

Fatwa illegal

HC rules against all extra-judicial punishments upon writ petitions

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court in a verdict yesterday declared illegal all kinds of extrajudicial punishment including those made in the name of fatwa in local arbitration.

The court directed the authorities concerned to take punitive action against the people involved in enforcing fatwa against women.

Anyone involved, present or taking part in or assisting any such conviction or execution would come under purview of the offences under the penal code and be subject to punishment, the court observed.

It also observed infliction of brutal punishment including caning, whipping and beating in local salish (arbitration) by persons devoid of judicial authority constitutes violation of the constitutional rights.

The court said the people's rights to life and equal protection have to be treated in accordance with the law.

As per the rules of the Constitution, the citizens will not be subject to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment, the HC said.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore came up with the verdict in response to three separate writs. The petitions were filed by rights organisations -- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, BRAC Human Rights and Legal Services, and Nijera Kori, and four Supreme Court lawyers -- Advocate Salahuddin Dolon, Barrister Mahbub Shafique, Advocate AKM Hafizul Alam and Barrister Iman-ul-Hye.

The rights organisations filed a writ last year and the lawyers filed two separate writs this year with the HC, seeking necessary directives from the court to stop extrajudicial punishment in the

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

While drives are on to save the rivers in Dhaka and its surroundings following government directives, a portion of river Shitalakkhya is being filled up by an influential quarter every day. The photo was taken from the north of Kanchpur Bridge in Narayanganj a few days back.

Terminal exam for madrasa students too

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The students of class-V of ebtadai madrasa will sit for a terminal examination for the first time this year along with primary school students.

Only school students of class-V participated in the previous primary terminal examination introduced last year.

Students of the ebtadai madrasas that follow the curriculum of Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board will take the examination likely to be held on November 22 this year, said officials of primary and mass education ministry yesterday.

Mohammad Yusuf, chairman of Madrasa Education Board, said around five lakh madrasa students are expected to sit for the exam, which will be supervised by the primary and mass education ministry.

Around 21 lakh students of primary schools will also take the exams and the results are likely to be published within December 20-25, said ministry officials.

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Hasina backs free trade

Urges removal of tariff, para-tariff barriers to expand intra D-8 trade

UNB, Abuja

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the Developing-8 member states to evolve their own mechanism for establishing a D-8 Free Trade Area to increase trade and businesses.

"Trade among us, however, has been disappointing despite having a combined market of nearly one billion people," she said while addressing the seventh summit of D-8 countries at the State House of Nigeria.

"We truly need a mechanism within

our capacity for a D-8 Free Trade Area," Hasina said.

The theme of the D-8 summit this year is "Enhancing Investment Cooperation among D-8 Countries."

The Istanbul-based D-8 groups Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey. The group of eight Muslim countries was established in 1997 to promote economic ties and solidarity among the member states.

The premier said with proper recipe for trade and investment, the D-8 can

achieve 10-15 percent of intra-D-8 trade by 2018, a target set two years ago in the Sixth Summit.

She noted that the obstacles to attaining development have been due to lack of harmonisation in standards and uniform sets of criteria in testing of quality.

"These have been responsible for increasing tariff and para-tariff barriers and thus hindering trade expansion," Hasina said. The obstacles must be removed for active trade and economic cooperation among the D-8, she added.

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with D-8 heads of state and government during a summit in Abuja, Nigeria yesterday.

Grill Paul, cry Germans

REUTERS, Berlin

Some Germans are calling for a public roasting of the oracle octopus who correctly picked the winner of all six of their national soccer team's World Cup matches -- including a bitter defeat to Spain on Wednesday.

Paul, a two-year-old octopus in a German aquarium, turned into a global celebrity for his uncanny ability to predict the winner of all Germany's matches -- even a group stage



defeat to Serbia and an ousting by Spain in the semifinals.

"Nothing beats grilled octopus," said Dolores Lusch, a Germany fan who works on a Berlin fish stall. "Cut him up in thin slices and grill him on all sides with a dash of lemon juice, olive oil and garlic on it. Delicious!"

Not an ordinarily superstitious people, Germans became believers in Paul's possible psychic powers. The country was shocked and

Elderly fan dies over WC squabble

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An elderly fan died over a squabble surfacing from a World Cup football match at Mohela of Chatmohar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was Aftab Ali, 65.

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SAHR demands judicial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) urged the government yesterday to open a judicial enquiry, not a police enquiry, into the recent cases of custodial deaths and disappearances.

In a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Co-chairperson of the human rights organisation Hameeda Hossain asked the government to take serious note of custodial deaths and disappearances published in the national newspapers, particularly in The Daily Star in the last few weeks.

Reports of three custodial deaths in five days drew people's attention to human rights violation by law enforcers, the letter reads.

Police denied the accusation of killing Mizanur Rahman, Babul Kazi and Mujibur Hossain in their custody, it said.

Their family members, however, alleged that the police took them in custody and killed them as the family

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CUSTODIAL DEATHS, CROSSFIRE

Home mum, HR commission vocal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Human Rights Commission yesterday decided that dealing with extrajudicial killings and custodial deaths will be its top priority.

The same day the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry however glossed over the issue, which has been much-talked about following three recent deaths in police custody.

A Jatiya Party lawmaker raised the subject at the JS body meeting, but members of the ruling Awami League including Home Minister Sahara Khatun showed no interest to have a discussion.

When JP lawmaker Mujib-ul-Haque Chhunu wanted to know why and how the deaths occurred, the home minister and home secretary kept mum, said meeting sources.

On the other hand, the human rights commission at its meeting acknowledged the gravity of the issue and decided to pursue an end to extrajudicial killings, disappearance and torture of people in custody.

After the meeting, first since its reconstitution on June 22, the commission said if the government fails to address the problem, it will

initiate its own investigation to identify the persons responsible and file cases against them, if necessary.

"From now on, we will press the government to act immediately in case of any extrajudicial killing or death in custody," NHRC Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star.

He also said NHRC's top priorities for the next year would be working against violation of human rights of women and children and citizens in detention.

JS PANEL MEET

At the parliamentary committee meeting, only Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad gave a little hope, saying the House body would be briefed about the issue at its next meeting.

Major Gen (ret'd) Abdus Salam, chairman of the committee, told reporters that they would seek to know in detail about the three alleged custodial deaths once the probe is over.

Jamiruddin Sircar, lone member from the opposition BNP, was not present at the meeting attended among others by AL lawmakers Mirza Azam, M Mujibul Haq, M Habibur Rahman, M Nurul Islam Sujon, Sanjida Khanam and M Shafiqul Islam.

Lock-up deaths have recently caused

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