

DAPPLED GOLD CRESTS FOR FOREIGN FRIENDS JS sub-committee formed for probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday formed a three-member sub-committee to find out the people involved in making and purchasing substandard crests, which were awarded to Bangladesh's foreign friends for their contribution to our Liberation War.

The enquiry committee, headed by ruling Awami League lawmaker Afsarul Amin, was asked to submit its report within a month.

The parliamentary standing committee on liberation war affairs came up with the decision following revelation of the scandalous act.

"We have taken the matter seriously," AB Tajul Islam, chief of the parliamentary standing committee, told The Daily Star after emerging from a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

Perpetrators of the crime deserve no mercy, he added. According to media report, the Bangladesh Standards

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Fake medical centre sealed off in capital Owner, manager given jail terms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday sealed off a fake medical centre in the capital's Banani, and sentenced its owner and manager to six-month jail terms each for providing fake fitness certificates to overseas jobseekers.

Star Cure Medical Centre owner Abul Bashar and its manager Mohammad Moniruzzaman were also fined Tk 2.05 lakh and Tk 2 lakh respectively, said Executive Magistrate AHM

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Changes in RTI act urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need for amending Section 7 of the Right to Information (RTI) act, which is hindering the free flow of information to people.

Government and non-government officials often use the section to deny giving information to applicants, said Information Commissioner Prof Sadeka Halim.

She called for modernising the section that makes disclosure of "certain types of information not mandatory".

In his keynote paper, Nepal Chandra Sarker, MRDI adviser and former secretary to Information Commission, made mention of a farmer in Banaripara upazila of Barisal who was sent to five offices before being denied information which officials called "secrete".

Prof Sadeka Halim said some 572 complaints were filed with the Information Commission for not providing information, 50 percent of which were not accepted due to restrictions imposed by Section 7 and other issues resulting from its "misapplication".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Road crash kills one in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver was killed and four others were injured in a road crash in the capital's Paltan yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Alim of Selimpur village in Joypurhat's Talai upazila.

The accident took place at Paltan intersection around 5:00am when a truck hit the auto-rickshaw carrying four passengers, leaving its driver dead on spot.

Sub-inspector Shushankar of Paltan Police Station admitted the incident.

WAR CRIMES TRIAL PW rejects Qaisar's innocence again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness yesterday rejected defence's claim that Syed Md Qaisar is innocent of war crimes and reiterated that Qaisar had abducted him and his father and handed them over to the Pakistani occupation army.

Defence counsel Abdus Sobhan Tarafdar made a suggestion to 8th prosecution witness Shah Hussain Ali, son of martyred Shah Firoz Ali of Habiganj, that Qaisar did not hand over the two to the Pakistani occupation army, but the witness said it is not true.

In his deposition on Tuesday also at the International Crimes Tribunal-2, Hussain said Qaisar and his accomplices had handed him over to the Pakistani army during the Liberation War and their brutal torture compelled him to amputate his one leg.

Qaisar and his cohorts also abducted Hussain's father and handed him over to the army. Firoz Ali never returned home.

Tarafdar yesterday also suggested that the witness lost his leg in an accident much after the Liberation War. Again the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Jan 5 polls aimed to strengthen democracy

Says Bangladesh envoy in US

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Ambassador in the US Akramul Qader on Wednesday said the January 5 national elections were held under an unprecedented commitment of the government to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

CTG EIGHT-MURDER CASE SC upholds Shibir men's acquittal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday rejected a government petition seeking stay on a High Court verdict that acquitted four Islami Chhatra Shibir activists in the eight-murder case in Chittagong.

Chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order after holding hearing on the petition.

The four accused will now get released from jail, as the HC verdict is in force following the apex court chamber judge's order, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Moniruzzaman Rubel told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

JUSTICE FOR ALL Find ways for rule of law

India's ex-chief justice Altamas Kabir tells discussion in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unless there is a will to put laws into practice it is very difficult to ensure that justice reaches all the people, former Indian chief justice Altamas Kabir said yesterday.

Speaking on "Access to Justice for All" in the capital, he shared how alternative dispute management strategies have been used in India to provide means to the poorest of the poor who do not have the means, make justice system more accessible, and remove backlogs.



Replying to questions by young lawyers, activists and journalists, Justice Kabir said, "Political pressures will always be there but you must have shoulder broad enough to check that pressure."

"Use your wisdom to find ways around a problem," he said in his speech, organised by the Institute of Governance and Development of Brac University, at The Daily Star Centre.

Kabir, who was India's 39th chief justice from September 2012 to July 2013, talked

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

SAAD MURDER BAU students bleed for killers' arrest

BAU CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) yesterday emptied several syringes of their own blood in front of classrooms of different faculties as protest, demanding punishment to the killers of Saad Ibney Momtaj, a fellow student.

This is the symbol of Saad's blood, said the students. If anyone wants to attend classes, they will have to step on the blood of Saad, they said.

Saad Ibney Momtaj, a final-year student of fisheries faculty of the university, succumbed to his injuries at a private clinic in Mymensingh town on April 1, a day after some

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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Md. Mosharraf Hossain Mazumder
EVP & Head of HRD

on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

Accord Statement on 'Critical Findings' Factory Inspections Which Lead to Suspension of Operations and Evacuation of Factory Buildings

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Accord) marks a binding commitment of 160 plus global brands and retailers and global and national RMG industry union federations to prevent avoidable tragedies such as the Rana Plaza building collapse and the Tazreen Fashions Ltd. factory fire from ever happening again in the Bangladesh RMG factories.

Factory inspections of Accord producing facilities designed to identify fire, electrical, and building structural safety risks are an integral component of the Accord requirements. As expected, Accord inspections are identifying safety risks in all three areas.

Many of the findings, such as reducing weight loads and adhering to load management plans, can be easily corrected and do not involve significant costs. Other findings are a matter of cleaning up, organizing, and then being disciplined in maintenance practices. These include properly connecting and sealing electrical wires and keeping wires and circuits free of dust and lint. Other findings and safety requirements involve more substantial costs. For example: installing fire doors, automated smoke detectors and fire alarm systems, and establishing fire protected egress from factory buildings.

During the course of the first 250 factory inspections, Accord structural engineers have identified "critical findings" in 8 buildings. The findings were of a structural nature and were severe which led to recommendations that the buildings be temporarily evacuated until such time that more in-depth tests could be conducted, substantial weight and load is removed from the building, and/or immediate strengthening measures are completed.

In these cases, the Accord requested that the Review Panel, established through the Ministry of Labour and Employment led National Plan of Action, be convened. The Review Panel was established for inspections which lead to determinations that a building evacuation or suspension to operations is required. In order to "overturn" the initial production suspension / evacuation recommendation of the inspection, a unanimous decision of the team of 4 Review Panel engineers (1 Accord, 1 Alliance, 2 GoB/BUET) must be reached. The Accord has conformed to the Review Panel mechanism in all 8 of our critical findings cases.

The decision to suspend operations and evacuate a factory building is a serious and difficult one. Such decision is only taken when the inspections show very serious problems and safety vulnerabilities. They are only taken after all options to safely permit production and occupancy are thoroughly considered. In the end, it is a matter of the science and the safety of the people working in the building that drives the decision.

In these cases, the efforts of the Accord focus on expediting the required remedial measures so the factory can be safely re-opened as quickly as possible. The Accord is working earnestly with the factory owners, Accord brands, and worker representatives in these efforts.

Under the Accord, signatory brands are required to provide financial assistance to the owners if it is needed to complete the remedial measures. The Accord also requires that signatory brands ensure the factory owners maintain the employment relationship with and pay the regular monthly wages to the affected workers affected by suspended operations and evacuation for up to 6 months while the urgent remediation is executed. Accord signatory brands in these factories are required to communicate their commitment to the remediation and to continued business with the factory so the difficult period of reduced ability to meet production can be overcome.

The Accord is not operating in Bangladesh to "close RMG factories". The Accord is operating in Bangladesh to make factories safe and the industry sustainable. At times, tough decisions that nobody wants to be the one to make must be made. The Accord accepts this responsibility and will work with the affected parties in Accord inspection critical findings cases and all other factory assessment and remediation efforts so needed fixes get fixed. Though there are enormous challenges involved, as a result workers and the Bangladesh RMG industry will be better off and most importantly, producing in safe buildings.

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