

## Notice on Square, Apollo hospitals to stop VAT collection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A notice was served yesterday on Square Hospitals Limited and Apollo Hospitals asking them to stop collection of value added tax (VAT) from patients within 24 hours as per the High Court (HC) directives.

Earlier on July 14 this year, the HC declared illegal the imposition of VAT on citizens for providing health services to them.

It also declared illegal and unconstitutional the provision of Value Added Tax (VAT) Act 1991 for realising VAT from patients for making any prescription or doing pathological tests.

The HC came up with the verdict upon a public interest litigation jointly filed by three Supreme Court lawyers.

Petitioners' Counsel Advocate Manzill Murshid sent the notices to the hospitals authorities stating that if the VAT collection is not stopped within the next 24 hours, legal steps will be taken against them.

He also attached a copy of the HC judgment with notices.

Manzill yesterday told The Daily Star that he would take legal actions against other big private hospitals and clinics in the capital to stop VAT collection from patients.

He said he served earlier legal notices on 15 big private hospitals including Square Hospitals Limited and Apollo Hospitals in the capital, requesting them to stop vat collection from the patients as per the HC directives.

But the authorities of these hospitals, excluding Square Hospitals Limited and Apollo Hospitals, have not responded to the legal notice, he said.

Meanwhile, EE Yusuf Siddique, manager (accounts) of Square Hospitals yesterday told The Daily Star, "We are in trouble. We are just playing as an agency to charge VAT from patients for National Board of Revenue (NBR) or the government. If the government or NBR says to stop charging VAT from the patient, we will follow the order."

NBR Chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed said, "NBR has already moved to file an appeal with the Supreme Court against the HC verdict."

A member of NBR also informed that the NBR did not impose the tax on patients, it is a decision imposed by parliament.



A bulldozer of Rajuk dismantles the illegal structure of Muktabangla market at Mirpur-1 roundabout in the city yesterday as part of its ongoing eviction drive. (Story on Page 16)

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## PRP extended for another five years

UNB, Dhaka

The Police Reform Programme (PRP) has been extended for another five years to support the transition from a colonial style police force to democratic policing for enhancing human security in Bangladesh.

"We are encouraged by the commitment of the Bangladesh government to improve the law and order situation and strengthening human rights," the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Director Stefan Priesner said at the signing ceremony yesterday.

On behalf of the government, Economic Relations Division Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan signed the agreement with the UNDP at a simple function at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar NEC conference in the city.

The new phase will contribute around Tk 203 crore with financial support from UNDP and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

During the next five years, the Phase II of the PRP will support the government to tackle the law and order and human rights situation by building trust with the community through community policing, strengthening oversight and accountability of the police, and boosting police professionalism in the areas of investigations, training and gender sensitivity.

Speaking at the ceremony, the UNDP country director urged the government to amend the Police Act of 1981.

The first phase of PRP ended on September 2009 after its formal start in late 2005.

## Army replaces contingent in Darfur

METRO DESK

Bangladesh Army is going to replace its contingent at United Nations Assistance Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Sudan.

Medium Multi Role Logistics Unit-1 will be replaced by Medium Multi Role Logistics Unit-2 comprising 348 members, says an ISPR press release.

Under this programme, a 174-member army team led by Lt Col Md Manirul Islam left Dhaka for Darfur by a UN chartered plane on Saturday night.

Remaining members of the contingent will leave Dhaka for Darfur on October 28.

Bangladesh Army Contingent (BANBAT) has been being deployed in UN Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur since 2008.

## RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

# Writ filed to implement PM's directives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain within two weeks why it should not be directed to immediately implement the rules of Disabled Welfare Act 2001 and the prime minister's recent directives for ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui issued the rule following a public interest writ petition filed by Salma Ali on behalf of Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA).

The National Committee for Disabled Persons (NCDP) and 16 government high officials have been made respondents to reply to the rule.

Counsel for BNWLA, Advocate Fawzia Karim Fiore last night told The Daily Star that it was stated in the petition that different laws, policies and directives were made for the welfare of the

persons with disabilities, but those were not implemented.

She said the petition mentioned some promises made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the inauguration of the 5th National Convention of the Disabled on October 19 that her government would formulate a law to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities and they would also get the opportunity to have their say on it.

The process is underway to introduce quota for them in government services, including civil service, and the government has already introduced quota for this special group for the posts under the 'class four' category, Advocate Fawzia said quoting the PM.

She said the PM announced that information technology-based tele centres would be set up in every union to create jobs for the physically challenged persons.

We have mentioned the statements and directives of the prime minister in the writ petition, Fawzia added.

## ZIA ORPHANAGE CASE

# Police asked to submit report on arrest of two accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again directed the police to submit reports before it by November 19 on whether the arrest warrants against two accused were executed or not in the Zia Orphanage Trust embezzlement case.

The accused are Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, former principal secretary to prime minister, and Mominur Rahman, nephew of late president Ziaur Rahman.

The court also set November 19 for next hearing of the case.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order as police failed to submit any report regarding arrest of the two accused by October 25.

The court directed officer-in-charge (OC) of Cantonment Police Station to submit report on arrest of Kamal Siddiqui while OC of New Market Police Station was asked to submit report on arrest of Mominur Rahman.

A time petition was submitted on behalf of former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia while her elder son Tarique Rahman appeared before the court through his lawyer.

Former BNP lawmaker Salimul Haque and another accused Sharfuddin Ahmed were present in the court.

Meantime, the High Court had earlier issued rules on the government to explain why the charges brought against them should not be quashed after Khaleda and Tarique filed separate writ petitions challenging legality of the case.

Earlier on September 7, the court took into cognisance the charges against Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and four others in a case for embezzlement of Tk 2.10 crore by forming Zia Orphanage Trust.

The court also issued arrest warrants against Kamal Siddiqui and Mominur Rahman as they have been absconding since the case was filed.

The court dropped names of two persons -- Syed Ahmed alias Sayeed Ahmed and Gias Uddin Ahmed -- from the charge sheet after the investigation officer (IO) prayed for it finding that they were not involved in the incident.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against Khaleda, Tarique and five others on July 3 last year with Ramna Police Station for committing the offences.

ACC submitted the charge sheet against Khaleda, Tarique and four others to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on August 5.

## Govt to procure 3 dredgers

# BIWTA signs contract with German-Dutch joint venture company today

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

The government is set to procure three large dredgers worth Tk 200 crore from the Netherlands to increase the dredging capacity of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

BIWTA will enter into a contract with M/S Vosta LMG-Karnaphuli Joint Venture Consortium today at the shipping ministry in this connection, said official sources.

BIWTA Chairman Abdul Matin said the procurement is part of a massive plan for river dredging not only to bring back navigability of the country's rivers and waterways, but also to conserve environment.

Karnaphuli Ship Builders Ltd is the local partner of M/S Vosta LMG International, a joint venture company of Germany and the Netherlands.

Source said the equipment will be purchased under the two projects named 'Procurement of necessary equipment, including two dredgers, to increase navigability of inland waterways' and 'Procurement of a dredger, including all necessary equipment'.

Japanese Debt Cancellation Fund will finance Tk 170 crore for implementation of the 1st project and BIWTA will finance Tk 34.32

crore for implementation of the 2nd project.

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Enec) approved the projects on January 13.

Later, BIWTA invited two separate tenders in this connection. On September 2, the technical evaluation committee (TEC), formed by the ministry, selected M/S Vosta LMG for awarding the tender.

Finally, the ministry approved the proposal last week.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Mannan said BIWTA is facing difficulties in removing siltation due to shortage of high-powered dredgers. It has only seven dredgers. Two were purchased in 1972 and the rest were purchased in 1975. But the working capacity of the dredgers has already expired.

Firoz Ahmed, TEC convener, said it is essential to dredge at least 80-90 lakh cubic metres. The inland waterways of the country are losing their navigability for lack of regular dredging.

That's why, it has become essential to purchase new dredgers, he mentioned.

He said the government has taken an initiative for another massive project for entire development of the navigable waterways, including river dredging, which will cost Tk 11,000 crore.



PHOTO: STAR

Noted writer Prof Hasan Azizul Haque inaugurates the three-day 33rd council of Bangladesh Chhatra Union by releasing a pigeon at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. This year's slogan of the council is 'Unitrack education system, establish control on national resources and build movement to establish a society of equality'. Several thousand BCU leaders and workers along with former leaders from across the country joined the council with colourful placards, posters and banners. On second and third days, the council sessions will be held at TSC auditorium.

## Chinese team meets army, navy chiefs

METRO DESK

A 31-member Chinese PLA National Defence University (NDU) delegation led by its Vice-President Lt Gen Wang Chaotian paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff Gen Md Abdul Mubeen at Army Headquarters in the city yesterday.

The delegation leader exchanged greetings and discussed matters of bilateral issues with the army chief.

Earlier, Gen Chaotian called on Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral ZU Ahmed at Naval Headquarters, says an ISPR release.

Later, the delegation members visited Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) and National Defence College.



PHOTO: ISPR

Visiting Chinese National Defence University delegation led by Vice-President Lt Gen Wang Chaotian pays a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff Gen Md Abdul Mubeen at Army Headquarters in the city yesterday.

## Call to eliminate child labour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday demanded steps to abolish child labour from hazardous occupations immediately.

The first step to eliminate child labour should be taken from bidi factories, automobile workshops, battery manufacturing plants and ship-breaking industry, they added.

The speakers said this at the dialogue on 'Steps to eradicate child labour: Bangladesh context' organised by The Good Earth in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at YWCA auditorium in the city.

Occupations in these sectors involve the worst forms of hazardous activities where many children are still employed, they

mentioned.

The speakers said the government alone cannot eradicate child labour from the country.

The government as well as non-government organisations must work unitedly to achieve the goal.

Md Israfil Alam MP, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry; Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF; Md Asgar Ali, executive director of Child Development Forum; Rafiqul Islam, executive director of The Good Earth; spoke at the dialogue.

Representatives from the government and non-government organisations, including BJMEA, Unicef and Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, were present.

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