

Bogra farmers

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Chandi Das Kundo, deputy director of DAE in Bogra, said the chilli yield would be bumper this year, and the farmers were happy as they started getting good price from their produce.

Source of the DAE told this correspondent that chilli had been cultivated on around 8,000 hectares of land in 12 upazilas.

They expected that some 32,000 metric tonnes of chilli would be produced this year, he added.

Free parking

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negligence in enforcing laws," said the minister.

"Doreen Tower in Gulshan, for example, with the approval to build 18 storeys, has constructed 25 storeys with Rajuk staying silent," he said.

"It is true that the unbearable situation has been created in connivance with Rajuk," said its chairman, GM Jainal Abedin Bhuiyan.

But citing that there are 2,200 court injunctions and 5,204 cases barring Rajuk action against the offenders, he said they hardly could enforce building laws successfully.

Mayor Khokan said Rajuk should cancel the plot lease deeds of those who violated the building laws and did business in violation of the lease deeds.

The Rajuk chairman, however, could not cite a single instance of taking such basic legal action although thousands of land plot lease holders have violated the lease deeds.

Alauddin Mahmud, general secretary of the Federation of Hotel, Guest House and Restaurant Owners, claimed that illegal commercial establishments like hotels and restaurants did not damage the residential features.

Gulshan Society President ATM Shamsul Huda said those who had ruined residential neighbourhoods and the city at large with illegal commercial activities just to make money at any cost did not live in the country. "They just make money at the cost of public life in the country to live a comfortable life abroad," he said.

The former chief election commissioner said Rajuk should not be allowed any further to function both as a real estate developer and development regulator -- it should do one thing.

The counsel said there was no scope to keep "Islam" as state religion after the Supreme Court had declared illegal the fifth amendment to the constitution and restored "secularism" in the constitution.

The government led by military ruler HM Ershad had inserted a section in the eighth amendment to the constitution making "Islam" state religion on June 9, 1988.

Fifteen distinguished citizens had filed the writ petition with the HC in 1988 challenging the amendment that gave "Islam" the status of state religion.

The writ petitioners were Begum Sufia Kamal, former chief justice Kemal Uddin Hossain, Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Dr Mosharraf Hossain, Maj Gen (ret'd) Chitta Ranjan Datta (Bir Uttam), Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, Badaruddin Umar, journalist Faiz Ahmed, Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir, Prof Anisuzzaman, Justice Devesh Chandra Bhattacharjee, Justice KM Sobhan, Syed Istiaq Ahmed, and Kalim Sharafi.

Ten of them including Begum Sufia Kamal and Justice Kemal Uddin Hossain have already died, said the petitioner's lawyer Afric, adding that the petition was included in the hearing list of the three-member HC bench yesterday, as the chief justice recently assigned the bench for its hearing.

The lawyer, however, declined to say why the 1988 petition was heard for the first time in 2011 and why the petitioner's counsel applied to the chief justice last year so that the HC hears it now.

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Book fair ends

FROM PAGE 5

he said, adding, "We've done well this year. There were some problems which will be addressed next year," he said.

Bangla Academy had shut down four stalls over copyright issues and selling books that "hurts religious sentiment". These four will not be able to set up stalls for at least two years, he added.

Provide personal

FROM PAGE 1

police and as many as 287 groups of policemen of 49 police stations were collecting the information.

According to the commissioner, the initiative was taken as per section-42 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, that allows cops to ask people's assistance in maintaining law and order while people, as per the section, are bound to assist police.

However, several city dwellers said they were unsure whether their personal information would remain safe in police hands.

They viewed that the police move was unnecessary and time-consuming as basic information of people were already in the national identity (NID) card database.

"The initiative seems to be time-wasting," said Abu Bakar Siddique, a private service holder in Mirpur.

He said the type of information police asked was already in his NID. Moreover, police are spending money and wasting time on something that is already done and is unnecessary.

Rahimul Islam, who lives in Mirpur-12, said he was unaware of the initiative and that he heard it for the first time from this correspondent.

"It is preferable, for me, to provide only NID number instead of giving a bunch of information to police," he said.

Banker Mahfuzur Rahman, a tenant in Khilkhet, said his landlord already collected his basic information when

Move to stop malpractice

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irregularities in public procurement.

"There have been widespread irregularities in public procurement. If a 10 percent limit is set in this regard, chances would be created to curb irregularities to a certain extent," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star.

He said other factors contributing to the irregularities needs to be looked at to ensure transparency and accountability in public procurements.

The cabinet also approved in principle the draft of Civil Aviation Act-2016, keeping provisions for appointing a security official in each flight and imposing fine and punishment on any foreign aircraft for violating Bangladesh's airspace.

The proposed law would replace the existing Civil Aviation Ordinance-1960. The draft has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the International Civil Aviation Organization, said the cabinet secretary.

Alam said there is a provision in the law to provide assistance to the plane accident victims and their family members.

If any foreign aircraft violates Bangladesh's airspace, the offenders

AIDS rumour

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some time to find a school place, but "they didn't take my child because of this AIDS fear".

"I protested and nothing happened, even I found it difficult to get any work."

After her case was reported by BBC Sinhala earlier this month, the educational and human rights authorities became involved, and last week one school was ordered to take in the child.

Despite both her and her son holding certificates showing they are not infected, parents immediately began putting pressure on her to remove him, but she refused.

"He went to the class and played with other kids, but then suddenly all the parents came and took their children away," she told the BBC.

His class teacher, who stayed with him at school, said she felt "very sad when the child asked me why all my friends are leaving because of me, and why the police and others are here".

She said even though other children had treated him normally, "I am not sure how the children will react even

Rab 'rescues 4 girls

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one Rawshan Ara complained to the Rab camp in Sirajganj that her daughter Sabina had been abducted and reportedly trafficked to India, and an unknown caller demanded Tk 5 lakh for her safe return to Bangladesh.

Following that, Rab investigated and found an international human trafficking gang behind it, he said.

According to Rab, the force rescued Sohagi and arrested two traffickers, Mohammad Rokon, 21, and Ayesha Akter Asha, who allegedly sent Sabina to India from Borobar area in Gazipur on Friday.

Based on their information, Rab arrested two more traffickers, Amir Hossain and Hasan Khondhoker, from Jatrabari area in the capital on Saturday night and rescued Shirin from their custody.

The next day, Rab arrested three more traffickers, Habib, Milton and Samad, who mainly communicate with their Indian counterparts from

he rented the flat.

Police should collect information of tenants from landlords, he said.

DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman admitted that people do not have complete trust in the police and that they might be worried about giving information and being harassed.

He claimed that the information collected from individuals would be safe.

This paper published a report in December last year regarding the DMP move and several city dwellers had then expressed their concerns.

The police had then said they sought information in three types of forms -- for house and flat owners, tenants, and mess owners and their tenants.

The form for house and flat owners asks for 17 types of information with photographs.

These are the individual's name, father's name, date of birth, marital status, the type of the house, present and permanent addresses, religion, occupation, work address, educational qualification, mobile phone number, email ID, national ID number, passport number, contact person, and names and details of house helps, drivers, and security guards with their photos.

The tenant's form asks for 15 types of information and photographs and the one for mess owners and their tenants, 13 types of information and photographs are sought.

would have to face three to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Tk 2 crore.

In case of flying any aircraft recklessly, the pilots concerned would have to face a maximum five years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Tk 1 crore, he added.

The cabinet secretary said the proposed law would ensure flight safety oversight. Besides, it has stated the responsibilities of flight operators.

The cabinet gave the final approval to the draft of Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council Act-2016, with a provision for setting up of a 24-member council to give registration to the nursing, midwifery and related professionals.

As per the draft law, nurses and midwives will have to be registered with the council.

If anyone takes up nursing or midwifery as profession without valid registration, he/she will face a maximum three years' imprisonment or a maximum fine of Tk 1 lakh or both. If anyone in the professions is found using false designation, he/she will face a maximum one-year imprisonment or a maximum fine of Tk 50,000, mentioned Alam.

when they come back".

The regional education director, Saman Wijesekara, said parents of all 186 pupils had formally asked to stop attending the school.

"We are thinking of having an educational session to parents to solve this issue," he said.

The school head has closed the school for two days but BBC Sinhala reporters say angry parents have been standing at the school gate and protesting to officials and teachers who enter.

Meanwhile officials from the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission have been to the school and have also visited the boy's home.

Sri Lanka is considered to have a very low prevalence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

According to UN figures, in 2014 there were 3,200 adults and 100 children living with HIV, fewer than 0.1% of the population.

But there is also concern about poor awareness of the virus and how it spreads, which leads to stigma and discrimination.

4 girls

Benapole bordering areas in Jessore.

Another trafficker, Mamun Mirza, was arrested in Paltan of the capital, and later on the basis of his information, two victims, Sharmin and Riya, were rescued from Keraniganj.

Replying to a query, Mufti Mahmud said they had found the location of Sabina in India and steps were being taken through consultation with Interpol for her return.

The Rab official said the gang had district and upazila level agents who used to lure poor people, mainly females, with the promise of high salaried jobs abroad.

Those who agree to their offers are taken to the capital and kept confined for days or months. Later, the traffickers in their convenient time send the victims to neighbouring countries in exchange for money.

Rab officials said most of the trafficked females were forced to be sex slaves in foreign land.

2 RNB men 'snatch gold'

Complain 2 jewellery shop staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two members of Railway Nirapotta Bahini (RNB), posing as detectives, allegedly snatched over 200 tolas of gold from two staff of a jewellery shop in Chittagong yesterday.

The staff -- Palash Nandi and Biswajit Chakraborty -- of Biswakarma Bullion, a jewellery shop in the port city's Hazari Lane area, lodged a complaint with Chittagong Railway Police Station in this connection yesterday evening, said Himangshu Das Rana, officer-in-charge of the police station.

In complaint, they alleged that the incident took place at Pahartali Railway Station in the presence of RNB Pahartali outpost in-charge habildar Mohammad Mezbah.

Bidhan Dhar, the jewellery shop owner, told The Daily Star that the duo were waiting at Pahartali Railway Station with eight gold bars, weighing 205 tolas, to catch Sagarika Express to go to Dhaka.

They were going to return the gold bars, made after melting old ornaments, as the designs provided by the clients could not be made in Chittagong, he said.

"While they were waiting for the train, two persons, posing as members of the Detective Branch of police, approached them and asked the two to go to the RNB outpost, where they took away the gold bars in the presence of habildar Mezbah," said Bidhan.

KIBRIA MURDER TRIAL

Attach assets of fugitives

Special tribunal asks authorities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A special tribunal in Habiganj yesterday ordered attaching the assets of the accused on the run, including Harris Chowdhury, in the SAMS Kibria murder case.

Judge Atab Ullah passed the order after yesterday's hearing in the case, Public Prosecutor Sirajul Islam told The Daily Star.

Five people, including Kibria, were killed and 70 others injured in a grenade attack on a public meeting held by Awami League at Baiddar Bazar in Sadar upazila on January 27, 2005.

On June 2 last year, the case was transferred to Sylhet Speedy Trial Tribunal from the Habiganj Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court for its quick disposal.

On September 13, the court framed charges against BNP leaders Lutfozzaman Babar and Harris Chowdhury and 30 others in the case. Among the 32 accused, 22 including Babar and suspended Sylhet city mayor Ariful Haq Chowdhury were produced before the court on that day.

Eight of the accused are on bail, while 10 others, including Harris, political secretary of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia, have been absconding.

Raushan hails

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Turning to maritime territories and resources, Raushan called upon the premier to undertake appropriate measures to procure the maritime resources for the country's development.

She also said the government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina has achieved victory over maritime boundary after a long time and established the country's sovereignty over the sea.

She also said the country is fast moving towards its desired goals with development and democracy under the dynamic leadership of Hasina.

During the last seven years, the AL government has been able to ensure a sustainable growth in economy and institutionalised democracy at all levels, setting a milestone in the history of Bangladesh, she observed.

"Bangladesh is now awaiting a dignified position in the global arena as the country would become a middle income nation by 2021 with massive development in all sectors as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is determined to fulfil the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," added Raushan.

The opposition leader urged the government to create employment for the young generation to keep them on the right track.

Multiple offices

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generalised allegations, not specific.

Election to 738 UPs will be held on March 22 in the first phase, while the second phase election is scheduled for March 31.

For the first time in the country, elections for the post of chairman will be held in partisan lines, and 16 political parties, out of the total 40, are participating in the polls.

'Yaba trader' killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An alleged Yaba trader was killed in a 'gunfight' with Rapid Action Battalion in Patuakhali town early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Golam Mawla Mridha, 35, son of Nurul Haque Mridha of Kalikapur area in the town.

He was an accused in a number of cases including an arms case, KM Tariqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Patuakhali Police Station said.

The 'shootout' took place in Hatalia area of Kaliakpur village at 4:00am, he said.

After the 'gunfight' police recovered

the bullet-hit body of Mawla and sent it to Patuakhali General Hospital morgue for autopsy, the police official said.

The elite force members recovered two firearms, some bullets and more than 600 pieces of Yaba, according to a text message sent from Rab-8 Patuakhali camp.

After hearing news of his death, local businessmen distributed sweets among the townspeople.

Mawla used to collect toll from businessmen of Hatalia Badghat bazaar, local trader Ruhul Amin claimed.

The deceased was also building a market by encroaching a portion of Hatalia canal, he said.

Killers of children

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to destructive activities in the name of anti-government movement.

"Whenever police arrested militants or terrorists with arms or explosives, it was found that they had ties either with the BNP or the Jamaat."

The PM thanked members of law enforcement and intelligence agencies for their ceaseless efforts to curb militancy.

Hasina also highlighted her government's development activities.

The country's poverty rate dropped from 56.7 percent in 1991 to 22.4 percent last year, while its per capita income has now gone up to \$1,316 from \$543 in 2005-06.

On the government plan to set up 100 economic zones by 2041, she said the foundation of 10 economic zones has already been laid and the zones are expected to fetch \$40 billion a year.

Referring to freedom of the media, she said the government didn't impose any restrictions on it. "I have created all the opportunities for the media, but I am its worst victim."

The PM came down hard on The Daily Star and Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

"These two newspapers have been writing against me over the last 20 years. I don't read any of the two since I was released from jail in 2008."

"Even when they wrote something good, they said something harsh at the end of it. If I read those, I may lose my confidence. What is the point of reading those? I know very well that whatever they will write, it will be against me."

The PM said an editor of a daily had to admit recently at a TV talk show that "whatever his paper wrote to brand her as a corrupt person was provided by the DGFI".

"The two newspapers are The Daily Star and Prothom Alo. Their names are beautiful. Daily Star means a star in the sky which is seen even during daytime. The other is Prothom Alo that means the light of the day breaking. But they do deeds of darkness. And what is that? It is publishing writings from the DGFI."

"When they published the news items [about Hasina], they didn't attribute the sources."

Pointing to the last caretaker government, Hasina said the main task of that government was to hold the elections. But instead, it hatched a conspiracy to stay in power permanently.

"I was the first to be hit by their conspiracy. Why was I the first? I was not in power; I was the opposition leader then. But I was the first to be arrested."

"During the BNP government's tenure, a dozen cases were filed against me. The caretaker government also lodged 5-6 cases. And before the filing of the cases, these two newspapers continuously published false news reports against me. And the false information was supplied by the DGFI."

Who were in the DGFI then... Brigadier Amin and Bari.

"Nobody was spared from their torture. Teachers, businesspeople and politicians -- nobody could escape."

"Then what relations did the two editors have with the two DGFI men. I ask this question to Mahfuz Anam of The Daily Star and Matiur Rahman of the Prothom Alo. Can they answer my question? Why did they have so much closeness with the DGFI?"

The premier said either the two editors were involved in a deep-rooted conspiracy to implement "the minus-two formula" to banish her from politics or they acted as agents of the DGFI on its payroll, or did they do it in exchange for money.

"If they were not involved in the conspiracy, why did they publish such false information," she asked.

These two editors were patronised by Brig Amin and Brig Bari. "They [the editors] were the stars and the light of Brig Amin and Brig Bari," she said.

Hasina also alleged that the two editors always try to create an "abnormal situation" in Bangladesh. It means they would get importance if anyone comes to power through an unconstitutional way.

"They feel suffocated in a democratic environment. They don't want democracy," she said, urging the two editors to float political parties if they wish to assume power.

The PM also talked about an eminent person, who is a Nobel laureate and was the managing director of a bank.

She said the person used his friends in the US to stop the World Bank funding for the Padma Bridge over allegations of a corruption conspiracy.

Hasina alleged that these people are still conspiring.

She is confident that nobody would be able to hinder Bangladesh's progress.

AL may defer

FROM PAGE 16

President Sheikh Hasina, also the prime minister, hinted at the deferment.

The next meeting of the AL working committee, the highest decision-making body of the party, would soon finalise the new date for the council.

The first and second phases of the union parishad elections are slated for March 22 and March 31. The party is going to delay the council as it would be busy with polls preparations.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, an organising secretary of AL said the party in principle has decided to defer the council.

The AL held its last national council on December 29, 2012. The tenure of its central committee expired on December 28 last year, but the working committee extended the tenure by six months.

Tourism teachers

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agitation, they have lagged behind. Now with the addition of the tour, they will face problem again.

"We have more than 10 classes a week. We don't know how our make up classes will be conducted. Teachers also did not conduct make up classes after last month's agitation," said Mukit Parvez, a 5th semester student.

"I am anxious that I may not obtain expected result in the final exam because of these stoppages, it adds a lot pressure at the end of the semester," a final year student alleged.

Fresher are also nervous as many of them are struggling in their courses. "The break of regular classes will put me behind in my studies," said a fresher seeking anonymity.

An official of the administration department of the university showed a leave approval paper to this correspondent where it shows that the teachers will go for the tour on a "duty leave". It also said that they have to attend two programs in Thailand on 2nd March and 3rd March. They will conduct a joint program with Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Bandung University, Indonesia on those two days.

Takriama Sayeda, who could not join the tour for personal problems said, "Teachers' tour is a common phenomena of our department. Our teachers will also present papers there."

"It's not a recreational tour; it's only for academic purposes. Pro-vice chancellor (administration) of the university also went with them. The VC office approved the tour," she added.

Acting chairman of the department Md Badruzzaman Bhuiyan, who could not join the tour, told The Daily Star, "...As Singapore is a developed country and famous for Tourism, the teachers will visit many tourism sites to achieve hands-on experience and practical knowledge."

Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam, dean of the business faculty, could not be reached even after several phone calls.

AAMS Arefin Siddique, vice-chancellor said, "There is no restriction from the university on visiting any foreign countries for all the teachers of a department for academic purposes," adding, teachers may take extra classes to make up the classes which could not be held as per schedule.