

867 chemical depots run without licence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 867 chemical factories and warehouses out of 994 in the city have been running without licence from the fire service and civil defence department, says a senior fire official.

Additional Secretary of Home Iqbal Khan Chowdhury said most of these industrial units are located at Kotwali, Shampur, New Market and Airport areas in the city.

The Fire Prevention and Control Act, 2003 says all chemical industries or warehouses should take licence from the fire service department to run operation.

Iqbal Khan, also head of the taskforce formed to remove illegal chemical warehouses from the city's residential areas, yesterday said they will conduct mobile courts against the illegal chemical factories and warehouses.

The taskforce, which was formed following the June 3 Nimtoli fire that killed around 119 people, discussed the license issue at its fourth meeting.



Vehicles got stuck in a one-hour gridlock after a bus crashed into a private car, injuring the car driver, on Mohakhali flyover in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

CCC mayor Manzu's petition rejected

BSS, Chittagong

The First Joint District Judge Court (Election Tribunal), Chittagong, yesterday rejected a petition of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manzurul Alam Manzu seeking dismissal of a case filed by ABN Mohiuddin Chowdhury for concealing information in his nomination papers submitted to the Election Commission.

The court rejected Manzu's petition and fixed November 11 for submitting written statement by the defendant.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury lodged the case in the court of Election Tribunal of Chittagong on July 18 against newly elected Mayor Manzur for concealing information.

In the case, Mohiuddin alleged that Manzur concealed an incident of power pilferage and was fined Tk 1,723,500 by Power Development Board Magistrate on February 11, 2007.

PM donates Tk 2 lakh to ailing Bipul Bhattacharya

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has donated Tk 2 lakh for the treatment of Bipul Bhattacharya, an artiste of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

On behalf of the prime minister, her assignment officer Manoj Kanti Baral handed over a cheque for the amount to Kumkum Bhattacharya yesterday.

The treatment of Bipul Bhattacharya, who has been suffering from incurable diseases, is going on at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University at the directives of the prime minister.

Pry schools to get internet

Says Prime Minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday laid emphasis on fixing timing of schools in the rural areas on the basis of respective climate and socio-economic conditions.

The suggestion came when a delegation of Bangladesh Government Primary School Teachers Association met her at her office.

On strong demand from the association leaders, the premier agreed for observance of the Primary Teachers' Job Nationalisation Day on July 1, the day when their service was nationalised in 1973.

She sought suggestions from teachers for fixing the best timing for schools suitable both for the teachers and students.

Hasina also declared that as a part of the digital Bangladesh plan, every primary school will get laptop and computers with internet facilities.

She sought cooperation from the teachers to implement social programmes like vaccination, tree plantation and environment conservation.

New schools will be built in 1,500 villages and old school buildings will be renovated, said Hasina.

She said school management committee, guardians and local elite people should be involved in implementing the school feeding programme.

Only government allocation will not make the programme a success. All have to be involved in the programme. Government funding cannot be a permanent solution, she said.

"When all will have sense of belonging to a work, the work will be successful," she added.

Hasina called upon the primary school teachers to play an effective role beyond academic classes in moulding the character of students.

Referring to her government efforts to free the nation from the curse of illiteracy, she said a National Education Policy has been formulated providing education up to class eight under primary school.

She said in the new education policy, emphasis was given on vocational training

along with general education for creating self-employment opportunity. Teachers will be trained for improving the standard of education.

She said to stop drop out, the government is providing textbooks to the secondary level free of cost and a total of 19 crore books were distributed this year.

More than 23 crore text books will be distributed next year. This shows dropouts are decreasing, she said.

The teachers submitted a memorandum of demands to the prime minister including establishing Government Primary Teachers' Welfare Fund and giving them a land for establishing office and a research centre.

Hasina said there should be a welfare trust fund for the government primary teachers.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin, State Minister Md Motahar Hossain and Chief Adviser of Government Primary Teachers Association and lawmaker Zobeda Khatun Parul also spoke at the function.

Govt not to withdraw cases against BNP leaders

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday declined to withdraw cases against some BNP leaders including opposition Chief Whip Joydul Abdin Faroque MP and Barkatullah Bhulu MP on the plea that those cases were not filed on political grounds.

However, the government decided to withdraw 105 more cases considering that those cases were filed with political motivation during the last BNP-Jamaat government and the subsequent caretaker regime.

The present government has so far recommended withdrawal of 6,497 "politically motivated" cases till yesterday.

An inter-ministerial committee on 'political harassment' cases made the recommendations at its 23rd meeting chaired by State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam.

After the meeting Qamrul told reporters that a total of 1621 cases, including 79 of

Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), were placed in the meeting for consideration. Of them, 105 were recommended for withdrawal.

The meeting rejected appeals for withdrawal of 305 cases and decided to hold more discussions on 1201 cases, including 79 of ACC for taking final decision.

Among the cases recommended for withdrawal, one case against Agricultural Minister Matia Chowdhury and two cases against Abdur Rahim MP.

Asked why no case against opposition leaders is on the recommendation list Qamrul said the committee found no political motivation behind the cases against opposition party leaders.

The Home Ministry invited applications in February last year for the review of cases which were filed on political grounds. The deadlines for submitting applications were extended thrice till July 12 last year.



Rajuk demolishes the illegal buildings in Hatirjheel area on Begunbari Khal (canal) in the city yesterday. The drive began on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

Setting up of climate dept on cards

BSS, Dhaka

The government has undertaken an initiative to establish a separate Department of Climate under the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to deal with the climate issues and respond to climate related challenges in future.

Secretary of the MoEF Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder said the ministry, in this regard, is now preparing necessary document.

Separate department on climate became essential as volume of work and projects relating to climate change are on rise, he said, "without a separate department the works will not progress".

Now, a climate unit under the Department of Environment and a Climate Cell under the MoEF are responsible for dealing with climate issues.

The secretary said the environment ministry has also undertaken a plan to establish an Institute of Environment and Climate Change Research to build resourceful manpower in this area.

The institute will be built similar to the TERI (Training, Education and Research Institute) of India with the purpose of tackling and dealing with the immense and acute climate and environmental problems.

Dr Mihir said the ministry has already finalised the guideline for Climate Change Trust Fund Fellowship (CCTFF) for post-graduate students for higher study on the subjects relating to climate change.

Students of public universities would be given scholarship from climate change trust fund for their research in the areas climate change from next academic year, he said.

An M Phil student would get the fellowship for their study on any 44 programmes under the six thematic areas of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP).

Climate Change Trusty Board allocated Taka 50 lakh in the current fiscal year for the fellowship programme, which will help creating efficient human work competently to address climate change issues.

Shankar discusses 'Chowringhee'

METRO DESK

Well-known novelist Mani Shankar Mukherjee, popularly known as Shankar, discussed the making of Chowringhee-a not-so-well-known story yesterday at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in the city.

Faculty members, students of IUB and from other institutions, and literature lovers attended the event organised at the university's Bashundhara campus.

Shankar from West Bengal in India has been on a six-day visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of IUB, says a press release.

IUB Vice-chancellor Prof Bazul Mobin Chowdhury presented a sash to the popular writer introduced by Prof Razia Sultana Khan, head of English and Modern Languages departments of IUB.

IUB Pro Vice-chancellor Prof Omar Rahman, among others, also spoke on the occasion.

2,045 held in drives

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 2,045 people on various charges in separate drives across the country in 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday.

Nine firearms, fifteen explosive materials and 35 rounds of bullet were also recovered during the countrywide drive, said a police headquarters release.

Some 113 motorcycles were also seized during the drives for not having valid documents and 298 cases filed in this connection.

President for Dhaka-Jakarta trade balance

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman has emphasised ensuring balance of trade between Bangladesh and Indonesia through increasing export of Bangladeshi commodities to Indonesia.

The president laid the emphasis on reducing the huge trade gap between the two countries when newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to Indonesia Golam Mohammad paid a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban yesterday.

During the meeting, President Zillur asked the ambassador to take necessary measures to gradually reduce the trade gap. "Indonesia can import more pharmaceuticals, ceramics, melamine wares, and jute and jute goods from Bangladesh," he said.

Describing Indonesia as the largest Muslim country and Bangladesh as the

second biggest according to population, he said as both the countries are in the South Asia and Southeast Asia regions, there is ample scope for expanding cooperation between the two countries.

The president also asked the envoy to identify areas of prospects and explore the avenues for cooperation.

Ambassador Golam Mohammad told the president that he would take necessary steps for establishing joint venture industries between Bangladesh and Indonesia, specially in palm oil and pharmaceuticals.

"I shall try my level best to explore job market for Bangladesh workers and also to increase export and expand cooperation in all sectors," he said.

Secretary of the President's office M Safiul Alam, Military Secretary to the President Maj Gen Abul Kalam M Humayun Kabir and Press Secretary AKM Nesar Uddin Bhuiyan were present.

Dhaka, Delhi to ink deal on border haats

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and India are going to sign an agreement to set up border haats, a traditional commodity market, as a business delegation leaves here for New Delhi today, officials said.

Apart from the agreement on border haats, a number of deals related to trade and investment would be signed to boost local trade in border areas of the two countries.

"A number of Memorandums of Understanding would be signed with neighboring India during the visit," said Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, who will lead the delegation.

The 21-member delegation will include trade body leaders and senior government officials.

Faruk Khan said duty-free access of 61 products; entry of Bangladesh's trucks into India and trade with its northeastern states will dominate the discussions

during the four-day visit.

"I always say business with India is very important for Bangladesh and we are trying hard to increase the trade" he said expressing the hope that the visit would help grow the business between the two neighboring countries.

Commerce Secretary Ghulam Hossain described the anticipated border trade as experimental and said that the border haats would be continued on successful operation.

The Indian part of the two border haats will be in the Meghalaya state while the Bangladesh part will be set up in Sunamganj and Kurigram districts.

The trading will be held once a week in two frontier locations and an individual will not be able to trade above US \$50 at the border haats.

The trading would be conducted in currencies of the two nations. Farm and home made items produced

within 10km radius of border haats will be traded at the markets to be set up within five kilometers of the frontier, according to the final draft of the agreement.

The commodities to be traded in these haats including locally produced agriculture and horticulture products, spices, minor forest products excluding timber, fresh and dry fish, dairy, fishery and poultry products, cottage industries items, wooden furniture and cane goods, handloom and handicraft items.

The two countries had agreed to set up border haats along with their international border in the northeast when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited India in January this year.

India is Bangladesh's single largest trading partner. Bangladesh's imports from India in 2009-10 were nearly \$4 billion against its exports of only \$330 million. The trade deficit stood at \$3.6 billion.