

Controversy over CJ post unnecessary

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is needless to blow the chief justice appointment issue into a controversy as the president definitely will not keep the post vacant, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

He made the remark while talking to reporters after inaugurating a training programme for additional district and sessions judges at the Judicial Administration Training Institute in Dhaka.

The chief justice post of the Supreme Court has been vacant since justice Surendra Kumar Sinha resigned from the post on November 10. Earlier, he went on a leave on health grounds on October 3.

Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, senior most judge of the Appellate Division of the SC, has been performing functions of the chief justice under Article 97 of the constitution.

EDUCATION EXPO STARTS China increases scholarship opportunities for Bangladeshi students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

China has increased scholarship opportunities for Bangladeshi students, say organisers of Third China Education Expo 2017.

In this regard, Chinese Scholarship Council launched scholarships for masters and PhD programmes for Bangladeshi students last year.

The organisers say around 280 Chinese universities are offering the scholarships under which tuition and dormitory fees are not required; students receive monthly stipends of Chinese RMB 3,000 to 3,500 which is equivalent to BDT 37,000 to 43,000.

However, they have to pay for medical insurance, physical examination, residence permit and bedding charge, costing between Tk 20,000 to Tk 25,000 in the first year. The following years, the cost will be Tk 12,000 to Tk 15,000.

The students need to bear food and other

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Boats gliding smoothly over the serene water of a canal have become a rare sight in Sylhet. Due to encroachment, waste dumping, box culvert construction and above all mismanagement, these integral parts of the city's drainage system are in death throes. *Left*, Illegal occupation and pollution continue to threaten Gabhiar Khal's existence. *Right*, Mongolichhora turned into a box culvert. The photos were taken from Sheikh Ghat and Mirer Moydan areas recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR



Sylhet canals face existential threat

Environmental activists and experts blame poorly-planned development, garbage dumping, illegal embankment grabbing

DWOHA CHOWDHURY with ANDREW EAGLE

Legend has it that famous landlord Hason Raja Chowdhury used to arrive in Sylhet on his beautifully decorated bojra, a traditional type of boat, which would glide with ease from the Surma River via a sublime canal to dock right in front of his town house. Hason Raja died in 1922 and within a century Sylhet's canals are also dying, due to embankment grabbing, mismanagement and the dumping of garbage.

According to Sylhet City Corporation, around 26 canals, locally known as "chhora", connect the city's hilly hinterland with the Surma river. In total the urban canal system is said to reach 96 kilometres in length, with 13 major canals accounting for 76 kilometres of that length. Traditionally, these canals were an integral part of the city's drainage system and also served as a water storage asset.

"There was a time when the city's canals were clean and during the rainy season people used to catch fish there," says Ashraful Kabir, coordinator of environmental organisation Bhoomishontan Bangladesh. "Nowadays most are not more than a repository for garbage. The waters are polluted. The canals are ecologically devastated."

In recent years, Sylhet City Corporation has implemented plans to protect the canals, but according to local environmentalists the results are questionable. One project at a cost of Tk 11 crore was launched in 2009 and extended with an additional budget of Tk 20 crore in 2013.



Swamped by garbage, Jallarkhal lies neglected. The photo was taken in Taltala area.

The implementation of a second project worth over Tk 236 crore and sanctioned by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne), commenced last January. It involves the construction of 27 kilometres of retaining wall, 5 kilometres of u-type drains, 13 box culverts and 3.5 kilometres of walkway. This project has raised eyebrows among environmentalists who fear that the walkways, culverts and drains will effectively destroy the canals.

Indeed the city corporation has already constructed a box culvert in conjunction with a walkway in Mongolichhora, from Mirer Moydan to West Chowhatta at a cost of Tk 6 crore, and the construction of

another walkway in Jallarkhal from Jallarpur to Taltala at a cost of Tk 4 crore is underway.

"The box culverts and walls alongside the canals are effectively an existential threat," says Ashraful. "These canals have traditionally had natural banks and concrete walls can serve to block them, especially if people continue to dump garbage there."

"The denizens of Sylhet have been using the canals to dump waste for decades," says Faruk Mahmud Chowdhury, president of Sylhet chapter of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (SHUJAN), a civil society platform.

"Garbage dumping has become a

serious threat to the city's ecology. Along with illegal land grabbing of canal embankments, the situation is alarming." Faruk believes an expert urban developer at the city corporation is urgently needed in order to effectively coordinate the corporation's development work with a view to properly preserving the canals.

A 2015 study approved of by the Ecne and undertaken by a team led by Professor Jahir Bin Alam from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology on how to protect the canals noted 1,054 instances of land grabbing along the canals' embankments.

"The study included a recommendation that the corporation not build any type of box drain," says the professor, "but they are constructing them anyway. If a walkway is needed, it must be ensured that it is not to the detriment of canal connectivity. Besides, the walkways should not be allowed to undermine the cleanliness of the canal environment."

The corporation's Chief Executive Officer Enamul Habib, meanwhile, says that all steps have been taken to protect the canals with proper planning; and the continued existence of the canal system is not threatened.

"The box culverts will not be harmful as the water flow in the canals will still be natural, and we have included measures to ensure cleanliness," he says. "Our prime target has been to combat land grabbing and to keep the canals free of garbage. All of our plans have followed the advice of experts."

ICB employee 'kills himself'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An employee of Investment Corporation of Bangladesh allegedly killed himself by jumping off the roof of a four-storey building in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday morning.

Kajol Hossain, 35, a peon, lived on the third floor of the building of Graphic Arts Institute staff quarters, said police.

He succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical Hospital, said Jamal Uddin Mir, OC of Mohammadpur police.

Kajol's wife Shila Khatun told The Daily Star that he might have killed himself due to various problems he was facing at his office.

Sub-inspector Nurul Islam said a note was found in Kajol's diary, reading that he would be terminated if he showed an office file of audit division to anyone.

However, one of the deceased's colleagues, said nothing serious had happened in the office to provoke him in "committing suicide."

Workshop on fundraising for NGOs held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Progressive Action for Community Empowerment (PACE), a Toronto-based non-profit organisation, in partnership with Manusher Jonno Foundation, PSTC and Eco Fab held a day-long workshop on fundraising for NGOs in Dhaka on Wednesday.

The workshop discussed fundraising best practices in Bangladesh and basic fundraising concepts and plans including best practices of developed countries and northern NGOs, says a press release.

Representatives from over 30 NGOs in Bangladesh participated in the event.

Chaired by Population Services and Training Centre (PSTC) Executive Director Dr Noor Mohammad, the inaugural session was also addressed by PSTC Chief Finance Officer Sushmita Parveen, Barrister Nusrat Jahan of PACE and "Food for the Hungry" Country Director Kajal Sengupta.

Enamul Haque, a former UN official and executive director of PACE Canada, gave a presentation on the "Myths

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Hasanul Haq Inu, information minister, speaks at the 3rd China Education Expo 2017, organised by Sangen International, at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. On his left are Yang Siwei, deputy dean of Southwest Forest University, China; Monirul Haque, CEO of Sangen International; and Dr Partha Sarathi Ganguli, China's South Asian education affairs adviser.

PHOTO: STAR

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Mr. Iftekharul Islam Vice Chairman of Uttara Bank Limited & Managing Director of Aftab Group inaugurated the 230th branch of the Bank named 'Kaligonj' branch' at Awal Market, Kaligonj, Shubhadda, Keranigonj, Dhaka on 23-11-2017. Mr. Mohammed Rabiul Hossain Managing Director & CEO of Uttara Bank Limited and local dignitaries were also present on the occasion.



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