman for his recent remark that his leadership has become ineffective.

The former lawmakers also assigned five leaders of the so-called reformist faction of the party for expediting the process of re-unification with their rival pro-Khaleda faction led by the detained chairperson appointed Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, according to meeting sources.

The sources said at least thirty

two former lawmakers loyal to pro-Saifur faction of BNP held the meeting in a Gulshan house in the capital to discuss the next course of action of the group.

When asked about the meeting, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star last night, "We, at least 30 former lawmakers of the party, discussed the party's re-unification process, the upcoming election, and the proposed dialogue with the government."

Replying to a question he said, "The recent remarks of Saifur Rahman, and the issue of Mannan Bhuiyan also came up in the discussion."

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WOMEN'S RESERVED SEATS IN LOCAL GOVT

Govt retreats from pledge

SHAKHAWAT LITON

In a surprise move the caretaker government has retreated from its earlier pledge of reserving 40 per cent seats for women at all tiers of the local government system for three consecutive terms.

It is widely believed that the government has buckled in the wake of violent protests by hardliner Islamist groups against the National Women's Development Policy 2008.

The pledge however was made to effectively empower women at all levels of the local government system.

On March 23, the council of

advisers approved in principle two ordinances regarding formations and functions of city corporations and municipalities with the provision for reserving 40 per cent seats exclusively for women.

The government also had a plan to incorporate the same provision in other upcoming laws regarding formations and functions of union, upazila and zila parishads, the sources added.

But an Ulama Committee formed by the government to review the women's development policy, on April 17 in its recommendations to the government, strongly opposed the policy and

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Charge sheet in Gatco case likely today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is likely to submit today the charge sheet against detained former premier Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 22 others for illegally awarding container-handling job at two container depots in Dhaka and Chittagong to Gatco.

Meanwhile, detained former state minister for youth and sports Fazlur Rahman Patal was yesterday shown arrested in a case filed against him for amassing assets illegally.

GATCO CASE
Sources said the investigation officer (IO) ACC Deputy Director Johirul Huda is expected to submit the charge sheet against Khaleda,

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Mirza Abbas gets 8yrs for tax offences

Fined Tk 54 lakh; Tk 2.24cr property to be confiscated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court dealing with graft cases yesterday sentenced detained former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas to eight years' imprisonment on charges of dodging tax and furnishing false information in his tax returns.

The Third Special Court of Judge Shahed Nuruddin also fined Abbas Tk 54 lakh, in default of which he would have to serve another year in jail.

The court also ordered confiscation of his property worth over Tk



Mirza Abbas

2.24 crore to the state.

The former minister was handed down the punishment under two sections of Income Tax Ordinance, 1984.

He was sentenced to three years' jail under section 165 of the ordinance for providing false information in 13 tax returns since 1990-1991 tax year and was given five years' jail under section 166 for evading Tk 57 lakh in tax by concealing information about wealth worth over Tk 2.24 crore.

However, Abbas will have to serve only five years in jail as the

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This photo taken yesterday in front of the public prosecutor's office at the Chittagong court building shows bamboos being used for keeping the dilapidated ceiling in place.

APPELLATE DIVISION

SC lawyers to abstain from proceedings for 2 hrs Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday decided to stay away from moving cases in the Appellate Division for two hours from 9:00am Thursday to protest against a few recent judgments delivered by the apex court.

It also decided not to bid farewell to the incumbent chief justice and felicitate his replacement.

The SCBA took the decision at an urgent general meeting with SCBA President Barrister Shafique Ahmed in the chair, held at

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Task force to find Biman irregularities

UNB, Dhaka

A special task force has been formed in order to make Biman Bangladesh Airlines a more dynamic and profitable organisation by removing corruption and irregularities from the national airline.

An ISPR press release yesterday requested all to provide necessary information to the task force at the following addresses to formulate recommendations in this regard.

Postal address - Special Task Force-Biman Bangladesh Airlines, c/o Armed Forces Division, Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka-1206.

E-mail address - bimantf2008@gmail.com.

Interested people may also contact at Tel: 8917487 and mobile 01670070070.

Besides, complaints relating to Biman can be dropped at the complaint boxes kept at Balaka Bhaban and Zia International Airport.

Jalil's parole extended by 2 months more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the parole of ailing Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil, currently undergoing treatment in Singapore, by two months, a home ministry release said yesterday.

The extension came in response to Jalil's application for extending his parole so that he can continue his medical treatment at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

"The government has extended the parole on humanitarian grounds for the sake of treatment with effect from May 11," said the statement signed by deputy secretary of the home ministry Md Mizanur Rahman.

This is for the third time Jalil's parole has been extended.

On March 2, the AL leader was released on parole for one month for treatment abroad. He flew to

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A member of the joint forces puts in sacks of rice they seized on April 25 at Halishahar of Chittagong after it was dumped as "inedible". The photo was taken yesterday.

Probe body formed to find reason for rice dumping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A nine-member probe committee was formed yesterday to investigate why over 400 MT of good, edible rice was being dumped and who took such a decision.

The probe body is headed by the Commander of Task Force in Chittagong Brigadier General Hasan Nasir and consists of members from the district administration, customs, food department, task force and BSTI (Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution).

The committee has been asked to hand in its report by May 31.

Brigadier General Hasan Nasir told reporters yesterday, "We will investigate the reasons why a decision was taken to destroy such a large quantity of rice in good

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FIVE-POINT DEMAND

Hasina asks AL men to launch movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed her party colleagues to forge a movement to force the government to meet the five-point demand including her release and immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

She also asked them to know about the military-backed caretaker administration's agenda before attending the official dialogue. She also wants them to "make the talks successful at any cost".

A former prime minister, Hasina made the comments to her lawyers after the hearing on charge framing in the MiG-29 graft case was adjourned till May 19.

Fourth of its kind, yesterday's



adjournment came as the former army chief Mustafizur Rahman, an accused in the case, could not appear before the court due to illness.

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Hasina files writ petition against graft case proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) challenging the legality of the trial proceedings of the barge-mount power plant corruption case against her.

The former prime minister, in her petition, appealed for quashing the case being tried by a special judge court set up at Jatuya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

The HC bench of Justice Md Iman Ali and Justice Emdadul Huq is likely to hear the case today.

Hasina stated that as per Section 6(A) of Criminal Law Amendment Act 1958, the trial proceedings of a criminal case should have to be disposed of within 60 days after the court takes

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