



# STONE CRUSHERS IN SYLHET HC orders govt to remove them

Authorities conduct drives against illegal stone extraction in Jaflong, Companiganj

STAR REPORT

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to remove all unauthorised stone crushing machines, now operating in five upazilas of Sylhet, in the next three months to save public health and environment from pollution and damage.

Responding to a writ petition, it also asked the authorities to move all authorised stone crushers that have environmental clearance certificates issued against them to a stone crushing zone within the time, reports our court correspondent.

According to a report submitted by the Department of Environment (DoE) to the HC in August 2015, 393 out of 606 such machines, set up in Sylhet sadar, Companiganj, Gowainghat, Jaintapur and Kanaighat upazilas, were illegal as no environmental clearance certificate had been issued against them.

The court yesterday ordered the authorities to implement the Stone Crushing Policy 2000 in the same period.

Under the policy, no stone crushing machine can be set up within 500-metre radius of a town, upazila, municipality, academic institution and hospital, 100-metre radius of a residence and religious workshop and 50-metre radius of a road and highway, Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, a lawyer for the petitioner, told The Daily Star.

A bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo came up with the verdict after hearing the writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

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Workers illegally extracting stone from hillocks near the Lovachhara river in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila. Several raids by the Department of Environment in the area could not stop this unlawful activity that damages the environment and leaves the area vulnerable to landslides. The photo was taken recently. Inset, a bulldozer knocks down a crusher during a drive by the local administration in Jaflong of Gowainghat upazila yesterday. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Lovachhara river at risk for stone extraction

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Kanaighat

Influential traders have been illegally extracting stone from the Lovachhara river and its nearby hillocks in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila for several years, making the area vulnerable to landslides.

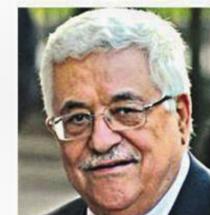
Nobody files complaints against the unscrupulous traders for fear of retaliation as they are politically affiliated with different parties, said locals and green activists.

Visiting the area yesterday, this correspondent found that workers were busy extracting stone from deep trenches.

Some workers said traders sometimes employ dredgers, locally known as Boma Machine, to extract stone.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kanaighat Police Station, said Subel Ahmed, 25, of Sunamganj was injured in a landslide while extracting stone in the area on Monday night.

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## An opportunity for Bangladesh

Economists, RMG exporters see an end to uneven trade preferences against Bangladesh as Trump administration abandons TPP deal

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Economists and garment exporters see the abandonment of 12-nation mega trade deal Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as an immense opportunity for Bangladesh.

With the scrapping of the deal, they believe, there would be no future uneven trade preferences against Bangladesh in the US market.

Vietnam, a signatory of the TPP, is a major competitor of Bangladesh when it comes to exporting garments to the US market. As per the TPP, Vietnam was supposed to enjoy zero-duty benefits. But now, things might be quite different, they said.

"The TPP was a matter of worry for us as Vietnam was a member of this trade bloc. So, it is good news for us that the deal has been scrapped," said Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a private think tank.

The CPD chief, however, said Bangladesh will have to remain "cautious" as there is a possibility that the US would sign bilateral deals with other countries for importing goods at a cheaper rate.

The US might sign the bilateral trade deal with Vietnam as well, he said.

"With the scrapping of the TPP, we also came out from an unusual competition in garment trade in the US market. Vietnam will not enjoy duty benefits anymore," said Siddiqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh

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## Letter on EC search body likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The President's Office would send a letter to the cabinet division this noon on the formation of the search committee to constitute the next Election Commission, said a source in the Bangabhaban.

Joyal Abedin, press secretary to the president, told The Daily Star yesterday that the letter to the cabinet division would be sent within a day or two.

The letter might suggest some people as members of the search committee, the highly-placed Bangabhaban source said.

In 2012, the then president Zillur Rahman formed a search committee to constitute the EC after holding talks with 23 registered political parties.

Following the talks, Zillur Rahman formed a four-member search committee led by Supreme Court Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain to recommend people for appointment as the chief election commissioner and election commissioners.

Sources said the search committee this

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## Driverless buses on trial in Paris



AFP, Paris

Paris began its first experiment with driverless buses on Monday, with city officials saying they were eager to prepare for the coming "revolution" of autonomous vehicles.

Two box-shaped electric vehicles capable of carrying around 10 people have been deployed -- within the safety of a special lane -- on a bridge connecting two railway stations to the east of the city centre.

"Autonomous vehicles represent a revolution for every city on the planet... which will change our urban environment and public space in a spectacular fashion over the next 20 years," Paris deputy mayor Jean-Louis Missika told reporters.

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## 'INTERNAL FEUD' BCL leader beaten to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A leader of the Nizampur College unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was allegedly beaten to death by rivals on college campus at Mirsarai upazila of Chittagong Monday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Nurul Amin, an HSC

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 25

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
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JAMAAT 6-10 1-15 4-30 5-50 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## BCL won't hold rally on weekdays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of major traffic disruptions in the city, Chhatra League yesterday decided not to bring out processions and hold rallies in the capital on working days, considering public sufferings.

Rather, it would organise such programmes at weekends -- Friday and Saturday -- from now on.

BCL General Secretary SM Jakir Hossain announced the decision at the organisation's reunion programme at the Suhrawardy Udyan.

Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was the chief guest at the programme, chaired by BCL President Saifur Rahman Sohag.

Commuters experienced traffic jams on city streets as different units of the BCL brought out processions and moved towards Suhrawardy Udyan to join the programme.

At the programme, AL  
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Iqbal along with his 41-day-old baby and wife waits for public transport near the capital's Shahbagh intersection after visiting a doctor at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University yesterday. When the photo was taken in the afternoon, they had been waiting there for about an hour. Some nearby streets were closed around noon ahead of a Chhatra League rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## WB ON CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT Sundarbans at risk of losing Sundari trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Increasing salinity in the water and soil of the Sundarbans due to climate change will leave a significant impact on the tree and fish in the mangrove forest in near future, predicts a World Bank study.

Some iconic tree species like Sundari, Passur and Kankra and a few freshwater fish species are likely to be extremely rare in the Sundarbans.

Climate change coupled with human activity-induced consequences will have significant implications for the present and future management of the Sundarbans as well as the forest-dependent livelihoods of the surrounding poor inhabitants, the study added.

The report was released yesterday on the World Bank's website. It comes at a time when environmentalists from home and abroad have been protesting a government move to establish a coal-fired power plant near the Sundarbans, a Unesco natural heritage site, jointly by two state-owned companies from Bangladesh and India.

According to the WB, the Southwest coastal region of Bangladesh is already facing increasing salinity, especially between October and May. Laboratory analyses of water and soil samples show an increase in salinity over time in the region.

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