

# Green light

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Following protests by the Khasia community and Bapa, forest ministry on October 19, 2008 suspended the permit.

Before the suspension, the contractor, however, had cut 1,200 trees and removed them with elephants. The court in its February 22 directive did not mention the number of trees already felled.

Interestingly, Sylhet Divisional Forest Officer Md Delwar Hossain issued a fresh permit on February 2 this year allowing the garden owner to cut down 2,350 trees and asked to spare 450, as those are located in the Khasia Punjis (1200+2350+450=4000).

Following a writ petition filed by the timber trader Salim Uddin Mohalder and Nahar Tea Garden Manager Pijush Kanti Bhattacharya, the court on February 22 directed the forest department authorities and local administration to allow the felling of trees as per the earlier work order.

In the Sylhet Divisional Forest Office permit, the garden owner was asked to pay the government an enhanced royalty of Tk 1.19 crore for the trees as per revised rate of forest goods.

The HC in its February 22 rule also asked authorities including environment and forest secretary to show on what legal grounds they had imposed the enhanced royalty and reduced the number of trees by 450 and stayed the permit for three weeks.

"The timber trader started cutting the trees around noon with the backing of several hundred musclemen," said father Joseph, a religious leader of the local Khasia community.

Environment and Forest Secretary Mihir Kanti Majumdar said he would take initiatives to file an appeal today against the HC directive that allowed the felling of trees.

As to why the ministry gave permission in the first place to wipe out as many as 4,000 trees, he said, "We shelved it for some time."

The then Sylhet Divisional Forest Officer Abdul Mabud in a letter to the Nahar Garden manager in August, 2008 said 3,754 of the total 4,000 trees grew naturally and the rest were planted. The trees had 87,174 cubic foot timber and 75,508 cubic foot of firewood.

The trees included Cham, Gamar, Gorjon, Jaam, Koro, Bonak, Rongi, Shimul, Awal, Khami, Bolos, Lud, Belpoi, Dumur and others.

Khushi Kabir, chairman of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), said tree felling on this scale would adversely affect environment, life and livelihood of the local indigenous people.

"Forest area in Bangladesh is already very low compared to requirement," she said.

Bapa General Secretary Md Abdul Matin referring to locals' estimate said even though the tea garden has a lease for 864 acres of land, it is on over 1,200 acres of land

including 200 acres of Khasia community land.

The garden owner has been realising money by sub-leasing 100 acres of the leased-land in violation of the terms in Bangladesh Tea Management Directory, alleged Bapa Member Secretary Sharif Jamil.

The owner has realised a total of Tk 2 crore illegally in the form of land tax since 1984 from the Khasia communities, said Md Abdul Matin.

Deputy Commissioner of Moulvibazar Mofizul Islam said Khasia community is dependent on the trees for their livelihood by the betel leaf cultivation. He received no complaints about realising tax from the community, he said.

There are around 60 Khasia families in two Khasia Punjis--Akilam Punji and Kailin Punji--in and around the garden.

The tea garden's manager Pijush Kanti said they needed to cut the trees to expand the garden by 60 acres every year. On realising tax from the Khasia, he said they do not do that anymore but the previous owner used to do it.

## Dhaka banks

**FROM PAGE 16**  
fertiliser factory, Chinese investment in Bangladesh's oil and gas field, waiver of a \$800 million loan from China.

Foreign ministry sources said Chinese assistance for various projects in Bangladesh, including construction of the seventh Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge, Chittagong-Myanmar-Kunming Highway and a Bangladesh-China exhibition centre, a deep-sea port at Sonadia Island in Cox's Bazar and some power plants, will be sought during the talks.

Officials said Dhaka's concern on the issue of balance of trade tilted in favour of Beijing is also expected to figure in the talks. The bilateral trade volume between the two countries amounted to about \$4.67 billion in 2008 with the balance of trade tilted heavily in favour of Beijing.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh imported 18 percent of its goods from China in 2007-2008 pushing Dhaka's trade deficit with Beijing to \$3.8 billion.

They said regional connectivity will get top priority at the talks. Dhaka would attach top priority to construction of the Chittagong-Teknaf railroad to be connected with China's Yunnan province via Myanmar in future, they added.

During her stay in China, Hasina will call on the Chinese president on March 19 and visit Kunming the next day. She is expected to return here on March 21.

Her delegation members include Finance Minister Abul Maal Abul Muhith, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, AL leader Kazi Zafarullah and State Minister for CHT Affairs Dipankar Talukder.

Convenor of BCL college unit Mamunur Rashid told The Daily Star that the allegation of admission trade brought against them is not true.

"We are protesting irregularities in the admission," he said. Matiur Rahman, city president of Moitree, denied their involvement in the admission trade and said "We went to the college as guardians of some students but not to force the authorities for their enrolment."

Colonel Alam also said that according to a joint decision taken in September 2009, the BSF and BDR had kept themselves at a distance of 200 yards from Padua-Protappur border.

Meanwhile, BDR on Thursday handed over an Indian to BSF, who intruded into Bangladesh through Padua border on the previous day. The BSF also returned a Bangladeshi, held by them from zero line along the same border the same day.

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A team from District Livestock Office are seen culling a chicken at Kazi Breeders in Thakurgaon yesterday, following bird flu outbreak at the poultry farm. PHOTO: STAR

## Bird flu

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Zahedul Hasan said his farm incurred a total loss of Tk 34.09 crore due to spread of bird flu virus.

Zahedul suspected that the bird flu virus might be transmitted from recently imported eggs from India.

After the bird flu attack at Murshidabad in West Bengal, the government gave permission to import 20 crore eggs from India defying its rules that any poultry goods can not be imported from poultry industries of any country where bird flu has broken out, he alleged.

He said that they are very anxious for their other 19 farms in the district and Panchagarh after the spread of the virus.

The DLO said they have already taken necessary measures to stop spread of the flu to other farms and chickens. They also supplied medicine to the poultry farms through their workers, he added.

## Clash again

**FROM PAGE 1**  
authorities for "quota" in the ongoing admission.

As the authorities refused them, the activists jointly brought out a procession, then entered the administration building and vandalised a classroom and a seminar room.

At this, the law enforcers on the campus asked the activists to leave the college around 11:00am.

The incensed activists fought a pitched battle with the police that left around 10 people injured.

Police said the BCL and Moitree men also damaged two vehicles outside the college.

At one stage of the clash, police baton-charged the activists to disperse them. Later, police held Kanak, Rubel and Nayan from the campus.

Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Rajpara Police Station, claimed that police constable Raihan received injuries during the clash.

The college authorities, however, resumed the admission process at 12:00noon after a break amid tight security as additional police forces were deployed on the campus.

Talking to The Daily Star in the afternoon, Principal Farida Sultana said they successfully completed the admission process.

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"We are protesting irregularities in the admission," he said. Matiur Rahman, city president of Moitree, denied their involvement in the admission trade and said "We went to the college as guardians of some students but not to force the authorities for their enrolment."

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# Suicide blasts kill at least 30 in Afghan city

AP, Kandahar

A suicide squad detonated bombs at a newly fortified prison, police headquarters and two other locations late yesterday, killing at least 30 people in the largest city of the southern Taliban heartland.

The prison was the main target, but no prisoners escaped, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's half-brother said. Ahmed Wali Karzai, a member of the Kandahar provincial council, said two of the explosions occurred near his home, which was not damaged.

Wali Karzai told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that Canadian troops had reinforced the prison with cement block after a suicide attack in 2008 blew apart the prison gates and freed hundreds of criminals and suspected insurgents.

"They wanted to keep people busy in the city and break the prison, but the Canadians last time did a good job," Wali Karzai said. "They did a lot of reconstruction so they couldn't break the prison this time."

One suicide attack struck at the front gate of the Kandahar police headquarters, causing a lot of casualties, he said.

"There are a lot of civilian casualties," Wali Karzai said. "There are houses that have collapsed and businesses and people are still under the rubble. There was a wedding hall near the police headquarters and there was a wedding. A lot of casualties there from the explosions."

The management stored his 150 bag of potato in the morning, he added.

Potato cultivators of the northern districts are facing a great problem for shortage of space in the cold storages.

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# Drug barons

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Camp slum, Karwan Bazar Railway Line slum, Mohammadpur embankment, Janata Housing and Bashbari -- are the most vulnerable compared to other places.

Of the 200 people, there are 10 wholesale drug peddlers while eight are heroin vendors and 30 sell ganja (marijuana), said the DC.

He added, "Karwan Bazar is a wholesale drug trading centre."

Sources said other hot drug zones include Bijoy Sarani, Tejgunipara, Fakinnipara, Nakhlapara, Arzatpara, Mohammadpur Town Hall and Adabor.

Some powerful and influential people and even a number of law enforcers are the stakeholders in the trade.

According to sources, some traders keep contacts with users through mobile phone.

The DC said they had launched a "special drive", as the peddlers and junkies are responsible for at least 80 percent of the criminal incidents.

Around 400 policemen led by the Tejgaon division DC every day conduct the special drive in a selected area.

Sources said the special drive is carried out in broad daylight using loudspeakers, and therefore, no significant success is ever reported.

Witnesses said it appears that the police stage a "show-down" on the city streets. They parade roads and make announcements against the drug peddlers through loudspeakers.

Additional DC Md Manirujjaman said, "The special drive was launched on January 16 to create mass awareness about the drug peddlers and it will continue."

Sources said the peddlers and other criminals in the areas remain absent during the drives. As soon as the

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# Settlers to enforce blockade in hills Mar 18

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Samo Odhig Andolon and its student wing Parbatya Bangali Chhatra Parishad yesterday announced a road and waterway blockade programme in three hill districts for March 18 to protest "harassment" of their leaders.

The announcement came at a press conference at the office of Rangamati Reporters Unity.

The Andolon leaders claimed that Yakub Ali Chowdhury, founder president of Chhatra Parishad, has been falsely implicated in the cases filed for recent arson in CHT.

They alleged that Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, founder of the Andolon and also a former BNP lawmaker, was also being harassed.

The organisations demanded that the government release Yakub and conduct a judicial probe into the hills violence.

The blockade programmes will be called off if their demands are met immediately, the leaders said.

The other programmes include submission of a memorandum to the prime minister on March 16 and a roundtable in Dhaka on March 19, sources said.

Jahangir Kamal and Muhammad Shahjahan, presidents of Rangamati units of Andolon and Chhatra Parishad, and Jalal Uddin Chowdhury, central president of Parbatya Bangali Gono Parishad, among others, spoke.

Witnesses said the clash ensued at noon when the cold storage employees were receiving potatoes from the group of traders ignoring the farmers who were waiting in front of the cold storage for long.

The farmers protested the incident that led the clash, they said.

In another incident, a farmer died of cardiac arrest in front of a cold storage in Tapadhan village under sadar upazila of Rangpur district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahim, 45, hailed from Mayanagar village under Kounia upazila of the district.

Sources said Rahim stood in the line for seven hours for storing his 150 bags of potato when he felt pain in his chest and died on the way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Director of Zelema Cold Storage Anwarul Islam Maya said as he become sick he was sent to Hospital with an ambulance and died on the way to the hospital.

The management stored his 150 bag of potato in the morning, he added.

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# Opportunities

**FROM PAGE 1**  
enormous opportunity to criticise and review the executive's performances. Had they utilised this, they could have come up with suggestions which would help formulation of policies to run the country in a better way for people's welfare.

According to parliament secretariat, the House had as many as 42 hours and 56 minutes of discussion on the president's address and 236 MPs -- 204 from the treasury bench and 32 from the opposition -- took part in it.

Meanwhile, Transparency International Bangladesh pointed out that Tk 35,000 is spent a minute for House sitting.

Most of the lawmakers who participated in the discussion either misused or abused the opportunity. They locked horns on flimsy grounds and traded blames aggressively and unnecessarily. In such situation, the opposition staged over a dozen walkouts from the House.

This appeared to have demonstrated their failure to rise above partisan interests and act as members of the House -- the highest forum of the nation. In some cases, their behaviour put the House in disorder and undermined its dignity, sparking widespread public criticism.

The way most of the treasury bench deputies spoke at times created the impression that they are also members of the cabinet. It is the responsibility of each cabinet member to support and defend cabinet decisions in parliament. But treasury bench lawmakers joined them in doing so. They blindly supported and lauded the executive's policies and actions, and blasted the opposition for criticising these.

The other side of the coin was also not anything different. The opposition deputies found nothing to appreciate in government activities, and labelled all those anti-people and damaging to democracy.

In doing so, they cared little about people's interests and rules of procedure of parliament. They kept themselves confined to their partisan interests and unnecessarily raised old issues in their discussions to criticise the government side.

The opposition lawmakers blasted Awami League for its rule immediately after the country's independence. They portrayed a gloomy picture of the AL rule using unparliamentary and indecent words about Bangabandhu and his government.

The treasury bench deputies countered this by portraying BNP-Jamaat alliance rule as a dark episode marked by repression and unbridled corruption, and blamed them for the state of emergency later.

It was totally unbecoming of both the sides to unnecessarily bring father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and late president Ziaur Rahman in their deliberations. They engaged in an unhealthy competition -- treasury bench upholding the image of Bangabandhu and tarnishing that of Zia and the opposition doing just the reverse.

They also wasted much time to prove whether Bangabandhu or Zia declared the country's independence.

A number of BNP lawmakers made derogatory remarks on Bangabandhu while treasury bench deputies termed Zia a "killer" and also questioned existence of his dead body in his grave.

The treasury bench tried to glorify the leadership of Sheikh Hasina and the Opposition did the same for Khaleda Zia. The former labelled Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman as corrupt and the latter accused the premier's son Sajeb Wajed Joy of involving in illegal VoIP business.

This unhealthy situation climaxed on March 4. While the BNP-led opposition lawmakers' return to the House on February 11 ending a long boycott was a good sign, its positive side was buried under the shocking events.

A number of AL and BNP lawmakers on that day leaped out of their chairs and rushed towards each other gesturing aggressively throwing the parliament sitting into chaos for around 10 minutes.

Without microphones, the lawmakers, particularly the ones elected to reserved seats, were seen shouting loudly and exchanging extremely indecent and vulgar words on the floor, most of which are unprintable.

Speaker Abdul Hamid decried this and said, "The use of words by lawmakers also bespeaks of their modesty and manhood. Our dignity depends on our behaviour."

"For God's sake, please act in such a way that parliament can be effective, and people's desires are fulfilled. The nation expects a lot from you. Lakhs of people elected you and they cannot accept the behaviour you displayed and the language you used in parliament [on March 4]," Hamid said.

AL senior lawmaker Fazle Rabbi on March 5 said, "I feel ashamed of giving my identity as a lawmaker."

But the lawmakers did not care the speaker's call. A number of treasury and opposition bench lawmakers on March 10 engaged in a squabble again on how much time BNP lawmaker Moudud Ahmed would be given on the floor, sending the House in disorder for over five minutes. Without microphones, some AL and BNP lawmakers pointed fingers and showed sneering gestures at each other and shouted, "shut up".

Finally ending the discussion, the House passed the motion giving thanks to President Zillur Rahman for his January 4 address in parliament, highlighting the government success and plans. In fact, it was not the president's own address as the cabinet approved it. And it is the AL that in 1996 amended the rules of business and introduced the provision for approving the president's address.

The way the discussion was held proved that lawmakers, even those from the treasury, paid little heed to the president's call to change confrontational political culture to realise the people's dream for a change in line with the ruling party's pledge in its electoral manifesto styled "A Charter for Change".

The treasury bench lawmakers' behaviour also proved that they cared little about their own manifesto that promised exercise of tolerance to end confrontational politics.

## Anti-graft

**FROM PAGE 1**  
public service, will be discriminatory and counter-productive to the objective of making corruption a punishable offence".

TIB said the ACC should be allowed to fight public service graft without requiring prior permission from any authority. Offences committed in good faith, if any, should be determined in the Court of Law, not through any blanket waiver.

It also demanded the commission retain the authority of appointing the secretary.

Iftekharuzzaman said setting up a strong internal audit unit in addition to statutory audit would strengthen financial accountability of the ACC.

The unit could comprise qualified professionals reporting directly to the ACC chairman, he added.

The watchdog in the statement said it had submitted a set of 18 proposals to the government.

Section 25 of the ACC Act 2004 must be reviewed to provide full authority to the commission to use its budget independently without interference from the government, TIB suggested in its proposals.

It also said the ACC jurisdiction should be expanded to include crimes under Money Laundering Act 2002, and other crimes in the banking and financial sector, foreign companies, and those involving foreign exchange.

The TIB statement said the proposal to make the commission accountable to the president would not meet the objective of transparency. The ACC should rather be made accountable to a Supreme Court judicial committee.

Alternately, the ACC could be reportable to a parliamentary committee comprising one member from every party represented in parliament.

It also proposed that a citizens' advisory committee composed of non-partisan citizens of high integrity, honesty and credibility could be assigned to advise and evaluate the ACC activities.

Citizens' subcommittees can be formed to advise ACC on specific work in the fields like education, awareness and civic engagement.

It said the ACC should develop its own anti-corruption strategy setting out prioritisation of jobs at hand as provided by the law, particularly to develop a strategic balance between functions of investigation, prosecution and prevention.

It also said the ACC needs to develop a policy to be able to deploy its resources and capacity for effectively handling the huge number of pending cases against new ones.