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Custodians the culprit

Sand traders feast on greed of BIWTA staff

MORSHED ALI KHAN and TAWFIQUE ALI

A section of BIWTA officials are allegedly allowing sand traders to extract much more sand than the permitted quantity from riverbeds in the capital, an act that is threatening the channels and courses of the city's rivers and the densely populated localities along their banks.

Officials of the hydrography, port, conservancy and engineering departments of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and top officials at its headquarters at Motijheel have been involved in issuing work orders to powerful sand traders.

The unscrupulous traders then extract millions of cubic feet of sand from the rivers in the most unsentimental way to make hefty amounts. One square feet of sand costs Tk 2 at the selling point.

The BIWTA officials are taking advantage of the absence of a policy or rules for sand extraction from riverbeds in port areas, where the BIWTA virtually enjoys total jurisdiction under the Port Act and Port Rules.

The BIWTA issued 18 permissions to private companies this year to extract sand from the Buriganga.

In one recent instance, the BIWTA issued permission to Ali

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Powerful dredgers at work extracting sand from the Buriganga offshore at Basila on the outskirts of the capital city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Three workers die falling from high-rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three construction workers died after falling from 15-storey Bell Tower in the capital's Dhanmondi area yesterday.

M Mintu, 40, Shaheen, 24, and Ali Ahmed, 25, fell from a makeshift ladder on the rooftop of a four-storey adjacent building at about 11:00am.

Police said they were putting gums and cleaning glasses of the head office of Beximco Group on the 14th floor.

Security guard Nazmul Haque said they went to the rooftop after hearing a bang where they found the three bodies.

On information, police reached the spot and took the bodies to the New Market Police Station.

Officer in-charge of New Market Police Station Quamrul Hasan confirmed the incident and said the accident occurred due to carelessness of the labourers.

Bangabandhu murder case hearing soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hearings of the appeals of convicted defendants in the long pending Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assassination case will start before the August 15 National Day of Mourning, said Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday.

The hearings can be held as there is no shortage of judges in the Supreme Court (SC) now, he added.

On August 15 of 1975, Father of the Nation Sheikh

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Secy-level talks likely on Tipai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State minister for Water Resources Mahbubur Rahman yesterday said a secretary-level meeting would be held between Bangladesh and India, if necessary, to resolve the much-talked Tipaimukh Dam issue.

"If the meeting fails, even higher level talks will be held to settle the matter," he said while talking to reporters at his ministry office.

Terming the Tipaimukh issue "not a big problem" for the country, the newly appointed state minister said more delegation would visit the dam site in India. Besides, the parliamentary standing committee on the water resources ministry would soon form an expert committee to deal with the issue.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Rodent horror looms large in the hills

Jhum farmers face poor cultivation prospect for lack of seeds, abundance of rodents

NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN, back from Rangamati

Jhum cultivators in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) areas who were affected by the rodent crisis of 2007 are yet to find their feet back on the ground.

This year because of lack of paddy seeds they have not been able to cultivate their land to full capacity.

To top it all the population of rodents hasn't gone down either, so there remains the possibility of some loss to their crops.

Locals blame the government of failing them because the government has done precious little for the jhum cultivators since the rodent crisis. They alleged that they had been given more assistance by the government they would have recovered

quickly. Today they are still struggling.

In 2007, the flowering of bamboo -- which happens once every 40-50 years -- caused a huge boom in the rat population in the region leading to not only the total destruction of crops on the fields but also the destruction of food storage. This led to a severe food crisis in the area.

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An indigenous man shows two captured rodents in this file photo taken in 2007.

FILE PHOTO

Fix migration cost within Tk 1 lakh

JS body also asks govt, stakeholders to outline action plan for manpower export in 2 months

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary standing committee yesterday gave two months to manpower export related government and private agencies for coming up with detailed action plans for restructuring themselves, in a bid to end irregularities and mismanagement in the sector.

The parliamentary standing committee on

expatriate welfare and overseas employment also asked the relevant ministry to restructure itself within the same period, so it may meet the needs of about 6.5 million Bangladeshi expatriate workers efficiently, as they are one of the major sources of the country's forex earnings.

The committee also asked the authorities concerned to introduce low cost passports for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Tigers jive on Ashraful ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammed Ashraful hit a sublime century as Bangladesh launched their Zimbabwe safari with an emphatic eight-wicket win on the heels of their outstanding Caribbean clean sweep.

Ashraful struck a run-a-ball 103 at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo as Bangladesh chased down a modest Zimbabwe total of 207 with 15.3 overs to spare to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match Grameenphone Cup. The victory meant Bangladesh have won six games in a row after their 3-0 ODI series triumph against the West Indies last month and twice against Zimbabwe at home in January.

Ashraful took centre stage after a disciplined bowling performance restricted Zimbabwe to a below-par score on a wicket dubbed as a batting paradise.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Another army camp pulled out from CHT

Petition to HC to stop withdrawal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

One more army camp was pulled out from Khagrachhari yesterday in line with the government's pledge to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, 1997.

Pomungchhari army camp under Dighinala army zone in the hill district with about 35 army members has been

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Jamaat claims confusing

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, which calls for establishing the rule of Islam through organised efforts, has strongly claimed that its charter has never had any clause that contradicts the country's constitution.

But Jamaat's claim does not match with the landmark Supreme Court verdict that the constitution of the republic does not allow establishing any rule but the rule of law in the country. According to the verdict, the basic structural pillars of the country's constitution are sovereignty of people, supremacy of the constitution, democracy and secularism. It says none of these can be changed, even by amending the constitution.

"The structural pillars of the constitution stand beyond any change by amendatory process. Any amendment will be subject to the retention of these basic structures," former chief justice Shahabuddin Ahmad, who was one of the judges in the then Appellate Division, said in the historic verdict on the constitution's eighth amendment case in 1989.

Jamaat's aims and objectives for establishing the rule of Islam in the country as stipulated in its charter require bringing drastic amendments to the basic structures of the constitution. Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed in a statement on Tuesday said, "I want to make it crystal clear that there has never been any anti-constitutional clauses in Jamaat's charter."

The two-page statement signed by Prof Tasnim Alam, secretary of Jamaat's publicity department, also accused newspapers

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