

NEWS IN *brief*

**Land for Qatar embassy**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday handed over the final deed of lease of land (area 25.36 katha) located in the Gulshan-Baridhara diplomatic enclave in the city to construct chancery building for the embassy of Qatar.

Abdulrahman Yousuf Al-Mullah, the Qatari Ambassador in Dhaka, received the document at the foreign ministry, said a press release.

During the event, foreign secretary, secretary of land ministry and member of Rajuk, among others,

**Nat'l memorial closed Dec 13-15**

BSS, Dhaka

The authorities have decided to prohibit temporarily the entry of general people into the 'National Memorial' at Savar for maintenance and cleaning of the monument.

The restriction will be effective from December 13 to 15 on the occasion of the 'Great Victory Day'

**Two robbed of Tk 10.30 lakh**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed muggers on motorbikes snatched Tk 10.30 lakh from two employees of a car showroom at gunpoint in city's Kakrail area yesterday afternoon.

Paltan police said Amir Ahmed Tarikh, an official of the car showroom, Car Collection, at Baramagbazar filed a case last night in this connection.

**US official leaves Dhaka**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Special adviser to the US secretary of State Ronan Farrow left Dhaka yesterday.

Farrow, who arrived here on December 9, had a series of meetings over global youth issues during his stay in Dhaka with youth leaders, educators, students and the media of the country.

In the meetings, he highlighted the importance of participation of youth in politics and civil society and how the US government plans to engage young people in different activities in Bangladesh.

Together with the US Ambassador Dan Mozena, Farrow inaugurated the ambassador's Youth Council in Bangladesh on Sunday.

**ENCROACHMENT ON SHITALAKKHYA**

**19 dockyards to withdraw**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 19 dockyard owners gave a written undertaking to Narayanganj District Administration and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday to remove their establishments and the soil they dumped, encroaching on the Shitalakkhya river, in a month.

The dockyards had encroached on around 200 yards on an average past the recently set up demarcation pillars of the river along a one kilometre stretch, locally known as Purbogao Mouja, said BIWTA Deputy Director Alamgir Kabir.

The district administration served them an eviction notice last year and launched a drive on Sunday. They pledged to remove the soil in two weeks and the dockyards within a month, said Alamgir.

Md Mohabbat Hossain Khan, general secretary of Purbogao Dockyard Owners Association, said they would relocate their dockyards, set up five years ago, on private land or on leased khas land.

"We will never conduct business by encroaching on the river," he said.

Meanwhile, a joint team of the district administration and BIWTA conducted a drive led by Executive Magistrate Afroza Akhtar yesterday and on Sunday and removed nearly 30 semi-concrete and makeshift structures in the area.

**WEATHER TODAY**

**Moderate to thick fog likely**

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary or partly cloudy sky over the country in 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and adjoining area over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country during mid night till morning, Met office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged and night temperature may fall slightly over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:13pm today and rises at 6:32am tomorrow.**

Country's highest temperature 30.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 11.6 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.8	17.3	78	59
Chittagong	28.0	17.6	68	49
Rajshahi	23.2	15.8	91	86
Rangpur	24.5	13.0	94	84
Khulna	26.0	18.3	80	70
Barisal	27.5	16.6	84	78



Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam speaks at the concluding session of International Conference on Rights of Dalits at the senate bhaban of Dhaka University yesterday. On her right are National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman and human rights activist Irene Khan and on her left are Social Welfare Ministry Secretary Ranjit Kumar Biswas and Dalit community leaders Hirendranath Biswas and Achinta Saha.

PHOTO: COURTESY

**Unite to establish rights**

*HR activists ask Dalit communities*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights activists yesterday suggested Dalit communities to form a greater coalition to initiate stronger movements at national and regional levels to end all forms of discriminations they face.

Isolated movements will be of no help towards establishing equal opportunities, which are being denied just for being born in a certain community like that of Dalits, they observed.

The rights activists were speaking at the concluding session of a two-day "International Conference on Rights of Dalits" organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University.

The representatives of Dalit communities and human rights activists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the conference.

"You (Dalits) have to be hard and conscious about your rights. Collective strategies are the best to protect your rights," said Irene Khan, an internationally renowned human rights activist.

There are around 50 lakh Dalits in Bangladesh and around 25 crore in Asia.

In Bangladesh, around 80 percent of the Dalits do not have their own houses, are considered low caste people and untouchables and thus face severe discrimination in society.

Though they are constitutionally entitled to enjoy the basic human rights just like any other Bangladeshi citizen, in reality, they face serious discrimination even in matters like access to

education, healthcare and jobs.

The biggest tragedy occurs when incidents of human rights violations and discrimination are overlooked. Accountability of the state and the people as a whole is imperative to ensure human rights for all, said Irene, also the former secretary general of Amnesty International.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said, "A bigger coalition is needed involving the mainstream population" for Dalits to realise their rights.

"The leaders must be from within your community. Leadership must not be compromised if you want to win the battle," he said, assuring all forms of support from the commission.

Prof Debi Chatterjee from India suggested creating an alternative culture, which includes rejecting the ways of the Brahmins who maintain the caste system, for establishing the rights of the Dalits.

Dhaka University Prof Abul Barakat said the Dalits must have constitutional recognition and be separately brought under the population census so that affirmative actions are taken to promote their causes.

He demanded a separate budgetary allocation and quotas in public jobs and educational institutions for the Dalits.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said the objective of the conference is to help the Dalits form a greater platform. "I hope the conference will help them."

Research Initiatives, Bangladesh Chairman Dr Shamsul Bari chaired the session.

**Reduce control on local govts**

*Speakers urge govt*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to reduce its control on local governments for strengthening and establishing the latter's autonomy.

They also recommended curbing the authoritativeness of the government officials over implementation of development activities by the local governments to ensure their accountability to the local government representatives.

The conference, "Strengthening democratic local governance: An investigation into the roles and authorities of local governments in Bangladesh", was jointly organised by Unnayan Shamannay and Centre for Urban Studies at a city hotel.

Though there are enough laws to strengthen the local governments, they are not implemented, preventing them from working independently, they said.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government, said the government is duty-bound, as per the constitution, to establish the local government as an autonomous and effective administration to cater for the needs of people.

The government lacks the "political will" to strengthen the local government. Good governance will be ensured when the local governments are empowered through implementation of the laws according to the constitution, she said.

Lawmaker AKM Mozammel Haque said the government officials spend a lion's share of the small amount of the national budget, allocated by the government for the local governments, without any consent from the local representatives.

Each unit of the local governments should be allocated a specific amount of the national budget to carry out development activities which they deem necessary, said Mozammel, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Land Ministry.

Fifty percent of what is collected, usually the taxes, by the local administration should be provided to the local government to extend their services to the people, he suggested.

Prof Sarwar Jahan of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology said the government must decentralise its administrative activities by strengthening the local governments to develop the country's economy.

Dr Mahfuz Kabir, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, presented a paper, "Leveraging the periphery: Effective decentralisation at upazila and union parishad".

Kabir said the local governments must be allowed to extend their capacity over development works out of the government's control otherwise they can not be autonomous and effective.

Former University Grants Commission chairman Nazrul Islam conducted the conference where Shamim Al Razi, general secretary of Municipal Association of Bangladesh, and Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, president of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum, spoke.

Urban planner Salma A Shafi presented a paper on the scenario of the pourasava and different local government representatives of the country took part in the conference.



Awami Sangskritik Forum stages a demonstration wearing shrouds before the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday demanding speedy trial of all war criminals.

PHOTO: STAR

**NEW DCC ADMINISTRATORS**  
**Hearing on petition Thursday**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday heard a writ petition filed challenging the legality of appointing unelected persons as administrators for splitting Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

The High Court bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Md Khurshid Alam Sarker fixed next Thursday for further hearing.

The government appointed two administrators for the DCC on December 4. Ignoring widespread criticism and protests, the parliament hurriedly passed a bill to split DCC into two on November 29.

It took only four minutes and a few seconds to pass the bill, bringing about some major changes to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009.

The writ petition filed by four persons, including two lawyers on Sunday with the authority concerned of the apex court also was sought stay order on the appointment.

Petitioners also prayed for appointing elected persons as the interim administrator.

The local government secretary, the public administration secretary, law secretary and two administrators of DCC were made respondent of the writ petition.

**BDR CARNAGE CASE**  
**Court dissatisfied over facilities**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the metropolitan session judge's court, trying the 850 accused in a BDR carnage case, is not facilitated like other session judges' courts, the lawyers often face various problems, defence counsels told the court yesterday.

Echoing their claim, the court also expressed dissatisfaction over the facilities provided to the court set up temporarily at the playground of Alia Madrasa in the city's Bakshibazar.

They expressed their dissatisfaction following cross-examination of a witness by the defence counsel Aminul Islam at the first hour of the court proceeding.

"I have informed the president, the prime minister and the chief justice about the problems but no result is [yet to be] found. The court is run by Allah," said the judge.

"I have conducted many session judges' courts, but never faced problems like this," the judge added.

He, however, did not elaborate the problems and requested the lawyers to carry on the court proceeding within the existing limitations.

Aminul claimed that in the name of security, on-duty police often misbehave with the lawyers.

"We couldn't park our cars on the playground next to the court. Besides, our juniors and clerks are not permitted to enter the court," he said adding it is a free court and lawyers should be allowed to work here in a regular way.

He said police should check their identity without any hassle.

A commotion outside the court premises occurred between police and lawyers over a trifling matter yesterday noon. The problem was later settled with the interference of the state counsel.

Earlier, Aminul, counsel for deputy assistant directors (DAD) Towhid and Nasir, alleged that the 11th witness of Pilkhana carnage Maj Sujaul Haq Sujaul went to the court after influencing IO Abdul Kahar Akhand as per the instruction of former army chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed.

Sujaul categorically denied the allegation.

One of the civilian accused, Rahima Begum, charged for keeping looted goods, got bail on December 1 from High Court (HC). Defence lawyer yesterday submitted the order of HC to the court. So far, four people got bail while lawyers submitted petition for bail of another 23 accused of the case.

The court will resume this morning with the deposition of Maj Shah Alam, the 12th prosecution witness.

The two-day mayhem at the headquarters of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) killed 74 people, including 57 top and mid-ranking army officers.