



A sign saying "Madhu Haji Lake View" is placed on the sand-filled Buriganga second channel and a wall has been built around it at Kamrangirchar in the capital. A factory, right, gradually gobbles up the channel in the same area. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Yunus would have been in jail if I were PM

Says Latif Siddique

UNB, Dhaka

Textiles and Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddique yesterday said Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus would have been in jail had Latif been the prime minister.

"Yunus is a traitor because he advocated for restoration of the caretaker government system violating the constitution. He should be punished for the offence," Latif said.

"Yunus is lucky that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is yet to take any action against him," he told a discussion.

The ruling party-backed Jagannath University teachers' forum arranged the discussion at the university to mark the National Mourning Day and protesting the August-21 grenade attack.

On August 22, Prof Yunus said the next national election must be held under a non-party neutral government to make it credible, acceptable and peaceful.

"There's no scope of having a peaceful election without a non-party neutral (polls-time) government. There must be an election and that is under a non-party neutral government," he said after a meeting Latif's brother Krishak-Sramik Janata League leader Kader Siddique at Yunus Centre in the capital.

No need for amendment to charter

Law minister says on interim govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No constitutional amendment is needed to determine the structure of the interim government that will oversee the next parliamentary election, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said yesterday.

Political parties can hold talks to determine the structure, Shafique said after attending the inaugural session of "Sarc Regional Judicial Conference on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing" at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital.

Insisting that the next general election would be held under an interim government, he said the incumbent election commission, "which is performing its duties properly, will conduct the polls."

About militancy in the country, the minister said some organisations had been carrying out terrorism in Taliban style. They had been mounting attacks on the law enforcers.

"We are taking this seriously," he said adding that stern actions would be taken against these groups.

Asked if he was hinting at the Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, he declined a straight answer and said, "Whoever they are, their activities are unacceptable."

The three-day judicial meet has been co-organised by Counter Terrorism Bureau of the US State Department and US Department of Justice.

Cause lost

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The Buriganga second channel used to flow from Chandnighat to Rayerbazar through Lalbagh, Nawabganj, Hazaribagh and Mohammadpur, nearly a five-kilometre stretch. Half of it has now been grabbed and officially allotted, said locals.

There is no official record of the grabbing either.

"Once, cargo and passenger vessels plied this channel and the locals used to bathe and do daily chores here," said Humayun Kabir, former ward commissioner of Nawabganj.

Fishermen used to anchor their boats in the

place where now stands the ballpoint pen factory, he said, adding that local inhabitants had already faced severe drainage problem as a consequence of grabbing the channel.

The district administration wilfully left the channel out during the latest river foreshore demarcation survey to facilitate encroachment, alleged Kabir.

Md Qamrul Islam, local lawmaker and state minister for law, said: "It is our failure that we could not save the river from powerful grabbers. No matter which party in power, ruling party men had always plundered the channel by turn."

According to a report prepared in February this year by assistant commissioner (land) of the district administration, the river has been filled up in Kamrangirchar and Kalunagar areas by more than a hundred encroachers, big and small.

The city corporation men have also filled up the channel from Loharpool to Companyhat dumping solid waste, the report said.

"Even 15 years ago, I used to visit my grand parents in Kholamora by boat, through this river," said Md Shamim, a resident of Nawabganj, adding that the channel was hardly naviga-



ble now.

"The choked river deeply saddens me when I go there for a stroll," said resident of Mohammadpur Mahbub Ali Khan.

The Directorate of Land Survey and Records has labelled the channel in Kamrangirchar and Kalunagar as river, a government property, but at places it has dubiously shown some channel areas as private land.

According to law, a person cannot possess a river, as it is a khas land.

The inland water transport authority in 2007 under a scheme for Dhaka river port development

intended to build a harbour in the channel and take it over so that river vessels could berth there instead of crowding at Sadarghat terminal.

But the district administration never handed it over to BIWTA. Instead it leased out seven acres of the channel area to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), a portion to power grid sub-station and two other pieces of land for a government hospital and a school in Kamrangirchar.

Asked why, Dhaka district Additional Deputy Commissioner Manoj Kumar Roy failed to answer saying it was an "old issue". Shaikh Yusuf Harun,

deputy commissioner of Dhaka district, said they were working with BIWTA on how to demarcate the channel's foreshore area and evict the encroachers.

At a meeting on June 5, Manoj Kumar decided to form a technical committee comprised of engineers from Water Development Board, Dhaka Wasa and BIWTA to ensure the channel's flow despite allotment of river land to Rab and for the hospital.

"Another committee headed by me is working on how to reclaim rest of the channel," said Manoj Kumar giving no more details.

Land deal won't hurt W Bengal

Says Salman Khurshid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh has "no adverse implications" for West Bengal or any other state and is a "win-win situation", Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid has said.

"We are trying to persuade them that there is no adverse implications for Bengal or indeed for anyone of us in the country ... that this is a win-win situation", Khurshid told Times Now news channel yesterday evening.

His remarks came two days after strong objections were expressed by India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, Trinamool Congress and Asom Gana Parishad to the LBA.

The lawmakers of the three opposition parties had last week prevented Khurshid from tabling a constitution amendment bill, aimed at ratifying the LBA, in the Rajya Sabha, the upper House of Parliament, last week.

BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, at a press conference here last Saturday, had voiced her party's refusal to support the LBA and so did Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in a Facebook post.

BJP, Trinamool Congress and AGP oppose the LBA on the ground that India would stand to lose more land in the exchange of enclaves.

Nazrul's death

FROM PAGE 16 highlighting Nazrul's life and works.

The day's programme will begin with placing wreaths at the poet's mazar at Dhaka University (DU) Central Mosque premises in the morning.

A quarkhawani will be held at the central mosque after Fazr prayers, DU Public Relations Officer Ashraf Ali Khan said yesterday.

Bishwa Bangalee Sammelon, South Asia Literature and Cultural Parishad and Wonders' Media will jointly organise a discussion at Nazrul's graveyard premises.

Bangla Academy, Nazrul Institute, Shilpakala Academy and other organisations will also observe the day in a befitting manner.

Known as rebel poet, Nazrul was born at Churulia in Bardhaman of West Bengal on 11 Joistha of Bangla calendar year 1306 (May 24, 1899).

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman brought the poet to Dhaka from Kolkata in 1972.

The poet of equality and humanity, Nazrul used to raise his voice to the highest pitch in favour of humanity defying many adversities of his time.

Nazrul died in Dhaka on August 29, 1976 (the 12th Bhadra of Bangla calendar).

Agri scientists aggrieved

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Dr Md Syedul Islam told The Daily Star that many proposals were forwarded to the government seeking incentives to agro-scientists.

"I heard today that the government has increased the retirement age for scientists at science laboratory. The prime minister had pledged to provide the agro-scientists with such incentives and also a separate pay scale for the scientists like in India," he noted.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, however, last night said, "It's under process.... The agriculture ministry has already placed the issue [incentives for agro-scientists] before the establishment ministry." She hoped incentives for agro-scientists would be announced soon.

Administrators overseeing the NARS were worried at agriculture scientists' quitting jobs and going abroad. They attributed this to the government's failure to announce a long-pledged special incentive package for the scientists.

Unhappy with the poor pay package and other facilities at home, and attracted to greater opportunities abroad, at least 300 scientists went into self-retirement from the public research institutions under the NARS over

the last decade, while 30 percent more out of a 1,700-strong scientists' pool were now fast approaching retirement age, show official statistics.

Officials and scientists at Barc said such a massive brain drain has created a shortage of experienced and skilled agriculture scientists in the public sector institutions when there is a growing need for research to innovate and introduce new and improved seeds and farm technologies to combat climate change fallout and help feed the country's ever growing population.

Chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the cabinet meeting yesterday also approved the draft of the National Integrated Multimodal Transport Policy, 2013 aiming to make the country's multimodal transport system safe and cost-effective.

Musharraf said the proposed policy was given approval in line with the government's bid for sustainable development, Millennium Development Goals, Sixth Five-Year Plan and the Perspective Plan.

The integrated policy would prioritise rail and river communication, he added.

Objectives of the policy are to make transport system more affordable and environ-

ment-friendly by reducing transport costs and accidents, enhancing competitive edge and developing service sector.

Development of roads, rail, domestic river ports, sea ports and human resources are also included in the policy, under which emphasis will be given on regional cooperation for effective transport by ensuring land use plan and proper training for the transport workers. The policy also covers ensuring due facilities for women, senior citizens and physically challenged people while using transport.

To monitor the policy, said Musharraf, a cabinet committee will be formed by the prime minister, under which another National Multimodal Transport Coordination Committee will be formed.

The cabinet also endorsed the draft of the Bangladesh Handloom Board Bill, 2013 to make the existing law of 1977 more time befitting for boosting the handloom industry.

The proposed law has relaxed the provision of holding the monthly meeting of the handloom board as it could now be held in every two months. The proposed law has been formulated in Bangla as per the higher court verdict.

Rich sleep well at night

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nights -- and had never resorted to sleep remedies.

High earners were more likely to share their bed each night with a partner, but also admit to using their laptop as the last thing they do before going to bed.

At the other end of the scale, a third of unemployed people surveyed in the poll said they slept very

poorly most nights.

They are also far less likely to share a bed with their partners, according to The Sleep Council.

Nearly a quarter of those working in sales, media, marketing, architecture, engineering and building said they turned to alcohol to help them nod off.

Those in arts and culture topped the list of late night

drinkers.

Lawyers suffer the least from sleep deprivation and are in bed by 10:00pm, with City workers coming second.

Architects and engineers complained the most about getting too few hours in bed at night, often blaming a nap in the day for upsetting their body clock.

BNP won't accept

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national standing committee member.

The prime minister herself knows that the 18-party would not participate in any election under her leadership, he added.

Talking about the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's advice on holding the next election with the participation of all political parties, Moudud claimed that he [Ban] had talked about holding the next election under a non-party government.

BNP had been demanding a non-party government, not an all-party government, he added, while speaking at a programme in the capital's National Press

Club.

Moudud, however, claimed that the government's nonchalant attitude to the opposition's demand for reviving the caretaker government system would change from next October.

In a separate programme, another BNP standing committee member Rafiqul Islam Mia warned that the country would face constitutional crisis if the UN initiative to resolve the ongoing political deadlock fails.

"We all have to sit for a dialogue in line with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's August 23 phone call to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia to resolve the

country's ongoing political stand-off," he said.

Rafiqul made the observation while talking to reporters after placing a floral wreath at late president Ziaur Rahman's grave on the occasion of the 24th founding anniversary of Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal in the capital yesterday.

Talking to the reporters at a programme in Thakurgaon, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said the government did not want to revive the caretaker government system, as they had understood from the AL-blessed candidates' defeat in the five city corporation elections that people were not with them.

UN inspectors

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any evidence to support rebel claims that government forces fired gas-laden rockets five days ago that killed hundreds of civilians will be a key element in arguments for peace or war.

"I am with the team now," the doctor who uses the name Abu Karam told Reuters by telephone from rebel-held Mouadamiya.

"We are in the Rawda mosque and they are meeting with the wounded. Our medics and the inspectors are talking to the patients and taking samples from the victims now."

Wassim al-Ahmad, an opposition activist, said members of the Free Syrian Army umbrella rebel organisation and the opposition's Mouadamiya Local Council were accompanying the inspectors on their tour of the suburb.

Activists say at least 80 people were killed in

Mouadamiya when the district was hit with poison gas at 4:00am on August 21. Three other rebel-held districts - Irbin, Ain Tarma and Jobar - were also hit in attacks that killed hundreds of people.

The inspectors pressed on despite the sniper attack that disabled the lead vehicle in their convoy, forcing them to turn back for a replacement car.

"The first vehicle of the Chemical Weapons Investigation Team was deliberately shot at multiple times by unidentified snipers in the buffer zone area," a UN statement said.

Syrian state television blamed rebel "terrorists" for the shooting. The opposition blamed it on pro-Assad militiamen. Any delay diminishes whatever evidence the experts might recover.

Meanwhile, Syrian President Bashar Assad says his troops did not use chemical weapons in an attack on

rebel-held suburb in a Damascus suburb last week where hundreds of people died, AFP reported.

Assad told Russia's Izvestia daily that the accusations that his troops were responsible were "politically motivated." He said in an interview published yesterday that attacking such an area with chemical weapons would not make sense for the government as there was no clear frontline between regime and rebel forces.

Syria said Sunday that a UN team could investigate the site but a senior White House official dismissed the deal as "too late to be credible."

Bashar al-Assad warned the US of "failure" if it attacks Syria.

Assad argued Washington's recent military campaigns had all fallen short of their aims.

"The United States faces failure just like in all the

previous wars they waged, starting with Vietnam and up to our days," he said.

A US diplomatic offensive led by Secretary of State John Kerry, comments coming from the White House and signs the Pentagon is positioning ships closer to Syria fuelled an impression that President Barack Obama may be getting ready to jettison his antipathy to new Middle Eastern entanglements and to order limited military action.

Kerry has spent days on the phone with Washington's foreign partners.

French President Francois Hollande told his US counterpart that "everything was consistent" with the conclusion that Damascus was behind the attack.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned Kerry of the "extremely dangerous consequences" of launching military action.