

Uttara students can't roam streets in school hours

DMP decides to detain 'violators' for containing gang culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an attempt to restrain gang culture in Uttara, Dhaka Metropolitan Police has decided to take students into custody if they are found roaming the streets in uniforms during school hours.

Police will release the detainees only after their parents and representatives from their respective schools come to the police stations and sign bonds, said Bidhan Tripura, deputy commissioner of Uttara division of DMP.

He made the announcement yesterday while addressing a briefing on the progress of investigation into the murder of Uttara teenager Adnan at DMP media centre.

Tripura said social media sites such as Facebook gave rise to the teenager groups that wanted to prove their dominance in their area. Lack of monitoring gave rise to these groups consisting school dropouts, day labourers and masons, he said.

He, however, said police could not stop it alone; parents and schools had some responsibilities as well.

Criticising the decision as "an example of lawless attitude of the police", eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik told

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A man waits for his Valentine at the capital's Ramna Park yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Why 8 accused in jail can't get bail

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain in two weeks as to why eight accused languishing in prisons for 10 to 14 years should not be granted bail.

The accused are Sabbir Ahmed alias Dulal and Dana Mia of Brahmanbaria; Saiful Alam alias Belal of Sylhet; Asadul alias Asa of Satkhira; Ashim Halder, accused in a case filed in Bagerhat; Tabbir Mia of Kishoreganj; Saji Mia of Narayanganj and Mohammad Jalal of Munshiganj.

The HC bench of Justice AKM Abdul Hakim and Justice SM Mozibur Rahman issued the rule on a suo moto move after Supreme Court lawyer Chanchal Kumar Biswas prayed to the court for bail to the eight.

The court earlier granted bail to several other accused who had been confined to prisons for 11 to 17 years.

SUNDARBANS DAY OBSERVED

Call to scrap Rampal project

STAR REPORT

Calls rang out once again for the government to abort the Rampal power plant project as green activists observed Sundarbans Day yesterday to raise awareness on preserving the world's largest mangrove forest.

The environmental activists also urged the government to bar construction of industrial establishments near the Unesco world heritage site and ensure measures against overexploitation of timber and fish resources.

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Ltd, a joint venture of the two countries, signed an agreement with India's state-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd last December to construct the 1,320MW coal-fired power plant.

The site in Bagerhat's Rampal upazila is just 14 kilometres upstream of the Sundarbans Reserve Forest.

Addressing a rally in the capital, eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal said scientists at home and abroad and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) opined that the power plant may severely harm the forest.

Not only will the environment be damaged but livelihoods of around 35 lakh people in five southern districts and the area's ecosystem will also be adversely affected, she said.

Sultana Kamal, convener of The National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans, a platform of 53 green organisations that organised the rally, urged people to unite and raise voice to save the Sundarbans.

Dr Abdul Matin, Member Secretary of the committee and also general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), said, "The government criticises our movement but we do it only to save our priceless natural asset, the Sundarbans."

Their protest would continue till the demands were met, he added.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, organiser of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports; Kamrul Hossain Khan, convener of Bangladesh Environment Network; and Mihir Biswas, joint secretary of Bapa, also spoke.

The Sundarbans committee brought out a procession ending at Jatiya Press Club where another rally was organised marking the day, observed unofficially since 2001.

Another rally was organised along with a discussion and cultural programmes in Khulna city by Sundarbans Academy and the forest department.

Over 200 students, environmental organisations and journalists took part in the programmes, reports our Khulna correspondent. Similar programmes were organised in Bagerhat by the local press club.

Couple found dead in Savar

A CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A married couple was found dead in their house in Shreepur of Ashulia yesterday.

The deceased were Rana Mia, 28, a day labourer, and his wife Shekha Akter, 20, of Meherpur.

Rana was found hanging from the ceiling while Shikha's body was on the floor in their rented house, said Rakibul Islam, a sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said the SI, adding that they might have committed suicide.

However, the reason behind the death of the couple could be known after getting the autopsy report, said the SI.

SAND FILLING IN SONARGAON

HC summons N'ganj DC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned the deputy commissioner of Narayanganj to appear in person before it on February 22 to explain the actual situation of croplands and wetlands in Sonargaon upazila where the lands are being sand-filled ignoring the court's injunction.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das passed the order following a petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela).

Narayanganj DC Rabbi Miah has also been asked to explain the steps the government has taken to comply with the court order, Bela's lawyer Advocate Minhazul Haque Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Bela submitted the petition in early February seeking an order on all 12 respondents including DC Rabbi Miah to appear before the court. But the HC only asked the DC to appear before it.

The respondents include secretaries to housing and public works, land, environment and forest, home affairs; director general, a director and a deputy director of the department of environment; DC of Narayanganj; upazila nirbahi officer and assistant commissioner (land) of Sonargaon; and managing directors of Unique Property Development Limited and Sonargaon Economic Zone.

Earlier on January 22, the HC bench asked all 12 respondents to explain why its order for stopping destruction of the lands with sand filling in six moujas in the upazila has not yet been complied.

On January 17, when moved the petition alleging that sand filling had been going on in defiance of the court order, the court verbally ordered for immediate halt of the activities.

The sand filling was first launched by the real estate developer in 2009 for a resort city. It was then stopped for two years following a

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National Committee to Protect the Sundarbans and its 53 member organisations bring out an anti-Rampal procession from in front of Bangladesh National Museum in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Don't raise land dev tax for 1yr

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday prohibited the government to collect land development tax at enhanced rates for next one year.

The bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah passed the order following a petition filed by Dewan Abdur Rashid, a farmer from Barisal.

Earlier on August 22 last year following a petition filed by Abdur Rashid, the HC issued a rule asking the government to explain why the provision of a law that empowered the government to raise or reduce the land development tax should not be scrapped.

Petitioner's lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua told The Daily Star yesterday that his client filed the petition challenging the legality of the provision of the Land Development Tax Ordinance, 1976.

The petitioner in his petition said any tax has to be enhanced or reduced through passing a bill of law by the parliament under

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Fair polls rest on law enforcement: Analysts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proper enforcement of the law and good governance must be ensured for holding fair and credible elections in the country, experts and academics said at a seminar yesterday.

They said violence, irregularities, and political influence were major barriers to conducting fair elections.

The seminar, "Electoral Governance in Bangladesh", was jointly organised by Microgovernance Research Initiative (MGR) and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) at Dhaka University.

MGR research coordinator Aynul Islam said electoral violence was triggered by local political rivalry, and it had to be solved by the local politicians.

Referring to the law enforcers overseeing election, he said they were often not trained enough to properly handle violent situations.

Prof Amena Mohsin of Dhaka

University said women should be given more space in politics.

Sabbir Ahmed, an associate professor of DU, called for bringing reforms in electoral laws.

Presenting a paper, MGR research analyst Sunbin Islam said some parliamentary constituencies in the past were delimited through a political nexus.

In another paper, human rights activist Bipasha Chakma said indigenous women were lagging behind in terms of political participation due to the language barrier and the absence of land rights.

She demanded a law to ensure reserved seats for indigenous women in local government institutions at the hill districts.

IFES's chief of party in Bangladesh Silja Paasilinna and Assistant Professor Mubashar Hasan of North South University, among others, also attended the programme.

No scope for filing lawsuit against WB

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said Bangladesh has no scope "as per the relevant agreement" of filing any lawsuit against World Bank for cancelling the \$1.2 billion credit for the Padma bridge project over corruption allegations.

People falling victim to the corruption allegations can personally take legal steps and they should take legal advice, he told a "Meet the Press" organised by Law Reporters Forum in the capital's Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

A Canadian court on February 10 acquitted three former senior executives of SNC-Lavalin Group in a corruption conspiracy case.

The allegation was that SNC staff planned to bribe officials in Bangladesh to try to win a \$50 million contract to supervise the bridge's construction.

Responding to journalists' queries, Anisul said, as per information Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina provided on corruption allegations over the project, Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus was involved in plans to stop the World Bank funding.

He said he could not state whether legal steps can be taken against Prof Yunus as it must first be seen whether the involvement was an offence. Everything should not be brought under the purview of the law, he said, adding that Bangladesh's dignity has increased following the Canadian court's acquittal.

Anisul said the government would take up short, mid and long-term plans for reducing the huge backlog of cases in courts across the country and also take steps for appointing new judges for lower courts.

He said the government would issue a gazette within a few days determining disciplinary and conduct rules for lower court judges as per a Supreme Court directive.

Law Reporters Forum President Ashutosh Sarkar and General Secretary Didarul Alam also spoke at the function.

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