

Govt destroyed judiciary: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday criticised the government for "destroying" the judiciary.

He said, "The total judicial system has been destroyed as the government made the judiciary partisan, creating instability in the sector."

The BNP leader made the allegation while addressing a discussion at Diploma Engineers Institution auditorium in the city.

National Democratic Party organised the meeting to commemorate the historic Farakka Long March led by Mowlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani during Bangabandhu's rule.

Fakhrul urged the people to resist the ruling government as was done against the Pakistani forces in 1971. "An united movement must be forged against those who made Bangladesh an ineffective state," he said.

He alleged the government made the judiciary partisan to implement their political agenda. They appointed judges in the Appellate Division by superseding 53 judges; even they appointed the chief justice the same way, he added.

Fakhrul also blamed the government for "failing to protect the country's interest," saying the present government signed a number of deals and treaties with the Indian government though Bangladesh could not achieve anything from these.

Shafiul Alam Pradhan, Sheikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu, Sadek Khan, and Mostafa Kamal Majumder, among others, spoke at the meeting with Golam Mortuza in the chair.



A devotee offers prayers at Basabo Buddha Mandir in the city yesterday marking the Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of Buddhist community.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Mega plan to save Halda in pipeline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government will take a huge plan to address the issues posing existential threat to the river Halda, one of the world's major natural breeding spots for sweet water fish.

The plan, however, would equally prioritise both fishing and agricultural activities depending on the river.

The decision was taken yesterday at the first meeting of a high-powered inter-ministerial committee formed to protect the Halda.

Chaired by Md Shamsul Kibria, joint secretary of the fisheries and livestock ministry and convener of the team, the meeting was held at Chittagong Circuit House.

The committee yesterday decided to take some immediate steps previous to the plan.

These include restricting engine boats during spawning season from April to May, preventing disposal of industrial waste from Asian paper Mill at Nandirhat and state-owned Karnaphukli Paper Mill at Kaptai into the river, and steps against brickfields located on the riverbank.

Following the meeting, Local Awami League (AL) lawmaker ABM Fazle Karim, an adviser to the committee and the chief guest, briefed journalists about the plan.

He said, "Dredging is necessary in the river Halda from Satterghat point to upstream Fatikchhari, as its depth has drastically lowered even by one and a half feet at many places of the area due to siltation."

Two roads, each 85-kilometre long, would be constructed on both sides of the river and trees will be planted so that the movement of engine boats is reduced, he said, adding the 13 sluice gates would be re-modeled to create enough spaces for easy passing of fishes.

The meeting sources said a technical committee would be formed with representatives from five ministries and other government organisations to conduct a primary survey on the river.

These are the ministries of fisheries and livestock, agriculture, water resources, LGRD, and forests and the Department of Fisheries, the Institute of Water Modeling (IWM), and Bangladesh Fish Research Institute (BFRI).

The inter-ministerial committee members, following the meeting, and local representatives made a journey on the river on an engine boat to glimpse its present state. Two other engine boats carrying law enforcers accompanied the team.

Chief Engineer of Water Development Board (WDB), Chittagong Syed Ahsan Ali and Additional District Commissioner (general) Ehsane Ali were also present at the meeting.

Increase in bus fare protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several organisations yesterday strongly protested the government's decision raising bus fare by around 30 percent and demanded review of the decision.

Terming it an "irrational decision", they said the government had increased the fare only to protect the interest of bus owners overlooking people's sufferings.

Citizen Solidarity, a non-government organisation, formed a unique human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club to protest the decision.

Participants in the programme stood with little bottles of mustard (sharisha) oil in their hands and with a banner titled "Jogajog mantri, apni ar koto ghumaben" (Mr communication minister, how long will you remain asleep).

Citizen Solidarity general secretary Sharifuzzaman Shairf said anarchy is prevailing in the country's transportation system and the government should address it with necessary measures.

The government decision of increasing bus fare would adversely impact the livelihood of middle-income and low-income people, he said.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, organiser of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports, demanded introduction of mass transit that will help common people travel at relatively low cost.

At a separate news conference at Jatiya Press Club, Poribesh Bachao Andolan (Poba), an environmental organisation, also protested the increase.

Speakers at the programme said a terribly profit-hungry syndicate has grasped the entire transportation system due to negligence of the communication ministry.

They demanded formation of a committee to re-fix bus fare to protect people's interest, ensuring movement of rickshaws and bicycles on all routes across the city, and punishment of those who charge extra fare.

At the conference noted columnist Syed Abul Moksud termed the government's decision a "deception" with the people.

Buet's former vice chancellor AKM Shafiullah and Poba chairman Abu Naser Khan, among others, spoke at the programme, says a press release.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Dhaka Zilla Auto-rickshaw-Auto-tempu-Mishuk Janbahon Samik Union in two separate statements also protested the government's decision.

Meanwhile, the Association of Bus Companies (ABC) at a press conference rejected the government-set new bus fare and demanded more increase in the fare, saying that the price of vehicle parts and maintenance cost have gone up, says a release.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Call to introduce pictorial warning

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a workshop yesterday underscored the need for introducing effective pictorial warning on the packets of tobacco products to inform the users about its dangerous consequences as well as protecting them from tobacco related diseases.

They said on an average a smoker sees the cigarette packets over 7,000 times a year and if they realise about the negative impacts of tobacco use seeing pictorial warning on the packets, it will help them quit use of tobacco.

Progga, Anti-tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) and Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) jointly organised the media planning workshop marking the World No Tobacco Day 2011 at Sundarban Hotel in the city.

CTFK Coordinator Taifur Rahman, ATMA Convener Ruhul Amin Rushad and Progga training officer Hasan spoke at the workshop.

The speakers urged the government to raise the rate of direct tax on all sorts of tobacco products, including cigarettes, bidi, jorda, sada pata and gul to discourage tobacco consumption in Bangladesh.

They called for restricting the smokeless tobacco products such as jorda, gul and sada pata as these products also cause serious diseases among the people.

Taifur said there are about 42 million passive smokers in Bangladesh and some 57,000 people die every year in the country due to tobacco-related complications.

About tax on tobacco products, he said higher tobacco tax could decrease consumption of tobacco in the country. "Increasing tax on tobacco products by 10 percent will result in decrease of tobacco consumption by three to six percent in Bangladesh."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the opening session of the 64th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: PID



Awami League activists take out a procession in the city yesterday celebrating the Homecoming Day of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

PHOTO: STAR

Hasina's Homecoming Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League celebrated the Homecoming Day of Prime Minister and its President Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

On this day in 1981, Sheikh Hasina returned home from India after about six years in exile following her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members assassinated on August 15, 1975 by a group of army officers.

Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, Bangabandhu's two daughters, survived the assassination as they were in Germany at that time.

In the morning, the party leaders led by Acting President Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi in the city.

AL also brought out a jubilant procession in the city. The procession started from in front of Engineers Institution at 3:00pm ended at Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi.

A rally was held in front of Engineers Institution with Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair. Begum Matia Chowdhury, Advocate Sahara Kahtoon, Suranjit Sengupta and Mahbubul Alam Hanif spoke at the rally.

'Coal policy not by June'

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said the much-talked coal policy will not be available by this June, and a fresh deadline will be set to get the final policy.

"There are many kinds of thinking regarding the coal policy. That's why it is getting delayed. I want to say that it should be resolved," he said.

The minister was addressing a seminar titled "Development of North Bengal and National Budget" at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the city.

North Bengal Development Forum (NBDF) organised the programme chaired by M Shahriar Alam MP.

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton and State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman Fizar also addressed it.

The finance minister, in December last year, had said the coal policy would have been finalised by this June.

Last victim of Nimtoli fire buried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of the last victim of Nimtoli inferno, which was preserved in Dhaka Medical College (DMC) mortuary, was buried unidentified yesterday.

DMC sources said they could not identify the sex of the victim after the autopsy, as the body was completely burnt.

The body, recovered from the spot, had been preserved in the mortuary since the fire tragedy of June 3, 2010. No one had claimed the body till yesterday.

The devastating fire at Nimtoli in Old

Dhaka claimed some 123 lives.

DMC authorities kept sample of the victim to perform a pathology test to identify the sex and a DNA test to confirm any claim.

Jamiruddin Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Bongshal Police Station, said if anyone claims the body later, the DNA test would provide the confirmation.

DMC morgue sources assumed the body to be of a middle-aged woman.

OC Ahmed said they handed over the body to Anjuman-e-Mofidul Islam, a charity organisation, from DMC morgue around 1:50pm.

Rab man faces disciplinary action

UNB, Narayanganj

A sub-inspector of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) faces disciplinary action for keeping close relationship with a listed criminal and involvement in anti-social activities.

Primary investigation proved the allegations and SI Anwar was transferred to the headquarters from Narayanganj yesterday. Further departmental actions are being taken against him, said a Rab official.

Informed sources said Anwar used to drink alcohol with a ruling party man who was listed by Rab as a top criminal of the town. Anwar also allowed the criminal to use his mobile phone to threaten wealthy persons for extortion.

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