

HC refuses to hear Amir Khasru's petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday refused to hear a writ petition filed by BNP leader Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury challenging Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) notices issued against him for interrogation over graft allegations.

Following the HC's refusal, Amir Khasru will have to appear before the ACC on September 10 for quizzing, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said.

The bench of Justice Borhanuddin and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman also dropped the petition from the hearing list, he said.

On August 16, ACC asked Khasru to appear before it over the allegations.

On August 28, he sought one month time to collect necessary documents. He filed the petition on September 3 seeking stay on the notices.



Carrying garbage during daytime in open trucks is prohibited, but this Dhaka North City Corporation truck is doing exactly that on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. The photo was taken around 3:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Encroachers injure 3 forest officials in Ratargul swamp forest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Encroachers in Ratargul swamp forest yesterday attacked and injured three officials of the forest department.

The officials came under attack around 11:00am when they went there to plant trees in Maheshkher area of the forest located in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet.

One of the injured, Saad Uddin, 48, range officer of Sylhet Forest Division, remains in a critical condition at Neurology department of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said RSM Munirul Islam, divisional forest officer (DFO) of the district.

The other two injured foresters -- Akkas Ali, 32, and Shuvro Ahmed, 31 -- are also undergoing treatment at the same hospital.

The day before, the forest officials planted around 10,000 cane plants on 131 acres of nearly 200 acres of encroached forest land that the forest division reclaimed from

encroachers last year.

As the encroachers uprooted all the plants the same day, the forest officials along with Gowainghat Upazila assistant commissioner (land), accompanied by a small police force, went there yesterday to exert control over the land and replant trees, DFO Munirul said.

The assistant commissioner (land), Ashiqur Rahman Chowdhury, said, "While we were informing the locals that the forest department is planting trees on recovered forest land only, a group of people suddenly attacked the forest officials."

"Police had to fire blank shots at the attackers to bring the situation under control," he added.

Forest officials said the local land grabbers have instigated the attack.

DFO Munirul said the department will take legal actions against the encroachers to recover all forest land and they were under the process of filing a case over yesterday's attack on its officials.

Resist early marriage, educate girls

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Early marriage hinders women's economic empowerment and makes them prone to gender-based violence, said speakers at a discussion in Rajshahi yesterday.

It is also one of the most significant reasons for girls dropping out of school, even though educating them was a major priority of the government and non-government organisations.

They were speaking at the discussion on "Strategy to stop gender-based violence" at the conference room of Rajshahi-based NGO -- Association for Community Development (ACD) -- in the city's Sagarpara area.

ACD in collaboration with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) organised the event.

The aim of the discussion was to gather grassroots opinion for

successful implementation of a project to strengthen the civil society and public institutions to address violence against women.

As a result, women are lagging behind in the race for achieving economic empowerment. So, everybody needs to play a proactive role in resisting early marriage and ensuring proper education for girls, speakers said.

Also, by raising awareness and changing social norms through education and economic empowerment, gender-based violence can be resisted, they added.

Beginning in December 2016, the project is likely to end in November 2021, said speakers. Once completed, it would benefit some 10,370 women, men, youths, adolescents and garment workers of eight districts of Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong, Sirajganj, Kurigram, Jhenidah, Satkhira and Bandarban.

The speakers said existing laws of the land cannot be imposed properly due to a lack of consensus among people against early marriage. Also, some people are conducting such marriages without any government permit.

They again stressed the need for education as it can help eliminate various social hurdles and enhance the living standards of rural women.

ACD Executive Director Salima Sarwar chaired the programme. Rajshahi Additional Deputy Commissioner Nasima Khatun, MJF Gender Adviser Banasree Mitra Neogi and its Deputy Programme Manager Shoma Datta spoke among others.

Around 25 persons including government officials, law enforcers, lawyers, union parishad chairmen, field-level development activists and journalists attended the event.

NEWSIN brief

Fire breaks out at RMG factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A fire broke out at a readymade garment (RMG) factory in Bayezid intersection area of the port city yesterday.

However, no causality was reported in this connection.

The blaze originated from a drying machine in the factory around 2:00pm, Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) Jasim Uddin of Fire Service and Civil Defence said quoting witnesses.

Two units of fire fighters from Bayezid Fire Station rushed to the spot and doused the blaze, he added.

The extent of loss caused by the fire could not be ascertained immediately.

Prof Mohammed Noman's death anniversary

CITY DESK

The 22nd death anniversary of Prof Mohammed Noman, an eminent educationist and former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, will be observed today, said a press release.

On the occasion, his family members have arranged Khatam-e-Quran, milad mahfil, special munajat at mosque and food distribution among the destitute.

Professor Noman Smriti Foundation will also hold programmes to observe the death anniversary.

Prof Noman was a recipient of the Ekushey Padak and President's Gold Medal. The family has requested all to pray for his departed soul.



Denying children playtime

FROM PAGE 4

Ishrat Islam, a professor of urban and regional planning at Buet, said the available playgrounds in the capital are neither sufficient, nor accessible or conducive for children.

The available city parks and playgrounds are not children-friendly particularly for girls, who are subjected to sexual harassment and verbal abuse in open playfields, said Meftahun Nahar Ful, a member of Child Parliament, an adolescents' platform.

Ahnaf Anam Arko, researcher at child rights forum National Children's Task Force, said most of city's playfields are plagued with commercial activities and pestering of drug addicts.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bapa, said there are many public playgrounds in the capital like Dhanmondi road-8 playground that are off-limits to children.

With the city children suffering due to shortage of adequate playgrounds, the abandoned Tejgaon airport, four times the Suhrawardy Uddyan, should be opened as a free public space, he said.

Prof Adil Mohammed Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said five public playgrounds in Dhanmondi are all exclusively occupied by different clubs denying public access. Despite a High Court verdict in its favour, the government failed to recover the Dhanmondi road-8 playground, he said.

Md Ashrafur Islam, project director of Dhaka city's Detailed Area Plan revision, said they would incorporate citizens' recommendations for playgrounds in the upcoming revised plan.

Road accidents kill seven

STAR REPORT

At least seven persons were killed and two injured in separate road accidents across the country in last two days.

In Feni, Rahela Akter, 48, and her daughter Momtaz Begum, 25, were killed after a car hit the duo on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The accident took place in Fazilpur upazila. Rahela died on the spot and Momtaz succumbed to injuries at a hospital, said police.

In Gaibandha, Noruttam Chandra Ghosh, 28, and Sajib Ghosh, 22, were killed in a road accident on Gaibandha-Shahata road yesterday, said police.

The accident took place when their motorbike hit a bicycle. The bicycle along with the riders skidded off while Noruttam and Sajib fell on the road.

Meanwhile, a sand-laden tractor ran over the duo killing them both on the spot, witnesses said, adding that one of the bicycle

riders, a school boy, was also injured. He was taken to a hospital.

In Nilphamari, college students Amin Rahman, 22, and Rifat Hossain, 18, were killed on the spot when their bike collided head on with a car on Rangpur-Jaldhaka road on Tuesday, reports our correspondent.

The incident also injured Tarekul Islam, 18, who was taken to a local health complex and later to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. His health condition is still unstable, relatives said.

Meanwhile in Brahmanbaria, rickshaw-puller Kamal Mia, 40, was killed as a covered van hit the rickshaw on Comilla-Sylhet highway on Tuesday, police said. Kamal died at a local hospital.

Ctg commuters suffer for lack of transport

Vehicles stop plying roads fearing BRTA drive

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) conducting mobile court drives since August 30 and imposing strict measures on vehicles plying without proper documents or route permits, commuters of the port city are suffering due to a shortage of public transport on city roads.

People in different parts of the city struggled to reach their destinations as a large number of the public transports remained off the streets.

Fearing BRTA drives, vehicles without fitness certificates or licences remained off-road, said many transport workers. Consequently, commuters' sufferings escalated as they had to wait for hours for transports.

Ripa Khanam was one of them. She along with her daughter was waiting near Jamal Khan intersection yesterday afternoon. "I have been waiting for an hour but could not

get on a bus. Only a handful are operating, and they are packed to the brim."

"I don't know how long we have to wait to go home," said the Agrabad resident.

Not just Ripa, but many other parents were also waiting there with their school-going children.

Same scenario prevailed in Chawk Bazar intersection. Students of Chittagong College and Hazi Mohammad Mohsin College were seen waiting for public transportation.

"I have been waiting for around 40 minutes to go to Dewan Hat," said Sumi Das, a student of Chittagong College. "Most of the human hauliers seem to have vanished."

However, many citizens appreciated the ongoing drive.

Naimul Haque, a private job holder, said even though it was hard to find a vehicle since the drive started, it was necessary for ensuring road safety.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Unable to find any other alternative, people travel hanging behind human hauliers in Dewan Hat area of Chittagong yesterday. As Bangladesh Road Transport Authority is conducting mobile court drives against vehicles without permits, fewer vehicles are plying the streets, creating a transport crisis.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

An alarming level of clout

FROM PAGE 3

progress which the government made in implementing Article 5.3 of World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004.

In the article, WHO asks all governments which ratified FCTC to stay free of interference of the tobacco industry while taking measures for tobacco control.

Indonesia, the only country that ranks worse than Bangladesh as per the study, is a non-party to the FCTC.

The study said Bangladesh government is supposed to take specific measures and formulate a policy to be free of interferences of tobacco companies, as it adopted the guidelines of the article in 2008. But, those are yet to be implemented.

Providing examples of the interferences, PROGGA said the government reduced the proposed tax on biri (locally made cigarette) from 35 percent to 30 percent in the budget of 2017-18 fiscal, because the finance ministry was influenced by recommendations from the tobacco industry.

Besides, NBR has approved a 25 percent tax waiver on export of tobacco products by factories located in the Export Processing

Zones (EPZs), it added.

The study said several high government officials hold positions in British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) as the government owns 10.85 percent shares in BATB, which is self-contradictory.

Although the country's tobacco control act requires pictorial health warnings to be printed on top 50 percent space of tobacco packs, the tobacco industry received permission to print the warnings on the less effective lower half of the packs, it said.

Contrary to the WHO article's guidelines, several government officials are engaged in tobacco companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes.

To overcome the present situation, the study suggested the government remove all taxation privileges for tobacco companies, disclose all interactions with tobacco companies, impose a ban on using subsidised fertiliser for tobacco cultivation.

It also recommended formulation of a code of conduct for all government officials in dealing with the tobacco industry, and a ban on participation of government officials in CSR activities and award ceremonies

of the tobacco industry.

Presenting the study findings, Hasan Shahriar, one of its lead researchers, said the implementation of the guidelines of the Article 5.3 in Bangladesh is "not satisfactory", as the country scored 78 out of 100.

"The government should implement the recommendations to accelerate the country's tobacco control activities as well as to be free of interferences of tobacco companies," said Hasan, a project coordinator of PROGGA.

Citing recent studies, he also said tobacco kills over 1,62,100 people in Bangladesh every year, and the financial losses of tobacco use here is around Tk 158.6 billion annually.

Speaking as chief guest at the programme, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said they will consider the recommendations of the study and its reflection will be found in the next budget.

Inter-Parliamentary Union President Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Chief Coordinator for SDG affairs at the Prime Minister's Office Abul Kalam Azad and Dhaka University's former Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique also spoke at the programme.

A rough day for Laguna

FROM PAGE 3

better," said Nafisa Akhter, who took a rickshaw from Jigatola to Farmgate.

Nishi Jaman, a resident of Sankar, said, "From Sankar to Farmgate there is no direct public bus service, except for the Lagunas. Sometimes rickshaw-pullers decline to go."

Lagunas, however, were seen on a few roads. From Purbha Tejguri Bazar of Tejgaon to Niketan of Gulshan 1, the vehicles were available. Some were also seen on the road from Dhanmondi-2 to New Market.

Regarding the ban on Lagunas, Md Soruzzaman, a duty officer of Tejgaon police post, said, "The roads are free now from overcrowding because there are no Lagunas. Usually Laguna drivers don't have licences, and in most cases, children drive the vehicles. So, they should be off the streets."

There are a total of 5,156 registered human hauliers or Lagunas in the city, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

During a press conference on

Tuesday, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said Lagunas will not ply the major city roads, but they are allowed on the feeder roads.

BUS DRIVERS DEFY DIRECTIVE

At the press conference it was also informed that DMP has designated 121 bus stops. Buses have to take or drop passengers at those places, and they have to keep their doors shut till the next stop.

However, the directive was not obeyed on many routes including Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Newmarket to Mirpur road where buses did not stop at the designated places and many of them kept their doors open.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Autorickshaw-Auto-Tempo Transport Workers Federation (BAATWF) issued a press release protesting the ban on Lagunas. They claimed in the release that BRTA gave registration to more than 4,000 Lagunas and the Regional Transport Committee (RTC) gave route permits for the vehicles on 159 routes.