

Govt harming rice farmers by allowing Indian import

Alleges BNP
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday accused the government of giving undue benefits to pro-Awami League businessmen for importing rice from India, affecting Bangladeshi farmers. "The government is destroying our peasants, as the prices of [local] rice [varieties] are decreasing due to imported rice from India. A section of businessmen aligned with the ruling party is importing rice from India taking the opportunity of full duty waiver," BNP spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon told a press conference at the party's Nayapalton central office. Referring to media reports, Ripon, also international affairs secretary of BNP, said farmers had already expressed frustration at the government's move favouring the import of rice from India. "Farmers are being discouraged to produce paddy as they are not getting proper prices of their produce," he said, adding that the situation might endanger the country's food security. The government's claim that the country is self-sufficient in producing rice is a sheer lie, as it is permitting businessmen to import rice from India, the BNP spokesperson said. He demanded that the government stop "giving all undue benefits to the party-aligned businessmen" and protect the country's farmers. He also criticised the law enforcers for Sunday's "brutality" on students protesting the molestation of females during Pahela Baishakh celebrations in the capital.



Left-leaning student bodies under the banner of Progotoshil Chhatra Jote and Samrajyabad Birodhi Chhatra Oikya bring out a torch procession on Dhaka University campus last evening, voicing strong condemnation of the police beating of demonstrators of Bangladesh Chhatra Union the day before. Demanding arrest of the Pahela Baishakh molesters, the protesters were heading to besiege the headquarters of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and encountered the cops near Dhaka Officers Club.

PHOTO: STAR

Morning rain cools Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Morning shows the day. But yesterday was an exception in the capital. It was a normal sunny morning; children were rushing to school and the office-goers to workplaces.

All of a sudden at around 7:45 the bright sky grew thick with clouds, darkness eerily enveloped every corner, and then came the drizzle.

Pedestrians were hurrying for shelter. Vehicles plying the streets had to turn the headlights on. The next few minutes were filled with the sounds of violent winds, honking, and slamming of windows. And soon the drizzling turned into a downpour that lasted for around an hour.

Roads in Sukrabad, Rajabazar, Green Road, Dhanmondi, Shantinagar, Shajahanpur and other parts were inundated exposing the poor drainage facility in the city ahead of the monsoon.

The commuters suffered, as motor vehicles and rickshaws got stranded on the

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N'GANJ-7 MURDER

One victim's wife doesn't trust DB's charge sheet

Seeks re-investigation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A no confidence (naraji) petition was filed with a court yesterday against the charge sheet submitted by the detectives dropping names of five accused in Narayanganj seven-murder case.

Selina Islam, wife of slain Narayanganj City Corporation coun-

cilor Nazrul Islam, filed the petition with the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate HM Shafikul Islam seeking its directive to appoint Criminal Investigation Department or any other law enforcement agency, except detectives, to re-investigate the case.

The court fixed June 8 to hear the petition.

Advocate Sakhawat Hossain, a counsel for Selina, said the five who were made accused in FIR are Hasmat Ali Hasu, Hazi Yasin Mia, general secretary of Siddhirganj upazila Awami League, Aminul Islam, Anwar and Iqbal Hossain.

Some other names were also

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Unregistered Hajj aspirants seek PM's help for journey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some prospective Hajj pilgrims who did not register online yesterday sought the prime minister's intervention in arranging their journey to Saudi Arabia.

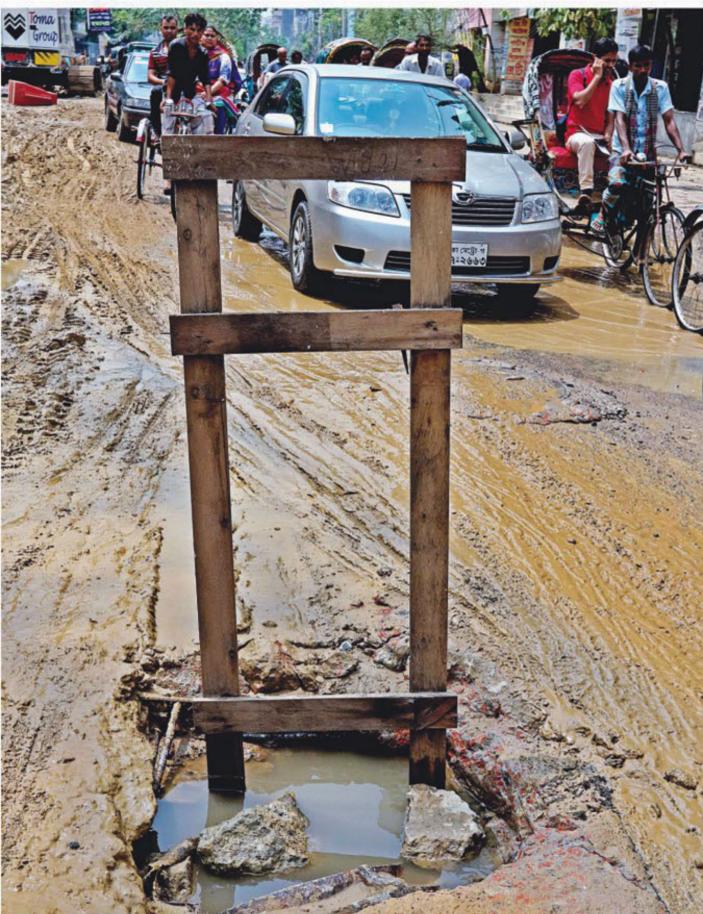
Forming a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club wearing the two unstitched white cloths worn on the pilgrimage, they, along with some private Hajj agency owners, tried to bring out a procession but were stopped by police.

Later, their representatives were allowed to go to the prime minister's office to submit a memorandum.

One of them, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, accused some government officials of creating the problem by not registering "genuine Hajj pilgrims".

The Ministry of Religious Affairs says the Saudi authorities fixed a quota, saying 1,01,750 Bangladeshis will be allowed to perform Hajj this year.

However, 1,11,012 people deposited the fees and 19,104 of them did not register online, a process introduced this year, says the ministry. Since the registration deadline expired, the ministry officials say everything now depends on the Saudi authorities.



A wooden frame warns of a hole among the numerous craters lurking under puddles crisscrossed by mounds of earth and roads streaked with mud following the rains near the capital's Rajarbagh Police Lines resulting from the construction work of the Mouchak-Moghbar flyover. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TRIAL OF BERGMAN VERDICT CRITICS Prosecution claims they belittled court's authority, dignity in public mind

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty three of the 50 eminent citizens "belittled" authority and institutional dignity of International Crimes Tribunal-2 in the public mind by expressing concern in a statement over Dhaka-based British journalist David Bergman's sentence, which goes against "public interest", and thus should be "punished adequately", said the prosecution yesterday.

Placing arguments on the prosecution's behalf, Tureen Afroz, referring to sections of the statement, also accused them of questioning justification of the tribunal's sentence and the "transparency and openness" of the tribunal's judicial proceedings.

Shireen Huq, one of the 23, said they did not commit any offence as the statement's content fell under the parameters of "fair criticism."

The tribunal, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam, adjourned until May 14 the contempt proceedings, initiated against the 23 on April 1.

On December 2, 2014, the tribunal found Bergman, editor (special reports) of New Age, guilty of contempt for two of his blog posts of January 2013 on the verdict of Abul Kalam Azad, known as Bachchu Razakar.

It sentenced him to imprisonment "till rising of the court" that day and fined him Tk 5,000.

On December 20, 2014, the daily Prothom Alo ran a report titled "50 people express concern over Bergman's punishment" on the basis of the statement, which observed that the tribunal's order would restrict freedom of expression.

One signatory, Khushi Kabir, later withdrew her name. The tribunal exonerated 26 signatories who sought unconditional apology.

Yesterday, Shireen, reading out the reply she and

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83/B, Kemal Ataturk Avenue Banani, Dhaka 1213
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SC upholds HC ban on use of national anthem as ringtone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court verdict that directed mobile phone operators to stop using the national anthem as a ringtone or a welcome tune.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice SK Sinha passed the order after disposing of two appeals filed by mobile operators Banglalink and Grameenphone challenging the HC verdict.

Following a writ petition, the HC on August 5, 2010 declared the practice illegal. The HC also directed Banglalink, Grameenphone and Aktel (now Robi) to donate Tk 50 lakh each to three charity organisations for using the national anthem commercially violating laws. However, the SC commuted the amount to Tk 30 lakh.

Writ petitioner's counsel Masud Ahmed Sayeed told The Daily Star that Banglalink and Grameenphone have to donate Tk 30 lakh to charity organisations -- Liver Foundation and National Institute of Kidney Research -- within 30 days after the release of the full SC verdict.

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