

## Writ petition challenges legality of keeping CJ post vacant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of keeping the post of chief justice vacant and not appointing a successor to former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha. Advocate Eunus Ali Akond petitioned the court to issue a rule asking the respondents to explain why their action of keeping the post of chief justice vacant and not appointing a new chief justice should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries to the cabinet division, president's office, the law ministry, and prime minister's principal secretary, and registrar general of the Supreme Court have been made respondents to the rule, Eunus told The Daily Star.

Citing from the petition, he said the post of the chief justice cannot be kept vacant even for a day under the constitution but the respondents have not taken measures to appoint the chief justice after Justice SK Sinha resigned on November 10 last year.

In the petition, Eunus prayed to the HC to order the respondents to appoint himself (Eunus) chief justice until disposal of the rule.

Eunus said he will move the petition before the HC on Sunday.

Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah of the Appellate Division has been discharging the duties of chief justice since October 3 last year, when then chief justice SK Sinha went on leave before finally stepping down.



The road from the capital's Farmgate intersection toward Tejgaon rail gate via Govt Science College has become quite impassable. Getting on this road from the Farmgate end is the most difficult as this area remains occupied most of the time with makeshift stores and rickshaws. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## 5 defence counsels' arguments end

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence lawyer for fugitive accused Md Hanif yesterday completed closing arguments and sought acquittal of his client in cases filed over the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally back in 2004, saying the charges were not proven.

State-appointed lawyer Chaitanya Chandra Halder yesterday argued for Hanif, owner of Hanif Paribahan, for an hour, arguing that the charges brought against his client were not proved.

The prosecution has completely failed to prove the charges of criminal conspiracy and other charges including killing charges against Hanif and he should be acquitted, Chaitanya argued.

Meanwhile, defence lawyers for four other accused including former BNP lawmaker Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad yesterday also completed their closing arguments and sought acquittal of their clients of the charges.

After the arguments for the second day, Judge Shahed Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka set

### AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK

January 9 for next hearing in the cases for placing defence arguments of other accused.

Twenty-four leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associate bodies were killed and over 300 others suffered injuries in the attack. Ivy Rahman, the then Mohila AL president and also the wife of late president Zillur Rahman, was among the killed.

Many of the injured became crippled for life while Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the then opposition leader, narrowly escaped the attack with ear injuries.

Of the 49 accused, eight, including three former inspectors general of police, are now on bail, while 18, including BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman, have been absconding.

In his arguments, Chaitanya said Mufti Abdul Hannan, leader of banned militant outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), in his confessional statement given on April 7 of 2011, said

Hanif was present at the house of the then deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu in Dhanmondi where a meeting for criminal conspiracy was held.

But 19 prosecution witnesses gave testimonies before the tribunal, saying that the meeting for criminal conspiracy with an aim to carry out the grenade attacks on the AL rally at Bangabandhu Avenue was held at Hawa Bhaban in Banani.

So, there was contradiction between the confessional statement of Mufti Hannan and the testimonies of 19 prosecution witnesses, Chaitanya added.

The lawyer also cited different rulings of other courts in support of acquitting his client.

In the meantime, advocate Ashraf Ul Alam completed arguments for Kaikobad and sought acquittal of his client.

State-appointed lawyers for Abul Harris Chowdhury, Md Khalil and Anisul Mursalin also completed their arguments.

On Monday, the prosecution completed their closing arguments and sought the highest punishment for all the accused.

## Obaidul, Indian envoy visit Ramgarh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Road Transport and Bridge Minister Obaidul Quader and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsha Vardhana Sringla yesterday visited Ramgarh where Bangladesh-India Friendship Bridge-1 will be built.

Indian High Commissioner said the proposed 412-foot bridge is very important as it would facilitate trade and communications among the people of two countries. They also visited Ramgarh Land Port.

The Indian government will build the bridge at an estimated cost of 228.69 billion rupees.

## NEWSIN brief

### Mohiuddin Chy commemorated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Former mayor of Chittagong City Corporation ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was commemorated in Chittagong Press Club yesterday.

A faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Chittagong Union of Journalists organised the event.

Media Affairs Adviser to Prime Minister Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and its general secretary Omar Faruk and editor of Dainik Azadi MA Malek were present. Mohiuddin died on December 15.



### 3 locals held over Begunbari clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested three residents of Begunbari slum in connection with Tuesday night's clash between students of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute and inhabitants of the slum.

The arrestees – Mostafa Kamal, Shafiqul Islam and Fazar Ali – are day labourers. Sub-inspector Abdul Barez yesterday filed a case against them and over 100 unnamed persons with Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station.

Locals alleged that police did not arrest any students.

Meanwhile, some students of the institute's Latif dormitory yesterday beat up a rickshaw-puller, a local inhabitant, when he went to a nearby alley to take his rickshaw, alleged locals. Additional police were deployed in the area.

At least 16 students and several locals were injured when police opened fire to quell the clash on Tuesday, which ensued when a student of the dormitory was allegedly beaten up by some residents of the slum.

## Bhowmick, Khokon president, secy of DU social science 81 batch alumni

BSS, Dhaka

Banamali Bhowmick, director general of Department of Information and Communication Technology and an additional secretary, and Fazlul Haque Khokon, a renowned businessman, have been elected president and general secretary of Dhaka University Social Science Department's 81 batch alumni association.

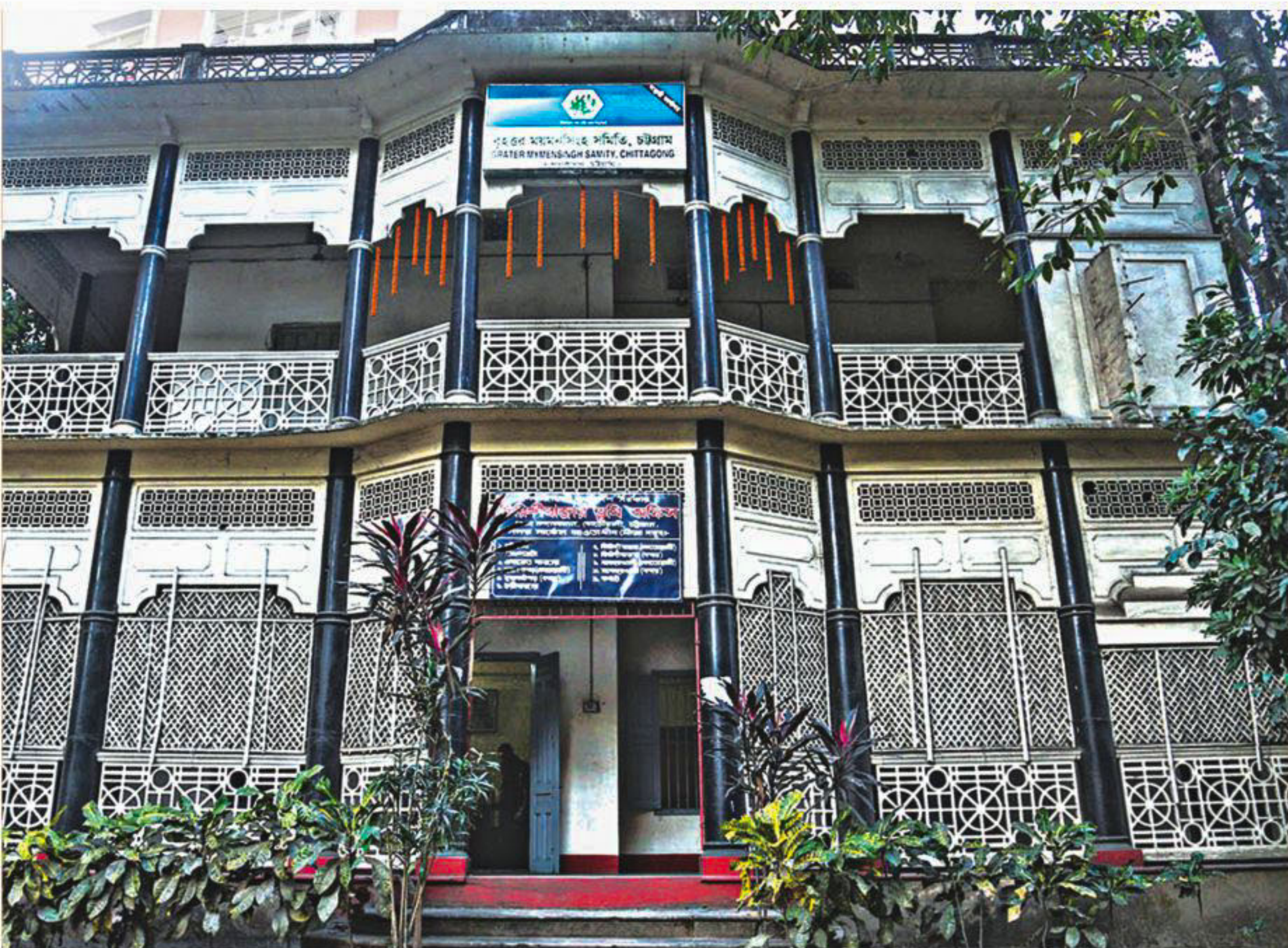
The 41-member committee was formed in a special meeting held at a city hotel on Monday with former VC of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Prof Dr Nurunnabi, in the chair, said a press release yesterday. Habibur Rahman Lebu was elected treasurer.

### Worker falls to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A construction worker died allegedly after falling from an under-construction building in Chittagong yesterday.

Shaheb Mia, 32, of Chapainawabganj, fell from the second floor of the seven-storied under-construction building named Rose Villa in Khulshi area while working there around 12:30pm. He was declared dead at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).



The land office building of Firingi Bazar in Chittagong's Nandan Kanan area. The signboard of the city's Greater Mymensingh Samity office is seen on the first floor.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## An undue favour!

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

A private organisation has set up its temporary office at a government building in the port city's Nandan Kanan area, apparently without any official permission.

Abdul Mannan, divisional commissioner of Chittagong, inaugurated the office of Greater Mymensingh Samity Chittagong on the first floor of Firingi Bazar Land Office on Monday, said sources.

President of the samity, Masud-ul-Hasan, said they submitted an application to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Chittagong around one and a half months back, seeking permission to set up their office at any government building. Asked whether they obtained any official permission from the DC office, Masud, also additional commissioner (admin and finance) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, replied in the negative.

"The DC office allocated us the space for the time being through a verbal agreement," he said. "They (DC office) said they would issue an official letter immediately."

To verify the matter, this correspondent talked to Zillur Rahman, DC of Chittagong, on Tuesday afternoon. He acknowledged that his office had received an application from the samity seeking allocation. But he said he was yet to give it a thought.

When he was informed that the office had already been set up there, the DC said he was currently out of office and would look into it after returning to office.

Asked if any government property can be given to any organisation or any body for use, he said, in such case, they first check whether the property is leaseable after receiving any application. If it is leaseable, they call a meeting and take decision about leasing the property, the DC added. But a member of the samity, on condition of anonymity, said they set up the office there after getting verbal permission from Abdul Mannan, divisional commissioner of Chittagong.

This correspondent talked to Abdul Mannan. He said the first floor of the building has been allocated to the samity on a temporary basis on condition that they would be bound to vacate the place whenever the authorities ask them to do so.

He said, "I shifted the Firingi Bazar land office to the ground floor of the building in 2013 when I was deputy commissioner of Chittagong. The initiative was taken then to ensure that none can grab the government building." "But its first floor remained unused since then and when the officials of Mymensingh samity approached me, I asked them to use the first floor on a temporary basis," he said.

## Two BCL men hurt in JnU factional clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two activists were injured in a clash between two rival groups of Jagannath University unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League yesterday.

The factions are led by JnU BCL President Torikul Islam and General Secretary Joynal Abedin Rasel. The two groups chased each other around 8:30am, triggering sporadic clashes that continued till 1:00pm, witnesses said.

Swapon and Shohan sustained injuries during the clash, the OC said. They were taken to a local hospital.

Contacted, JnU BCL President Torikul Islam, however, denied incidence of any factional clash of BCL but said he heard that two groups of students had a scuffle. Police could not say anything about the reasons behind the clash.

## Deadliest in decade

FROM PAGE 3

different labour courts, said the report.

Along with the rising number of deaths in the workplace, strict repression of labour movement, unsafe work environment and bar on forming trade unions tarnish the image of the country in terms of upholding labour rights, the report observed.

Speaking at the press conference, SRS Executive Director Sekender Ali Mina said, "The report does not reflect the actual number of workplace deaths as many such incidents were not reported in the media."

Ignorance of the employers and a lack of caution among the workers were responsible for recurring deaths like electrocution and suffocation inside septic tanks, he added. Those could have been avoided.

Poorly-made scaffolds, unauthorised boilers, inadequate fire equipment at workplace, and negligence in following traffic rules were some of the reasons behind the death of workers.

He also said the workers have been victimised, as they were not provided with protective gears during work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To overcome the situation, the report recommended that the government must strengthen its workplace monitoring mechanism and continue it on a regular basis.

In addition, the government should strengthen the concerned bodies such as Rajuk and the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments for the monitoring. The report also recommended implementing the national building code properly. Also, those responsible for the death incidents should be punished. Laws should be amended to provide compensation for the victims' families. In addition, workers should be given training on safety.

It also urged the owners to form a safety committee as per the labour law, and develop an internal safety policy and



SOURCE: SAFETY AND RIGHTS SOCIETY (SRS)

mechanism. Like the garment factories, the government has to increase safety activities in other sectors to reduce the death incidents. Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) Executive Director Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed said, "The rising number of the workers death is very alarming and a matter of concern..."

"The government activities in taking action against the death incidents have reduced alarmingly while protest from civil society and rights organisations has lost momentum, which is also a matter of concern, he said.

"As punishment for the workers' death is not strictly implemented as well as compensation for the families is very low, the employers do not care much about the death incidents. Thus, such accidents are increasing gradually," he told The Daily Star.

SRS Chairperson Khushi Kabir, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) Honorary Executive Director Barrister Sara Hossain, and Bangladesh Trade Union Centre General Secretary Wajedul Islam Khan, also spoke.



What appears to be an open drain used to be a wide canal called Gowali Chhara in Sylhet city. Crucial to saving the city from waterlogging, this five-kilometre-long canal is now in its death throes with littering and encroachment all around. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR