

Mobile courts

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charges of calling hartal or picketing, as the Supreme Court has not declared hartal illegal, he added.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government, said: "Many people informed me that the mobile courts did not maintain procedure while convicting people."

She said the courts did not read the case statement before the convicts or did not take their signature on it.

"I do not support anarchy... Mobile courts can take action against persons involved in anarchy, but following the procedures," she added.

Former adviser to a caretaker government ASM Shahjahan, also ex-inspector general of police, said legal experts will understand well whether mobile court operation during hartal is lawful.

He, however, said the government should be careful so that no picket is repressed in the name of trial, as hartal is a democratic right.

Hafizuddin Khan, another former adviser to a caretaker government, fears that the mobile court might lose its credibility by operating during hartal.

Amid chaos of a hartal day, it is very difficult to determine if anybody is a criminal.

Additional Home Secretary Iqbal Khan Chowdhury, however, said if people do not participate in a strike spontaneously, nobody has the right to compel them to observe it.

So, he added, the government decided to conduct mobile courts to punish the pickets who create unrest and force people to take part in hartal.

The mobile court has jurisdiction, Iqbal said, and the convict can appeal to the higher court if he thinks he was wrongly punished.

Govt staff

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considered as civil contempt.

Verbal, written, symbolic, or displayed expression of undermining the authority of a court, or expression of such intention, or creating obstacle to judicial proceedings will be considered as criminal contempt, says the bill.

In defence of enacting the new law, by scrapping the existing one enacted in 1926 during the British colonial regime, the law minister said the current law on contempt of court is unclear and also incomplete to a large extent.

There are confusions in peoples' minds regarding punishment for contempt of court due to inadequacies of the law, he added.

He said aggrieved people file contempt of court cases against government officials accusing them as individuals, although the officials work maintaining existing laws, rules, regulations, orders, and customs.

As cases of contempt of court are filed against individual persons, the accused government officials have to personally bear all expenses for fighting the cases including lawyers' fees and court fees.

"Officials feel discouraged in discharging their duties due to the sufferings caused by contempt of court charges," the minister said.

The bill proposes that a government official will not face contempt of court charge while engaged in the republic's work for public interest following existing laws, rules, regulations and other circulars.

If a government official faces a contempt of court charge, he or she can contest the charge through government lawyers, the bill says.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry for scrutiny, with a deadline of three weeks for submission of a report.

CTG MARINE FISHERIES ACADEMY

Over 100 hurt in cop action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 100 students of Bangladesh Marine Fisheries Academy were injured in an unexpected police attack in Chittagong last night.

Students of the academy had been staging a sit-in on its parade ground to press home their two-point demand that includes issuing of Continuous Discharge Certificates (CDC), necessary for the students to join ocean-going vessels.

Police last night locked the main entrance to an academy hostel in Karnaphuli and beat the students up with truncheons. Later, the law enforcers forced the students out. Many students had no other option but to spend the night under the open sky.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (boat zone) Imran Bhuiyan said the students were asked to vacate the hostel. He termed the beating up of students "a mild scuffle".

A total of 178 cadets took part in the sit-in carrying different banners with slogans. Ex-cadets of BMFA also expressed solidarity with the students.

Deputy Secretary of Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock AKM Jafarul Haque along with BMFA principal had assured the cadets of taking up their demands to the minister and authorities concerned.

Academy Principal ATGM Sarkar said the process of issuing CDC depends on the government. He said a new regulation is being formulated to solve the problem.

5 lakh drivers don't have licence

Minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around five lakh drivers are illegally driving their vehicles across the country without any driving licence, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told the parliament yesterday.

The government has taken steps to identify the 'illegal' drivers and provide them licences with the help of district administrations and members of law enforcement agencies, the minister informed the House while replying to lawmakers' queries.

There are about 15 lakh registered vehicles in the country and the number of total driving licences is 10 lakh, according to a statistic of 2010.

Of the registered vehicles, around 8 lakh are motorcycles, noted the minister adding, they assume among the five lakh 'illegal' drivers, most drive motorcycles.

Last month the government started a two-month long 'service period' to provide licences to the motorcycle and three-wheeler drivers, Abul Hossain went on saying.

The government is actively considering going for an arbitration to realise money from Hyundai company for repairing cracks on the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge, he added.

Kamaruzzaman

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response during the day-long interrogation in a safe house of Dhanmondi.

"He [Kamaruzzaman] tried to dodge the charges when we placed the supportive evidence... but we are convinced that he indirectly admitted his involvement in the crimes," M Sanaul Huq, acting coordinator of the investigation agency, told The Daily Star.

A four-member investigation team quizzed Kamaruzzaman, an assistant secretary general of Jamaat, on his involvement in crimes against humanity and genocide at city's Mirpur, and Jamalpur, Sherpur and Mymensingh during the Liberation War.

"We placed evidence... print materials, video clips and witnesses' statements before the accused and he responded to those," the investigator told reporters.

Sanaul said they took notes and recorded the response of Kamaruzzaman during the interrogation and they will place those before the International Crimes Tribunal. He said they will be able to place the investigation report before the tribunal soon.

Kamaruzzaman was arrested on July 13 last year on war crimes charges. The International Crimes Tribunal on June 1 this year allowed the investigation agency to interrogate him for a day at the safe house.

Investigators started interrogating Kamaruzzaman around 10:00am and continued till 5:00pm with a lunch break around 1:00pm. Earlier, he was taken to the safe house from Dhaka Central Jail around 9:00am.

The investigators will quiz another top Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Molla at the house today.

Jamaat and many of its leaders several times said there was no Liberation War in 1971. They claimed it was a civil war and a war between India and Pakistan. They also said none of their leaders were involved in Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams, respon-

ible for many atrocities during the war.

Meanwhile, Kamaruzzaman's lawyer Tajul Islam alleged that his client was harassed by the investigators before and during the interrogation.

Quoting Meher Ahmed Bin Kashem, another lawyer of the accused who was inside the safe house during interrogation, Tajul said a lamp was kept in front of him while there was no ventilation in the interrogation room.

He also alleged that an investigator pushed Kamaruzzaman when he was getting off a vehicle that took him to the safe house.

Sanaul, however, denied the allegations and said there was nothing unusual in the room and there was no pushing or shoving. He said his lawyer and a doctor were in the next room during the interrogation.

New chiefs

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Forces Intelligence (DGFI) while director of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Brig Gen AKM Shamsuddin has been withdrawn and attached to the Armed Forces Division.

Maj Gen Anwar was the general officer commanding (GOC) of Mymensingh Army Resource Training and Doctrine Commander (Art Doc). He is likely to take over the office of the BGB DG on July 3.

According to sources from Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), outgoing BGB DG Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam will return to the army after handing over charges to the new DG and retire on July 14. The outgoing DG will preside over a trial of the mutineers of Battalion 24 on June 27.

Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam joined as the DG of BGB on May 9 last year.

ISPR sources said former DG of DGFI Lt Gen Molla Fazle Akbar has been transferred as the commandant of National Defence College.

Minimum tax

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representing the company's yearly gross receipts from all sources.

According to the proposal, "gross receipt" means all receipts derived from sale of goods; all fees or charges for rendering services or giving benefits including commissions and discounts; and all receipts derived from any head of income.

Many company directors use several cars but have them registered under the company's name depriving the NBR of revenue.

The NBR proposes imposing tax on vehicles used by a director of a company if its value is more than 10 percent of the company's paid up capital.

The proposal says that actors, actresses, producers or a person responsible for making any part of a film, play, advertisement or television or radio programme have to pay 10 percent tax on their remunerations. This goes for people buying a programme as well.

Reacting to Sheikh

Toxic bananas

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destroyed in presence of the mobile court.

The accused trader used a chemical agent calcium carbide to hasten the ripening of fruits, according to the UNO.

The use of chemical to ripen fruits is banned because it poses serious threat to human health, she stated.

"Anwar used the chemical and kerosene stoves to ripen the green bananas. In the process the fruit lost its natural quality and turned risky for consumption," Md Nazrul Islam, sanitary inspector of Pabna told The Daily Star.

Some traders are still using artificial methods to ripen fruits defying repeated warnings. The court will conduct more drives to destroy unhygienic foods, noted the UNO.

Paying the fine the accused trader Anwar vowed not to use any chemical in ripening fruits in future.

Sanitary inspector of Pabna and local law enforcement agencies assisted the court during the drive.

Bhola forest

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Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain stayed Wednesday's High Court verdict that permitted the government to construct the road on certain conditions.

The judge passed the order after hearing a petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

The petition also prayed for upholding another order of the HC that on August 16 last year issued an injunction against felling of trees in wildlife reserve at Char Kukrimukri to construct a road to link the island with Bhola.

Barrister Fida M Kamal and Advocate Iqbal Kabir Lytton moved the petition on behalf of Bela, while Additional Attorney General MK Rahman represented the government.

The government cannot construct a road through the mangrove forest by chopping down trees following the SC's stay order on the HC verdict, Iqbal Kabir told The Daily Star.

Bela will file a leave to appeal petition with the SC against the HC verdict after getting the copy of its full text, he added.

The lawyer said within hours of the HC's verdict on June 8 that clearly directed the authorities to abide by the forest and environment acts, groups of people reportedly chopped down trees in the reserve forest.

Earlier on June 12, The Daily Star reported that the lawmaker of Bhola-4 (Charfassion) Abdullah Al Islam alias Jacob and his local supporters backed chopping down of the mangrove forest to build a 2.5km road without any environmental clearance or permission from the forest department as required by the law of the land.

Khaleda will announce the latest party position on caretaker system at a press conference tomorrow. And the party is also set to announce a road march programme, said insiders.

Khaleda will lead the two-day road march from June 26 [a tentative date fixed by party high-ups] towards northern Bangladesh, they said.

Chapainawabganj and

MPs to decide on polls

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said: "Please do not bring in a crocodile by digging a canal."

Mentioning the arrest of Khaleda during the last caretaker government, Hasina said when crocodiles get hungry, they do not pick and choose who to spare and who to eat.

Hasina said BNP can place a bill to the Jatiya Sangsad on revising the system of caretaker government.

The Supreme Court in May declared the caretaker system illegal, but observed two more parliamentary polls can be held under the system for "safety of the state and its people".

BNP, the main opposition, maintains it will not participate in the election if it is not held under a non-partisan caretaker government.

But Sheikh Hasina said when the caretaker government system was introduced, the political parties agreed that three elections would be held under the system.

"Three elections have already been held under caretaker governments. And time and again the nation has got bitter experiences from the caretaker governments," she said.

She added that unselected people are given state power through the system and once in power, the people in caretaker government change their mindset.

"The last caretaker government had planned to stay in power for ever, as if a government is a permanent settlement. But in the face of strong national and international

pressure, it was compelled to hold parliamentary polls."

Hasina, also the Awami League president, recalled the "tough" days Khaleda and she herself had to face during that time.

She said while abroad, she was told by some of the advisers of the military-backed interim government that Khaleda Zia had agreed to leave the country.

"The caretaker government had been forcing me not to return home and at the same time its advisers had been telling me that she [Khaleda] had agreed to leave the country. But I did not believe them," she recalled.

The prime minister alleged that a vested quarter is plotting to break the continuation of democracy in the country.

Mangoes date with chemical

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carbide on mangoes.

They hardly heed to the HC order and mobile court actions.

"We use chemical [calcium carbide] to ripen mangoes," said a wholesaler at Baneshwar in Rajshahi, preferring anonymity.

Nurul Islam, a producer at Nababganj in Chapainawabganj, said he uses calcium carbide as it ripens mangoes fast and adds attractive colour to the fruits.

"Why this medicine [calcium carbide] will be harmful? I just keep a piece of carbide wrapped in a paper in the storeroom for mangoes," added Nurul, also a wholesale shop owner at Kansat.

Shafiqul Islam, chief scientific officer of Regional Horticulture Research Centre (RHRC) in Chapainawabganj, said "Orchard owners and traders use calcium carbide on mangoes only to make extra bucks. They don't bother about its impact on human health."

On availability of the chemical compound, another producer, Kawsar Mian of Rajhati village at

Nababganj said, "Most of the pharmacies in the area sell it."

At markets of Baneshwar and Kansat, usage of the ripening agent is an everyday affair. Workers said they start treating the mangoes with the chemical early in the morning to get those ripened by afternoon and loaded onto trucks by evening.

Traders of Baneshwar said, from mid May to mid July every day at least 30 trucks of mangoes -- each carrying seven to eight tonnes -- leave from the market for different places around the country.

On haat [traditional market] days on Saturday and Tuesday, the supply surges to around 50 truck-loads.

Prof ABM Abdullah, dean, faculty of medicine at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said calcium carbide, if consumed, can damage kidney, heart and liver and cause ulcer and gastric.

Mangoes ripened with calcium carbide taste abnormal or tangy, and look either pale or very bright with its flavour missing, he said. So people can easily identify them.

BNP announces its stance

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leaders to sit for talks to resolve the caretaker issue.

Party sources said Chairperson Khaleda Zia held a meeting with constitution experts and senior leaders of the party to finalise its latest stance on caretaker government.

Khaleda will announce the latest party position on caretaker system at a press conference tomorrow. And the party is also set to announce a road march programme, said insiders.

Khaleda will lead the two-day road march from June 26 [a tentative date fixed by party high-ups] towards northern Bangladesh, they said.

Chapainawabganj and

Dinajpur are possible destinations of the road march.

Acting Secretary General of BNP Mirza Fakhruul Alamgir will sit with party leaders from Rajshahi region on Friday to finalise the destinations.

While leading the road march, the party chairperson will address around 50 rallies to build public support to her stance for continuation of the caretaker government system.

"Road march will head for northern Bangladesh. I am sure people will make it a success to express their support to our party," BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told this correspondent.

However, Nazrul Islam, a wholesaler at Baneshwar, said a section of businessmen and producers of the region now use ethephon, a regulator of plant growth and maturity, instead of calcium carbide.

Prof Nilufar Nahar of Dhaka University chemistry department said use of ethephon to ripen mangoes is allowed globally and it is not harmful to public health.

She said ethephon is widely used to help fruit reach maturity quickly and mango producers can try it.

RHRC scientist Shafiqul said it is important that people use proper dose of ethephon on mangoes.

He, however, suggests natural ripening as any sort of chemical reduces taste, fragrance and nutritious quality of fruits.

Mohammad Al-Amin, an executive magistrate of Dhaka deputy commissioner's office, said some traders now use ethephon instead of calcium carbide.

He said they are yet to be sure whether use of the chemical is bad for human health. But they penalise those using ethephon on charges of ripening fruits with chemicals.

Fresh BCL

central body next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new central committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League, a pro-Awami League student body, is set to be formed in July.

Top leaders of Chhatra League will declare the dates for holding the council to elect the overdue fresh leadership in a press conference at Madhur Canteen in Dhaka University today noon.

The incumbent central committee was formed on April 4, 2006 with a two-year tenure.

A number of Chhatra League leaders told The Daily Star that the president and general secretary of the organisation have already decided to hold the two-day council on July 10-11.

Schoolboy

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School. Injured 10-year-old Sohag was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Officer-in-Charge Ainal Haq of Fatullah Police Station told The Daily Star that a Rab team raided Boubazar around 9:20pm. The team engaged in a gunfight with the drug peddlers.

Shuvo died on the spot being hit in the chin and his brother received a bullet in the leg, Ainal Haq said. Their home is close to the spot.

Shuvo's body was sent to a Narayanganj hospital.

Meanwhile, mother of the two Rahima Begum told news agency UNB that Shuvo and Sohag were returning home along with Badal after buying chanachur from a shop.

She heard gunfire and rushed out looking for her sons. But to her astonishment she saw her two sons and Badal lying in a pool of blood on the road, the news agency said.

However, Captain Nazmul, who led the Rab team, told The Daily Star that they fired a single shot during the drive.

"The drug peddlers assaulted two of our team members, Lance Corporal Jakir and Sergeant Shafiq," he said, adding that the two were sent to a hospital in Dhaka for treatment.

Sonia due

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conference will be held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre from July 23.

But the inaugural session will be held on July 25 which Sonia will attend. She will also attend the panel discussion at the conference on July 26.

Diplomatic sources said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina invited the ruling United Progressive Alliance chairperson to attend the programme.

Confirming Sonia's visit, foreign ministry officials said the congress leader will also have meetings with Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

Diplomatic sources consider Sonia's visit ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proposed trip to Bangladesh well before the end of this year very important. It will be a big step towards resolving the long-standing bilateral issues.

Envoy to Japan

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gully, two other sources at the foreign ministry said.

The probe report said the allegations against Majibur may affect Dhaka's good relations with Tokyo, according to the sources.

Majibur could not be contacted in Tokyo for his comments.

Career diplomat Ambassador Majibur joined the foreign service in 1986. Previously he served in the Tokyo mission as Counsellor. He also served as Bangladesh ambassador in Bhutan.

A section of Dhaka newspapers recently reported allegations of violating diplomatic norms against Bangladesh ambassadors in Oman and Nepal.

The government's response to these allegations was not immediately known.

Water resources secretaries of the two countries recently drafted the framework agreement for a 15-year treaty for sharing waters of the Teesta and the Feni rivers, an issue the two sides have been trying to settle for nearly two decades.