

16th amendment

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According to the provision, the Supreme Judicial Council, led by the chief justice, would enquire into the capacity or conduct of a judge and make a recommendation to the president, and then the president could order on the judge's removal.

Yesterday, the lawyer prayed to the court to issue a rule upon the government to explain why the 16th amendment to the constitution should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

The HC is likely to hear the petition on October 19, Eunus told The Daily Star.

On September 17, parliament passed the 16th constitutional amendment bill, rejecting all calls for soliciting public opinion, and a gazette notification was issued in this regard on September 22.

42 judges

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lodged with the ministry in this regard. The ministry then engages a senior district judge to probe the allegation.

The final probe report is sent to the HC for a decision which is later executed by the ministry, mentioned the officials.

The ministry in last two months has sent three lower court judges into forced retirement for misconduct and corruption. The judges are AKM Ishtiaque Hossain, chairman of First Labour Court of Chittagong and former District and Sessions Judge of Dhaka; Mizanur Rahman, Additional District Judge of Jessore; and Salauddin Md Akram, Joint District Judge of Lalmonirhat.

Ministry sources said Ishtiaque as the district judge in Khulna had acquitted the accused in a few hundred corruption cases without taking the charges into cognisance.

There were allegations of taking bribes and other corruption against Mizanur while Salauddin had been absent from office for a long time.

Opportunities

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Addressing the event, Social Welfare Minister Syed Mohsin Ali announced that white canes, which are necessary for safe movement of visually impaired people, will be produced in the country from next year.

Presently, equipment like white canes and wheelchairs are not produced in the country.

The minister also pledged to introduce special mobile services to provide physiotherapy to physically challenged people at their doorsteps. Saidul Haque, president of Jatiya Protibondhi Forum, demanded a reserved seat in the parliament for people with disabilities.

Promod Mankin, state minister for the social welfare ministry, among others, spoke.

Mortified

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Islam, officer-in-charge of Mohadevpur Police Station.

Returning home, she took poison in her room around 12:30pm.

Her family first took her to Mohadevpur Upazila Health Complex and later to Naogaon Sadar Hospital. As her condition did not improve, she was being shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital when she died around 5:00am yesterday.

Rocky of Bindarampur village in Mohadevpur upazila went into hiding following the incident.

The girl's father filed a case against the boy with Mohadevpur Police Station yesterday.

The Daily Star has kept from identifying the girl and her family, given the social stigma associated with the incident.

Stem cell trial

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one clinical trial was to test the safety and tolerability of the operation, which involved injections with three different doses – 50,000, 100,000 and 150,000 cells – said Robert Lanza, chief scientific officer of Advanced Cell Technology in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

No adverse safety issues were found during the three years that the 18 patients were monitored. There was also evidence that the injected cells had survived, and had contributed to an improvement in the eyesight of some patients, Dr Lanza said. "About half of the patients had an improvement in visual acuity of three lines or more, which corresponds to a doubling of the visual angle, and is generally accepted as clinically significant," Dr Lanza said.

Follow-up testing found that 10 out of the 18 patients experienced substantial improvements in how well they could see, according to the study published in the journal The Lancet.

Further clinical trials will be carried out to test the efficacy of the treatment.

No sign yet of MH370 in first update of underwater search

AFP, Sydney

Australian authorities released their first update on the latest underwater probe for missing flight MH370 yesterday, saying more than 670 square kilometres had been searched without success.

The Malaysia Airlines aircraft carrying 239 people vanished en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8 and no sign of the jet has been found despite a massive air and sea search.

The Boeing 777, which is believed to have crashed into the southern Indian Ocean after inexplicably veering off course, is now the subject of a renewed underwater hunt far off western Australia.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), which is leading the search, said the Malaysian-contracted vessel GO Phoenix was continuing to conduct underwater search operations.

The underwater search began on October 6 and followed a survey to map the seabed. About 127,000 square kilometres of the search zone has been mapped so far.

Ex-Libyan general in bid to retake Benghazi

AFP, Benghazi

Forces loyal to a prominent former general in Libya launched a new bid yesterday to recapture the second city Benghazi from Islamist fighters vying for power in the violence-plagued state.

The North African nation has been gripped by turmoil since the 2011 uprising that toppled long-time leader Moamer Kadhafi, with the authorities struggling to control powerful militias that ousted and killed him.

Gunfire and explosions were heard in Benghazi yesterday, according to an AFP correspondent, after ex-general Khalifa Haftar announced that he was ready to "liberate" the flashpoint eastern city from Islamists.

Witnesses said that tanks had launched an assault against an Islamist militia known as the "February 17 Martyrs Brigade", while planes carried out air raids against the group, whose headquarters is located west of the city.

Oil-rich Libya has two competing governments and a host of rival armed militias jostling for influence in the largely lawless country.

US experts inspect

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African countries since August 12. Of them, 97 have completed the 21-day follow-up and are in good health.

The US team's visit comes a week after six Bangladeshis returning from Liberia managed to pass through the airport without being screened.

Rezia said five of them were screened later, and the authorities were still trying to locate the person who was yet to be screened.

Prof Mahmudur Rahman, member of inter-ministerial monitoring committee on Ebola, claimed that the health screening arrangement at the international airport is one of the best in the world.

"This is because the airlines inform the immigration whenever somebody buys a ticket from West African countries. The immigration then communicates it to the medical team at the airport," said Mahmudur, also director at the Institute of Epidemiology,

Sophisticated vehicles attached to the ship by tow cables have been programmed to detect the biggest parts of the aircraft likely to be in one piece, such as engines and fuselage.

"GO Phoenix continues to conduct underwater search operations," the ATSB said.

"At one point, operations were halted in order to recover the deep tow vehicle and rectify a cable connection fault. Operations were quickly recommenced."

GO Phoenix is searching the area considered the most likely final resting place of the plane, based on detailed analysis of the aircraft's satellite communications.

A second ship, the Fugro Discovery, is conducting sea trials and is expected to join the search mid next week in the second most likely area, officials have said.

Australia has been spearheading the hunt for the plane, a dauntingly vast task that has been beset by false leads and initial confusion -- to the continued frustration of grieving relatives.

One parliament, elected in June, is recognised by the international community but contested by the militia controlling most of Tripoli and by the Islamists who dominate Benghazi.

Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thani and the majority faction in the elected legislature have decamped to the far eastern city of Tobruk because of widespread insecurity, including in the capital, where a rival administration has been set up.

Haftar, 71, who took part in the uprising against Kadhafi, launched a military offensive dubbed "Operation Dignity" against Islamists in Benghazi in May, but with little success.

In a speech broadcast late Tuesday, Haftar warned: "The coming hours and days will be difficult".

He said: "I bring you today (a message) from the men of Operation Dignity saying that they are ready to fulfil their next goal, which is to liberate the city of Benghazi."

The former general has been vague about his ultimate goal and critics have accused him of seeking to mount a coup.

Disease Control and Research.

On the passenger's arrival, the medical team inquires after him, checks his temperature and collects his contact numbers for follow-up, he said.

The World Health Organisation termed the Ebola outbreak in West African nations an international health emergency. The deadly disease has claimed at least 4,447 lives, mostly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria.

Medical teams have been assigned to conduct screening for Ebola at 25 international, sea and land ports in Bangladesh.

Coordination among airlines, immigration and medical teams has been strengthened after six Bangladeshi expatriates from Liberia were allowed to leave the airport without health screening on October 9, said Mahmudur.

Arrest order for Latif

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his addresses in Tangail and Dhaka undelivered.

The court considers return of the order as "not served" as the accused was not present at the addresses to receive that.

As per the Code of Criminal Procedure, no lawyer can be assigned to defend any accused at the court in his or her absence in such cases.

Latif's return to the country is uncertain for now, sources said.

"He should be barred from entering the country at this moment," a senior official of a law enforcement agency told The Daily Star yesterday.

Law enforcement agencies have been kept on alert to detain him if he returns, he added.

Latif is under fire for the derogatory comments he made on hajj and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in New York on September 28.

Militant held

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The policemen then retaliated by opening fire on them. Rubel sustained bullet injuries to his left hand while his accomplices fled the scene, the OC added.

Aminul Islam, a businessman who was passing by on a motorcycle at the time, was also hit by a bullet in his right hand.

Both were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The police recovered a pistol, two bullets and two syringes filled with poisonous liquid from the scene.

During an interrogation, the arrestee said he and his associates had planned to kill a college teacher by poisoning him, said Lutful Kabir, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. They carried firearms to ensure a safe escape.

An assistant commissioner of the division said the trio wanted to kill the teacher because of what Rubel said was that the teacher had allegedly forced one of his male colleagues to shave his beard, a female teacher to attend classes without veil and turned a prayer place into a classroom.

The police are yet to confirm the militant group the three belong to.

Some religious books and a bottle filled with poison were recovered during a raid on a mess at Abdullahpur, carried out on the basis of information from Rubel, police sources said.

A case was filed under the anti-terrorism act with Cantonment Police Station against four people, including the arrestee.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police will investigate the case, according to the police station.

The DB took Rubel into its custody yesterday afternoon and interrogated him at its Mintoo Road office.

Kadir on 2-day

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from a pond at Sector 4 a day after he had gone missing on October 4.

Zubair's mother Dilara Begum on October 5 filed a case with Uttara East Police Station accusing Kadir and one Ismail Hossain of murdering her son.

The 46-year-old Algerian was arrested a day later and Ismail on Friday.

Police earlier claimed Kadir tried to molest Zubair when they were swimming in the pond. As the boy resisted and jostled for escaping, he plunged the teenager into the water.

CBI rules out

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pumped into Bangladesh for terror activities.

The sources said the CBI was asked by the External Affairs Ministry to submit its report whether any such issue had cropped up during its probe.

CBI sources, however, said so far they did not come across any instance of funds being transferred to any terror group or Jamaat-e-Islami, but the probe is still on and nothing conclusive could be said at this moment.

The sources said they got some of the money trail on the basis of which action was being taken by the agency.

The CBI sources further said the probe met a stumbling block because the account books of the group have been "purposely" removed from the offices of Saradha on the excuse of the mob attack on its offices after news of scam broke out.

Govt against

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the AL government is often seen as a pro-India government. And if Latif stays there, it might be further used to establish that sentiment, according to the source.

Also, this might send a signal to religious parties and organisations that the government is supporting Latif.

The latest development comes amid reports that the government does not want Latif, who sparked controversy by making derogatory comments on hajj and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), to return to the country, at least for now.

Against this backdrop, Latif told The Daily Star on Sunday that he wanted to return to the country but if he cannot, he would stay in India.

But the source said Dhaka verbally requested New Delhi not to permit Latif to stay in India. Such a message was communicated with the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka and also the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi.

Contacted, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said he knew nothing in this regard.

On Sunday, Latif was sacked as posts and telecommunications minister and also removed from the Awami League presidium over his comments at a discussion on September 28 in New York.

His primary membership in the party has also been suspended.

Latif arrived in India on Sunday and is now in Kolkata.

At home, he faces about 30 cases for hurting religious sentiments.

Moscow and Beijing 'natural allies'

Putin tells China

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday praised growing economic ties with "natural ally" Beijing as he hosted Chinese premier Li Keqiang for high-profile talks.

Li's three-day visit to Russia comes as the Kremlin is locked in a battle of wills with the West over Ukraine and is seeking to ramp up cooperation with Asia and Latin America.

"We are natural partners, natural allies, we are neighbours," Putin told Li during talks at the Kremlin.

"We are setting large-scale, absolutely realistic goals for ourselves and no doubt this will serve our peoples well," he added.

The Chinese prime minister for his part praised the "inexhaustible" potential for cooperation between China, the world's largest energy consumer, and Russia, one of the largest energy suppliers.

"We are witnessing a growing tendency of the development of our cooperation in all spheres," Li said.

Li and Putin spoke after Russian and Chinese officials on Monday signed dozens of deals ranging from energy to banking to cars.

The two countries agreed to open a yuan-ruble swap line worth 150 billion yuan (\$24.5 billion) to reduce dependence on the US dollar and promote bilateral trade and investment.

"A large amount of agreements have been signed," Putin said in remarks released by the Kremlin.

"But it's not the quantity that matters. What's important is that they are promoting our real cooperation, and in very different fields, both in energy and hi-tech, which is especially important."

Birth rate drops

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"I think the stabilisation [equal birth and death rate] would occur after the population reaches 18 to 18.5 crore," the population expert said.

Citing BDHS-2011 data, Rob said total fertility rates in Chittagong and Sylhet divisions were 2.8 and 3.1 per woman respectively but were close to 2.1 in other divisions.

"Birth rate is expected to come close to 2 in Chittagong and Sylhet by now," he told The Daily Star.

The change in behavioural pattern among urban slum population, as found in BUHS-2013, is noteworthy.

Contraceptive prevalence rate in the slums increased from 58 percent in 2006 to 70 percent in 2013 whereas in non-slum areas it increased to 65 percent from 63.

There are issues of concern, however.

Teenage pregnancy (15-19) in the slums is 21 percent that saw no change

After a decade of tough negotiations, China and Russia inked a 30-year, \$400-billion agreement in May that will eventually involve Moscow supplying Beijing with 38 billion cubic metres of gas annually.

Critics, however, claimed that in his bid to spite the West, Putin signed an agreement that was more beneficial to China than to Russia.

Ahead of Li's visit to Russia, the two countries got caught up in diplomatic incident of sorts when an endangered Siberian tiger wandered over the border into China in search of a meal.

The big cat, named Kuzya, was among three Siberian tigers released into the wild by the Russian president in May.

Kuzya's arrival sparked fears that the rare animal could fall victim to Chinese poachers.

The foreign ministry in Beijing pledged that Putin's tiger would be protected, citing an existing agreement on cross-border protection of Siberian tigers.

"We will make joint efforts with the Russian side to protect wild Siberian tigers which travel back and forth between China and Russia," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in a statement.

Once bitter foes during the Cold War, Moscow and Beijing have over the past years ramped up cooperation, driven by a desire to counterbalance US global dominance.

China has spoken out against Western sanctions against Russia and has called on all sides to reach a political settlement over Ukraine.

Ahead of his Moscow visit, Li travelled to Germany for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel. He will also participate in a Europe-Asia summit in Milan later this week.

since 2006, says the survey.

Most couples rely on short-term contraceptive methods like pills and condoms that have higher use-failure rate than long-acting and permanent methods like IUDs, implants and sterilisations.

Although 60 percent of women do not want any more children, only 5-7 percent of them use a long-acting or permanent method of contraception.

Experts say it is high time the government cleared up misconceptions about long-acting methods of contraception.

Interventions must be in place to reduce teenage pregnancy that has a direct link with maternal and child health, said Jamil.

The BUHS says 50 percent under-five children in slums are stunted.

Ubaidur Rob said birth rate decline leads to improvement of health and education status provided that income levels rise.

PM in Italy, media team

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Consul General Rozina Ahmed and other officials received her around 3:45pm local time at Milan Malpensa Airport.

The media adviser to the prime minister and Awami League president, four eminent media personalities, special correspondent of the official BSS News Agency, senior correspondents of UNB and bdnews24.com could not go to Italy with her.

The Italian embassy in Dhaka could not process their visas due to late submission of their applications.

Newsmen of BTV and Bangladesh Betar, and a deputy press secretary and an assistant press secretary to the PM went with her.

Sources in the Prime Minister's Office said apart from addressing the summit, Hasina has important bilateral meetings with a number of world leaders, including with her Italian, Swedish, Dutch and Greek counterparts Matteo Renzi, Stefan Lofven, Mark Rutte and Antinios CSamaras.

She is also to attend several events and receptions to be hosted by

Matteo Renzi, Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council.

The PMO officials said it was very difficult to gather news of the events for the two press wing officials who were with Hasina and then relay those to the media in Dhaka.

They were apprehending poor media coverage of the PM's tour.

Meanwhile, the Italian embassy in Dhaka and the media people who could not go with the PM were embarrassed.

Diplomatic sources said five prom-

inent journalists and three senior correspondents of leading news agencies had no fault of their own for not getting visas.

They had been included in the PM's entourage at the invitation of the Prime Minister's Office and they had submitted their passports along with visa applications in time.

Highly placed sources said the main reasons for this problem were that the prime minister was away abroad earlier this month, and when she had returned on October 2, the press secretary failed to get the media list approved by her in time.

Sources said the press secretary did not dare to approach Hasina as she was highly displeased with him for some reason.

An assistant press secretary got the list instantly approved on October 3 by the PM.

Instead of sending officials concerned from the PMO or the foreign ministry, the Press Wing officials sent the official film cameraman of the Department of Films and Publications, who is also attached to the Prime Minister's Press Wing, to the embassy to submit the journalists' applications on October 8.

The embassy could proceed with the visa applications had it gotten the applications with at least 10 working days' time.

The PM entourage includes Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, three eminent personalities, 11 officials from the PMO, eight officials from the foreign ministry, 17-member security team, seven-member official media team, 71-member business delegation, three officials from Bangladesh embassy in Italy and Bangladesh ambassador to Brussels.