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HC case disposal rate improves

3.12 lakh cases still pending

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The rate of disposal of cases at the High Court has lately gone up in a marked improvement in the court's case management. However, more than 3.12 lakh cases still remain pending with the court.

In the recent months, more cases are disposed of than filed, shows an SC study report.

This is the first time that the disposal of cases has overtaken those filed, SC Registrar M Ashraful Islam has told The Daily Star.

The registrar said if the present trend can be sustained, the backlog of cases would come down gradually.

The report shows a total of 3,15,481 cases had been pending at the High Court in the first phase of December. Nearly 2,547 cases were filed with the court from December 1 to 15, while 5,459 cases were disposed of within 15 days.

According to the report, about 3,55,002 cases remained pending with the High Court till October 31. Some 4,940 cases were filed in October while 2,829 cases were disposed of in that month.

Nearly 3,15,481 cases had been pending with the court till November 30. About 3,242 cases were filed and 3,097 cases were disposed of in that month, the report said.

About 547 death reference cases now remain pending with the High Court. Seven of them were sent to HC benches for hearing and disposal while three others were ready to be heard, according to the report.

Around 8,000 cases remain pending with the Appellate Division of Supreme Court, said an official at the apex court.

The rate of disposal of cases has increased due to the chief justice's close monitoring and supervision of case management, the official told The Daily Star requesting anonymity.



People queue up to buy rice at an OMS point in Kamrangirchar yesterday. The government has begun Open Market Sale in response to a fresh hike in the price of rice.

OMS of rice starts in city

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday started Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice in the capital in response to rising prices of food grains. The move came to make rice available to the lower income group at a cheaper price.

The rice was being sold at Tk 24 per kilogram at 37 points in the city, sources said. Three metric tonnes of rice will be sold from a truck at each selling point.

An individual is entitled to buy maximum five kgs of rice per day. The OMS starts at 9:00am and continues up to 5:00pm every day except Friday and Tuesday.

Officials of the Directorate General of Food visited the OMS points yesterday to oversee the operation.

The OMS programme will also begin in Narayanganj, Gazipur and Savar on January 1, the sources added.

Woman suicide bomber kills 43 in Pakistan

40 'militants' killed in raids

AFP, Khar

More than 80 were killed in a suicide bombing on a World Food Programme project and a series of helicopter raids against militant camps in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, officials said.

A suicide bomber wearing a burqa, who some officials said was a woman, killed at least 43 people at a World Food Programme distribution point in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

The blast occurred in Khar, the main town of lawless Bajaur tribal district, once a stronghold of Taliban militants who have carried out several bombings and suicide attacks in the area.

Most of the victims belonged to the local Salazarai tribe which supported military action against the militants and formed a militia to force them from

Bajaur.

"At least 43 people were killed and more than 100 wounded in the suicide bombing," top tribal administration official Zakir Hussain said.

Separately, 40 militants were killed in Mohmand, another lawless tribal district, in a series of military raids, officials said.

There were conflicting reports about the identity of the bomber in Khar with some officials saying the attacker was a woman, while others claimed a man disguised in a burqa was responsible.

The bomber was intercepted at a checkpoint outside the ration distribution centre and the blast occurred during a search, Sohail Khan said.

The deputy administrator of Khar, Tariq Khan, told AFP that the bombing was carried out by a woman. "It was a female suicide bomber," he said.

Tribal police officials Mubashir Khan and Munasib Khan also said the attacker was a woman, who resisted being searched and hurled a hand grenade at security guards at the checkpoint before triggering her bomb.

"I was waiting to be searched in a queue at the checkpoint outside the ration point and heard a grenade explosion. People started running in panic and then a huge blast occurred," tribesman Mushtaq Khan told AFP in hospital.

Khan, who suffered injuries to his arm, said he saw many people lying on the ground in pools of blood amid a cloud of dust and smoke.

Salazarai tribespeople had set up a vigilante force to evict militants from their area, but officials declined to comment when asked if they were the

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AIRPORT PRIVILEGE BNP MPs to complain to speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers of the main opposition BNP would complain to Speaker Abdul Hamid that they have recently been barred from entering the VIP lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

A number of BNP lawmakers have said they would call on the speaker very soon and urge him to address the issue.

Meanwhile, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is set to visit Bonpara in Natore on December 30, party sources say.

Khaleda would hold a public rally at Bonpara school ground to commemorate the death of Sanaullah Noor Babu, local BNP leader and former

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PM visits UAE January 16-18

Manpower export, trade, investment top agenda

REZAUL KARIM

Manpower export and trade and investment will figure prominently in talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's three-day state visit there from January 16.

To enhance economic relations, Bangladesh and the UAE are expected to sign two significant agreements -- one on promotion and protection of investment and another on avoidance of double taxation.

Both the countries have already finalised the drafts of the agreements a few months ago in presence of the high-level dignitaries, official sources said.

Signing of the agreements will be a "milestone" in the bilateral relations because that would certainly boost the scope of investment in both the countries, officials said. Potential investors from the UAE would enjoy a secure environment in Bangladesh with the signing of the agreements.

During her visit, the premier will hold meetings with UAE

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Pro-AL SC Bar leaders reject TIB graft report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League lawyers of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday rejected the latest survey report of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) in which the judiciary has been deemed the most corrupt.

At a press briefing at the SCBA auditorium in the morning, the lawyers described the report on corruption of service sectors in the country as "naked interference" in the judiciary.

Reading out a written statement at the briefing, SCBA Assistant Secretary Mofaqqur Rahman Sobuj said the survey report published last Thursday has tarnished

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Christmas celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christians in Bangladesh celebrated their biggest religious festival, Christmas, yesterday wishing peace and prosperity in the country.

Like elsewhere in the world, the day was celebrated in Bangladesh commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, who sacrificed his life for the salvation of mankind.

According to the Christian belief, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born as a man on this day.

As part of the celebration, several sessions of special prayers were held in the churches on the Christmas Eve and yesterday morning across the country. Christmas carols and hymns were sung in musical shows before and after the prayers.

Marking the holy occasion, the churches in the capital and elsewhere in the country were illuminated with colourful lights and festoons as well as decorated Christmas trees.

Glittering stars adorned roofs of houses, symbolising the mythical star that guided the Magi, the three wise men from the east, to the newborn Jesus in Bethlehem.

Santa Claus also gave Christmas presents to children. The day was a public holiday.

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Santa Claus brings kids presents during Christmas celebrations at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO STAR

TRAIN CRASH Don't take action before fresh probe

JS body asks ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary sub-committee investigating the Narsingdi train crash has asked the communications ministry not to take further actions on the report of the ministry's probe.

"As we have rejected the findings of the ministry's probe into the train accident, we have asked them not to take actions against anyone until our investigation is completed," said Golam Maula Rony, chief of the three-member sub-committee formed by the parliamentary

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JAN 27 BY-POLLS ALPB sits to finalise candidates

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League Parliamentary Board at a meeting at Ganobhaban yesterday decided to finalize the party's candidates on December 30 to contest in by-elections in Habiganj-1 and Brahmanbaria-3 constituencies.

Election Commission (EC) has fixed January 27 to hold the by-elections.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting, said PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad.

He said nomination forms

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KHALEDA ZIA'S PREVIOUS HOUSE

Army starts process to build 3 high-rises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army has decided to build three high-rises for its mid-ranking officers on the Dhaka cantonment land where stands the much-talked about residence once lived in by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The decision came recently and necessary formalities have been completed, said army sources.

The Army Headquarters has already got the approval from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also holds the defence portfolio, they added.

"Initially, three 15-storey buildings will be constructed there," a high-ranking army officer having knowledge about the issue told The Daily Star.

The flats will be allocated as official resi-

dences of majors and lieutenant colonels.

The army has undertaken the project to ease the existing housing crisis for its officers posted to Dhaka cantonment.

The officer said the construction is likely to begin within a month. After construction of these three, two more multi-storey buildings might be built there.

Khaleda left the house set in 168 kathas of land at 6 Shaheed Mainul Road on November 13.

She had lived there for 38 years since the days when her husband Ziaur Rahman was the deputy chief of the army. After the assassination of late president Ziaur Rahman in 1981, the then army chief HM Ershad had given her the house at a token price.

In April last year, the Cantonment Board

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KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN Body of engineer arrives today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The body of Kazi Altaf Hossain, a Bangladeshi engineer who was gunned down by Afghan miscreants on December 17, is expected to arrive in Dhaka today.

Afghan miscreants attacked a camp office of Samwhan, a South Korean Construction company, in Mazar-I-Sharif on December 17 and killed Kazi Altaf Hossain on the spot and abducted seven Bangladeshi workers.

Altaf hails from Pabna. The miscreants later released two workers but five others are still held hostage.

Foreign ministry sources said the body of the deceased was flown from Kabul to Dubai by Ariana Afghan Airlines, national carrier of Afghanistan, yesterday afternoon and is expected to arrive in Dhaka this morning on a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight.

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OnlinePoll

Do you agree with the parliamentary standing committee on communications ministry that Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain should have resigned following the Sirajganj train accident?

- Yes (79.7%)
- No (17.3%)
- No Comments (3.0%)

Total votes: 465

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam that Transparency International Bangladesh's report about corruption in service sectors will hinder the trial of war criminals?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net