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Canals for grabbers

Haikkar Khal disappearing as encroachment goes unabated

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Natural canals crisscrossing the low-lying areas along the Mohammadpur flood protection dam are disappearing fast due to encroachment by land grabbers.

The famous Haikkar Khal, which links the Turag river with the Buriganga, faces obliteration as the "so-called" landowners continue to fill it up.

Hundreds of signboards have been put up in the filled-up sections of the canal claiming ownership of the lands just behind the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial.

Not so long ago, the canal originating from the Turag streamed across a vast area in Ramchandrapur, Basila, Mohammadpur and Rayer Bazar, before emptying into the Buriganga river. It has now shrunk considerably.

Interestingly, no government office claims responsibility for protecting the canal.

The deputy commissioner's office said it is the Dhaka City Corporation's responsibility to protect the canal since the corporation plans to set up a graveyard there.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka asked this correspondent to contact the Local Government and Rural Development ministry to inquire about the issue.

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People have put up numerous signboards claiming ownership of land on this filled-up stretch of Haikkar Khal, just behind the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial. Land grabbers continue to fill up the canal that once flowed through here before emptying into Buriganga.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Prof Yunus hails bid to probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus has welcomed any probe into the allegation against Grameen Bank of unauthorised transfer of funds.

Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, made the remark in a statement from Lisbon, Portugal, after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there must be an extensive probe into the matter to find out if there was any unauthorised fund transfer by him.

The microcredit pioneer said,

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Govt to unearth the facts

PM critical of micro financing state, tells of extensive probe into 'Grameen anomalies'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reacting sharply to the recent controversy over Grameen Bank, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday it must be investigated extensively to find out if there was any unlawful activity.

"I think there must be an extensive probe into the matter to find out if there was any unauthorised fund transfer by him (Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus)," she said.

The government will take steps to unearth the facts, the PM added.

Replying to questions at a press conference at the Prime Minister's Office following her tri-nation visit to Russia, Belgium and Japan, Hasina said it is time

to know what has been going on in the name of poverty alleviation, and improving the fate of the poor.

Referring to Finance Minister AMA Muhith's comment on media reports about 'unauthorised' fund transfer by Prof Yunus, the prime minister said her government never wants to destroy the image of the country, and always upholds its image.

That's why, she said, the finance minister made the comment.

Muhith told journalists on Saturday there was nothing wrong in the transfer of funds from Grameen Bank to Grameen Kalyan and vice versa.

But Sheikh Hasina said the fund transfer took place to evade tax, and this was

very unfortunate. "What had happened in the Grameen Bank was just a trick, and this was done to evade tax, nothing else."

She said sarcastically, "Bangladesh sometimes sets examples in different fields. You can think of this also as an example."

The premier went on, "Nobody can hide the truth for long... Truth will definitely come out once."

Turning to microcredit, Hasina said the micro financiers nurse poverty to run their quick business, which is a bad luck of the poor people of the country.

She alleged that the micro financiers suck blood out of the poor in the name of eradicating poverty. "We cannot allow use

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Cap on soaring soya oil prices

Tk 86 a litre fixed in Dhaka, Tk 84 in Ctg

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

After a series of pleas, warnings and meetings with top edible oil refiners, the government has set the mill gate and retail prices of edible oil to stop it from skyrocketing in the local market.

At a press briefing at his secretariat office yesterday, after hours in a final meeting with the industry's heads, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan announced six price ceilings that take effect tomorrow.

At retail, the price of loose soybean oil will be Tk 86 per litre in Dhaka and Tk 84 in Chittagong. It was Tk 91-92 per litre in Dhaka yesterday, said the minister.

The price of bottled soybean oil of all brands is capped at 15 percent above the retail price of loose soybean oil, he added.

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ASHULIA RMG UNREST 800 unknown workers sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted one-day remand for the three garment workers who were held and shown arrested during the Saturday's clash between Universe Knitwear Factory workers and law enforcers in Ashulia on the capital's outskirts.

They were produced before the court with a prayer for three days' remand each, said Ashulia police.

Meanwhile, a case was filed with Ashulia police station Saturday night against some 800 unknown apparel workers while naming eight following

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JAIL KILLING CASE SC resumes hearing on appeal against acquittal of six

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court today resumes hearing on the leave-to-appeal petitions filed by the government against the High Court judgment that acquitted six former army personnel in the jail killing case.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque on November 9 adjourned the hearing.

The apex court on the day asked Anisur Huq, principal state counsel for this case, to produce before it by today documents and evidence in support of his claim that the lower court was influenced while dealing with the case and passing the judgment.

Anisur Huq told The Daily Star yesterday that he was yet to place any documents to the SC.

He, however, refused to say more about the case.

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Policemen enjoy a ride on a rickshaw on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Avenue yesterday overlooking a traffic department decision that strictly prohibits operation of the non-motorised vehicle on this road.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Khaleda moves all belongings

29 air conditioners among household stuff; Hasina says army to decide about how to utilise its land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Representatives of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia have received all her belongings including 29 air conditioners, 48 pieces of sofa, six television sets and five refrigerators from the Dhaka Cantonment house that she lost in a legal battle.

A sculpture of late president Ziaur Rahman on the premises was also moved to the opposition leader's Gulshan office.

A top cantonment board official while talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening confirmed that all the personal effects of Khaleda Zia had been collected by her representatives.

The shifting ended with the moving of several hundred vases.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said it [the cantonment house] is an army property and they will decide on the use of the land.

Earlier on Friday, a lawyer of Khaleda told The Daily Star cantonment board chief Nazmus Sadeq Selim gave them a 72-hour timeframe, which ended yesterday, to collect all her household items from the cantonment house.

Khaleda's sister-in-laws -- Nasrin Sayeed and Kaniz Fatema and personal secretary Saleh Ahmed -- received all her stuff from the house in last three days.

About 14 big covered vans, a few pickups and cars were used to carry Khaleda's belongings from the cantonment house to Baridhara residences of DCC councillor Abdul Qaiyum and

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One shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A trader was shot dead on Noorjahan Road in the capital's Mohammadpur area last night.

The motive behind the murder was not clear.

A gang of three fired shots at Tazzil Hossain Johny, 28, son of Mokbul Hossain in Mohammadpur, on his way back home from a tea stall on Noorjahan Road at around 8:00pm, said police and the victim's family members. Johny, who received bullets

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Hamid beckons opposition

Chief Whip Zainul Abidin says return to JS depends on 'congenial atmosphere'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At the beginning of the seventh session of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, Speaker Abdul Hamid urged BNP-led opposition lawmakers to return to the House to make it more effective and strengthen democracy in the country.

In his inaugural speech to the sitting, Abdul Hamid asked the opposition lawmakers to speak of all important national and international issues in parliament.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque, however, yesterday said they will return to the House only if a "congenial atmo-

sphere" is ensured allowing them to speak in parliament.

"We wanted to discuss important issues like BDR mutiny, price hike of essentials, and present law and order situation. But we were not allowed to talk about those," Farroque said at a press briefing at the media centre of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The last time lawmakers of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party attended parliament was the first day of the budget session in June. They boycotted the rest of the fifth session.

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7 teams to scout jobs overseas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to send seven teams to different countries of Asia, Europe and Africa to explore new job markets.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Engineer Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday informed parliament in response to lawmakers' queries on the government's steps to send more workers abroad.

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Trust not there right now

PM's Adviser Mashiur tells The Daily Star about opportunities, obstacles of transit facilities

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh could earn a huge revenue by allowing transit to neighbouring countries but it is also about building trust, Mashiur Rahman, the prime minister's adviser on economic affairs, has said.

Mashiur leads a committee responsible for background work and coordination among the ministries dealing with transit and transshipment with India, Nepal and Bhutan.

The Daily Star on November 20 interviewed him for his views and details on transit and



transshipment.

The adviser said Bangladesh and India can build up mutual trust if they cooperate with each other uninterruptedly for a decade. "Then India can start importing all the goods for its north-eastern states through Chittagong and Mongla ports."

But the trust is not there right now.

He said a debate is on over transit and transshipment fees. Article-V of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of World Trade

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