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Prof Yunus visits Friendship Hospital

METRO DESK

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus visited Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital in the city on Friday, says a press release.

During the visit, Hospital Chairman Dr Jonaid Shafiq and Managing Director Dr Sarder A Nayim apprised Prof Yunus of various healthcare facilities of the hospital.

Prof Yunus, also the founder of Grameen Bank, praised the indoor and outdoor facilities of the hospital, especially medicare services to farmers and the extreme poor across the country.

The hospital is playing a vital role in ensuring medical services to the ultra-poor by introducing 'Telehealth-10600', he said.

Prof AKM Fazlul Hoque and Prof ABMF Karim were also present during his visit.

Use law cautiously

Minister asks executive magistrates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday asked the executive magistrates to cautiously use the mobile court law to avoid any kind of harassment to the innocent people.

The executive magistrates have been provided facilities to use their power under 80 laws as per Mobile Court Ordinance 2009 to maintain peace and discipline in society as well as in the country, he added.

The minister said this while inaugurating a two-day orientation course on 'Mobile court management for executive magistrates' at Biam Foundation in the city.

Presided over by Director General Md Sirajul Islam, the function was addressed by Cabinet Secretary M Abdul Aziz and Course Director Abul Qasem.

Some 60 executive magistrates participated in the course.

Shafique said the executive magistrates have been given power under the mobile court law to deal with various

law to resist all kinds of criminal activities, including encroachment on lands, adulteration in food and medicine, drugs trading, gambling and smoking in public places.

He called on the magistrates to be pledge-bound to properly discharge their duties.

He also advised them to acquire knowledge about the laws to ensure the right use of the existing laws in the country.

After the meeting, Shafique told newsmen that the president has decided to send two district judges -- Abdul Gafur and Md Shahjahan -- into retirement as per provision of the constitution.

Replying to a question, he said the hearing of Bangabandhu murder case would be held after the chief justice (CJ) constitutes a bench of the Appellate Division, adding that the CJ will constitute the bench after submitting a summary of the case by the state counsels.

The minister hoped that the case would be disposed of soon.

DEFIANCE OF GAZETTE NOTIFICATION

Many river ports still under dist admin

TAWFIQUE ALI

Different district administrations in defiance of a gazette notification have evaded handover of a number of declared river ports and foreshores to BIWTA for decades, causing anarchy in the conservation of rivers.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is the legal conservator of river ports and adjoining foreshore areas, but it lacks authority over them, leading to encroachments by leaseholders, anarchy in port management and loss of river navigability, said officials.

The concerned district administrations, on the other hand, lease out foreshore lands to private parties on permanent (99 years) basis letting in river grabbers and obstructions in normal commercial activities in the designated port areas.

They also permit sand extraction from river channels. As BIWTA is not involved in the process, sand trading goes at will virtually damaging the channels, said BIWTA officials.

Efficiency of a river port goes down if the foreshore within port limit is leased out for commercial uses with permanent structures.

BIWTA is enfeebled with lack of administrative power and manpower to take effective measures in view of river protection.

BIWTA Chairman Md Abdul Mannan Howlader said out of a total of 22 declared river ports in the country, half are yet to be handed over either fully or partially.

"We have written several times to the land ministry in this regard but to no avail," he said, adding: "BIWTA simply cannot assert itself on the port limit and foreshore unless and until it is handed over."

BIWTA Director Mahabubul Alam said until and unless a river port is handed over to BIWTA, the river authorities neither could develop port facilities nor earn revenues.

According to the Port Act of 1908, BIWTA is the

conservator of river ports, foreshore and port limit.

According to the Port Rules of 1966, river foreshore is defined as the submerged land lying between high-water mark and low-water mark of a river during ordinary spring.

The port limit extends 50 metres up from the high-water mark.

As per the port rules, no person can excavate and make any construction of any kind on the bed or foreshore of navigable waterways without any licence from the conservator.

Most of the foreshore lands, let alone port limit, are occupied by leaseholders with various permanent structures, said BIWTA officials.

BIWTA Joint Director Abul Bashar said the port rules specify required vertical and horizontal clearance in the river channel for smooth navigation.

The concerned authorities have written to the concerned district administrations time and again but to little avail.

Tongi on the Turag river was declared a port in 2004 but none of the Dhaka and Gazipur district administrations have yet handed over the port area, said Deputy Director of BIWTA Alamgir Kabir.

Foreshore of Chandpur river port has been out of BIWTA's control since 2003, as Chandpur district administration has not renewed the lease with BIWTA over a dispute of area, he said, adding that a joint survey was conducted during the caretaker government and the port area was ascertained as 80 acres.

Dakatia foreshore of the port has been leased out indiscriminately on permanent basis to private parties, he mentioned.

The authorities have not yet handed over Meghnaghat and Bhola river ports to the water transport authorities.

Narsingdi port was declared in 1960 and is yet to be handed over, said Kabir, adding that Barguna river port was declared in 1975 but is yet to be handed over.

Mirkadim and Ashuganj-Bhairab river ports were declared in 2004 but are yet to be handed over. Chhatak river port was declared in 2006 but it is still facing the fate. Charjanaja port is not handed over to BIWTA.

Development of those ports has been uncertain and the government as a result is incurring a huge amount of revenues for years. River trading and management are also being hampered, said the BIWTA deputy.

Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur Md Kamaluddin Talukder said he was not aware of the matter, but adding: "I will look into it."

As per the law, khas (fallow) land of foreshore remains at the disposal of the district administration, he said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC revenue) of Dhaka Masud Karim said, "I am not supposed to talk to the media." The DC may respond to the issue.

Narayanganj ADC (revenue) ABM Aminullah Nuri said the district administration used to lease out the port area until 1998. "We do not do it any longer."

He said the administration manages land under Tenancy Act of 1950 and Port Act and Eviction Ordinance of 1973. BIWTA is allowed as a lessee to use land of a port area on a contract between land and shipping ministries.

As per the tenancy act, land ministry is the owner of all lands, he said. "But I agree that port area should be laid under the authority of BIWTA."

Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, additional secretary to the information ministry, who headed a government-instituted committee on river pollution during the interim regime, said, "Obviously, district administrations cannot lease out the foreshore of a declared river port."

But the problem lies in lack of coordination among the agencies, he said.

"A dedicated river authority with enforcement authority under the Prime Minister's Office is imperative to protect the rivers," he said.

JCD rebel faction makes U-turn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rebel faction of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal finally reversed its stance and extended support to the newly formed JCD central committee yesterday.

This faction had been demonstrating on the Dhaka University campus against the new committee since BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced the names of new leaders on July 1.

The leaders of the faction also termed the new leadership elderly and non-students and alleged that they have links with militancy. They also demanded formation of a fresh committee.

Saiful Islam Firoz, who was expelled as Dhaka University JCD general secretary for staging protests, appeared at a press conference at Madhur Canteen yesterday to extend support to the new committee.

The demonstration was the initial reaction to the committee and a result of misunderstanding, he said.

Apart from Firoz, DU JCD vice-president Mamunur Rashid Mamun and joint secretaries Akramul Hasan and Sadiul Kabir Nirob were also expelled for staging demonstrations.

In a written statement, Firoz said, "We extend our full support to the newly formed central committee approved by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman for the sake of the unity of the party and to foil the conspiracy against the country."

The leaders of the rebel faction, however, agreed that the new central committee is formed with non-students.

Replying to a question, Firoz said, "We hope that the new committee will hand over the leadership to regular students after their tenure ends."

About the allegations of links with militancy, Firoz said they did not brought such allegations formally. Rather, a section of junior activists made the allegations.

Three other expelled leaders and other leaders and activists of JCD were present at the press conference.



Citizens Rights Movement, Green Voice and Sundar Jibon form a human chain near Hatirheel in the city yesterday demanding immediate steps to recover 43 canals from the grips of land grabbers to resolve the city's waterlogging problem.

'Formulate service rules for private educational institutes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Educational Institutions Employees Federation yesterday demanded the government to formulate service rules for the employees of private educational institutions.

In a statement the organisation said, due to absence of service rules employees of educational institutions are suffering much. They are getting deprived and losing jobs without any cause, as they do not have any service rules, the statement added.

They urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to instruct formulating service rules and bring end to their sufferings.



This newborn baby was found abandoned in front of Kishalay High School on Tajmahal Road at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday. Md Nazim Mia of the same area took the baby in his care.

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