

ALLOWING IMPORT OF SCRAP SHIPS Six govt officials face contempt rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a contempt of court rule against six government officials for issuing no objection certificates (NOCs) to import scrap vessels violating its orders.

The Department of Environment recently issued NOCs to importer of MV Badri and MT BO though the HC earlier directed the government several times not to issue such NOC to vessels that do not have proper decontamination certificate obeying the Basel Convention.

An HC bench of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Obaidul Hasan yesterday also directed the contemptor officials to appear before it on October 13 in connection with the contempt of court petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA).

The officials include the director general and director

(Chittagong division) of Department of Environment, director general and chief chemist of Department of Shipping, chairman of Chittagong Port Authority and collector of Customs (Import).

The court issued the rule asking them to explain within 10 days why contempt of court proceedings shall not be drawn against them for issuing NOCs to import scrap vessels violating court orders.

The court stayed the operation of the NOCs for one month and directed importers of scrap vessels to maintain status quo on dismantling of the ships.

Bela stated in the petition that the contemptor officials issued NOCs in connivance with the ship breakers that is a violation of the HC orders.

Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan and advocate Iqbal Kabir Lyton appeared for the petitioner.

Ayodhya site

FROM PAGE 1
Hindus claim the site of the Babri Masjid is the birthplace of their deity, Ram, and want to build a temple there.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has appealed for calm. In a statement, he said: "My appeal to all sections of the people is to maintain peace and tranquility and to show respect for all religions and religious beliefs in the highest traditions of Indian culture."

The court ruled that the site should be split, with the Muslim community getting control of a third, Hindus another third and the remainder going to a minority Hindu sect, Nirmohi Akhara, which was one of the early litigants in the case.

It said that the current status of the site should continue for the next three months to allow the land to be peacefully measured and divided.

The Hindus will keep the area where a small tent-shrine to Ram has been erected, lawyers said.

"The majority ruled that the location of the makeshift temple is the birthplace of Ram, and this spot cannot be shifted," said Ravi Shankar Prasad, a lawyer for one of the parties to the suit.

Both Hindu and Muslim lawyers say they will appeal against the ruling in the 60-year-old case to the Supreme Court, which is likely to delay a final decision still further.

"We have to study the judgement in details," said Zafaryab Jilani, lawyer for the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

"NO-ONE'S VICTORY"
Ayodhya is calm after the verdict was delivered. There is still a heavy security presence. Police armed with automatic rifles and wearing riot gear can be seen everywhere.

The disputed site is heavily guarded, its entrance behind barricades. These restrictions will stay in place since the legal battle is still not over. But many people

here say they want to move on and above all want peace.

Correspondents say the Ayodhya ruling could not have come at a worse time for the authorities - they already have their hands full dealing with security preparations for the Delhi Commonwealth Games which begin on Sunday.

"It's an 8,500-page order. The court has said a status quo will be maintained at the site for three months so we have time to appeal in the Supreme Court."

He told the BBC: "We hope peace and tranquility will be maintained."

The head of the right-wing Hindu group Rashtriya Samajsevak Sangh, Mohan Bhagwat, said: "It is no-one's victory, no-one's defeat."

LONG-RUNNING AYODHYA DISPUTE

Centres around land 130ft x 90ft where mosque stood

Court cases over the issue date back to 1949 - so far 18 judges have heard the case

1992 report blamed Hindu nationalist politicians for role in the mosque demolition

Key issue is whether the temple was demolished on the orders of Mughal emperor Babar in 1528

Other questions are whether the mosque was built according to Islamic law and whether idols were put inside it by Hindus in 1949

Form separate

FROM PAGE 1
government after monitoring human-rights-violation incidents. So, we need researchers and an investigation cell," Mizanur told reporters after the programme held at a city hotel.

The commission through the strategic plan wants to establish a culture and a society where the human rights violations by state mechanisms would be considered a thing of the past and state officials would be accountable.

According to the plan, the commission in the next five years will focus on institutional development of the NHRC, raise human rights awareness, research, monitor and investigate human rights violations by state mechanisms and violence against women and children.

Former chief of human rights commission of New Zealand Peter Hosking placed a brief description of the plan through a power-point presentation. He assisted the commission for the last two weeks to prepare the plan.

The commission wants to establish an effective, efficient and credible commission, make sure people are aware of human rights, significantly reduce human-rights violations by state mechanisms, and make state officials aware of their responsibilities.

Prof Mizanur said to achieve the goals in five years, the commission seeks cooperation from the government, state agencies and the civil society.

During the presentation, Hosking said the commission has almost no technical staff and lacks infrastructure and logistics.

Speaking as the chief guest, Law Minister Shafiqul Ahmed said the NHRC should not wait for the complaints of human-rights violations. When the commission sees any signs of violations, it should go and look into it, he added.

The minister said the government would provide all out cooperation to the commission to achieve its goals.

Bangladesh Country Director of UNDP Stefan Priesner termed the plan a milestone for NHRC.



From L-R: Bithi Rahman, her husband Mizanur Rahman and mother-in-law Sufia Rahman. The three were killed by unidentified criminals at their Jatrabari residence yesterday.

3 of a family

FROM PAGE 16
Mohammad Moniruzzaman, Jatrabari Police Station officer-in-charge (OC), said Mizanur gave some important information including about the land dispute with his brothers before he died.

The OC, however, declined to elaborate further for the sake of the investigation but said Ali might know the killers. Ali told reporters that Bithi asked him to fetch some milk and medicine from the nearby shop in the morning.

On his return, when nobody responded to his shouting, he entered the room and found Mizanur groaning, while the bodies of the two ladies lay motionless on the floor.

Some unidentified criminals forcefully brought Sufia from the third floor, where she used to live, to the second floor to enter the flat of the Mizanur couple, Bithi's cousin Zafar Sadek quoting Mizanur told The Daily Star.

Nothing was looted from the house, he added.

The four-storey house was equally shared by Mizanur and Linkon while the adjacent five-storey building was equally shared by Mizanur's two other brothers - Lipton and Khokon, who died earlier.

Sadek said Mizanur and his mother Sufia had a feud with Linkon and Lipton over the possession of six shops at the front of the two buildings on Shahid Faruque Road in North Jatrabari.

Bus drivers sued over Sayedabad accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The gateman of Sayedabad Railway crossing, the site of Wednesday's train-bus collision, was among the six killed and a case was filed yesterday with Government Railway Police (GRP) station at Kamalapur accusing the two bus drivers.

The body of the gateman Aminul Islam Jewel, 32, a resident of nearby Karatitola area, was identified by his younger sister Shilpi at Dhaka Medical College (DMC) morgue yesterday.

Abdul Matin Mondal, sub-assistant engineer of Bangladesh Railway, filed the case.

Sources said the dead bodies were taken to their homes by their relatives.

GRP, Kamalapur has started investigation into the incident. Its Sub-inspector Wahidul Haque, also the investigating officer (IO) of the case, said none was arrested but the two buses were seized.

Though the level crossing had an auto type bar, he said it is still unclear whether the bar was brought down or not.

The IO said, quoting some witnesses, the two buses crossed the gate before the bar came down. Later, the buses could neither proceed as there was an iron bar nor could they backtrack due to severe traffic jam, he added.

Wahidul Haque said pedestrians were killed in the incident as most of the passengers got down from the bus seeing the train approaching.

He also said a four-member investigation committee was formed by Bangladesh Railway to probe the accident.

Target to regain

FROM PAGE 16
Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, former chief justices Latifur Rahman, Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury and Md Ruhul Amin, a number of ministers and military and civil officials were present at the oath taking ceremony.

The chief justice said the articles of the original constitution had been restored automatically on February 2 this year when the Supreme Court dismissed the petitions against a High Court verdict that declared illegal the Fifth Amendment to the country's charter.

He recommended the law ministry reprint the constitution's copy containing those articles.

Attorney General Mahbub Alam in his speech recalled some landmark judgments delivered by Justice Khairul Haque during the period of his judgeship in

the High Court Division.

SCBA President Khandker Mahub Hossain in a written statement hoped that Justice Khairul Haque would act with utmost impartiality.

He opposed the attorney general, who on Wednesday accused outgoing Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim of violating the constitution by not administering oath to Ruhul Qudus Babu and M Khasruzzaman who were appointed as HC judges.

After the felicitation programme, the chief justice told reporters at his office that he would talk to SCBA leaders and senior lawyers about administering oath to Ruhul Qudus and Khasruzzaman.

Replying to a question, Khairul Haque said the judges of the SC divisions should publish their wealth statements in the interest of a transparent judiciary.

Lack of commitment

FROM PAGE 16
The speakers made the remarks at a roundtable on "Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: Quick Implementation is Necessary" organised by the Prothom Alo at its office in the capital.

The then Awami League government in 1997 signed the accord with the Parbatya Chattagram Nagorik Committee, Shudhashindhu Khisha, co-chairman of Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) ending a two-decade-long bush war.

PCJSS Organising Secretary Shaktipada Tripura said the previous AL government got three and a half years after signing the accord but did not take any effective measures to implement it.

"Before the ninth general elections Awami League pledged to implement the peace agreement but they have only reformed the Land Commission and removed some temporary army camps," said Shaktipada.

"In fact, implementation of the accord has been dropped from the priority list of the government."

Some activities of the government are rather contradictory to the peace accord like the "one-sided" decision of conducting cadastral survey in the region, he observed.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government, said if there is any fault in the accord, it could be removed through holding talks with the stakeholders.

It will be good for all if the government starts to implement the accord as quickly as possible, Sultana said.

Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, said the government is carrying out different projects in the hill areas without consulting the hill people.

"The government is implementing many projects in the CHT areas which would not bring any good for the hill people," Sanjib observed.

Former deputy minister of BNP government Mani Swapan Dewan said problems of CHT are problems of the entire nation. If the problems are not solved immediately, both the hill people and Bangla-speaking people will suffer, he added.

Prof Amena Mohsin of international relations department, Dhaka University, observed that there are some faults in the accord that should be amended.

In his speech Md Jahangir Alam, general secretary of Parbatya Chattagram Sama Odhikar Andolan denied the allegations that the Bangalees grabbed land of the indigenous people in CHT.

Babar

FROM PAGE 16
"As the IGP and additional IGP were not available at that moment, I talked with the state minister Lutfozzaman Babar. Babar told me that he was informed about the incident by DIG (SB) Shamsul Islam. He also [Babar] asked me not to arrest the NSI-men over the phone," Sabbir's statement said.

"On the following day, at a meeting held at my police lines office, we asked Babar about the involvement of NSI officials. But, he [Babar] asked us not to disclose the matter to anyone," he said.

"I told the committee chief Omar Faruk that three NSI officials including DG Abdur Rahim were involved in the incident, but he [Omar Faruk] avoided the matter."

"While monitoring the case later, I came to know about the involvement of NSI field officer Akbar Hossain, who hired the trucks to carry the weapons," Sabbir added in the statement.

Earlier, Enamur Rahman in his statement claimed that they suggested mentioning the involvement of the NSI officials with the import and offload of the arms in the report, but the committee chief didn't do that.

Farruk Ahmed in his statement implicated Babar along with Faruk for diverting the incident and said everything was done on orders of Babar.

Shamsul Islam said despite his being a member secretary of the committee, the probe report was made without informing him. After making the report, he was summoned at the office of the then home secretary and was forced to sign it.

All these three members of the committee alleged that the matter of involvement of the NSI officials with the incident was discussed in every meeting of the committee. But finally their involvement was not mentioned in the report. Even the copy of the report was not given to anyone of the committee.

One held

FROM PAGE 16
upazila of Habiganj.

Rab-11 Director Gazi Mohammad Ahsanuzzaman said this at a press conference at their Adamji office in Narayanganj yesterday.

A huge amount of counterfeit foreign currency, one mobile phone set and books on Jihad were seized from his possession.

Imran was involved in recruiting Bangladeshi members for LeT and arranging visa and passports for the new recruits, said Rab officials.

Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander M Sohail said Imran is being quizzed and they hope to extract important information on LeT activities in the country through him.

2 firms place

FROM PAGE 16
Bibiyan project in 2008 saw no competition as only one company participated in the bid. Then fresh tender was floated in April last year and it took five months for the Power Cell to select suitable bidders.

Meanwhile, eight power companies submitted their pre-qualification documents to the Power Cell for the second re-tendering of the 450 MW Sirajganj power project.

These companies are GDF Suez Energy of Thailand; local consortium of ERM-Shasha Denim; GMR of India; YTL of Malaysia; local Rupayan Power; Essar Power of India; Beijing Jingneng Corp of China and local Summit.

Summit had won the tender in the first bid for the Sirajganj project in 2004. But the then prime minister cancelled the bidding without showing any reason after the selection of Summit was approved by the cabinet purchase committee.

Admin reels

FROM PAGE 1
came out with more blunt intention, openly directing the health administration of the district to fill all the 13,500 posts with AL men. Much to the public disappointment, more such incidents or ruling party influences across the country were reported in the media. What a suicidal exposure it is for a party that came to power with a thumping majority and pledges for a change.

For days the tension brewed in Pabna before going from bad to worse. Examination centres for recruitment came under attack and government officials were assaulted. The administration got united and countered with an unprecedented public demonstration of its frustration over political influence, putting AL-loyalty before eligibility in recruitment. League men rallied and brought out processions to oust him from Pabna while the DC along with his colleagues stuck to his guns.

"The DC is not a good person, and he doesn't work for me or for the party [AL]. He is trying to tarnish my image by spreading propaganda against me," the lawmaker said. The DC, on the other hand, fired back: "I can't entertain any unlawful demand of the lawmaker. I'll discharge my duty as per the rules."

Both the strong men boasted of support from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was then attending United Nations General Assembly in New York. There came a compromise formula, with the event getting more and more media focus and piling up embarrassment for the government. Twenty-one AL men landed in jail upon surrender, the DC along with the superintendent of police were withdrawn from Pabna and media was castigated for exaggeration.

Suppose, lawmaker Prince did not press for anything unusual that BNP leaders did not gun for while in power, the DC refused to budge for some reasons other than ethics or rules of service and a section of media went on to exaggerate. Still, the whole issue from which the unfortunate incident stemmed remains as ominous as ever, as bad as it could be for the people and country.

The lawmaker was so hell bent on getting his men on government service that he dared to push his party on a collision course with the administration, support and sincerity of which are essential to fulfil election pledges and implement the development projects. And did he ever care to think what the people of Pabna would make of his aggressive actions? The MP is for the partymen, not for the people, and that the government would continue to deprive them of jobs for not being AL activists.

Now the question is whether there will be any soul-searching in the policy-making circle of the party, whose charter for change inspired millions of voters to be hopeful about a fresh start towards a better Bangladesh.

Would the AL bigwigs care to know what the ruling party has really gained out of the event-- 'yes' from some myopic partymen and huge 'no' from the people?

Soon after the Pabna pub-

licity, some AL big names tried to smart from the crisis, telling that it is only natural that people's representatives will have some recruitment obligation to fulfil and that BNP leaders had done that too. As being the people's representative, lawmakers are pledged-bound to uphold people's interest, not party's. They are expected to ensure only efficient and eligible candidates get recruited. And, under the charter for change, is not the AL supposed to break away from the culture of we-are-doing-as-they-did?

All appointments must have to be made on the strength of eligibility. None but qualification should come into consideration for recruitment and promotion. The target should be, as desired by the people and as outlined by all who wish Bangladesh well, to have a small but efficient government workforce. We can no way achieve it if the government gives in to the demand for partisan appointment. And if this culture of recruitment continues, the only signal the people would get is that none but political activists would be employed. And the taxpayers, not politicians, will have to bear the burden.

The administration along with many, meanwhile, has been waiting for the premier to return home with an expectation that head of the government would act judiciously and impartially to tackle the situation, action of which can have a decisive impact on its prospect in the general elections due in little over three years.

DC Manzur has certainly scored some points in his favour despite his loyalty to the AL being questioned. He might have violated a rule of service by going public with his frustration, but he indeed was bold enough to stand against unethical interferences, for the people in other words. The DC was hastily withdrawn from Pabna, and a group of AL leaders was planning to teach him a good lesson for the 'disobedience' on arrival of the prime minister on Wednesday night. The bureaucrats are also waiting to see how prudently the prime minister settles the matter.

What the DC did should be subject of a fair departmental inquiry and suitable actions. But any action beyond rules can make the administration nervy and erode its confidence in the government. And no party knows more than the AL how dangerous it can be when the administration becomes uncomfortable.

Problems are not in short supply in people's life-- the crises of electricity, gas, drinking water, traffic, housing, spiralling prices of essentials and climate. The government is about to enter the third of its five-year term, and the country still waits to see how it delivers on those crucial important fronts.

The people have witnessed enough of excesses by leaders of its student and youth fronts over tenders in development work and even admission in schools and colleges. They have seen how terribly the government failed to contain those bad boys.

The government must wake up now to the reality and get its priorities fixed before people's vote of confidence in it changes.

2 Pabna ADCs

FROM PAGE 1
Commissioner (DC) AFM Manzur Kadir and Superintendent of Police (SP) Jamil Ahmed, and transferred Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abdul Halim to Monpura upazila in Bhola.

Meanwhile, the district administration will today conduct a recruitment test for class-III employees of Statistics Bureau. The test is scheduled to take place in two phases -- one from 10:00am to 11:00am and the other from 4:00pm to 5:00pm.

The test will be conducted at Pabna Govt Women College, Pabna Govt Girl's High School, Pabna Zila School, M Mansur Ali Degree College, Pabna Islamia College and Pabna Technical School and College.

Local administration yesterday imposed section 144 within 200 yards of the six examination centres but later withdrew it around 10:30pm.

Additional District Magistrate Md Jafar Ullah, who enforced 144 in the morning, told The Daily Star last night that law and order in the district was normal, and the test could be given without imposing 144.

Today's is the first such exam since more than 100 Jubo League and Chhatra League

activists on September 17 assaulted government officers during a recruitment test, as the DC refused to entertain various demands of local AL lawmaker Golam Faruk Prince.

District administration officials refused to give the test after the attack on their colleagues.

The government on September 27 sent prime minister's Adviser HT Imam and State Minister for Home Shamsul Hoque Tuku, also a lawmaker from Pabna, to resolve the row.

Police arrested five ruling party men while 21 others on September 26 surrendered before the court in two cases filed by two magistrates. All of them are now in jail. Police also pressed charges against 33 Jubo League and Chhatra League men for the attack, vandalising vehicles and burning question papers.

"We have taken tight security measures to hold the recruitment tests peacefully," Mosharaf Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Pabna said. Additional forces will be deployed in and around the exam halls, he added.

According to officials, some 5,615 applicants will take the exams.