

Vegetables on water

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Growing vegetables on floating beds made of water hyacinth has turned out to be a boon for farmers at Nazirpur upazila in Pirojpur.

Under the model, local residents have brought the unused marshland under cultivation. They are now cultivating different kinds of vegetables, including beans, brinjals, beet, pumpkins, tomatoes, and pepper on the specially made beds that float on the marshland.

The age-old, yet not-so-popular, model is locally known as "dhap", which is used to grow crops on marshland that remains submerged for around eight months of the year, and therefore, remains unutilised.

Water hyacinth and other organic materials are usually piled up to create a "dhap" which takes shape over a few days, floating on the water like a boat.

The floating beds can be around 180-foot-long with around a two-foot thickness and a four-foot width.

Farmers say they are making profits by selling the seedlings and vegetables grown on the floating beds.

On the other hand, the marshland owners are also earning money by leasing their

land to these seasonal farmers.

"We earn Tk 5,000 by leasing a bigha of marshland to the farmers," said Abdul Mojid, a landowner of Dobra village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, the people involved in making these floating beds for farmers are also earning a handsome amount, boosting the local economy as a result.

"To make a 90-foot-long "dhap", Tk 500 is paid for water hyacinth, and around Tk 900 is paid to the labourers," said Shusanto, a "dhap" maker.

Once prepared, the "dhap" hits a market price of around Tk 2,500, he added.

The seasonal floating beds have other uses as well. When the water of the marshland recedes, the "dhap" is no longer useful for cultivation. It is then sold as compost.

Five thousand acres of marshland in the upazila are cultivated in this way every year, according to the district agriculture office.

More farmers are being trained under a government project on disaster and climate risk management in agriculture to encourage the farmers to try the "dhap" cultivation model, said Humayra Siddiqua, an agriculture extension officer in the upazila.



A farmer tends his vegetables from a boat as the plants are growing on a floating seedbed made from water hyacinth. Farmers of Mugarjhor of Nazirpur in Pirojpur relocate a floating seedbed, inset.



PHOTO: STAR

GIVING REPORT TO BB ON ANOMALIES

BASIC Bank gets 3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday issued a final ultimatum to the BASIC Bank to submit a report to it within three working days explaining the bank's gross irregularities in loan approval, recruitment and promotion.

The central bank made the move after it found 26 types of gross violations of rules in the troubled state-run bank, out of which 23 are loan related irregularities.

Central bank officials said it had earlier issued the same instruction to BASIC Bank, but the bank did not oblige. It forced the Department of Offsite Supervision of the banking

regulator to issue the final ultimatum.

The central bank recently studied 11 meeting minutes of the BASIC Bank's governing body and found the irregularities. The meetings were held between April, 2012 and March, 2013.

It found that the bank during the period approved loans amounting to Tk3,493 crore flouting rules.

The central bank presented its report on BASIC Bank at a recent meeting presided over by Finance Minister AMA Muhiith.

"Despite clear opposition from the credit committee of BASIC Bank's head office, its board of directors approved the loan proposals," said the BB report.

The BASIC Bank board recruited officers and office assistants though it was not entitled for the job. Even the board recruited a deputy general manager (DGM) who did not have the mandatory experience in the banking sector.

But irregularities in the bank did not stop there.

After only seven months, the DGM was promoted to the post of general manager (GM), though his service as a DGM was not confirmed, said the central bank.

Moreover, the state-run bank recruited two former army officials as DGMs although they did not have any banking experience, added the BB.

Justification not justified

FROM PAGE 1

national elections are completely different in nature. The facts testify to such a reality.

The polls to 400 upazila parishads were the first voting the EC conducted during the tenure of the present government. The election was held on January 22, 2009, two weeks after the AL assumed the office, with a total of 7.32 crore voters entitled to exercise their franchise. The EC completed all preparations for the polls during the past caretaker government regime.

But the polls were not completely peaceful as parliamentary elections held on December 29, 2008 under the caretaker government regime were. Clashes, ruling party activists influencing polling centres, snatching away of ballot boxes and ballot papers, preventing voters from going to polling centres and forcing voters to vote openly in many areas scarred the

long awaited upazila parishad election day.

The elections to over 4,000 union parishads were the largest scale voting the EC has conducted during the tenure of the present government. The polls were held in two phases—the first between March and April and the second between May and June 2011 which have around six crore voters.

At the beginning of the same year, elections to 254 municipalities, comprising altogether 74.53 lakh voters, were held. Staggered polling was held on four different dates.

Held in different years, polls to the city corporations were also on a small scale, with the total number of voters being 48.69 lakh.

Over the past four and a half years, the EC has conducted by-polls to 17 parliamentary constituencies which together have not more than 60 lakh voters.

As all these polls were staggered and held on a small scale, the EC has been

able to focus on all them. The law enforcement agencies have been able to ensure security as none of the elections was on a countrywide scale.

Moreover, the results had nothing to do with any change in the power equation.

But the general election comes with a completely different picture. This election is the only legitimate means to acquire state power.

As in previous years, the EC will have to conduct polling in all the 300 parliamentary constituencies in a single day. The number of voters in the upcoming polls is expected to be more than 9.20 crore.

The credibility of the current EC has already come under question over some of its recent activities which contributed to eroding people's confidence in the commission.

And politicisation of the civil administration, including that of the police admin-

istration that plays a crucial role in assisting the EC to hold the polls, remains a major obstacle to the holding of a free and fair parliamentary election.

In this culture, the administration has generally performed better when a non-partisan election time government has been in office, particularly since 1991.

This time the situation is much more complicated as the caretaker government system has been dissolved and the civil administration has been politicised even more.

The BNP-led opposition has been reiterating its determination to boycott and resist the general election if it is held under the present government.

Now, the big question is: will the government's success in holding the local government polls finally or at all work effectively in ensuring a fair and participatory general election?

Mubarak may be freed today

FROM PAGE 16

court had ordered Mubarak's release. His lawyer, Fareed al-Deeb, confirmed this as he left Tora prison after the session. Asked when Mubarak would go free, he told Reuters: "Maybe tomorrow".

Mubarak, 85, was sentenced to life in prison last year for failing to prevent the killing of demonstrators. But a court accepted his appeal earlier this year and ordered a retrial.

The ailing former president probably has no political future. But many Egyptians would see his release as the rehabilitation of an old order that endured through six decades of mili-

tary-backed rule—and even a reversal of the pro-democracy revolt that toppled him.

At least 900 people, including 100 soldiers and police, have been killed in a crackdown on Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood in the past week, making it Egypt's bloodiest civil episode in decades.

The United States and the European Union are both reviewing aid to Cairo in light of the bloodshed, but Saudi Arabia, a foe of the Brotherhood, has promised to make up any shortfall.

Mubarak is still being retried on charges of complicity in the killing of protesters during the revolt against him, but he has

already served the maximum pre-trial detention in that case.

The court ruling removed the last legal ground for his imprisonment in connection with a corruption case, following a similar decision in another corruption case on Monday.

Mubarak's release might stir more turbulence in Egypt, where the army ousted Mursi, the country's first freely elected leader, on July 3, saying it was responding to the will of the people following vast protests demanding his removal.

The generals have installed an interim administration to oversee a roadmap they say will lead Egypt back to democracy.

JU VC kept confined to office

FROM PAGE 1

No classes or exams were held yesterday and the transport services of the university remained suspended.

The agitating teachers complained that the VC did not expel JU unit Bangladesh Chhatra League General Secretary Rajib Ahmed Rasel even though "he had assaulted" a teacher on April 6.

They also accused the VC of being complicit in

anomalies in the admission process and teachers' appointments, ruining the campus environment by taking up unnecessary projects, and misusing university funds.

The forum Convenor Prof Hanif Ali told The Daily Star, "The VC has lost his right to hold the post ... we will continue our protest until he quits."

Terming the teachers' demand "baseless and

illogical", Prof Anwar said, "The teachers are ignoring and violating a High Court order ... I request the chancellor to investigate the allegations and take legal steps to save the university."

On July 24, the High Court, in response to a petition filed by four teachers and a student, had directed the JU authorities to immediately take necessary steps for the uninterrupted continuation

of JU's day-to-day functions.

Since April 27, Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (Juta) had been demanding that the VC be removed in connection with his inaction following the assault of the teacher.

Juta withdrew its agitation programmes on July 30 but the Sadharon Shikkhak Forum was formed and the agitation continued.

PMO bins Star report, editorial

FROM PAGE 1

In the report, The Daily Star alleged that the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the highest executive of the country, made a pointed attack on the newspaper despite its best practices to uphold the highest level of ethical journalism.

It is the expectation of each reader of a newspaper that it would practice ethical journalism and refrain from distortion of the facts. Unfortunately, The Daily Star, being an influential daily, is out of the practice every now and then. Even today's editorial is a glaring example of distortion of the truth.

In the editorial, the daily said, the fifteenth amendment of the Constitution was held 'according to her (PM) own wishes, and in undue haste, without a serious effort to engage anybody, including her own allies...' As a matter of fact, the Government followed a lengthy process for the fifteenth amendment in the Constitution.

The Supreme Court in May, 2010 declared the caretaker government system illegal, void and ultra vires to the Constitution.

Keeping in mind to involve all political parties representing in the Parliament with the amendment process, the government and the Parliament secretariat had requested the BNP several times formally and informally to give the names of at least two MPs with a view to include in the Special Committee in this regard (except Jamaat, as the party does not believe in the fundamental principles of the Constitution). For the first time in the history of constitutional amendments in Bangladesh, such Committee was formed by the Government. However, the BNP did not turn up with any name with an ill-motive. Except BNP, all representing political parties gave their names.

Then, the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the Parliamentary session on July 21, 2010 as per Article 266 of the Rules of Procedure proposed the 15-member 'Special Committee' comprising the members of the Parliament from different political parties with the Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury as the chairperson.

The Special Committee also accommodated a cross-section of eminent people including a number of former Chief Justices, Supreme Court's Judges, senior lawyers, leaders of the political parties, eminent intellectuals and freedom fighters, editors including The Daily Star Editor Mr. Mahfuz Anam, senior journalists irrespective of their political views to come to a decision on the very important issue.

After about one year intense discussion, the special committee submitted its report to the Parliament. On the basis of the report of the Special Committee, the fifteenth amendment bill was placed in the Parliament by the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister. Usually, such an important bill should be placed by the Leader of the House. But she gave the responsibility to the Law Minister so that the MPs do not take it as PM's affairs and give their views freely on the bill. The bill was discussed accordingly in the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs. The Standing Committee scrutinized the bill and reported it back to the Parliament with its recommendations.

Though BNP did not take part in the activities of the Special Committee, the party had immense scope to give their opinion at any stage of the one-year process and also in the parliamentary proceedings during the passage of the bill in the House on June 30, 2011. But with an ulterior motive they kept them in abeyance from the process. The Daily Star perhaps knowingly ignored the fact aimed at making the government's sincere efforts questionable.

Neither the Government nor the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina believes in maligning or bashing media. Rather, the present government is a real promoter to "Full freedom of the media" and gave approval to 15 new satellite TV channels so far. The present government provided licenses to 14 community radios for the first time and 7 FM radios.

The press is now enjoying the highest freedom than ever before. The present government does not believe in interference in expressing any thought and opinion. However, it is very regretful that a section of the press, which have limitation of thoughts, cannot give due value to the government's sincere endeavours.

However, we do appreciate the positive role of The Daily Star in many areas and welcome their reports pointing out the errors of the government. At the same time, we expect their judicious observation and comments on the initiatives taken by the government for the welfare of the people of all walks of life.

Abul Kalam Azad
Press Secretary to the Hon'ble Prime Minister

BISWAJIT KILLING

2 witnesses identify attacker

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two prosecution witnesses in a Dhaka court yesterday identified Rafiqul Islam Shakil as the one who had attacked Biswajit Das with a machete during a road blockade programme enforced by BNP-led 18-party alliance on December 9 last year.

Witnesses Yusuf Bepari and Abdur Razzak, line secretaries of Bahadur Shah Paribahan Ltd, also identified the weapon which was recovered in their presence from a dustbin adjacent to the Victoria Park in Old Dhaka on December 15 last year, said court sources.

In their statements, the witnesses said a micro-bus was driven to their office in the old city on December 15 around 8:30pm. Policemen came out of the vehicle with a man named Shakil. Showing the machete to them, the cops said Biswajit was hacked with the weapon. Yusuf and Razzak then signed a document which included the machete as evidence.

Their testimonies, along with statements of two other witnesses, were recorded by Judge ABM Nizamul Haque of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4.

Parbati Howlader, a cleaner at the Intensive Dental Care where Biswajit was attacked, said there was blood stains in the corridor of the clinic when she arrived for work around 9:15am on December 9 last year. Later on, she had washed away the stains.

Md Shahid, a tea vendor from the Shankharibazar intersection, said on that day around 9:00am, he had seen a group of men coming out of the Jagannath University campus and attacking and stabbing a man. He later came to know that the man was Biswajit Das, who had died at Milford Hospital the same day.

The court fixed August 25 for the next hearing.

Proprietor of Amantron Tailors in Shankharibazar, Biswajit, 24, was hacked to death allegedly by some activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Police charged 21 BCL activists with murder, of which seven are now in jail and 14 others are in hiding.

Anti-cheating

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rudimentary anti-cheating hats was recently posted on Facebook by the KU student board, where it got so many negative reactions that it was eventually removed. Unfortunately for the Thai learning institution the photo had already been picked up by the media and the negative responses just kept on coming. However, it appears the students were not pressured into wearing the paper blinders, in fact they were the one who suggested it.

"It was an agreement between us. No student was forced to wear a hat," Nattadon Rungruangkitkrai, a lecturer at Kasetsart University, said during a press conference.

Mozena

FROM PAGE 16

seeking contempt proceedings against HRW for its recent report on the verdict on former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam's war crimes case.

On Friday, the US-based rights body claimed that Azam's trial at the tribunal "had not met international standards" and was "deeply flawed".

On Tuesday, a seven-member delegation of the prosecution submitted the petition to the registrar office of the tribunal.

In the petition, the prosecution urged International Crimes Tribunal-1 to initiate the contempt proceedings against HRW Asia Director Brad Adams, its associate for the Asia Division Storm Tiv, and its board of directors.

The prosecutors said the case against Azam had been pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and the HRW statement at this stage was tantamount to contempt.

On July 5, the tribunal sentenced the former Jamaat leader to 90 years' jail when he was found guilty on all the five charges of crimes against humanity during the country's war of independence.

'Shibir' activist

FROM PAGE 1

Muslim Brotherhood and deposed Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, Shaikat wrote a letter to the embassy threatening to blow it up if the authorities did not forward the letter to the Egyptian government.

On Tuesday, he dropped the letter in the letter box of the Egyptian embassy in the capital's Gulshan.

"The USA, Israel and the KSA [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] supported it [the killings of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Egypt]. But we will never forgive and forget General Sisi, Saudi King Abdullah and other killers. To divide the Muslim Ummah, anti-Islam Zionist agents are doing all these misdeeds," read the letter.

"Therefore, I hope you will send this letter [to your government]. Otherwise, something may happen wrong like Egyptian embassy firing in Libya," it added.

On the envelope, he wrote his name Mohammed Shaikat Osman as the sender and a cell phone number.

Receiving the threat, the Egyptian embassy on the same day sent a letter to the

foreign ministry, requesting the government to reinforce security arrangements at the Egyptian chancery.

Later, the embassy authorities decided to shut its consular section for 11 days from Wednesday.

On information, law enforcement agencies beefed up security in and around the mission.

Hailing from Jalalabad, Cox's Bazar, Shaikat was inspired by a Facebook campaign in support of Muslim Brotherhood, said DB official Monirul.

Shaikat's handwriting matched the written letter. The DB was probing whether the arrestee was a Rohingya and anyone else was involved in the incident, he added.

On Tuesday, activists of Shibir brought out a procession and blasted a crude bomb in the capital's Dhanmondi, protesting the recent crackdown on the supporters of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

BBC reported: About 900 people including cops have reportedly been killed in Egypt since last Wednesday, when the army cleared protest camps set up by supporters of deposed president Morsi.