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HC warns against custodial deaths

Says no mercy for such incident, asks DMP to report its actions by Aug 3

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court yesterday issued a stern warning to the government that it must take legal action against policemen involved in custodial deaths after investigating the cases with non-police personnel.

This court will deal with everyone involved in custodial deaths with an iron fist without mercy and compassion, said an HC bench, adding that police must forget the idea that they are immune to prosecution.

Those days are over and the police must realise this reality, it commented in the presence of a number of police personnel who appeared before the bench yesterday in connection with three incidents of death in police custody.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Md Zakir Hossain came up with the observations during the hearing of a writ petition earlier filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh and Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation.

The two groups filed the public interest litigation on July 5 seeking directives of the HC on the authorities concerned to stop incidents of death in custody.

Officer-in-Charge of Gulshan Police Station Kamal Uddin, OC of Darussalam Police Station Mujibur Rahman along with sub-inspectors Anisur Rahman, Masudur Rahman, Hekmotullah, Moshir Rahman and assistant sub-inspector Sayed appeared before the court following its earlier order to explain the three custodial deaths in the capital.

The bench yesterday said police personnel found involved in such incidents must be suspended immediately.

"We will not spare any policeman whether he is the inspector general of police or an ordinary police constable on the road," Justice Manik said, adding that incidents of death in custody must be stopped.

The judge also said the process of impeccable investigation into the deaths must go ahead.

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A steel factory darkens the sky with smoke from its chimney near Kanchpur Bridge on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway. Once enacted, the environment court law could stop these emissions.

Environment courts at all districts

Cabinet okays draft law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft of the Environment Court Act 2010 that provides for five years' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 5 lakh or both for environment polluters.

The proposed act also provides for setting up environment courts in all districts to prevent environmental pollution, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told journalists.

The draft was approved at the weekly cabinet meeting held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Azad said the new law is being enacted to ensure stern action against environment polluters.

Besides, the cabinet

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OMS of rice before Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amidst rice price spiral, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has decided to launch open market sale (OMS) of rice ahead of the Ramadan in the capital to keep the price stable.

"We are preparing to launch OMS so that the prices of rice remain within reach of common people during the month of Ramadan," Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star at his office in the Secretariat yesterday.

The ministry is also considering taking the measure in

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ALL-PARTY JS BODY ON CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

AL asks BNP to send name of party rep

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Awami League has requested Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia to nominate a BNP lawmaker for a high-powered all-party parliamentary committee to be formed by Thursday to amend the country's constitution.

"We've requested to send the name of the opposition nominee by July 20, so the committee can be formed in the current session of the parliament," Treasury Bench Chief Whip Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

Shahid sent a letter to Khaleda on Sunday night, seeking the name by today as the parliament's current session is scheduled to be prologued on Thursday.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin

Farooque told reporters yesterday that they received the letter, and BNP will decide on the matter on consultation with its chief Khaleda Zia.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia started exchanging views with party senior leaders on the issue late last night. As of filing of this report at 1:00am today, the meeting was still going on at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

The opposition will also hold a meeting with different professional bodies and like-minded political parties today to discuss the issue, party insiders said.

BNP however already alleged that the government's move to amend the constitution has an "ulterior motive".

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Tough law for telcos passed

Fine raised to Tk 300cr from Tk 10 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday passed a bill making the provisions of telecom law tough to punish telecom operators and other ICT-based companies for specific wrongdoings with an increase of fine up to Tk 300 crore from Tk 10 lakh.

During passage of the bill, the House also accepted a recommendation made by the parliamentary standing committee on post and telecommunications for formation of a three-member appeal board led by a retired High Court judge.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

No bar to sending cases filed for crimes in '71

Ministry says after reviewing existing cases

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Reviewing cases filed against Jamaat-e-Islami leaders with different police stations in connection with crimes in 1971, the home ministry yesterday found no legal bar to sending the cases to the International Crimes Tribunal for trial.

However, the investigation officers of the cases would decide whether to have the trials at the tribunal. Once the IOs appeal to the tribunal to take the cases, the tribunal can decide, said home ministry sources.

The observation came at an inter-ministerial meeting at the home ministry yesterday evening with Home Minister Sahara

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BB for power price hike

Suggests separate tariff structure for low-income group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has suggested the government to hike power price keeping separate tariff structure for the low-income group.

"The high cost quick rental option needed for urgent augmentation of power generation has heightened the urgency of increase in prices of energy, to keep budgetary subsidy burdens sustainable," said the Monetary Policy Statement (MPS) of BB released yesterday.

BB Governor Dr Atiur Rahman unveiled the

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PHOTO: AFP

62 dead in Indian train crash

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

At least 62 people were killed and over 92 were wounded when an express train ramed into the rear of another train waiting at Sainthia station of West Bengal yesterday.

A statement issued by Eastern Railway, headquartered in Kolkata, put the death toll at 62 and the number of injured at more than 92.

Among the dead were 39 men, eight women and two children, railway officials said.

The accident took place yesterday, at around local time 2:00am (20:30GMT Sunday), when Siliguri-bound Uttar Banga Express running at a high speed apparently overshot the signal and came on the same track crashing into the stationary

Bhagalpur-Ranchi Vananchal Express at the station in the Birbhum district, about 200km from Kolkata, railway officials said.

The impact of the collision was so severe that the roof and the sides of two compartments of Vananchal Express were reduced to a heap of mangled metals, and the main section of one train carriage had been flung over an overhanging railway footbridge.

Rescue workers had to cut their way into the mangled wreckage to rescue the passengers.

Emergency officials said all the passengers trapped in the wreckage were rescued and all the injured were taken to hospitals.

Hospital sources said from among the 92 injured, 35 were in critical condition.

Driver MC Dey and assistant driver NK Mandal of the Uttarbanga Express and guard A Mukherjee of Vananchal Express

were among the dead, the statement said.

Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee appeared to raise doubts whether it was a sheer accident. "We have so many doubts in our mind. Whatever has happened is not casual," she told reporters before leaving for the spot.

"We are still finding out the details and we will take all necessary steps and action and find out who is behind this calamity," Banerjee said.

There is speculation that faulty signalling may have been the cause of the crash. A police investigation is now under way.

This was the second major railway accident in West Bengal this year.

In May, nearly 150 people died when a Mumbai-bound Jnaneshwari Express train derailed and was hit by a goods train. Police

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Probe finds lapses in BG Press security

Staff recruited without police verification

WASIM BIN HABIB

The probe committee formed by the Bangladesh Government (BG) Press authorities found security flaws and neglect in frisking employees as reasons behind the recent question leak.

The probe committee also found that the employees in the restricted section did not have police verification before appointment.

Even though the policy "Restricted Section Operation, 2000" states that employees can only be appointed to the section after being verified by the police, it was not followed, said

highly placed sources. These employees had their police verification done when they were appointed to the BG Press, they said.

The committee would recommend reforming and modernising the press by installing new equipment and ensuring tight security measures, say highly placed sources.

Formed on July 9 after the leak of questions for now-cancelled assistant teacher recruitment examinations for public high schools, the committee is likely to submit its report to the directorate of printing and publishing today, said Abul Kashem, head of the committee.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

HC asks police, Rab to find Alam

Pro-BNP DCC councillors stage token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the inspector general of police and director general of Rapid Action Battalion to take effective measures immediately to find out ward councillor Chowdhury Alam, who has been missing since June 25.

An HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Syeda Afsar Jahan passed the order following a writ petition filed by BNP leader Chowdhury Alam's son Abu Sayed Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, pro-BNP DCC ward councillors yesterday staged

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Drive against unfit vehicles

Run-down buses still off the roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drive against unfit motor vehicles in the city faces setback as owners continue to keep their run-down vehicles off the road to avoid being penalised.

The authority is considering authorising Dhaka district administration to confiscate rundown vehicles even if they are kept off the road.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Indian rescue personnel conduct recovery operations on the mangled wreckage of train coaches following a railway accident in Sainthia, 260km north of Kolkata, yesterday. An express train ramed the back of a stationary passenger train killing at least 62 people.

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