

Free parks, playgrounds

HC asks DCC, Rajuk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to demarcate areas of all the parks and playgrounds in the capital and demolish the structures except those that were built for the purpose of sports and religion.

Delivering a judgement on two separate writ petitions, the court said no structure could be built inside the boundaries of the parks and playgrounds of the capital from now on.

According to the statements of the writ petitions, there are 68 parks and 10 playgrounds in Dhaka city and different types of structures including residence and shops were built in many of those.

An HC bench ordered the authorities concerned of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) to comply with the directive within 15 days after getting the copy of its judgement.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain ordered the authorities to submit a report to the court within 10 days after complying with the directive.

The copy of judgement was not released yesterday.

The court passed the judgement following the writ petitions filed as public interest litigation by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) and Bangladesh Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Bapa).

Bela filed the petition in 2003 and Bapa filed another one in 2004 seeking necessary directives from the HC on the government to take steps for protecting the parks and playgrounds from encroachment.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Khaleda Zia, speaking at the 8th parliamentary session in the Jatiya Sangad Bhaban yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



PHOTO: STAR

DHANMONDI PLAYGROUND Still occupied flouting High Court order of 2004

TAWFIQUE ALI

A limited company named after prime minister's slain brother Sheikh Jamal continues occupying Dhanmondi road-8 playground, as Dhaka City Corporation has ignored the High Court (HC) directions in this regard for seven years.

Dhanmondi Club, which has been occupying the playfield for four decades with unauthorised structures and without permission, was turned into a limited company named after Lieutenant Sheikh Jamal in August 2009.

DCC, official custodian of the playground, has ever been permissive of its unauthorised occupancy and commercial uses in clear disregard to HC directions.

Following a writ petition, a HC bench in April 2004 directed the DCC mayor to report to the court within 20 days as to what actions it had taken to preserve the playground and remove the unauthorised semi-concrete structures there.

DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka evaded an answer to why they did not free the playground of unauthorised occupancy despite HC directions. He just said the law section would take care of legal matters.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, a resident of Dhanmondi and noted environmental activist, said the playground would embrace the same fate as Abahani field has, denying the residents a free open space.

Manzur Kader, president of the club, told The Daily Star at the time of renaming the club that they would build a mini stadium on the playground including a six-storey club building, cricket pitch, football and hockey ground, and swimming pool with gymnastic facilities.

He also said the club would be formed in the pattern of elitist Dhaka Club, Gulshan Club, and Uttara Club.

The HC, however, restrained anybody from altering the character of the playground.

The club recently persuaded DCC to replace the existing boundary wall of the playground with an expensive one at a cost of more than half a crore takas.

A recently-excluded member of the club's 11-member executive committee said the club takes huge financial contribution from various high-profile businesspersons in the name of sports.

Asked how the club has been running its activities in the playground without permission with unauthorised structures, Manzur Kader said, "You better talk to the prime minister and do whatever you wish."

Md Mashiar Rahman, chief estate officer of DCC, said, "We have not authorised anybody to take possession or care of the playground. Those who are there are occupying the playground illegally."

Public Works Department (PWD), owner of the 13.5-bigha Dhanmondi playground, handed it over to DCC in January 1984 for maintenance and conservation.

The DCC did not live up to its duty as a custodian to prevent the illegal occupancy, said Abdul Kader Chowdhury, executive engineer of PWD.

The public works ministry in July 2008 decided to free the playground of any illegal occupancy and maintain it as a public open space. Nothing has happened yet to carry out the decision.

A HC bench in May 2003, following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), issued a rule upon the government to ensure proper maintenance and protection of the playgrounds and open spaces.

Dhaka requests Tunis to help fly 7,701 nationals 2,931 return home today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has sought landing permission of Biman aircrafts in Tunisia to expedite the repatriation of 7,701 nationals now stranded in the Tunisian border, Ras Jdir.

Two aircrafts of Biman Bangladesh Airlines have already carried 600 Bangladeshis, and remaining 845 passengers will be repatriated in next couple of days.

Besides, Biman will operate two additional aircrafts tomorrow (March 17) to complete repatriation from Egypt.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at a press briefing yesterday said a total of 20,994 Bangladesh nationals have already repatriated to Bangladesh, and another 2,931 people are due to return today.

She said that currently, there are about 25,000 Bangladeshi citizens inside Libya, and they have been evacuating to safer areas.

So far 33,735 Bangladeshis have left Libya fearing deadly clashes.

"We are now awaiting Tunisian government's permission to operate Biman flights. The foreign secretary is now in Tunisia and holding meetings with government officials regarding Biman's landing permission and assurance to continue allowing Bangladeshis in its border till completion of repatriation," Dipu Moni said.

She said the influx of Bangladeshis at the border point of Al Salloum in Egypt has decreased remarkably.

According to Dipu Moni, the foreign ministry was informed that there are 189 Bangladeshi nationals staying in Ain-Amenas, a southern city of Algeria that is close to Libyan border.

The IOM has taken necessary preparations to repatriate the 189 Bangladeshi citizens, she added.

The foreign minister further informed that the Greece government has recovered more bodies in Crete Island, but all of them are yet to be identified.

"We are suspecting that the bodies may be of the 11 Bangladeshis who jumped from ship and went missing during evacuation at Hania Port in Crete Island," she added.

She said three bodies have earlier arrived in Dhaka and Greek police on Monday received another body, which the Bangladesh embassy in Athens has identified as Ruhul Amen, son of Majir Uddin of Hasan Lata in Dange Bazar, Polan, Narsingdhi.

Meanwhile, Dipu Moni said that while returning from Egypt, she held a meeting in Dubai with the Bangladesh ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Jordan, Oman, and Qatar and discussed the situation, in which Bangladeshis are residing in these countries.

Painting exhibition starts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A weeklong group exhibition of paintings titled 'Women in Nature' will begin tomorrow at Drik Gallery at Dhanmondi in the city, says a press release.

Asaduzzaman Noor will inaugurate the exhibition at 5:00pm.

Paintings of artists -- Kamrun Nahar, Mafruha Begum, Afroza Anjum, and Indian painter S Joyraj will be put on display. The exhibition will remain open everyday for all till March 23 from 3:00pm to 8:00pm.

Empower minorities, marginalised: NHRC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foundation of any work of a state should be built considering the desire of its citizens, as they are the formal source of laws of a state, said Mizanur Rahman, chairman of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

"Constitution is the reflection of collective desire of citizens," he said while presenting a keynote paper on legal empowerment of masses at a seminar in the city.

Human Rights International, Bangladesh (HRIB) organised the seminar titled "Empowerment of the people" at Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar auditorium.

In the keynote paper, Prof Mizanur said humanism now should be the core spirit of any law; otherwise concept of legal empower-

ment of mass people will not work. Special attention should be given to ethnic minorities, marginalised farmers, and women facing violence, discriminated people, religion and language minorities, illegally confined people, challenged people, and victims of national calamities for their legal empowerment, he observed.

Mizanur said access to justice is another condition of empowerment of masses, and so some rebellious lawyers are essentials who will fight for the rights of mass people.

Barrister M Amirul Islam, Advocate SM Rezaul Karim, Editor of the Daily Sun Anwar Hossain and Advocate Abdul Baset Mozumdar also spoke. HRIB Chairman and National Professor Kabir Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

Produce Jamaat top leaders before int'l crimes tribunal Jail authorities asked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday asked the jail authorities to produce five detained Jamaat-e-Islami leaders including its Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami before it on April 20 in connection with war crime charges.

The four other Jamaat leaders are Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojahid, senior assistant secretaries general Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Quader Molla and Nayeb-e-Ameer Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice Nizamul Huq directed the prosecution to submit the progress reports on the investigation into the war crimes allegations against the five leaders by April 20.

The tribunal also directed the jail authorities to provide necessary treatment to Sayedee and arrange medical test for him at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), if necessary.

The tribunal passed the order in respect of Nizami, Mojahid, Kamaruzzaman and Quader Molla in a suo moto move, while passed the order in respect of Sayedee after hearing a petition filed by the prosecution seeking time for completing investigation against him.

The tribunal, however, rejected a petition filed by Sayedee seeking bail in connection with the war crime charges.

Sayedee was produced before the tribunal after it began proceedings at about 10:30am.

the investigation agency for investigation into allegations against Sayedee for examining.

The tribunal on February 20 had ordered the investigation agency to submit the "case diaries" by March 15.

The court at around 10:45am adjourned the hearing for an hour to examine the "case diaries" and resumed the hearing at around 12:00noon

Passing the order, the tribunal said completion of investigation against Sayedee is almost at the final stage.

Prosecutor Syed Haider Ali told the tribunal that the investigation agency has collected papers and documents on the allegations against the accused and would collect more.

He said there is progress in the probe against Sayedee and the investigation agency needs some time to complete its job.

Haider Ali prayed to the tribunal to permit the jail authorities to keep Sayedee detained till completion of investigation into the allegations brought against him.

Sayedee is a very influential political person and may hamper the investigation and threaten the witnesses if he is free, Haider Ali argued.

Sayedee's counsel Tajul Islam told the court the prosecution could not show any progress in the investigation against his client, who should not be detained on "false" charges.

He prayed for his client's bail saying there is no evidence of the allegations against him.

Tajul also prayed to the court to ask the jail authorities to take necessary steps for proper treatment of his client.

JS body for ethnic groups' contribution in 1971 war

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment will recommend the constitution recognises the country's ethnic groups' contribution to 1971 Liberation War.

Co-chair of the committee Suranjit Sengupta disclosed this after a meeting of the body held at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

Ethnic minorities did not get recognition in the constitution, adopted immediately after the country's independence.

"We now want to do what we could not in 1972," said Suranjit, also the chief of the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry.

A number of lawmakers from ethnic groups joined the meeting on invitation by the committee.

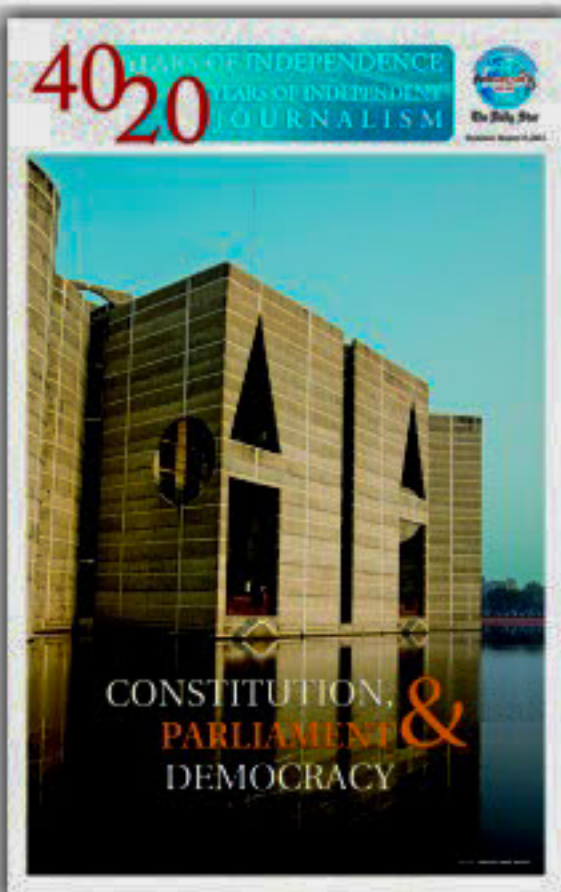
They demanded constitutional recognition of the ethnic minority population's culture, education, heritage, language and literature.

"The committee heard them and will consider their demands practically," added Suranjit.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR OVERWHELMING RESPONSE ON OUR FIRST ISSUE OF The Daily Star 20th ANNIVERSARY SUPPLEMENT SERIES

The 2nd will be on **"CONSTITUTION, PARLIAMENT AND DEMOCRACY"** coming out on Thursday, 17th March 2011

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