



HI-TECH PARK

TechnoCity to invest \$25.8m in the 232-acre zone

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U-16S REACH SEMIS

Bangladesh under-16 team defeat Sri Lanka 4-0 in SAFF championship

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STANDOFF IN FERGUSON

Protesters defy state of emergency, take to streets

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HC pummels 10 tardy polluters

Issues contempt of court notice for dilly-dallying over tannery relocation

STAR REPORT

The High Court yesterday issued a contempt of court rule against 10 tannery owners for obstructing the implementation of its 2001 judgment on relocation of hazardous tannery industries from the capital's Hazaribagh area to Savar.

The court asked them to explain in two weeks why contempt of court proceedings should not be brought against them.

The HC gave the rule after hearing a contempt of court petition by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), a non-governmental organisation.

Petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid told the court that 10 of the polluting tannery industries in Hazaribagh didn't take any step to relocate their factories to Savar though the government had given them notices to do so following HC directives.

The owners of the other tanneries in the area made preparations for shifting their factories after getting the notices, he said.

In 2001, the HC directed the government

to ensure relocation of the tanneries within two years to save the Buriganga river from pollution.

As the government didn't implement the HC directives by that time, the HRPB filed a petition with the court in June 2009.

On June 23 that year, the HC asked the government to execute its orders by February 28, 2010. The court later extended the deadline by six months.

On October 30, 2010, the HC gave tannery owners six more months to relocate their factories to Savar.

But the owners didn't shift their factories even now, which was an obstruction to implementing the HC verdict, said Manzill.

Hearing the petition, the HC bench of Justice Ashfaul Islam and Justice Zafar Ahmed issued the rule.

Talking to The Daily Star, Manzill said Industries Secretary Mosharruf Hossain Bhuiyan recently informed the HC that the government issued notices to all tannery owners in Hazaribagh to relocate the

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Tannery waste pollutes the water in the low lying area of the capital's Rayerbazar, around half a kilometre off the tanneries in Hazaribagh. Tanners discharge highly toxic waste into the area through underground pipes, putting the lives of nearby slum-dwellers at risk. The tanners were supposed to relocate to Savar by April 2011 as per High Court directives, but some of them are yet to start their preparations to do so. The photo was taken yesterday.



REFORMS MADE BY BANGLADESH

Labour law amended to strengthen freedom of association

New factory inspectors recruited and trained; fire and structural safety assessments made

A hotline established to report labour concerns

Since Jan 2013, more than 350 new trade unions have been registered

Accord and Alliance assessed over 3,669 garment factories

UNFINISHED TASKS

Bangladesh must implement rules under the new labour law

It needs to reform the law on export processing zones

US leaves us out

Conditions mostly fulfilled yet GSP privilege not given back to Bangladesh; 122 get it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pace and scale of reforms over the past two years were unprecedented in the country's garment sector that has been in existence since the 1980s. Yet, it was not enough for the Obama administration.

It left out Bangladesh from the list of 122 nations for whom US President Barack Obama on July 29 reauthorised the generalised system of preferences -- the US's biggest scheme for the world's poor nations.

The reason for the exclusion was Bangladesh's failure to fulfil all of the 16 conditions the Obama administration had laid out when it revoked the privilege two years ago on grounds of poor workplace safety and labour rights.

The GSP programme promotes economic development by eliminating duties on up to 5,000 types of products when imported from the 122 countries on the list.

Garment, which accounts for 95 per cent of Bangladesh's exports to the US, is not one of the products covered by GSP, which means there would not be deeper material

losses for the country for being left out.

But Sadiq Ahmed, vice-chairman of Policy Research Institute, a think-tank, says the GSP exclusion gives out the wrong image of Bangladesh: that the country has unsatisfactory garment worker regulations and implementation.

The protection of worker interest is not just a GSP issue; it is essential for modernising employment practices in Bangladesh in line with international good practices, he wrote in an article for The Daily Star recently.

KG Moazzem, additional research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the exclusion from GSP would put exporters of non-traditional items in a disadvantaged position, as all their nearest competitors would be enjoying duty benefits.

The beneficiaries of the new scheme include South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan.

Furthermore, it would pour a damper on the country's designs to expand its export

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"I am not interested at all in taking any more initiatives to get back the GSP. We have fulfilled almost all conditions given by the US. We have nothing more to do."

COMMERCE MINISTER
TOFAIL AHMED
IN REACTION TO THE US
DECISION NOT TO RENEW THE
GSP FOR BANGLADESH

Checks and balances of power vital in democracy

Says citizen platform, recommends formation of 'constitution reform commission'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerned Citizen's Group, a platform of distinguished personalities, yesterday recommended formation of a "constitution reform commission" to bring necessary changes to the charter for an effective democratic system.

The proposed commission also seeks to work on how to bring check and balance of power of prime minister who has been enjoying an absolute authority over state control since restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991.

The group made the recommendations after a roundtable titled "Checks and balances of powers to achieve fuller democracy" at the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

It said it would formally submit the recommendations to different political parties for their consideration. In the meantime, it will hold discussions at divisional level with citizens, particularly the

youth, for their opinion on the initiative.

"Our initiative will not die out. It might take several years -- five or ten even -- to get results like the ones in Sri Lanka, where democracy has taken a good shape after 13 years of efforts," said ATM Shamsul Huda, former chief election commissioner and convener of the group.

The group first appeared before the media on February 13 in the wake of deadly violence during the BNP-led 20-party alliance's anti-government movement. At the time, the group called for an immediate end to violence and talks between rival Awami League and BNP. It also sent letters to President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia in this regard.

It describes itself as a non-political entity and has 13 members so far.

After a two-hour discussion with political scientists, media personalities, journalists,

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EKATTOR TV SC asks for recordings of report, talk show

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered private television channel Ekattor TV to submit by August 16 the recordings of a report and a talk show in which "recorded conversation between two apex court judges" was played.

A four-member bench led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in a suo moto order also asked Attorney General Mahbubey Alam to inform the channel authorities of its order.

The TV channel on Monday night aired a report and a talk show over an audio record in which "two SC judges" were heard talking about constituting a bench for hearing a war crimes case.

The court had already issued a contempt of court rule on Janakantha Editor and Publisher Atiqullah Khan Masud and its

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Why schoolbag back-breaking?

HC asks govt, nudges it to ensure bag not heavier than 10pc of kid's body weight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Getting back from school by a microbus in the early afternoon, Lara, a class-three student, presses the calling bell on the ground floor to let her family on their third-floor flat know that she's home.

It's not that the collapsible gate is locked. It's just that her bag, stuffed full of books and writing pads, is so heavy that she cannot climb the stairs slinging it over her tiny shoulders. She needs help.

Then some older member comes down, carries the satchel and walks her up to the flat.

"The bag weighs her down so much that she cannot walk properly while carrying it. That's why one of us goes to help her out," said her father, a resident of the capital's Mirpur area.

Lara's case is not an isolated one. Children struggling with the weight of heavy and bulky satchels are a common sight in Bangladesh.

To the relief of school-going children and their parents, the High Court has issued a rule aiming to lighten the kids' burden of heavy schoolbags.

The court yesterday asked the government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed to formulate a specific law or regulation against carrying

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SHEIKH SIRAJUL HAQUE

Guilty of all 5 charges
Death penalty on each charge
Can be executed by hanging or shooting



KHAN AKRAM HOSSAIN

Faced 3 charges
Guilty of one charge
Awarded jail until death

Death for Siraj

Jail until death for Akram in Bagerhat war crimes case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special tribunal yesterday handed down death penalty to a Razakar from Bagerhat and jail until death to another for committing crimes during the Liberation War.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 found Sheikh Sirajul Haque alias Siraj Master, 73, guilty of five charges out of the six brought against him and gave him death penalty on each of the charges. The charges include two acts of genocide which killed over 600 Hindus.

Siraj, widely known as "Kasai (butcher) Siraj" for his 1971 notoriety, can be executed either by "hanging or shooting" as decided by the government, said the tribunal.

Razakar Khan Akram Hossain, 62, was found guilty on one charge out of three for crimes against humanity and was awarded jail until death. Another accused in the case, Abdul Latif Talukder, was exempted from the trial after he had died at the prison cell of Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 28.

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