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## Over 23,000 NGOs' activities unknown

Govt to scrutinise registration given by BNP-Jamaat; lax watch of social welfare ministry leads to irregularities

ALPHA ARZU

Around half of the NGOs registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare remain inactive for long and a few of them are even regularly taking funds from the government, reveals a recent finding.

The ministry makes the finding digging into the allegations against several NGOs of having links with militants.

A staggering 23,280 of the 50,997 registered NGOs, which do not get foreign funds but receive government allocation, have so far become "signboard NGOs"

and have no recent activities.

Ministry officials say these "signboard NGOs" did not submit their annual reports and financial records to the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) as per the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance, 1961.

As many as 16,980 such NGOs did not submit their annual and audit reports in the past 15 years, says an official, who works in the audit and administration department, DSW.

Sources say some NGOs are still receiving

annual allocation estimated between Tk 50,000 and Tk 5 lakh from the government in the name of social development and welfare. On the other hand, a number of inactive NGOs are receiving sewing machines, computers, wheel chairs and other things.

"The Social Welfare Department did not take action against those non-performing NGOs, though they received the government grants regularly," says a DSW high official.

He adds the process of getting funds

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- 50,997 NGOs under social welfare ministry
- Registration of 19,000 NGOs given during BNP-Jamaat rule
- No annual, audit reports in 15 years from 16,980 NGOs
- Receive allocation up to Tk 5 lakh annually
- No action taken as yet against defaulting NGOs

## Fruits aplenty but taste, flavour gone

Indiscriminate use of chemicals in ripening blamed

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Ripe jackfruit, pineapple, papaya or mango—all fruits flooding the city markets look great but lack usual scent and taste as traders use chemical compounds to ripen them artificially, posing a serious health risk to the consumers.

Sources said fruit growers and traders are using different harmful chemicals including growth hormone, insecticides and other chemicals like carbide and formalin in the fruits from the orchard to market for making quick cash.

Carbide, a chemical compound used for manufacturing dry cell batteries, is now being used in mango, banana and papaya for bringing colour.

"A couple of days ago, my husband bought a jackfruit which was soft like a ripe one. But we could not eat it because it was totally tasteless and stinky. I guess it was artificially ripened," said a housewife from Mirpur when asked about the seasonal fruits.

Besides the seasonal fruits, traders also use formalin in imported fruits like grape and apples to keep them fresh for long.

Sources said carbide, copper sulphate, different kinds of textile dyes and pesticides are very popular among the food traders and growers.

These chemicals are harmful to human health. They cause diseases of kidney, liver and even might cause cancer if consumed for long. Children are the worst victims of this practice.

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## 1 crushed under train wheels

Pilfering of oil by a syndicate goes unabated

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

A person was crushed to death under the wheels of a running train while pilfering oil from it at Mobarakganj in Jhenidah on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Jahangir Hossain of Kashipur village. He slipped off the train while handing a polythene bag of stolen oil to one of his accomplices, said locals.

A syndicate in connivance with some dishonest train drivers, oil depot in-charges and railway security guards are involved in pilfering oil from running trains in the southwestern districts of the country.

Every day thousands of litres of oil are stolen from running trains at ten spots for which Bangladesh Railway incurs loss in crores of taka every year.

The spots where the oil is lifted are Sundarpur in Jhenidah, Halsha, Poradah in

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These pieces of land created by encroachment on the second channel of the Buriganga are likely to be recovered once the deputy commissioner of Dhaka receives the High Court order.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## 4 DCs start river work, wait for HC order

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of four districts, who were asked by the High Court (HC) on June 25 to take measures to protect the rivers under their jurisdiction, are now 'doing some home work' in this regard on the basis of newspaper reports as none of them received the court order officially until writing of this report yesterday afternoon.

The DCs of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj said they cannot start the process of demarcating the rivers until they get the HC order officially.

"I have nonetheless started doing some homework which includes finding the location of the rivers as recorded in the 1914 Cedral Survey," DC of Dhaka Zillur Rahman told The Daily Star.

With the rivers Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakhya, and Tongi Khal (canal) worst affected by years of encroachment and pollution, the DC of Dhaka has the most significant job of reporting back to the HC timely.

The court ordered the four DCs to complete demarcation of the Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Turag and Balu rivers by November 30.

"We already have knowledge of encroachments on the rivers, and now we are forming some committees to work on the issue and report back to the High Court about the past and present conditions of the rivers," said Zillur Rahman.

DC of Munshiganj Md Mosharraf Hossain said the river Dhaleshwari under his jurisdiction also has problems of encroachment.

"Although I am yet to get the high court order officially, I have started a survey to identify the problems relating to the Dhaleshwari," he said when contacted.

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## Confusion over Tipai visit date

Water minister says govt sets July 15 as tentative date

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Confusions have arisen regarding the date for the visit to the Tipaimukh dam site in India by a special committee of lawmakers and experts.

"We have set July 15 as a tentative date for the visit. But the schedule could be delayed by one week for Nam summit," Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen yesterday told The Daily Star over telephone.

He also said the date for visiting Tipaimukh will be confirmed after Awami League lawmaker Abdur Razzak, chairman of the nine-member committee, returns from his visit to London.

On July 6, Ramesh had told journalists at his secretariat office that the committee would decide the date on July 13.

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## Birth control data paints grim future

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Traditional birth control strategy coupled with slow implementation of various related programmes by the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) has failed to control birth rate in the country.

The government is yet to achieve the target of lowering the birth rate to 2.2 per cent despite its 29-year effort.

According to a study of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics last year, the total population of the country is now 14.45 crore and the growth rate is 1.39 per cent. If the present rate continues, the population will be doubled within next 50 years.

Sources in the DGFP say, around 55 per cent of the countrymen are adopting family planning system currently. But the dropout percentage is 44. That is why the growth of population cannot be controlled, it says.

They said 5.7 per cent female are using permanent family planning system while 8.6 per cent long-term system. On the other hand, only 5.2 per cent male are adopting the long-term

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## AL council by July 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League yesterday decided to hold national council by July 25, the time limit set by the Election Commission, to ratify provisional changes made to its constitution for registration with the commission.

The decision came at an emergency meeting of the AL presidium, the party's highest policy-making body, with presidium member and deputy leader of parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair.

Sources said the party made the move after finalising

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## Team to visit Russian N-plants

Deal likely to be signed

UNB, Dhaka

The Russian government has invited Bangladesh to send a delegation to visit its nuclear power projects and sign deals.

"We have received an invitation recently from the Russian government to visit its different projects. They proposed the visit to be made at the end of the current month," a top official of the ICT ministry told UNB.

According to the official, Bangladesh government is now taking preparation to send a team in response to the offer.

The state minister for science and ICT himself might lead the delegation on the important mission, he said.

As per the plan, during the visit, an agreement will be signed between the two countries at the state level to move forward the nuclear power project in Bangladesh.

The purpose of the visit is to ink a deal between the two nations and to have experience and learn about the Russian

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## One killed, three injured in gunfight with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal was killed and three of his accomplices were injured in a gunfight between members of Rapid Action Battalion and criminals on Ispahani Road in the city's south Keraniganj last night.

The deceased was identified as Tapan, 28.

Locals said the gunfight broke out at about 8:30pm when a team of Rab-10 raided the area to arrest the gang members who robbed an employee of Shakti

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## Wealthy, they turned poor for medical bills

SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

Former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain had requested Khaleda Zia, then the prime minister, to relax the medical expenses rules and grant them Tk 37.86 lakh.

In their applications to the PM in 2006, both cited "inability" to bear the medical costs. But Khaleda did not buy that and declined to stretch the rules, show documents preserved at the parliament secretariat.

The two were in fact millionaires as per the wealth statements they submitted before the ninth parliamentary election.

Turned down by the Prime Minister's Office, Sircar drew Tk 27.86 lakh as medical bill of his own account. In doing so, he disregarded the parliament secretariat's objections.



Sircar

Delwar seeks details of probe cost Sircar will return money if SC asks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday demanded disclosure of the details of the amount spent for preparing the parliamentary probe report on the irregularities in Parliament Secretariat during the tenure of the then speaker Jamiruddin Sircar.

Delwar said formation of the parliamentary probe body was illegal and outside Jatiya Sangsad's rules of procedure. "So, there is no legal base of the suggestions of this

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PHOTO: STAR

Chillies become dearer as its price soars in kitchen markets of the capital.

## Essentials' prices go up on poor supply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of essentials rose further in the capital over the last week and wholesalers blamed the hike on low supply due to the recent downpours all over the country.

Green chilli, onion, pulses, garlic and different types of leafy vegetables—all saw a rise in their prices at the kitchen markets while the prices of battery chicken and edible oil went down.

However, retail prices of edible oil had come down by Tk 3-4 per litre over the last week. A five-litre can of

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