

SAKHIPUR RESERVE FOREST SAWING HC asks govt to report in 2 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to submit a report on the status of Sakhipur reserve forest area in Tangail in next two weeks.

The court formed a three-member probe committee with the deputy commissioner of Tangail as head, superintendent of police of Tangail and assistant conservator of the forest to probe whether illegal mills are still sawing trees in the forest area.

Manzill Murshid, who filed the petition on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, said the HC asked the probe committee to submit a list of sawmills established within 10 kilometres of the forest and the details of their owners. It was also asked to probe whether forest officials of the area are properly discharging their duties.

Responding to a writ petition filed on the basis of a report headlined "52 MILLS sawing reserve forests" published in The Daily Star on June 5, 2011, the HC the next day directed the government to immediately shut down those illegal sawmills.

Yesterday, Deputy Attorney General SM Nazmul Haque told the HC that the government has taken steps to stop operations of illegal sawmills in the area.

1,000 Egyptians evacuated from strife-hit Libya via Tunisia

AFP, Tunis

At least 1,000 Egyptians have been evacuated from Libya through Tunisia since Friday, the Tunisian transport ministry said, following the murder of Coptic Christians by the Islamic State group.

Last week Egyptian and Libyan warplanes hit IS targets inside Libya after the jihadists released a video showing the beheadings of 21 Christians, most of them Egyptian.

Since then Egypt has urged the hundreds of thousands of Egyptians who work in Libya to leave and chartered planes to ferry them home from Tunisia.

At least 1,000 Egyptians who fled to Tunisia have been airlifted home since the first flight was set up on Friday, a spokeswoman for the Tunisian transport ministry said.

She told AFP that 250 more Egyptians were expected to leave from the southeastern Djerba-Zarzis airport by 1600 GMT.

Munier Chy

FROM PAGE 4

Kobor and Munier Chowdhury", in The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Poet Asad Chowdhury remarked that it was sorrowful that the martyred intellectual's birth anniversary was not being observed.

Mamunur Rashid, a theatre artiste, playwright and director, said although many have tried to produce another masterpiece like Kobor, they have not yet been successful.

Ghashful, a media house, organised the discussion where renowned drama personality Lily Chowdhury, also wife of Munier Chowdhury, was honoured.

Monjuli Kazi, daughter-in-law of Lily Chowdhury and wife of late journalist Mishuk Munier, received the reward.

Fourteen cleared

FROM PAGE 3

some others sought apology in an improper way, which is also unacceptable.

The dignitaries exonerated are Shahdeen Malik, M Hafizuddin Khan, Badiul Alam Majumder, Rasheda K Choudhury, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, Amena Mohsin, Naila Zaman Khan, Shahnaz Huda, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Asif Nazrul, Zakir Hossain, Arup Rahee, Shaheen Akhter and Ilira Dewan.

Meanwhile, the tribunal is set to pass its next order on March 3 on The New York Times, which was asked to give its explanation by February 20, for running an editorial criticising the punishment of Bergman.

On February 11, the court asked the newspaper to submit the explanation through the Bangladesh mission in New York, but there was no response yet, sources said.

In its editorial titled "Muzzling Speech in Bangladesh" published on December 23 last year, the Times said the tribunal should immediately overturn Bergman's sentence and conviction.

The same tribunal on December 2 sentenced Bergman, editor (special reports) of the daily New Age, to imprisonment until the end of the court session and fined him Tk 5,000 for two articles he posted on his personal blog, which demeaned the court.

Over two weeks later, 50 people issued the statement, observing that the tribunal's order would restrict the freedom of expression. One of them, Khushi Kabir, later pulled out her name.

He questioned why India could not achieve progress in social indicators

WHO calls for 'smart' syringes to stem deadly diseases

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization has called on healthcare providers around the globe to switch to syringes that can only be used once in order to better battle deadly diseases spread by needle sharing.

In new guidelines released yesterday the UN health agency "detailed recommendations highlighting the value of safety features for syringes, including devices that protect health workers against accidental... injury."

Dangerous injection practices led to the accidental infection worldwide of 1.7 million people with hepatitis B, 315,000 with hepatitis C and as many as 33,800 with HIV in 2010, according to a 2014 WHO-sponsored study.

The new "smart" syringes recommended by the WHO include features that prevent them from being used a second time. Some have a plunger that breaks if someone tries to pull it back out following an injection.

Others have metal clips that prevent the plunger from being pulled back after it is used and another type has a needle that retracts into the syringe after a shot.

"Adoption of safety-engineered syringes is absolutely critical to protecting people worldwide from

becoming infected with HIV, hepatitis and other diseases," said Gottfried Hirnschall, head of WHO's HIV/AIDS Department.

"This should be an urgent priority for all countries," he added.

However, these types of needles cost at least twice the three to four US cents the regular ones cost when ordered through a UN agency.

Accidental infections are a global phenomenon. A 2007 hepatitis C outbreak in the American state of Nevada was traced back to a doctor reusing a syringe.

In Cambodia nearly 200 people living near Battambang tested positive in December 2014 for HIV and are believed to have been infected by dangerous injection practices.

Cutting down on the number of injections would also help reduce disease, WHO said. Of the 16 billion injections each year only 10 percent are for immunisations, injected birth control and procedures like blood transfusions.

The remaining 90 percent are used to administer medicine and in many cases the WHO says these injections are unnecessary. It appears excess injections are due to patients' beliefs that injections are the best form of treatment, but there also seems to be an economic reason.

Govt urges EC to hold

FROM PAGE 16

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a cabinet meeting yesterday approved a file containing documents on the demarcation of the DSCC.

The PM told the meeting that the election to Chittagong City Corporation will be held immediately after the DCC polls, meeting sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star, EC Secretary Sirazul Islam said the Election Commission received the letter from the ministry in the afternoon.

"Now we will prepare for the election. After that, we will send a file to the election commissioners for a final decision on holding the election," he said.

City residents are likely to have their elected representatives after more than three years as bureaucrats have been running the corporations since 2011.

The previous Awami League-led government split the DCC into two -- Dhaka south and Dhaka north, and appointed two government officials as the administrators of the corporations for six months. The Dhaka South City Corporation has 36 wards and the DNCC has 56.

The last DCC election was held in 2002 when BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka was elected mayor. Though Khoka's tenure ended in May 2007, he continued in office until the corporation was split.

In the cabinet meeting yesterday, the PM hinted that her party would back Sayeed Khokon, son of late DCC mayor Mohammad Hanif, for mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

Referring to Bangladesh's success in women's economic and social development, Sen said this is an indicator of Bangladesh's better performance than India's despite the latter's faster economic growth.

Per capita GDP of India was 50 percent higher than Bangladesh in 1990, whereas it is 100 percent higher now. Yet, social indicators in Bangladesh such as gender equity, women's empowerment, mortality rate, life expectancy, vaccination etc. are remarkably better here than in India, said Sen who teaches economics and philosophy at Harvard University.

"India can learn from Bangladesh on its success in gender equity," he said.

"In 1990, life expectancy was three years higher in India than Bangladesh. Now it is just reversed," he said.

In his lecture, he argued that Indian rulers have never been properly accountable to the needs of the vast majority. With economic growth, large public interventions have taken place in developed countries such as China and Brazil, aiming to raise health, education and other standards so that social gains can be accelerated.

"India is an exception here and its social problems serve to drag down its economic growth," said Sen.

He said economy in the Indian subcontinent had grown almost at zero percent between 1776 and 1947. The average economic growth rate was only 0.01 percent during the years of 1900-1947. After independence, growth rate increased to three percent and remained there for many years before it shot up to eight percent. Per capita income in India however has increased seven times since 1947.

He questioned why India could not achieve progress in social indicators

Food Minister Qumrul Islam drew the PM's attention to forming party committees at city, thana and ward levels in the capital. The PM said the committees would be announced once the DCC polls were over.

Also the Awami League president, Hasina in a cabinet meeting last week asked LGRD Minister Syed Ashraf Islam to take necessary measures to hold the DCC elections.

She told the meeting that her party would back Annisul Huq, former president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, as a mayor candidate of DNCC.

Ivorian former first lady questions charges over post-poll unrest

AFP, Abidjan

Ivory Coast's former first lady Simone Gbagbo yesterday questioned the charges against her as she appeared in court for the first time accused of undermining state security.

"I don't know exactly what the concrete actions are that I am being accused of," Gbagbo said, insisting also that her husband Laurent Gbagbo was the legitimate winner of a 2010 presidential election that sparked five months of violence that claimed some 3,000 lives.

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despite its visible success in per capita income.

He said many adults, especially women, are undernourished in India. Despite gains, extreme poverty is still a reality there and death in childbirth is all too common. Deaths caused by social prejudice are also rife in the country: as many as 6,00,000 fetuses are aborted each year because those are female.

Sen said compared with its poorer neighbours, Bangladesh and Nepal, India's social record is unusually grim. The economist said private sector has played a big role in India's economic development, but that cannot ensure education and health services to the poor.

"There is no country in the world that has developed its education and health system without the help of the government," said Sen.

The renowned scholar, who has authored many books on social injustice and its interrelation with economy, said Bangladesh has shown how it is possible to educate and empower women.

"It was not in Bangladesh before 1971, it is absolutely Bangladesh's success," he said.

After his lecture, Prof Sen took questions from the audience and spent around one hour to answer them.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of CPD and long-time friend of Prof Sen, chaired the programme also addressed by Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo, and CPD Executive Director Prof Mustafizur Rahman.

Terming Sen a "true renaissance mind", Prof Sobhan declined to say anything after what he said was a "rich lecture".

The book launching programme began with eminent singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bonya singing three Tagore songs.

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A relatively

FROM PAGE 16

since Sunday 6:00am in protest at what they say is the killing of opposition leaders and activists in the name of crossfire, and filing of false cases against the alliance leaders, mostly against BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

The shutdown comes on top of an ongoing countrywide blockade that has begun on January 6.

Meanwhile, civil society members and the international community have called for a dialogue to end the violence that has virtually crippled the country's businesses and all other sectors including education and transport. But there has been no progress to that end.

Top business chambers estimate daily loss of businesses at Tk 2,277 crore a day in the ongoing blockade.

Since February 1, the alliance has started to enforce hartals almost on all weekdays except on Fridays and Saturdays, creating huge troubles for about 1.5 million examinees of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent exams, forcing the government to defer all exams to the weekends.

Since the beginning of the blockade, 78 people have so far been killed, mostly in arson attacks, and over 300 people injured.

Criminals hurled a crude bomb at the house of Awami League senior leader Suranjit Sengupta in the capital's Jigatola around 8:30pm. Suranjit is not in the country now. A window of the AL leader's house was broken in the blast. A case was filed with Hazaribagh Police Station in this connection, police said.

Around 500 British nationals are believed to have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the IS group.

Sultana and Begum are British nationals, while Abase is a German citizen.

The three were all friends with another student at the school who left for Syria in December, one of some 550 Western women believed to have gone to Syria.

UK police brief

students at school of Syria-bound girls

AFP, London

British police have briefed students at an east London school attended by three girls believed to be travelling to Syria, their headmaster said yesterday.

Mark Keary said the police were part of a "support team" including experts in de-radicalisation from the British government's Prevent programme called in following the girls' disappearance.

Keary told reporters in a briefing at the Bethnal Green Academy that the police had indicated there was "no evidence that radicalisation of the missing students took place at the academy".

"It is clear that this is an international issue which is increasing in severity and it's affecting schools across the country and beyond," Keary said.

Kadiza Sultana, 16, and 15-year-olds Shamima Begum and Amira Abase left their homes last week and flew to Istanbul, raising concerns they would travel on to Syria to join Islamic State jihadis.

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BNP's war heroes

FROM PAGE 16

those killed by law enforcers as "national heroes" and compensate and rehabilitate their children and other family members