

Free rivers

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The rivers will be dredged and not be encroached upon and grabbed if the HC verdict is properly implemented, he commented.

He added the government can now continue its action knocking down the structures. The government has to implement the HC verdict to save the rivers from encroachment and pollution, he said, adding, the Appellate Division upheld the verdict and the government is bound to comply with it.

Manzill said removal of the structures has been halted due to the pending petitions filed by the private companies challenging the HC verdict.

The five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim passed the order after hearing arguments made by the counsels of the commercial companies and the HRPB. The other members of the bench are Justice MA Matin, Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman, Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Justice SK Sinha.

In response to a writ by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), the HC in a verdict on June 25 last year directed the government to remove all structures from the four rivers.

The same court on March 21 modified the order and ruled that the structures, excluding those set up by the government to serve public interests, have to be removed.

The HC also rejected the petitions by the commercial companies challenging part of the verdict and seeking stay on a government notice asking them to remove their jetties and other structures.

The companies then filed leave to appeal petitions with the SC against the rejection order.

The HC on June 25 last year in its verdict said the exact boundaries of the rivers have to be demarcated through surveys by November 30 and the rivers were to be designated as "Ecologically Critical Areas" during that period to facilitate demarcation.

Once demarcation is complete, the authorities concerned must have the river-

banks lined with pillars, tree plantation, walkways and pavements by November 30 this year, it said.

It directed the government to constitute a "National River Protection Commission" consisting of the experts concerned within three months to properly preserve and develop the rivers of the country.

The court urged the government to have short-term and long-term plans as per the recommendations of the Commission for development of all the rivers.

The HC also called for taking immediate steps to dredge the rivers and remove the garbage deposited in the riverbeds in the last two years to improve navigation in these rivers within the next five years.

The court also ordered for dredging of the Jamuna-Dhaleshwari, Dhaleshwari-Buriganga, Old Brahmaputra-Bangshi, Bangshi-Turag, Jamuna-Punglikhal, Turag and Tongi canals within five years.

It also ordered removal of all structures from the government land on the banks of the rivers around the city and its Bakland dam.

The deputy commissioner of Narayanganj on February 9 this year issued a notice asking the companies to remove their jetties from the rivers in line with the HC directives.

The companies in their petitions sought stay on the notice.

They stated in their applications that the HC judgment should be amended, since it had earlier directed the government to remove all the legal and illegal structures from the rivers.

They also claimed that their jetties have been legally set up upon obtaining lease from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

They prayed for direction to remove only illegal structures.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, advocate Mahmudul Islam and barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud appeared for the companies, while advocate Manzill Murshid argued for HRPB.

Jobseekers

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went through medical tests twice. But we were not included in the roster due the negligence of Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Ltd (BOESL)," said Mohammad Sajjad, one of the sufferers.

As per rules, if one year passes after the medical tests, a jobseeker has to undergo the medical tests again to get included in the roster.

BOESL Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan said either the BOESL official concerned had made the mistake of not including the names in the roster or it might have occurred due to technical glitches.

"However, we shall take actions against the official and special measures would be taken so that the left out jobseekers are included in the roster," he said.

The demonstrators suspended the strike after the assurance.

As per an agreement between Bangladesh and South Korea, those who are willing to go to South Korea for jobs must qualify in the language tests.

After the medical tests, it is the BOESL's responsibility to add the names of the qualifiers in the roster and send it to the Korean authorities.

5 killed

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hauler which was on its way to Feni from Fulgazi, rammied into a roadside tree at Munshirhat on a Feni-Parshuram road, yesterday morning leaving one dead instantly. His identity could not be known.

Two others died at Feni Sadar Hospital and were identified as Shahadat Hossain, 17 and Swapan, 36. The seven other injured were brought to Munshirhat and Feni Hospital.

In another incident, two people were killed when a covered-van on its way to Chittagong had a head on collision with a Dhaka-bound truck at Lemua Bridge, Feni on Dhaka-Chittagong highway Monday morning.

The dead were identified as Shahidul Islam Helal, 30, driver of the covered-van and Salah Uddin, 32, a passenger of the van.

Police held the two vehicles involved in the accident and sent the bodies to Feni Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Separate cases have been filed at the police stations of Fulgazi and Feni in connection with the two accidents.

12 hurt

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Dina, 25, Habibur Rahman, 27, Mohammad Mamun, 22, Mushfiqur Rahman, 28, Anwar Hossain, 25, Mohammad Mafiz, 22, and Abdur Rahim, 25, were all admitted to DMCH.

Samanta Lal Sen, project director of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit, told The Daily Star that each of the victims received four to six percent burn injuries.

Witnesses said the 12 protesters, who had been observing hunger strike since Thursday last, covered themselves in shrouds and set themselves afire pouring kerosene on their bodies around 4:00pm.

People nearby put out the fire with water and rushed the protesters to DMCH.

"If there was irregularities and corruption in the recruitment process the DMCH officials should be accountable for that not us," said victim Sharif Uddin, adding that they all had joined in DMCH leaving their earlier jobs and if the recruitment is cancelled they have to beg for living.

The Ministry of Health made a vacancy announcement of 171 class-III and IV employees for DMCH in November last. But the hospital authorities appointed 354 people, sources said.

A probe committee of the ministry later found huge corruption in the recruitment process in February.

Criminal

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The deceased was identified as Asadul Haq, 25, also known as 'Lady' Shahin.

Rab sources said he was a prime accused in Chhatra Dal leader Anik killing case. Anik was murdered on February 23 this year in broad daylight in Barisal city.

Lt Col Monirul Haque of Rab-8 in Barisal told The Daily Star that a team of elite force was patrolling in BSCIC area around 3:30am where a group of youths gathered for committing a crime.

When Rab men challenged them, they opened fire on the law enforcers. In retaliation, Rab members fired gunshots that triggered a 10-minute gunfight.

Shahin was caught in the line of fire and found dead after the gunfight, he said.

Rab recovered a 9mm pistol, a loaded shutter gun, one revolver and a few bullets from the scene.

The body was sent to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

BNP march to EC

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reiterated his previous claim insisting that there was police obstruction.

Police officials present at Bangla Motor said the opposition leaders themselves ended the march there.

DMP Deputy Commissioner of Ramna Zone Krishna Pada Roy also said BNP ended its programme at Bangla Motor on its own, police did not create any obstacle.

"They first told us that they would end their programme at Shishu Park at Shahbagh. But a group of leaders later said the programme would be concluded at Bangla motor," he said over the phone last night.

He also said police was ready to cooperate, if the marchers wanted to go all the way.

The BNP leaders however termed the unfinished march a "big showdown".

On the basis of The Daily Star's discussion with some of the marchers, it also seemed that the BNP leaders actually had been anticipating police resistance which would give them an excuse to stage a sit-in on the street, instead of marching all the way.

Some were also saying the route was too long, the starting point should have been somewhere nearer to the EC Secretariat.

Senior leader Mirza Abbas was seen abandoning the march on a motorbike when it reached Shahbagh intersection.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka, and Fakhru Islam Alamgir also took refuge on bikes from Shahbagh to Bangla Motor where the marchers voluntarily dispersed.

Meanwhile the half done protest aggravated the sufferings of commuters on the streets that were part of the march route from Paltan to Bangla Motor, as one lane was constantly blocked on which ever road the march was on.

BNP had announced the march demanding cancellation of the Bholo-3 parliamentary by-election result, and resignation of the entire EC.

According to a fresh programme announced by Mirza Abbas at a pre-march rally, the party will bring out processions towards district election offices all over the country on May 9 for the same demands.

Yesterday's programme started with a short rally at Mukhtang at 2:30 pm. The rally started gaining strength as small processions of activists and supporters from different wards and thanas under the city corporation thronged the venue carrying anti-government banners. The slogans on the banners demanded resignation of the entire EC, and resolution of the ongoing gas, power, and water crises.

At the rally, BNP leaders said the Bholo by-poll proved that free and fair election is not possible under the present EC.

"The Election Commission must resign without any delay, as it absolutely failed to hold a free and fair election," said Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, former president of Dhaka city unit BNP.

Many other leaders including Mirza Abbas, Abdullah Al

Noman, Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Zainul Abdin Farroque were also present.

A large number of police were deployed near Mukhtang, at all intersections up to Bangla Motor, and at all important buildings on the way.

When the march reached Shishu Park near Shahbagh, some BNP leaders wanted to end it seeing a contingent of police ahead. But some younger leaders pursued the seniors to continue, and they did without any police obstacle.

When the top leaders finally stopped the march at Bangla Motor intersection around 5:00 pm themselves, the rest of the marchers became rather angry, some of whom wanted to carry on defying the elders. The senior leaders however successfully dampened the enthusiasm of the younger marchers, and it ended there.

Mirza Alamgir concluded the programme with a brief speech demanding immediate resignation of the EC, and accusing the government of "increasing public miseries".

It's now time

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private universities. The subcommittee thinks that some clauses in it would be tough to comply with and create difficulty for entrepreneurs to set up universities.

Many pro-liberation war people want to set up private universities but some clauses in the bill might discourage the entrepreneurs, he said.

He however mentioned only two clauses one on finance committee and the other on university syndicate.

The bill suggests that the entrepreneurs should have a little role to play in the finance committee and the syndicate, where they will have only one representative, he said.

It says the finance committee, headed by the vice chancellor, will be comprised of the treasurer, three members nominated by the board of trustees, a departmental head appointed by the VC, two experienced representatives nominated by the syndicate and a director (finance).

The syndicate would be formed with the VC as the president. It will include the pro-VC, treasurer, a member of the academic council, a dean and a departmental head, an educationist appointed by the government, a member nominated by the board of trustees, a representative appointed by University Grants Commission and a registrar.

Azam said a proposal for keeping the existing law in effect was discussed in the meeting.

He said they received opinions from the representatives of various educational institutions and other bodies concerned.

They will send the bill to the standing committee after reviewing the opinions, he said.

Azam said they will hold another meeting on May 12.

The bill is likely to be passed in parliament in the next budget session, he added.

Power import

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The prime minister recently said her government hopes to import 500 MW of electricity from India by 2012.

Azam said the government has decided to increase power generation locally alongside importing power from the friendly nation to meet the demand.

A contract would be signed soon between Bangladesh Power Development Board and the National Thermal Power Corporation of India on the import, he continued.

Besides, the cabinet approved the final drafts of Bangladesh Tourism Board Bill 2010, for the improvement of services in the tourism sector and Battalion Ansar (Amendment) Bill 2010 to regularise the jobs of the Ansars after nine years of service, which was 12 years previously.

The meeting also approved the amendments to the Non-government Primary Teacher Welfare Trust Bill 2000, under which a teacher would be the member-secretary of the trust and there would be two vice-chairmen in place of one in the trustee committee.

Azam said the amendments have been brought for the socio-economic benefit of the teachers and their families.

The cabinet was also informed about Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain's recent visit to Lebanon to explore manpower market there.

Members of the cabinet, advisers to the prime minister, state ministers and secretaries concerned were present at the meeting.

PM's visit

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The PM and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak will hold crucial talks on expanding Dhaka-Seoul cooperation in varied fields including infrastructure development to shipbuilding and transfer of green technology to environment.

Recruitment of skilled and semi-skilled manpower will figure prominently during the official talks. A number of South Korean ministers will call on the premier.

During the visit, several agreements and MoUs are likely to be signed relating to infrastructure development, environment and cultural exchange.

Hasina will be a keynote speaker at a seminar to be organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industries will host a luncheon in honour of the PM where CEOs from leading Korean companies will seize the opportunity to talk with the premier on expanding Korean investment in Bangladesh.

The South Korean government may provide duty-free access of 251 Bangladeshi items to the Seoul market this year.

Bangladesh Ambassador to South Korea Shahidul Islam told UNB that the PM's visit would be productive and would help expand trade and investment between Dhaka and Seoul.

Hasina is expected to leave Seoul on May 18 for Kuala Lumpur where she will hold talks with her Malaysian counterpart Abdullah Bin Ahmad Badawi focusing on recruitment of Bangladeshi workers and expansion of bilateral trade and investment.

In Kuala Lumpur, Hasina is expected to address the inaugural session of the three-day 6th World Islamic Economic Forum, which will begin on May 18.

The PM is expected to return home on May 21.

BCL men

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Railway Station, one in front of Chittagong Education Board and two others near Muradpur Rail Gate area between 10:30am and 11:00am.

Jashim Uddin, driver of a human hauler, its helper Mamun and an unidentified CU female student were injured as pelted stones and pieces of broken glass hurt them, sources said.

Police, however, arrested two CU students: Shahidul Islam, of statistics department and Ferdous, of soil science department, in this connection.

Assistant Commissioner of CMP Panchlaish Zone Rezaul Masud said they suspect that the groups involved in the rampage were activists of BCL CU unit while the two arrestees were also from the same unit.

Leaders of Chittagong Metropolitan Sarak Parishad Malik Sramik Oikya Parishad threatened to go for movement if the police fail to ensure security of vehicles.

No change

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the government to implement within different deadlines.

The directives included demarcating the river shorelines, removing all illegal structures and putting an end to pollution and encroachment.

In light of the court directives, the government taskforce on rivers had taken some steps, but failed to carry those out.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan said they could not meet the court's deadlines as the finance ministry did not allocate enough funds.

The HC had some directives for four district administrations as well.

As per the court orders, the administrations in Dhaka, Munshiganj, Gazipur and Narayanganj districts have completed surveys on encroachment on the capital's rivers.

They now await HC directions for the next course of action.

The survey report of one district reveals how industrialists, influential individuals and even government organisations have grabbed rivers since 1983.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, the government agency entrusted with among others the responsibility to keep the rivers navigable, has itself filled rivers to build structures for commercial purposes.

It did so despite repeated protests from the environmentalists.

Asked if they would knock down those structures, the shipping minister said the government would go by the court directives.

In its June 25 directives, the court said once the demarcation is done, the authorities must have the riverbanks lined with pillars by May 30, 2010.

The HC said within six months after demarcation, the land ministry will have to hand over 50 yards along the river banks to the BIWTA.

As per the directions, the government's high-powered taskforce on rivers at its inaugural meeting on October 15 decided to launch an all-out eviction drive against the river-grabbers around the capital.

Jubo League

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Meherpur SP Iqbal Hossain told The Daily Star, special police were deployed in the town.

LGED authorities floated a tender of Tk 1.55 crore to build roads and culverts in two upazilas of the district about a month ago. Yesterday was the last date for the bidding.

Mumbai gunman

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Kasab was convicted on most of the 86 charges against him and faces the death penalty.

Dressed in a long white shirt from his native state of Punjab, Kasab stood impassively in the dock in the special prison court as the verdict was announced.

Two Indian nationals Fahim Ansari and Sabauddin Ahmed accused of providing logistical support to the gunmen by supplying them with handwritten maps of the city were found not guilty.

The widely-expected judgement came after the prosecution said there was "overwhelming" evidence against Kasab, including DNA and fingerprints, security camera footage and photographs showing him with a powerful AK-47 assault rifle.

Kasab, a school drop-out, was captured in a photograph walking through Mumbai's train station wearing a backpack and carrying an AK-47 in one of the defining images of the attacks.

The former navy initially denied the charges, then pleaded guilty, before reverting to his original stance and claiming that he was set up by the police and had been in Mumbai only to watch films.

Observers expect the judge to hand down the maximum death sentence when a sentence is announced on Tuesday, but a lengthy, possibly open-ended, appeal through the Indian courts is likely.

The government officially supports capital punishment for what the Supreme Court in New Delhi has called the "rarest of rare" cases but no execution has been carried out since 2004 and only two since 1998.

Decisions are still pending on appeals for clemency to India's president from the killers of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Mohammad Afzal, a Kashmiri separatist who attacked the country's parliament in 2001.

In his first confession, Kasab admitted to being one of two gunmen who threw grenades and opened fire at

within seven to ten days. Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj district administrations have completed surveys and demarcation of four rivers--Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Balu and Turag--by November 30 in keeping with the HC directives.

But the government could not yet complete its eviction drive.

The taskforce at its fifth meeting on February 14 decided to start setting up boundary pillars along the four rivers by the end of April, but failed.

On March 31, it identified 13 low bridges on rivers around the capital as obstacles to movement of watercraft and decided to knock them down.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, which was directed by the court to prevent direct discharge of wastewater from Mitford Hospital and other places into Buriganga, has not done much to that end.

Swine flu

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sources said, adding that the rest would come in two months.

One crore and 60 lakh people under priority groups that include healthcare providers, pregnant women and those aged above 6 months with chronic medical conditions, will receive the vaccine first.

The Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) will conduct the H1N1 vaccination programme.

The vaccines will be reached at the union level so that people can take the vaccines from there easily, said government health officials.

Each person needs just one vaccine. It may take one and a half months to provide the vaccines to 30 lakh people, they added.

WHO is providing emergency supplies of the vaccines to 95 poor and emerging countries to inoculate at least 10 percent people under the programme.

WHO estimates it will entail about 200 million doses of vaccine plus ancillary products such as syringes and safety boxes in the first phase.

"WHO works together with the ministry to bring this vaccines to Bangladesh and provides technical and financial support to benefit the most vulnerable groups, said Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, WHO representative to Bangladesh.

Mumbai gunman

unsuspecting rush-hour commuters at Mumbai's main railway station.

The railway assault, which killed 52 and wounded more than 100, was the bloodiest episode in the siege, blamed by India on Pakistan-based Islamist extremist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and elements in the Pakistan military.

Kasab later retracted the confession, saying it was made under police pressure and that he was a victim of mistaken identity. He had earlier alleged torture while in police custody.

He and his accomplice also gunned down a number of senior police officers as they fled the station while a homemade bomb they placed in a taxi that took them to the station later exploded, killing the driver and his passenger.

In Kasab's home village of Faridkot in Pakistan, many people denied any connection with him, while some sought to justify his attack on the implacable foe across the border.

Nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947.

"Look, don't blame him. There is nothing wrong if he did it with good intentions against an infidel country like India," said Amjad Ali, a 60-year-old farmer.

The trial, which began at a high-security prison court last April, was keenly-watched given the psychological impact of the attacks, which are often compared in India to the September 11, 2001 assault on New York and Washington.

The death and destruction in Mumbai came after a series of blasts in Indian cities in 2008 blamed on Islamist extremists.

The episode revealed glaring gaps in national security, prompted an expensive upgrade in home security and severely strained diplomatic ties with Pakistan, which are yet to recover.

Many Indians, including some lawyers, said the trial should never have taken place, with some calling for Kasab to be hanged without trial.