

Tangail-4 by-election remains stayed

As SC starts hearing Kader Siddique's plea seeking candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday started hearing an appeal filed by Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddique challenging a High Court verdict that upheld cancellation of his candidacy for the by-polls of Tangail-4 constituency.

After concluding yesterday's proceedings on the appeal, the apex court also postponed its hearing.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice SK Sinha said this court will fix a date later for resuming the hearing.

The SC's stay order on the process for holding the by-polls of Tangail-4 constituency will continue until its further order, Election Commission's lawyer Barrister Mohammed Yeasin Khan told The Daily Star.

The EC on September 16, 2015 had issued a notification fixing November 10 the same year for the by-polls to the constituency that fell vacant following the resignation of Awami League lawmaker Abdul Latif Siddique from parliament, and asked aspirants to submit nomination papers by October 11 that year.

As the returning officer on October 13, 2015 cancelled Kader Siddique's nomination on loan default charges, he filed separate appeals, first with the EC and then with the HC.

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Passers-by gather to inspect salvaged goods worth buying at throwaway prices for being somewhat damaged in the devastating fire of January 3 in the DCC Market in Gulshan-1 in the capital as affected traders set up shop on adjoining footpaths yesterday with hopes of cutting down losses. Meanwhile, work continues, bottom right, to remove the debris from the portion of the market which had collapsed.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Two arrested over confining, beating Iranians in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court on Tuesday sent two men to jail after police arrested them for allegedly confining and beating up three Iranians at one of their shops in Bagha upazila on Monday.

The court rejected bail prayers of the two -- Yajul Islam, 30, and Ariful Islam, 28, of Monigram village.

The Iranians -- Ali Najaf, Limbo AbasiSaor and Ali Ahmadlou -- bought a US card reader from Yajul's store at Monigram on Monday evening on their way to Rajshahi from Iswardi, said Ali Mahmood, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bagha Police Station.

Yajul noticed US dollars in Najaf's wallet and suddenly snatched his wallet and passport from his hands, and started shouting, terming him a mugger.

Hearing the shouts, the other two Iranians, who were waiting outside in a car, went inside the store. Meanwhile, locals, including Ariful and Md Swapan, gathered there.

Ariful, Yajul and Swapan confined the Iranians to the store and beat them up.

Being informed by locals, police rescued the three foreigners around 8:00pm. Swapan managed to flee. Police recovered Najaf's belongings from the store, the OC added.

Ariful is a son of a local Awami League leader, said locals.

Sub Inspector Torikul Islam filed a case with five charges including that over cheating and intimidation, against the three.

Stop sand extraction from Surma river: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to immediately take steps to stop extraction of sand from the Surma river in Sylhet.

The court asked the deputy commissioner of Sylhet to submit a report before it assessing the damage from the sand extraction.

Assistant Attorney General Arobinda Kumar Roy told The Daily Star. The bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain why they should not be directed to remove Peshnewaj from the list of sand extraction zones of the Surma river.

The rule was issued following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

BID TO LESSEN DCC MARKET FIRE LOSSES

Traders on footpaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine days into a devastating fire which reduced much of the DCC Market in Gulshan-1 to rubble, scores of the affected traders yesterday set up shop on footpaths in front and on the west end giving away whatever product they managed to salvage at throwaway prices.

"I am selling every product at a loss of Tk 300 to 400, otherwise it will be a total loss," said Abdul Karim sitting with his goods in front of the market.

The products have been damaged in one way or another on being exposed to heat, soot or black smoke from the fire, he said.

The array of goods put on display at the makeshift shops drew a large number of passers-by who stopped to try their luck at getting a good bargain on products which might come in handy, albeit following a good deal of inspection.

The products available include accessories for women, cosmetics, perfumes, shoes, clothes such as fancy frocks, toys, baby diapers, blankets and decorative pieces meant for households.

Construction of a number of makeshift shops was seen underway on a portion of the car park in front of the market to accommodate some of the affected shop owners.

Meanwhile, a team from Bangladesh Army got involved in the process to remove the massive chunks of concrete lying among the debris of a four-story kitchen and grocery market that collapsed in the fire.

The devastating fire engulfed the kitchen market, causing it to collapse on the 296 shops inside early January 3, heavily damaging 234 shops of the adjoining supermarket and causing an estimated loss of Tk 200 crore.

Though firefighters were able to prevent the fire from spreading by 6:00am, it took around 16 hours for them to douse it completely.

A seven-member probe body led by Lt Col Mosharraf Hossain, a director of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, is now trying to identify the cause of the fire. They have a deadline of 15 workdays starting from the day of the fire.

DU female student 'kills herself'

DU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka University (DU) student allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself from a ceiling fan at her residence in the capital's East Nakhhalpara area early yesterday.

Mohsina Akhter Medha was a sophomore of the department of international relations at DU.

Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge (OC) of Tejgoan Industrial Police Station, said, "She (Medha) hanged herself from a fan after her parents rebuked her for using Facebook late at night. Her mother discovered the body hanging at around 4:00am when she woke up to say her prayers."

A general diary was filed, the OC added.

ACC to watch 'graft-prone' govt offices, agencies

Chairman Iqbal Mahmood tells press conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Iqbal Mahmood yesterday said they would specially monitor government offices and organisations which were allegedly prone to corruption.

"Complaints against corruption are our main concern; we don't care about whether one is a cadre or non-cadre (official)," he told a press briefing at his office, revealing ACC's 2017 work plan.

Seeking anonymity, an ACC official said they would monitor land offices, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha, National Housing Authority, local government bodies including city corporations, health and education offices, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, and passport office.

Last year, ACC held a mass hearing over alleged irregularities and corruption in Rajuk, BRTA, Passport and Immigration Department and local land offices.

The anti-graft watchdog caught re-handled 13 people during exchange of bribes in 2016, Iqbal Mahmood said adding

that in 2017 the number would rise as ACC had boosted its monitoring in this regard.

"Whoever is involved will face dire consequences," he warned.

BASIC BANK CASE
The ACC chief said that about Tk 359.16 crore had been deposited in troubled state-run BASIC Bank since March 14, 2016, while over Tk 3,000 crore worth of loans was rescheduled within this time.

The board of BASIC Bank led by Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu disbursed around Tk 6,500 crore in loans between 2010 and June 2014, mostly on forged documents and inflated mortgages.

The BASIC Bank case is complicated, therefore, ongoing steps over it are taking a long time, he said, responding to a query.

All ports including that of land and air were informed about the suspects in the BASIC Bank case in order to stop them from leaving the country, he added.

2017 WORK PLAN
The ACC chairman said in the current year they would open a Wealth Recovery Unit.

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Beijing chalks out yearlong events with Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

The Chinese government has chalked out yearlong events to be held in Bangladesh and China to mark the "Year of Friendship and Exchanges", including high-level visits, fairs and cultural events, to further strengthen bilateral relations.

There is a plan to host an event named "Day of China-Bangladesh Friendship and Exchanges" in major cities in Bangladesh this year, a senior official told the news agency on Tuesday.

Ministries on foreign, cultural and religious affairs, education, science and technology, tourism, oceanic administration, telecommunications and public securities have primarily chalked out the events.

Bangladesh and China dedicated 2017 as the "Year of Friendship and Exchanges" when Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Bangladesh on October 14-15, 2016 seeking a "promising future".

The Chinese embassy in Dhaka in association with Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will host a performance of Henan Art Troupe of China on Monday at 6:30pm at National Theatre in Dhaka.

There will be a number of seminars on Bangladesh-China relations in both countries. China will also sponsor young Bangladeshi scientists for short periods.

Meanwhile, the formal mechanism of cooperation on counter-terrorism will likely be launched this year.

Bangladesh and China signed 27 deals worth about \$24.45 billion in soft loan for various key development projects apart from signing 13 joint venture agreements involving \$13.6 billion of Chinese investment in Bangladesh. Together, the sum of \$38.05 billion is the biggest ever assistance pledged by any single country for Bangladesh.

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