

CHALLENGING CLOSURE Channel 1 writ petition rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected a writ petition that challenged the government's action of shutting down Channel 1, a private satellite television station.

A HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore passed the order.

On April 27, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) stopped the transmission of Channel 1 by cancelling its frequency allocation for using rented broadcasting equipments in violation of the law.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told reporters at his office that the government had shut down the operation of Channel 1 since frequency allocation cannot remain valid after the company sells off its broadcasting equipments.

Replying to a question, he said job opportunities for journalists and staffs of Channel 1 would be created when some other television channels will be launched.

Petitioner's counsel advocate Ahsanul Karim said they were yet to receive any instructions from Channel 1 authorities to move an appeal with the Supreme Court against the HC order.

Earlier on May 2, Prof Mazidul Islam, director of Channel 1, filed the petition with the HC alleging that BTRC illegally cancelled the allocation of frequency for the channel.

Channel 1 was established on June 1, 2005 and it started broadcasting on January 24, 2006. The channel's founder Giasuddin Al Mamun is known as a close associate of BNP chief Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq appeared for the petitioner.

Thai protesters

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The Reds, whose vast base in the heart of Bangkok is under siege by troops, said they were ready to enter peace talks with the government "immediately" as long as the United Nations mediated.

"We want the UN because we don't trust we will receive justice from organisations in Thailand," protest leader Nattawat Saikuar said as the death toll from the urban warfare jumped by seven Sunday.

The idea was quickly shot down by the government, which has repeatedly warned foreign governments not to meddle in its affairs.

"No governments allow any organisations to intervene in their internal affairs," spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn said.

Previous talks between the two sides have failed to reach an agreement, despite an offer -- since withdrawn -- by the embattled premier to hold elections in November if the opposition demonstrators go home.

Authorities said they would send workers from the Red Cross to help protesters -- particularly women, children and the elderly -- who want to leave the vast protest area in the heart of the capital by 3:00 pm (0800) Monday.

"Men can also leave the site but they have to show they are unarmed," army spokesman Colonel Sunsern Kaekumnerd told reporters.

The army put off a plan to

impose a curfew in parts of the city but did not rule out restricting night-time movements if the situation worsens.

The wounded include six foreigners, from Canada, Italy, Liberia, Myanmar, New Zealand and Poland.

Authorities warned journalists to stay out of the main protest site, saying they were an easy target for "terrorists." Four reporters have been shot and injured and one killed in Bangkok since the unrest began in March.

The government extended a state of emergency to five more provinces, ordered schools to stay shut Monday and declared two days of national holidays to keep civilians off the streets as they battled for control of the city.

Violent clashes continued on the fringes of the Red Shirts' sprawling encampment Sunday as a swathe of the city was shrouded in black smoke after demonstrators torched piles of tyres in roads.

Three commercial buildings caught fire on Rama IV road, where some of the worst of the fighting has occurred, apparently because of sparks from the piles of burning tyres, emergency services said.

Protesters tried to stop fire trucks arriving at the scene, a local firefighter said by telephone.

"We tried not to fight with the protesters in the area," he said, adding that nobody was hurt in the blazes.

England's cup

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one-day event after losing in three World Cup finals (1979, 1987 and 1992) and the 2004 Champions Trophy.

England, who held Australia to 147 for six, had an early setback when Michael Lumb's exit left them seven for one.

But Kieswetter and Pietersen then dominated the Australian bowlers.

Pietersen, who faced 31 balls, with a six and four fours, was out when he hoisted leg-spinner Steven Smith to David Warner on the long-off boundary.

And, worryingly for England, 118 for two became 121 for three when Kieswetter was bowled by left-arm quick Mitchell Johnson, having faced 49 balls, with two sixes and seven fours.

But Collingwood and former Ireland batsman Eoin Morgan (both 15 not out) saw England home.

Defeat in what was a first World Twenty20 final for both the Ashes rivals left an Australia side previously unbeaten at the tournament still searching for the one major title that has so far eluded them.

Earlier, David Hussey's 59 kept Australia in the match during an innings where the next best score was Cameron White's 30.

Kieswetter and Pietersen were in commanding form against Australia's quicks, with Kieswetter striking two fours in as many balls off left-armer Dirk Nannes and cover-driving express quick Shaun Tait.

Pietersen then hammered left-armer Johnson for four and pierced the offside field with a boundary off Smith.

Kieswetter, a former South Africa Under-19 international, then struck medium-pace Watson for two fours in as many balls.

He later launched the all-rounder for a huge six over midwicket.

At the 10-over halfway mark, England were 73 for one compared to Australia's 47 for four.

England's hundred.

David Hussey's 59 kept Australia in the match during an innings where the next best score was Cameron White's 30.

Just days after brother Michael had pulled off a dramatic rescue mission in a thrilling semi-final win over defending champions Pakistan, the younger Hussey made sure Australia's bowlers would have a score to defend.

Together with White, David Hussey - missed on 25 - put on fifty for the fifth wicket and then shared a stand of 47 with his brother.

David Hussey was run out in the last over, going for a second run, by Luke Wright's throw from long-on to Kieswetter.

He faced 54 balls with two sixes and two fours.

Left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom took two wickets for 26 runs from his maximum four overs and off-spinner Graeme Swann a miserly one for 17.

England had a sensational start after Collingwood won the toss.

Sidebottom struck third ball when Watson edged an intended cut, which was dropped by Kieswetter only for first slip Swann to hold the rebound.

Then two for one became seven for two when David Warner was run out having made just two after failing to beat Lumb's under-arm direct hit after Australia captain Michael Clarke called for a single.

The collapse continued when Brad Haddin (one) was caught down the legside by diving opposing gloveman Kieswetter off Sidebottom.

Haddin then risked disciplinary action by pointing to his thigh after being given out by umpire Billy Doctrove.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 147 for 6 in 20 overs (D Hussey 59, Clarke 27, White 30, M Hussey 17, Sidebottom 2-26)

ENGLAND: 151 for 3 in 17 overs (Kieswetter 63, Pietersen 47, Collingwood 12 not out, Morgan 15 not out)

Result: England won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Craig Kieswetter.

Man-of-the-tournament: Kevin Pietersen.

HC status quo on building in Buriganga

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to maintain status quo for three months over the construction of a recreation centre in the river Buriganga at Kamrangirchar in the city.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Md Delwar Hossain passed the order upon a writ petition filed by the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), a human rights and environmentalist organisation.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks why the construction of recreation centre in the river should not be declared illegal and why it should not be directed to remove the structures from the river.

The petitioner's lawyer Manzil Murshid said the HC order brought the construction project to a halt for next three months.

The petition was recently filed on the basis of a report of the daily Prothom Alo on May 7 that the BIWTA had been carrying out construction of a recreation centre in the river Buriganga.

The petitioner alleged that the BIWTA had been building the recreation centre in the river ignoring the HC order that asked the government last June to remove all structures from the four rivers around the capital including Buriganga.

The shipping secretary, the BIWTA chairman and its director (port), director (planning), chief engineer and executive engineer, the deputy commissioner (DC) of Dhaka and the director general of Directorate of Environment have been made respondents to the rule and the directive.

7 stranded seamen return today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven of the 28 Bangladeshi seamen who had been stranded in ships off the Benin coast are finally returning home today.

"Seven are scheduled to fly from Benin today [Sunday] and arrive in Dhaka by 5:30pm tomorrow [Monday] by an Emirates flight," said Saida Muna Tasneem, director general of external publicity wing at the foreign ministry.

The remaining 21 will come back on May 20, she told this correspondent yesterday.

All the 28 seamen were earlier scheduled to return home on May 7 but it was delayed as the Benin authorities said some of them should stay back to take care of the ships.

Saida Muna mentioned that Bangladesh's Charge d' Affaires in Morocco Lutfar Rahman is negotiating with the Benin authorities for return of all the stranded seamen. But one of the might stay back, she said.

Orchard death

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false. Plunderers are opportunists who use ruling party connections no matter which one [party] is in power."

Madhupur Sal forest once sprawled over 45,000 acres. But in last four decades, it has shrunk to 8,000 acres to make way for orchards.

As a rich habitat of flora and fauna, it used to abound with medicinal herbs and tubers. But for the unabated onslaught on the forest, those plants are hard to spot these days.

Abdus Samad of Telki village in Aronkhola told the correspondent the plundering is going on only a kilometre off the Beribaid beat office under the National Park range.

"The forest bosses should come here to see first-hand the mindless felling of trees," he added.

Guards of the beat office say they cannot take quick action for lack of manpower, transport and other logistics.

And then there is the pressure from the local leaders of the ruling party.

Sarfuddin Ahmed, assistant forest conservator of Madhupur, said whenever the guards go to the spot, those hired by the plunderers melt into the forest only to return later to start cutting down trees again.

"I have taken part in at least 50 drives with forest guards and police, but could do nothing," he added.

Asit Kumar Nath, Tangail's divisional forest officer, said the forest department had uprooted a huge number of fruit saplings from the forestland last October. But in a few months, the orchards returned.

M Bazul Karim Chowdhury, deputy commissioner of Tangail, told The Daily Star he has already visited the site and directed local administration to work with the forest department to stop the plunderers.

Nocheers

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"The fund was allocated only to Munshiganj district. But later we found the money meant for Munshiganj was given to BIWTA. So we could not spend the money," said the deputy commissioner of Munshiganj.

"If we get money right at the moment, we would not be able to spend it before this fiscal year ends," said the DC of Munshiganj.

The taskforce on February 14 decided to start setting up boundary pillars along the four rivers by the end of April.

In the seventh meeting of the taskforce yesterday, the ministers and government officials discussed the issue of bureaucratic tangles in implementing any decisions.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed and State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam, State Minister for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Land Mustafizar Rahman Fizar, Sanzida Khatun, MP and other lawmakers from Dhaka, officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and Water and Sewerage Authority attended the meeting chaired by Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan.

"The situation is such, we cannot do anything faster even if we want to," the shipping minister noted.

Mockbul in prison

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Mockbul was earlier convicted and sentenced to 13 years in jail in absentia in the same case on May 06 in 2008 for concealing wealth information and amassing wealth beyond known sources of his income.

A number of senior lawyers expressed their astonishment over the bail order in such a short time.

Mockbul, however, was not released from jail until 8:35pm as he was sent to the Samarita Hospital around 3:30pm, Dhaka Central Jail sources said.

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Khandaker Mahub Hossain yesterday said that Mockbul and his lawyers had certainly concealed something from the HC to secure the bail.

As per the provisions, a convict has to submit the certified copy of the lower court verdict to the HC for filing an appeal against the conviction, he said.

The convict also has to surrender to the lower court to get such copy. At least 10 days are needed to normally complete the process, he added.

He said securing bail by a convict on the day of surrendering to the lower court is very unusual.

The SCBA president added that an appeal could not be filed without the certified copy of the lower court verdict.

Mockbul's lawyer Abdul Matin Khasru, however, said they filed the appeal with the HC yesterday on behalf of his client along with Vokalantama (powers to move the case) from the court custody about his surrender.

Earlier on the day, the HC condoned the delay of filing the appeal by Mockbul, he said.

When asked if there is any instance of granting bail to any

1 lakh women

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women selected by local government representatives across the country, he said adding that these trained women would be kept ready for sending as soon as the demand comes.

He said the workers would have to pay a nominal amount as training fee after being nominated for a particular job abroad.

Besides, all necessary expenditure would be borne by the foreign recruiting agencies, Mosharrar said.

To materialise the target of sending more workers abroad, steps would be taken to strengthen the BMET and the government has already taken some measures in this regard, the minister added.

"We are aware of different hazards for the women workers in the foreign countries and are talking with the authorities of the concerned countries to ensure congenial working atmosphere," he said.

He said every woman would be provided with a SIM card so that she can talk to her family members and keep contact with embassy officials when needed.

Director General of BMET and Khorshed Alam Chowdhury and other officials were present on the occasion.

The meeting decided to start a massive awareness campaign among communities and form local committees to conduct a door-to-door campaign, paste posters, bring out processions, and run television programmes for not dumping waste in the Buriganga river.

State Minister for Laws Qamrul Islam said eviction drive was not conducted properly in his constituency Kamrangirchar area as some industries far away from the riverbank were knocked down, while some illegal structures by the river are still standing.

The meeting also urged the Ministry of Home Affairs to direct all police stations along the rivers to file and accept cases against the encroachers.

The meeting decided to launch campaigns by posting posters and bringing out processions to save the rivers.

Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, said the government has to take integrated measures to implement the decisions taken so that one organ of the government does not hamper work of another's.

He drew the attention of the authorities saying, "If the Wasa continues to pollute the rivers, there would be no use of cleaning it by the Ministry of Shipping."

Criminal killed in 'shootout' with Rab

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An alleged criminal was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and Rapid Action Battalion members at Char Hoyalpatia village in Babuganj upazila of Barisal Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Jogneshwar Shil alias Joga, of Brahmandia in the upazila.

Delwar Hossain, deputy assistant director of Rab in Barisal, said a patrol team of the elite force rushed to Char Hoyalpatia at about 11:00pm where a gang of seven to eight criminals was holding a meeting.

Soon after being challenged by the Rab personnel, the gang opened fire on them, forcing the law enforcers to fire back. At one stage, the criminals managed to flee the scene.

Later, Rab found the bullet-hit body of Jogneshwar lying on the spot and sent it to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Jubo League leader killed

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Unknown criminals hacked a local Jubo League leader to death last night after abducting him at gunpoint from Saratola Bazar under Sharsha upazila.

Police said the criminals kidnapped Dihi union JL social welfare secretary Ratan Sarder, 32, around 9:00pm and left the spot killing him at a field.

Sharsha police said they could not yet ascertain the cause behind the killing.

TAX EVASION CASE

Arafat has to appear in court July 18

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked Arafat Rahman Koko, the youngest son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, to appear before it on July 18 in connection with a tax evasion case.

Judge (in-charge) Mohammad Ismail Hossain of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Koko's lawyers informed the court that the home ministry had earlier extended his parole until July 15.

The National Board of Revenue on March 1 filed the case against Koko in connection with evading income tax in different fiscal years.

In the complaint against Koko, Deputy Tax Commissioner of the NBR Shahin Akhter Hossain said Koko evaded income tax on his income of Tk 52.39 lakh between 2002-2003 and 2006-2007 fiscal years.

Koko along with his mother was arrested on September 2, 2007 in connection with the Gato graft case and he was placed on remand for interrogation.

Later, he was released on parole after which he went abroad for treatment. Koko is still staying abroad for treatment.

Four other cases, including a money laundering and an extortion case, were also filed against him during the time when he was in jail.

Earlier on April 30 last year, Koko's lawyers submitted applications for withdrawal of cases filed against him during the caretaker government.

CCC polls

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as some party leaders from Chittagong expressed interest in participating in the poll, said the source.

Party insiders hinted that BNP leaders would contest the election but they are still confused about selection of party's mayoral candidate.

They however hoped that the name of candidate would be announced soon.

The party chief at the meeting sought opinions from her senior colleagues about the anti-government programmes.

The leaders said the party should announce those programme, which will easily receive people's support.

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan at a press briefing urged the government and the ruling party not to create any obstacles to holding its Dhaka rally.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain told journalists that they would hold the government responsible, if any untoward incident happens at its Dhaka rally.

Tahrir leader's house raided

Anti-govt leaflets seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police raided the residence of Chittagong regional coordinator of banned Islamist outfit Hizb-ut Tahrir in the city's Khulshi area yesterday and seized documents, party and anti-government leaflets and posters.

However, the coordinator identified as Sheikh Omar Sharif Al Maruf Russell, 35, son of Ali Akbar of Chandpur, could not be arrested.

On information, Khulshi police arrested Nazmul Haque, 19, a first year student of electrical and electronics engineering department of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, from Sholoshahar area Saturday afternoon on suspicion of his involvement with the outfit, police sources said.

During interrogation, Nazmul confessed that he knows Chittagong regional

coordinator Russell and went twice to his Khulshi residence. After receiving a court order, police broke into Russell's residence on the fifth floor of Tarif Mansion at South Khulshi around 4:00pm and found the leaflets, posters, Islami books and documents.

Assistant Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, Kotwali zone Helal Uddin said Russell has been carrying out party activities secretly from the place.

He also said the documents show that Russell was a judicial magistrate of a Feni court and now a lecturer of law department of BGC Trust University and an advocate of Chittagong Judge Court.

A court yesterday placed Nazmul who was arrested under section 54 on a two-day remand, he mentioned.

A case was filed with Khulshi Police Station.

Nuke power deal

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power project, although a year has passed since it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Russia for setting up a nuclear power plant at Rooppur.

Following a meeting of a relevant high powered technical committee at the ICT ministry yesterday, Yeafesh Osman told journalists, it might take six to seven years to complete installation of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant with a capacity of generating 600 to 1,500 megawatt of electricity, which is enough to light most of Dhaka City.

According to the MoU, Russia will supply nuclear materials to Bangladesh, and provide services in the field of nuclear fuel cycle, in line with national legislations of the two states, and international treaties to which both countries are parties.

The MoU also includes terms for cooperation in educating, training, and updating the skills of administration staff, and scientific and technical persons in matters related to the project. Cooperation in radioactive waste management is a part of it as well.

Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission suggested building a human resources department as per requirement of the International Atomic Energy Agency for launching the plant by 2016.

"No matter who will rule the country at that time, it is important to resolve the country's power problem, and we are committed to generating more power for the sake of development," the minister said.

The high powered 22-member technical committee that was formed to oversee the project, met for the first time yesterday.

Shawkat Akbar, project director of Rooppur Nuclear

New MPO

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Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said that he sent the necessary papers through his ministry's additional secretary to the education adviser in the evening.

"As per Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's direction I talked to the education adviser and told him to take the responsibility. The adviser agreed," he said.

Nahid also said he will give all sorts of support to the adviser to complete the list successfully.

"We want the schools get government facilities as soon as possible," he said.

After a gap of six years the government on May 7 published the list of 1,022 new non-government secondary and higher secondary educational institutes for giving MPO facilities.

But, in the face of vehement opposition of some lawmakers the prime minister directed the education ministry to suspend the new inventory and asked it to review.

The premier also asked Alauddin to revise the list.

As both the education minister and education adviser are scrutinising the list separately some 13,000 teachers and employees of newly registered institutes are apprehending elimination from the list.

Sources said many teachers are now worried that the entire process might hang in the balance if the roll is not completed by this current fiscal year.

Around 26,340 educational institutions including 2,386 colleges, 15,515 secondary schools, 7,344 madrasas and 1,095 technical institutes are