

POOR SERVICE AT BRTA

'Come to my office'

Official asks aggrieved service seekers at ACC hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They have been waiting for several years to change the ownership of their vehicles. Some of them are told by BRTA officials that their "documents are missing" while others are caught up in red tape.

When the vehicle owners were talking about their sufferings at a public hearing in the city yesterday, BRTA officials assured them of resolving the problems within a day.

The Anti-Corruption Commission organised the hearing at the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh. Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Salah Uddin of Dhaka moderated the event.

Abdullah Al Faisal from Shewrapara said he bought a motorbike from a seller in December 2014 and applied to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) within a week for changing the ownership. Later, he was told that his documents were "missing".

"Just five days ago, I gave Tk 500 to one Arif and he traced the file straight away," he said.

Faisal could not confirm the designation of Arif, a BRTA staff member.

ATM Jamaluddin, assistant director of BRTA, asked Faisal to visit his office today for having his job done by the end of the day.

BRTA officials said it took them a maximum of 30 working days to change the ownership of a vehicle.

KM Afzal bought a car from a seller in April 2010 and applied to BRTA that month for changing the ownership, but the job is still pending.

He complained that due to the inordinate delay, he will have to pay more money now for the job as the charges for changing ownership have been hiked.

BRTA Deputy Director Masud Alam claimed the job was delayed as the ACC sought information about the particular car.

Some 20 people described how they were harassed by BRTA staff for having retro-reflective registration number plates, driving licences and fitness certificates. Brokers in connivance with some BRTA officials add to their sufferings, they complained.

The Dhaka DC asked the BRTA officials to take necessary steps to end the harassment of people.

BRTA Chairman Nazrul Islam said he would take necessary measures to reduce people's sufferings.

"Of course the brokers work in complicity with some unscrupulous BRTA officials. Otherwise they would not have been able to work."

Action will be taken against the wrongdoers, he added.

ACC Commissioner Nasiruddin Ahmed said many government offices had been failing to provide services to people which became evident during several hearings organised by the anti-graft watchdog.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Cabinet okays draft law on prevention

Dhaka city expansion gets nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved a proposed law aiming at preventing and controlling communicable diseases in the country.

The proposed law titled Communicable Disease Prevention, Control and Elimination Act, 2016 has a provision of jail term and fine for a person who is affected with such a disease but does not undergo medical tests for detection.

Briefing reporters after a cabinet meeting at the Secretariat, Cabinet Secretary M Shaiful Alam said the affected persons concerned would also have to be examined in related and specified institutes to detect the types of their diseases.

If a patient avoids medical tests to detect presence of diseases considered as transmittable, they would face one-year imprisonment or Tk 2 lakh fine, he added.

Alam said one of the goals of the draft law is to protect people from communicable diseases as well as taking proper measures to create mass awareness about germs related diseases like Kala-Azar, HIV, Influenza, Nipah, Ebola and Typhoid.

Under the proposed law, a patient or the affected persons would have to be screened and isolated to protect common people from being affected, he observed.

Experts have termed the proposed law a "landmark and a milestone."

"It's a landmark decision of the government. With enactment of the law, Bangladesh's health sector will move one step forward," said Prof Dr AKM Shamsuzzaman, director of Communicable Disease Control of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

He told The Daily Star that communicable diseases would be eliminated more quickly with the implementation of the law.

Communicable diseases like malaria, dengue, Filariasis, Kala-azar, all types of influenza, Nipah, HIV, viral hepatitis, among others, would be brought under the legal framework of the law, he added.

Prof Shamsuzzaman further said, "We used to face difficulties in dealing with diseases which appear suddenly on any part of the country. With the enactment of the law, the health department will be able to involve other government bodies concerned including the law-enforcement agencies for controlling such outbreaks."

Emerging threats of diseases like Zika and communicable diseases which transmit frequently on bordering areas would be dealt under legal framework, he said, thanking the government for approving the proposed law.

The health ministry moved to enact the law in 2014 but couldn't do so due to various bureaucratic tangles, according to insiders.

The draft law was prepared in line with and replacing the Bangladesh Malaria Eradication (Repeat) Ordinance, 1977 and the Prevention of Malaria (Special Provisions) Ordinance, they said.

ities concerned will create quarantine facilities for affected persons. The law also creates a scope for the government to take all kinds of assistance from other countries to prevent communicable diseases.

16 UNIONS TO BE ADDED

After the cabinet meeting, the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reforms (NICAR) with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair approved the LGRD ministry's proposal to add 16 unions to two Dhaka city corporations, doubling the areas of the capital.

With the inclusion of eight unions each to Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), the size of the metropolis would be 270 square kilometres from the existing 129 square kilometres, said the cabinet secretary.

He added the decision had been taken in order to provide better civic amenities to the people of these unions.

Beraid, Badda, Bhatara, Satarkul, Hoirampur, Uttarkhan, Dakkhinkhan and Dumni would be included in DNCC, while Shyampur, Matuail, Demra, Dania, Sarulia, Dakkhingaon, Nasirabad and Manda would be included in DSCC.

Alam said the NICAR also approved a proposal to upgrade Karnaphuli Police Station of Patia in Chittagong to a new upazila.

It will be the 490th upazila of the country and will be formed with five unions excluded from 22 unions of Patia upazila, he said.

Replying to a query at his ministry office, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said they would face no financial burden with the doubling size of the city corporation areas. He added financial position of the two city corporations is quite well off.

BNP leaders

FROM PAGE 1

the government to defame the party.

The meeting also decided that the party will contest the last two phases of the UP polls although massive irregularities by the ruling Awami League men have been reported.

The BNP did not brief the media about the outcome of the two-hour meeting of the party's highest policymaking body that started around 9:00pm.

"Most of the committee members talked about the alleged exchange of money for awarding posts in different party committees formed recently," a BNP standing committee member told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

BNP leaders also expressed anger over the alleged selection of UP chairman candidates in exchange for money, he added.

A standing committee member alleged that a section of BNP leaders in the party chief's Gulshan office and its Nayapalton central office were involved in such activities.

"We argued that the party chief should form a committee to identify those involved in such practices and take necessary action against them," another standing committee member told this correspondent.



Chittagong Regional Cultural Academy brings out a sampan (boat) procession to raise awareness about protecting the Karnaphuli river from pollution. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Verdict read out to Nizami

FROM PAGE 1

If the president rejects the petition or if Nizami decides not to seek clemency, the government would decide on when it would execute the verdict, Mahubey told The Daily Star last night.

Meanwhile, quoting Nizami's family members, one of his lawyers said his client wouldn't seek presidential mercy.

Tajul Islam, a counsel for the condemned war criminal, told this correspondent yesterday that Nizami's family members met him at Kashimpur Jail on May 6, and he told them he wouldn't seek clemency.

The Daily Star couldn't get any comment from Nizami's family on the issue.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said they had received a copy of the SC verdict and would execute it on completion of necessary formalities.

Earlier in the afternoon, the SC released its full verdict that dismissed Nizami's petition for reviewing his death sentence handed down by the International Crimes Tribunal-1 in October 2014 for committing crimes against humanity in 1971.

The full text of the SC judgement reached the ICT around 5:10pm, and the tribunal then sent copies of the verdict to Dhaka Central Jail and the other authorities concerned.

"We have sent copies of the verdict to the jail authorities and the district magistrate in Dhaka at 6:45pm for

taking necessary steps," ICT Registrar Shahidul Alam Jhinuk told this correspondent.

On Sunday night, Nizami was shifted to Dhaka Central Jail from Kashimpur prison in Gazipur amid tight security.

The ICT also sent a copy to the home ministry and the law ministry, he added.

Jail sources said a five member-team led by ICT Deputy Registrar Keshob Roy Chowdhury handed over a copy of the verdict to the senior jail superintendent around 7:00pm.

It cannot be said for sure how many days it would take for the authorities to complete the procedures for the execution of the verdict.

Previously, Jamaat leader Mohammad Kamaruzzaman was executed five days after the dismissal of his review plea while another Jamaat leader, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury were hanged three days after the apex court rejected their review petitions.

Nizami was the president of Jamaat's student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha from 1966 to September 1971 and ex-officio chief of Al-Badr.

He masterminded the formation of the militia that unleashed terror on peace-loving Bangalees, killed unarmed civilians, raped women and destroyed properties during the 1971 Liberation War.

Towards the end of the war, the Al-Badr Bahini committed "crimes of

serious gravity intending to demean the human civilisation," said the ICT-1 in its 2014 verdict.

Sensing Pakistan's imminent defeat, the notorious force systematically rounded up, tortured and killed the nation's brightest luminaries to intellectually cripple the soon-to-be independent Bangladesh.

But Nizami has never repented of the cold-blooded savagery.

Instead of getting punished for the heinous crimes, Nizami was rehabilitated after 1975. He gained immense political clout and even became a minister during the BNP-led government's tenure between 2001 and 2006.

But justice caught up with him in October 2014 when the ICT-1 sentenced him to death for war crimes, and the SC on January 6 this year upheld the death penalty.

Nizami filed a petition with the SC, seeking review of his conviction and sentences against him.

On May 5, a four-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha dismissed the review petition, paving the way for the execution of the verdict.

The three other judges of the bench are Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique.

SC OBSERVATIONS

In its full verdict, the apex court said Nizami has "impliedly admitted" his involvement in the crimes against humanity in 1971.

It said Nizami has been found guilty

on five charges, but he sought review of three charges on which he was given the death penalty.

"We would like to observe here that the petitioner [Nizami] has not taken any exception as regards his conviction and sentence with respect to charge Nos. 7 and 8, on which charges, he was also found guilty for his direct participation in the killing of Sohrab of Brishalikh and also instigating to kill Bodi, Rumi, Jewel and Azad at old MP Hostel, Nakhlapara.

"Therefore, the petitioner's involvement and complicity in the perpetration of offences of crimes against humanity and genocide have been impliedly admitted by the accused," the apex court said.

"More so, in view of the submission of the learned counsel to commute the sentence, the petitioner cannot dispute his involvement in those offences," it said.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch, a New York-based rights organisation, said the death sentence for Nizami should be suspended with immediate effect.

"Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as an irreversible, degrading, and cruel punishment," Brad Adams, Asia director at HRW, said in a statement.

"It is particularly problematic when there are questions about whether proceedings meet fair trial standards," he added.

Pakistan high commissioner summoned

FROM PAGE 1

and destroyed properties during the 1971 war.

Sensing Pakistan's imminent defeat towards the end of the war, the Al-Badr systematically rounded up, tortured and killed the nation's brightest luminaries to intellectually cripple the soon-to-be independent Bangladesh.

The Jamaat-e-Islami ameer or his party has never repented of the cold-blooded savagery.

"TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE" The protest note said it is a matter of great regret that Pakistan continues to comment in the misguided defence of this convicted criminal.

"These uncalled for reactions amount to direct interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country, which is totally unacceptable," it added.

Dhaka reiterated that the verdicts against the convicted individual Nizami had been handed down through an independent, sound, fair, impartial, open and transpar-

ent judicial process, and without any political interference.

The trials took solely into consideration the crimes committed by Nizami in 1971 and had nothing to do with his political identity or affiliation, the note stated.

The note refuted Pakistan's labelling the proceedings of the Tribunal as "controversial trials" and affirmed that Pakistan should in no way make biased, flawed and unfounded comments about the independent judiciary of a sovereign country.

According to a press release of the foreign ministry, the high commissioner was reminded that Pakistan continues to present a misleading, limited and partial interpretation of the underlying premise of the Tripartite Agreement of April 1974.

The essential spirit of the agreement was to create an environment of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence.

The agreement never implied that

the masterminds and perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide would continue to enjoy impunity and eschew the course of justice.

The note also pointed out that Pakistan has systematically failed in its obligation to bring to justice those of its nationals identified and held responsible for committing mass atrocity in 1971. It was Bangladesh which has consistently advocated regional peace, harmony, reconciliation and integration.

Dhaka deeply regretted that despite Bangladesh's repeated overtures, the malicious campaign by Pakistan against the trials of the crimes against humanity continued and this was an impediment to the bilateral relations.

The high commissioner was asked to take serious note of the points raised by Bangladesh and bring those to the attention of the competent authorities in Pakistan.

Towards organic litchi

FROM PAGE 1

litchi orchards, now need only this capsule that has the female sex hormones of insects.

The DAE officials hoped that this technology would radically change the use of pesticides in Dinajpur's litchi orchards, thereby drastically reducing the risks posed to local children, who sometimes consume fruits that had fallen to the ground.

According to the officials of the horticulture department in Dinajpur, litchi is being produced on 4,733 hectares of land in the district this year.

Of all the areas, litchis grown in orchards in the Biral and Dinajpur sadar upazilas are famous for their mouth-watering taste, colour and size.

Deputy Director of Dinajpur DAE Golam Mostafa said, "We have taken the initiative to install pheromone traps on a trial basis. We installed 50 traps on 50 litchi trees in Mashimpur and 50 traps in Robipur village in Biral."

He said each trap costs farmers only Tk 30.

If this trial goes well this season

then more and more litchi growers would be encouraged to adopt the trap, hoped the DAE official.

Mashimpur's Amin Uddin installed 19 traps on his 19 litchi trees this year. Amin has been involved in litchi production since 1972 and said he is getting positive results from the traps.

The traps were installed soon after flowering began and he has not sprayed any pesticides since.

"In previous years, I had to spray pesticides at least four times for controlling pests after the flowering began. And each spray would have cost me Tk

700, which is now saved," said Amin.

He wants his peers to follow him. He said when he used to spray pesticides, people would have difficulty breathing or just walking through the orchard.

During a recent visit to his orchard, this correspondent found the traps full of pests.

Amin was seen cleaning those. "In the last one month I spent only Tk 3 on detergent for washing the traps," said Amin, adding that he is expecting a good yield this year if there was no natural catastrophe.