



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, left, and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia offer Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) during Biswa Jitema held on the banks of the Turag yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



PHOTO: PMO, BNP

NOTICE TO UNIQUE PROPERTIES DoE order to remove earth within 30 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday sent a notice to Unique Properties Ltd asking it to remove the earth the company used to fill 2.65 lakh square feet of Meghna river within 30 days, starting from tomorrow.

In a separate drive yesterday, DoE fined and realised Tk six lakh from Dishari Real Estate Development Ltd for filling up a swamp in the city's Uttarkhan area for an illegal housing project.

DoE officials said earth-filling by Unique Properties Ltd on the river near Meghnaghat area in Vatiband and Char Bhabnathpur mauza is obstructing the river's natural flow.

DoE would seize the mentioned earth and auction it if the company failed to comply with the notice, they added.

On December 23, DoE fined and realised Tk 50 lakh from the company for the earth-filling and asked it to remove the earth. But the company did not comply and appealed to the Ministry of Environment and Forests against the order.

In a hearing on January 12, the ministry directed the company to comply with the DoE order.

On the other hand, Dishari Real Estate Development Ltd was fined after the DoE monitoring and enforcement team led by DoE Director Mohammed Munir Chowdhury conducted a drive in Uttarkhan.

The team also arrested the company's Managing Director Mahbubul Hussain Bhuiyan and stopped the housing project.

A DoE press release said the company earth-filled 50 to 60 bighas of wetland, used by the locals to cultivate boro rice during the winter and for fish cultivation, for the housing project.

The locals said the wetland, locally known as Siney canal, is connected to Nologang canal which merges with the Balu river and earth-filling could inundate the surrounding areas during the monsoon.

Varsity teachers' retirement age extension likely

WASIM BIN HABIB

The government is likely to extend the retirement age of public university teachers from existing 60 to 65 years.

"We have finalised the draft of a law to extend the retirement age and will be sending the bill to the cabinet soon for its approval," Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury told The Daily Star, yesterday.

Out of 34 public universities in the country, currently, the retirement age of teachers at 30 public universities is 60 years.

However, teachers of Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University and Jahangirnagar University are serving till 65 years of age, said education ministry officials.

"We are formulating the law to ensure equity among the retirement age of the teachers of all public universities," said a deputy secretary of the education ministry wishing not to be named.

The education ministry will send a summary of the draft to the cabinet this week and will later send it to the law ministry for vetting, he said.

According to University Grants

Commission (UGC), there are around 11,000 teachers at public universities, said UGC sources.

The teachers have been demanding for an extension of their retirement age for a long time, as it felt unfair to them to retire five years earlier than teachers of the other four universities.

Besides, it would also help remedy the growing shortage of teachers in the public universities, they said.

The issue came into focus last year when delegations of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) and the Association

of Universities of Bangladesh met the prime minister at her office and placed their demand.

The prime minister then assured them that their demand would be met, following which the UGC prepared a proposal and sent it to the education ministry, said ministry officials.

Also, the teachers of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) in November last year boycotted class voicing their demands to extend retirement age.

The demonstration ended following assurance from the education minister.

Fish fry production drops in Halda, say experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over the last six decades, the production of fish fry in the country's largest natural fish spawning ground - Halda river - has drastically decreased due to causes both man-made and natural, said experts at a seminar yesterday.

The production dropped all the way from 2,470kg in 1945 to 234kg in 2011, showed statistics presented by Chittagong University zoology department Prof Dr Mohammad Ali Azadi.

The experts said five oxbow-bends, spawning grounds for fishes, in the river were also lost in the period 1928-2002 due to loop cutting by the locals.

As a result, fishes have been spawning in scatter since 2004 causing a loss in fish production, they added.

Department of Fisheries (DoF) organised the daylong seminar styled 'Restoration, enrichment and preservation of the natural spawning ground of the river Halda' in the city's CIRDAP auditorium.

In his keynote presentation, Prof Azadi showed that sluice gates, set on the river for irrigation and flood control at different periods, have blocked 13 out of 16 tributaries of Halda that fell within its 20 km spawning area.

Consequently, the water flow here dropped, blocking fish and egg move-

ment, and the depth reduced due to sedimentation, he said adding that, "Loop cutting should be banned and unused sluice gates should be removed."

The production of fishes like Kalibaush, Rui and Mrigal has dropped drastically due to excessive capture of Kalibaush and Rui illegally by angling, he said.

Thus, selective stocking programme for each fish species should be adopted to increase the production of carps, he suggested.

DoF took up a Tk 13.21 crore project to conserve the natural spawning ground of Halda river in 2007-08 that has been expanded till 2013.

Prof Dr Mukhlesur Rahman Khan of Department of Fisheries Biology and Genetics of Bangladesh Agriculture University recommended stopping selling of sand from Halda river bed, irrigation in Halda basin, catching of brood fish and discharge of industrial effluents into the river.

He also called for banning fishing in the migration routes during the spawning seasons to restore the river's natural breeding ground.

Earlier, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdul Latif Biswas and DoF Director General Syed Arif Azad, addressed the seminar among others.



PHOTO: STAR

Guests with the winners of the competition held during the three-day "5th Jatiya Deyal Patrika Utsav" (national wall magazine festival), organised by Jatiya Deyal Patrika Parishad, at Bangla Academy premises in the city yesterday.

Sir Salimullah's anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 97th death anniversary of Nawab Sir Salimullah Bahadur, a renowned

politician of the sub continent, social worker and a leading figure behind the establishment of Dhaka University.

On this occasion, wreaths will be placed at his grave at Begum Bazar, said a press release.

A discussion titled "The Life and Works of Sir Salimullah" will be held at Sir Salimullah Muslim Orphanage and food will be distributed among the orphans.

A doa mahfil will be held at the Gor-e-Shaheed Mosque after Maghrib prayers.

Obituary

METRO DESK



M. A. B. Siddique, executive secretary of IBAT Trust and former treasurer of Northern University Bangladesh, passed away at Apollo Hospitals in the city on 12th January due to liver cancer at the age of 44, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons, parents, a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Qulkhwani of Nurjahan Haque, wife of late magistrate and freedom fighter

Majibul Haque, will be held at White Palace Community Centre at Dhanmondi in the city today.

Relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme, said a press release.

She passed away at a hospital in the city on Thursday at the age of 83.

She left behind her eleven children, grand children and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

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