

## JUDGE SHORTAGE IN SC, HC

## Deaths, retirement make it worse

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The shortage of judges in the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court has been compounded with deaths and retirements in the last couple of months. Coupled with the apparent absence of recruitment initiatives, this has further aggravated the backlog of cases.

The Appellate Division now has eight judges, including the chief justice. Justice Mohammad Bazul Rahman passed away on January 1 and Justice Md Nizamul Huq retired in April. Another judge is set to retire by this year.

There are 86 judges in the HC, three of whom are hearing war crimes cases in the International Crimes Tribunal. Justice JN Deb Choudhury died on December 15, Justice Shamim

Hasnain retired in April and three judges are set to retire by this year.

Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star yesterday that some judges would be appointed to the HC once it reopens on July 2 after the ongoing annual vacation.

The eight Appellate Division judges are dealing with over 13,600 cases while the 86 in the HC over 4.31 lakh. In lower courts, there are only 1,268 judges who are hearing over 27 lakh cases.

"There's one judge for every 10,000 people in the USA and for 67,000 in India. But in Bangladesh, we have only one judge for more than 1 lakh people," observed Law Commission Chairman Justice ABM Khairul Haque earlier.

The last time the Appellate Division saw new judges was on February 8 last

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## WHO SUFFERS MOST FROM EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS?

Six of Asia's countries are ranked among the world's top 10 countries most affected by climate risk based on frequency, death tolls and economic losses, according to the Global Climate Risk Index by think-tank Germanwatch.



Compiled by: ANN/DataLEADS

## EXTREME WEATHER

## Bangladesh 6th worst-hit country

DATALEADS, New Delhi

Bangladesh ranked sixth among the world's top 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in the last 20 years, according to the Global Climate Risk Index by think-tank Germanwatch.

On an average, a total of 679.05 people died in 185 climatic events in Bangladesh within the period of 1996 to 2015, the Germanwatch report said.

As a result, the country lost 0.7324 percent of its GDP.

The annually published Global Climate Risk Index analyses to what extent countries have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.).

Bangladesh sits at the head of the Bay of Bengal. The sea surface temperatures have seen a marked rise over the years. Scientists estimate the climate change in Bengal could lead to one of the largest mass migrations in human history.

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## A close call

20 hurt as two trains narrowly avert head-on collision in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

At least 20 passengers received injuries after jumping off their trains as two trains from opposite directions ended up on the same track but managed to avoid a head-on collision near Bonarpara railway station in Shaghata Upazila yesterday.

Railway authority has suspended the assistant station master and point man for alleged negligence in performing their duties.

Akbar Hossain, station master of Bonarpara said at about 11:30am Santaher bound Dolan Champa inter-city express train 768 was standing on

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## Two held

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Nayan, organising secretary of Sadar union unit Jubo League, was found dead on a road in Dighinala on June 1. He used to carry passengers on his bike in and outside Rangamati for a living.

Following the incident, Bangalee settlers unleashed a series of arson attacks on indigenous people in Longadu on June 2. More than 200 houses and shops were looted, vandalised and burned to ashes, according to victims.

Ali Ahmed Khan, superintendent of police (SP) in Khagrachhari, told a spot briefing in Dighinala that three youths were involved in the killing of Nayan.

The police have arrested two of them, while the other one is on the run, he said, adding, they are working to arrest him.

The SP further said the joint team found the motorcycle in the river around 4:30pm.

Md Mominul Islam, officer-in-charge of Longadu police, said Jasim, Didar and Babul were held in connection with a case filed for arson attacks on indigenous community, reports our Rangamati correspondent.

The affected indigenous families were still living in the jungle and a primary school of remote Longadu area since the attacks.

Kalindi Chakma, a victim of the arson attacks, said the authorities should take immediate steps to rebuild their houses.

"How long will we live under the open sky?" he asked.

The indigenous people also demanded exemplary punishment to

those involved in the arsons.

Mangal Chakma, chairman of Atharakhkhora Union Parishad, said after one week the administration was yet to take steps to rebuild the houses of the victims.

Longadu Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Tajul Islam said steps for rebuilding the houses were underway.

Chakma Circle chief Barrister Raja Debasish Roy yesterday visited the affected areas in Tintila, Manikjor Chhara and Battyra Para and talked with the affected villagers.

Parbatya Chattagram Bangalee Chhara Parishad has meanwhile called a daylong strike for today in three hill districts -- Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban -- demanding arrest of Nayan's killers and protesting mass arrest of Bangalees in Longadu.

## Rampal fallout will be severe

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Sundarbans and Bangladesh Parishad Andolon (BAPA) revealed the report findings at a press conference at the Prof Sirajul Islam Auditorium of Dhaka University.

Dr William Kleindl, research faculty at Montana State University and The University of Montana, US, and Dr Jon Brodie, professional research fellow at ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at the James Cook University, Australia, prepared the report free of cost early this year on request from the national committee.

The scientists reviewed Bangladesh government's five documents, including the final report on environmental impact assessment (EIA) of Rampal power plant; consulting services on coal sourcing, transportation and handling; summary of EIA on dredging and feasibility study for dredging in the Passur river from Mongla Port to Rampal.

Citing Bangladesh government reports, the review report said over 33 million tonnes of dredge spoil are proposed to be removed from the Bay of Bengal and Passur river to create channel for coal transport to the Rampal project site.

In 2015, the World Heritage Committee had requested Bangladesh to conduct a separate EIA for dredging as it found the EIA for Rampal power plant inadequate with respect to the threats posed by dredging.

Bangladesh government in August 2016 released two additional documents related to dredging, but those documents are not "independent,

## KEY POINTS

- 8 to 16 ships will operate per week through rivers on the Sundarbans
- River dredging will generate 33 million tonnes of spoil a year
- Dumping of dredge spoil will affect dolphins, fish and water birds
- Dredging noise and night-time lighting will disturb aquatic wildlife
- Government has not made adequate plans to mitigate the threats

comprehensive or scientifically sound", the review report said.

"They do not meet the guidelines of the World Heritage Advice Note on environmental assessment, which includes rigorous environmental assessment early in the decision process," it said.

The scientists in the report said Bangladesh government in one document claims the dredged spoil would be dumped into the upstream of Passur river, but in another document it said it would fill up the low land of Rampal plant area and build a dyke so the spoil does not go to the river again.

The scientists, however, observed there are high potentials that the said low land would be flooded as the area is one metre higher than the sea level. Thus, it would pollute the river and underground water.

On the other hand, as per the government documents, the 30 million tonnes of sediment removed between

Akram Point and the Bay of Bengal would be dumped into the Bay of Bengal. This will put the aquatic ecology, dolphins and the Sundarbans under serious threat, Dr Anwar Hossain said.

Unesco and International Union for Conservation of Nature recommended an effective action plan and emergency response facility to respond to shipping accidents. Bangladesh government claims it has adhered to the recommendations with the creation of National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, but "it does not reflect the reality," said the report.

"On January 13 this year, coal ship MV Aichgati sank at the mouth of the Passur river, spilling over 1000 tonnes of coal and hundreds of gallons of fuel oil adjacent to the Sundarbans. The government, however, has made no effort to date to remove the ship or spilled toxic fuels," said Prof Anwar Hossain.

The review report says Bangladesh clearly recognises that during operation of the plant, vessel movement through the rivers passing inside the Sundarbans will increase significantly for transporting coal and oil. Transshipping 472 to 944 ships annually mean about 145 days of active transshipment at Akram Point.

This is, however, clear violation of the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 and the Forest Act 1927 as the Sundarbans is a protected area where there should be no commercial activities that damage forest and wildlife resources.

"If these activities are allowed to

operate at Akram Point, then the EIA has not sufficiently assessed the threats to forest and wildlife resources within the Sundarbans," the report said.

India's state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation and Bangladesh Power Development Board are constructing the 1,320 megawatt plant on 1,834 acres of land in Rampal of Bagerhat, 14km north of Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, also a Unesco world heritage site.

Green groups have been protesting its construction near the Sundarbans, which acts as a natural barrier against cyclones.

Global environment organisation, Greenpeace, early last month said Rampal power plant would cause at least 6,000 premature deaths and low birth weights of 24,000 babies during its 40-year life due to air pollution from coal burning.

Dr Abdul Matin, member secretary of the National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans, said international scientists have so far prepared 12 reports assessing the damages to be caused by the Rampal power project.

"We have released nine of those. The government, however, has been rejecting the reports," he said, adding that after the Eid, they would meet the authorities concerned and formally present their scientific findings.

BAPA Vice President Rasheda K Chowdhury, Dhaka University Economics professor MM Akash, Geology professor Badrul Imam and Geology and Environment Professor M Shahidul Islam also spoke.

## A newfound belief for Tigers

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"He normally doesn't talk. Actually we were not talking when we were building that partnership. It was only after our partnership crossed 130-odd and [we] were something like 160-odd that we started talking. I had gone down the wicket on a number of occasions and we were saying that we have a chance," Mahmudullah said about the magnificent stand of 224, which was the highest for any wicket in Bangladesh's one-day history.

Shakib said that he was only thinking of staying at the wicket after Bangladesh were reduced to 33-4.

"I was thinking of staying at the wicket as long as possible. I don't get many opportunities to bat for a long time so with Riyad bhai at the other end we were thinking just to bat on. Once our partnership reached 100 and we saw we had plenty of overs left, we just kept continuing," said Bangladesh's premier all-rounder.

He was in a murderous mood after completing his 100, hitting two fours off successive deliveries against Trent Boult. He was almost denying Mahmudullah his century but when asked he said with a smile on his face: "Actually when I was



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza roars after the Tigers' win over New Zealand on Friday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

about to hit the third ball I was caught in two minds [about whether I was denying him a century]. So I played it half-heartedly."

He also said that if he gets another opportunity he would finish the chase.

"Tamim [Iqbal] always asks me why I can't finish a chase. I was really close yesterday but next time, I will try to do that," he said with a smile on his face.

Mahmudullah however lauded the performance of the bowlers.

"They did a tremendous job to

restrict New Zealand to 265. Our bowlers really bowled in the last ten overs. Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] bhai bowled well. Mosaddek [Hossain] came in and took three important wickets and Taskin [Ahmed] also bowled well," said Mahmudullah, who scored his first century since his back-to-back tons in the 2015 World Cup.

Bangladesh bowled really well in the last ten overs when the Black Caps could score only 62 runs despite being well placed at 201 for five in 39 overs.

## UK PM fights for survival

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province, and increases the chance that Britain will fall out of the EU in 2019 without a deal.

May called the snap election to win a clear mandate for her plan to take Britain out of the EU's single market and customs union, so she could slash immigration.

But her party is deeply divided over what it wants from Brexit and the result means British businesses still have no idea what trading rules they can expect in the coming years.

The British pound tumbled against the U.S. dollar and the euro after the election result.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she assumed Britain still wanted to leave the European Union and that talks must start quickly.

But Elmar Brok, a German conservative and the European Parliament's top Brexit expert, told the Ruhr Nachrichten newspaper the talks would now be more complicated.

"May won't be able to make any compromises because she lacks a broad parliamentary majority," he said.

If she is to succeed in delivering the wishes of 52 percent of the public and take Britain out of the EU, she must find a way to secure the full support of her party

to pass legislation preparing for and enacting the departure.

Anand Menon, professor of politics at King's College London, said her lack of a majority made it far more likely that Britain would leave the EU without a deal.

"Imagine she survives until autumn of next year," he told Reuters. "You will have a very fractious parliament. It is far from guaranteed to vote the deal through."

A failure to get legislation through parliament could eventually result in the need for another election.

Party insiders are placing bets on how long May will last, less than a year after Britain's surprise referendum decision propelled her into Downing Street.

"Theresa May is certainly the strongest leader that we have at the moment," lawmaker David Jones told the BBC.

When asked about her future, senior Conservative lawmaker Owen Paterson said "Let's see how it pans out".

The Times newspaper's front page declared "May stares into the abyss". It said Britain was "effectively leaderless" and the "country all but ungovernable". Its cartoon depicted May in a coffin with her feet sticking out and a speech bubble saying "Nothing has changed", a line she repeated several times as she reversed a key policy on social care

during the campaign.

The Telegraph newspaper said senior Conservatives including Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, interior minister Amber Rudd and Brexit minister David Davis were taking soundings over whether to replace May.

After confirming on Friday that her top five ministers, including finance minister Philip Hammond, would keep their jobs, May must name the rest of her team, who will take on one of the most demanding jobs in recent British history.

She said Brexit talks would begin on June 19 as scheduled, the same day as the formal reopening of parliament.

Senior EU officials and politicians have said May can postpone the June 19 date if she needs to, but with a final deadline for exiting the EU in March 2019, precious negotiating time would be lost if delayed.

Indeed, the prospect of a "hard" Brexit, by which the UK leaves with no deal, has shrunk with the Conservative majority, as it's a likely "red line" for the Democratic Unionist Party, the Northern Irish lawmakers May has turned to for support in Westminster.

The DUP backs the UK leaving the EU, but on the condition its border with EU member the Republic of Ireland, remains "frictionless."