

Eviction Drive

Land minister warns against threatening govt officials

UNB, Chattogram

Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed yesterday warned that whoever threatening the officials responsible for clearing illegal establishments on the Karnaphuli river would face actions.

"The speed of our work will be doubled if the authority receives threat from anyone while removing illegal establishments," he said while visiting the site in the afternoon.

The minister said he would not let the drive stop and would complete the work to implement plans on the Karnaphuli river.

A cold storage, preserving several thousand tons of fish, was found among the illegal establishments, the minister said, adding, "We do not intend to harm the businesspeople. It will affect the economy."

Meanwhile, the first stage of the eviction drive that started Monday has finished. Some 230 illegal structures have been removed from 10 acres of land during the drive.

Transplant

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transplantation in the country if brain-dead donor is found and the family members permit."

Termining it a major landmark of the country's Kidney treatment, he said, "The annual demand for the kidney transplantation in Bangladesh right now is estimated to be 5000, but on average annually, only around 120 people can manage kidneys from their relatives to undergo transplants.

"Kidney transplantation from living donors is not a new thing for us since we are doing it from 1982. Now, we are prepared to do it from brain-dead persons that had already been started even in our neighbouring India and Sri Lanka apart from other developed countries," he said.

Dr Anwar, Nephrologist of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said the Korean specialised team from the hospital will impart a hands-on training on cadaveric transplantation to a group of Bangladeshi doctors during their visit.

In this regard, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), however, endorsed the campaign as the basic principles of Islam always upheld humanitarian causes.

Islamic scholar Maulana Abdullah Al-Maruf referred to the decision of the OIC's Islamic Council which ruled that one can donate his or her organs before or after death "for the welfare of human being".

"A man, however, cannot sell his organs according to Islamic principles but he can donate... This is because human organs are highly precious in the eyes of Islam and they cannot be regarded as commercially tradable objects," he said.

The surgery can be done in any of the five hospitals -- Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Bangladesh Kidney Foundation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation for Diabetes (BIRDEM) and Combined Military Hospital (CMH) -- depending on the availability of donors.

A great cover!

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commander of Chandgaon Camp of Rab-7.

All of them are residents of different areas in Jashore, the Rab official added.

The six arranged a picnic in Cox's Bazar and invited some of their friends and relatives to join in with them.

According to the plan, they managed a bus, owned by Atiar, and started their journey from Jashore with some 40 passengers on board on Wednesday, Mehedi said.

On Thursday morning, all the group members boarded a St Martin's Island-bound ship, but the six decided to stay in Teknaf.

In the mean time, they collected the yaba pills from Teknaf and returned to Cox's Bazar town with the rest when they came back from St Martin's Island in the evening, he added.

The six had concealed the contra-band pills inside the baggage of other passengers before their return trip on Friday night.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-7 intercepted the bus around 6:30am, and recovered the pills after searching all the luggage.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees "admitted" that all the other passengers were their relatives and friends and they did not know anything about the illegal consignment, the Rab official said.

"The yaba tablets were supposed to be taken to Dhaka and Jashore for sale," he said, adding that the bus was seized and the arrestees would be handed over to police.

A case was filed with Bakalia Police Station in this connection, he added.



Traditional bullfighting taking place in Bulaura village of Sylhet defying a 2014 High Court order. Enthusiasts from across the region bring their bulls for the fights that take place in different villages in winter. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASER

Eviction drive on, so is grabbing

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of Buet's Accident Research Institute, said no structure should be built within 10 metres of any highway.

The structures increase the risk of road accidents as they create visibility problems for drivers. In many cases, people die after being hit by vehicles that overturned following accidents, he said.

RHD officials said inadequate manpower and equipment to conduct eviction drives, legal complications, political influence of illegal occupants and a lack of continuous monitoring were the reasons why the situation was not changing.

Saiful Alam, RHD's additional chief engineer (maintenance services wing), said, "Recovering land from occupants is a continuous process. We are carrying out drives regularly but encroachers return soon.

"This is a problem but we will continue our drives," he told The Daily Star on February 6.

The RHD owns a total of 69,794 acres of land in its 10 zones.

There are some 21,302km highways under the department. It includes 3,812km national highways, 4,246km regional highways and 13,242km district highways, according to the RHD's 2017-18 annual report.

Among the 10 zones, Rangpur has the highest number of illegal structures while Rajshahi comes first in terms of illegally occupied land.

Each zonal office regularly carries

ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF RHD LAND: JAN 2019		
ZONE	OCCUPIED LAND (ACRES)	NO. OF STRUCTURES
Dhaka	5.43	763
Mymensingh	25.37	4056
Cumilla	10.80	546
Sylhet	9.37	1272
Chattogram	1.80	288
Rajshahi	35.88	5615
Rangpur	41.88	4648
Khulna	8.89	831
Barishal	2.92	2580
Gopalganj	17.71	1937
Total	160.05	22,536

SOURCE: RHD

out drives against encroachment and updates the RHD headquarters and the ministry on a monthly basis, said one official.

DRIVES IN JANUARY

On January 11, Quader, who has been at the helm of the road transport and bridges ministry for more than seven years now, ordered the authorities to remove all illegal establishments along the roads and highways across the country. It was aimed at bringing discipline on the roads.

Talking to The Daily Star, an RHD official said they did not go for any action against encroachment for around three months before the December 30 national election due to "technical rea-

sons" and resumed its drive following the minister's instruction.

On several occasions in the past, Quader, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, had directed the RHD to free its land of illegal occupation.

Last month, the highest 14.64 acres of land went under illegal occupation in Mymensingh zone while the lowest -- three decimal -- in Sylhet zone, show RHD data.

Similarly, the highest number of illegal structures -- 679 -- were erected in Mymensingh zone while the lowest -- five -- in Sylhet zone.

The highest 16.93 acres of land were recovered and 836 illegal structures were removed in Rangpur zone last month.

'GROUND REALITY'

Talking to The Daily Star, Roshni-A-Fatimah, superintending engineer (MIS and Estate Circle) of the RDH, said they were conducting drives on a regular basis and intensified those following the minister's latest directives.

Roshni admitted that they could not go for continuous drives and monitor their areas properly. She said they did not have enough manpower.

As a result, the encroachers returned to RHD land.

The RHD has only four estate and law officers who can conduct drives in its 10 zones. It means one officer has to cover more than two zones, said its officials.

Besides, the department needs executive magistrates from the deputy commissioner's office and members from the police for conducting eviction drives. In many cases, it takes time to get them, they said.

Another superintending engineer, with years of experience in the field, said most of the illegal occupants were shopkeepers. Many of them erected illegal structures bribing the local administrations and political leaders.

In some cases, political parties set up offices on RHD land, the engineer said, wishing anonymity.

During drives, occupants often show fake documents, he said, adding that as they could not launch frequent drives, encroachers return within months.

Besides, a sub-engineer has to cover three to four roads on an average. It is difficult for one individual to monitor all those roads frequently, the engineer said.

Saiful Alam, the RHD additional chief engineer, said they were facing obstacles while carrying out drives due to manpower crisis and political pressure.

"It would have been better if we had 10 executive magistrates for the 10 zones," he said.

He also said that in many cases, they could not continue drives as the occupants get injunction order from courts.

Asked whether they had any deadline to free all the RHD land, he said, "No... There will always be illegal occupants and our drives will go on."

Police foil BNP demo in N'ganj

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December 30 with Khaleda in jail.

Alleging widespread rigging by the ruling Awami League, the BNP rejected the polls result.

In Narayanganj yesterday, police barred BNP men from holding a pre-scheduled rally in front of Narayanganj Press Club around 10:30am.

Protesting this, the activists tried to stage a sit-in, but police forced them to leave.

"We gathered together for a peaceful programme as per the instruction from the central committee," said

ATM Kamal, secretary of Narayanganj city BNP.

"Anybody can hold programmes in front of the press club. Despite being a large political party, why would BNP be barred from organising programmes in front of the press club? We condemn this act by the law enforcers."

Contacted, Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station, told The Daily Star that the BNP did not take prior permission for the event.

Besides, police did not let them demonstrate on the road to avert

untoward incidents, he added.

Barishal Metropolitan Police arrested Afroja Nasrin, assistant organising secretary of JCD central committee, around noon from in front of the party office near Ashwini Kumar Hall.

Moniruzzaman Faruque, vice president of Barishal city BNP, said police arrested Afroja "for no reason".

Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Barishal Model Police Station, said Afroja was arrested in a case over sabotage filed earlier.

In Khulna, BNP leaders in the rallies alleged that thousands of

their leaders and activists were arrested and jailed in false cases.

Khulna city BNP President Nazrul Islam Monju said, "The Awami League robbed the people of voting rights."

In Bogura, JCD and Sechchasebak Dal men had an altercation around 1:15pm during a rally in front of the party office.

Contacted, Bogura BNP President Saiful Islam said he heard about a "little feud" between two groups.

Our Narayanganj, Barishal, Khulna and Bogura correspondents contributed to this report.

Five-day national campaign begins

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officer of Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex, declined to talk to reporters.

Civil Surgeon Goutam said Sunit was one of the 536 children given the capsules from Kamrabad Family Welfare Centre in Sarishabari.

The baby was fed the capsule around 12:00pm and was taken home. After sleeping for a couple of hours, he started vomiting around 2:30pm and was also having loose motion.

He was then taken to Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex where he died around 3:45pm, said Goutam, who visited the hospital.

He told The Daily Star that other children who were also fed the capsules had no problems.

Meanwhile, the government formed a three-member probe committee led by resident medical officer of Sarishabari Upazila Health

Complex to see whether there was a link between the capsules and the boy's death, Younus said.

"We have provided vitamin A capsules to about 2 crore children. If there was anything wrong with it, why would the children of one upazila be affected?" he told The Daily Star last night.

All the capsules bought four or five months ago were tested in a laboratory. There should not be anything wrong with the capsules, he added.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Health Minister Zahid Maleque started the five-day campaign by giving vitamin A capsules and de-worming tablets to kids at Dhaka Shishu Hospital.

On January 17, the Institute of Public Health Nutrition had postponed the campaign slated for January 19 after receiving reports that capsules got stuck in packets.

While launching the campaign yesterday, the minister urged the parents not to pay heed to any rumour and to give their children vitamin A capsules and de-worming tablets to prevent childhood blindness, reduce child mortality and strengthen the immune system.

"We'll be able to build a beautiful Bangladesh for the next generation if we can make the campaign a success," he said.

The government is providing vitamin A capsules to the children for free.

Mobile healthcare centres have been set up at bus stands, railway stations, launch and ferry terminals, airports, bridge toll centres and kheyas ghats. These will remain open from 8:00am to 4:00pm during the campaign days to make sure that all the children of the specific age group are given vitamin A.

Around 25 lakh children aged

between six and 11 months will be given one blue-coloured vitamin A capsule each, while around 1.95 crore aged between 12 and 59 months would be given red-coloured capsules.

They will be given vitamin A capsules at some 120,000 permanent and 20,000 mobile healthcare centres across the country.

Children aged below six months or more than five years or with any kind of illness should not be administered the capsule, according to officials.

The rate of children's night-blindness in the country has come down below one percent following the distribution of vitamin A capsules regularly.

Giving children vitamin A capsule not only keeps them safe from night-blindness, but also enhances their immune system, keep their eyesight perfect, bring down child mortality rate and ensure their natural growth.

'Optimist' FM

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In response, the Indian external affairs minister assured that they would work for the early conclusion of the Teesta water-sharing agreement, according to Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

The foreign minister termed his India visit very successful and said his decision to visit India first was very appreciated by all, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Responding to a question, Momen said he sought India's support for quick repatriation of Rohingyas and to implement the development roadmaps of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina apart from his discussion on economic diplomacy which is emerging as a foreign policy priority for Bangladesh. "We need partnership and cooperation from all."

He reiterated that uncertainty and various problems, including radicalisation, might emerge in the country if Rohingyas repatriation is delayed and they stay in Bangladesh for a longer period. "This problem should be resolved as quickly as possible."

Responding to another question, the foreign minister said India would not deport any Rohingya to Bangladesh but would send them to their country of origin -- Myanmar. "The Indian government will not send anyone to Bangladesh if they are Rohingyas and not Bangladeshi citizens. They will send them to their country of origin, not to Bangladesh," he said.

On January 29, Momen said Myanmar could agree to create a safe zone under the direct supervision of ASEAN countries which may generate perception of safety and security for Rohingyas and make them willing to voluntarily return.

"We're now committed to their voluntary repatriation to their homeland as soon as Myanmar creates the congenial environment for their safe return," he said during his recent meeting with Special Envoy of Prime Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam Nguyen Quoc Dung at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka.

Saraswati

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goddess Saraswati in their pursuit of knowledge, art, music and culture.

Nirmal Kumar Chattarjee, general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, said Saraswati Puja is now not limited to only the Hindus; rather members of other religious communities, specially the youths, celebrate it spontaneously as a festival.

He said rituals of Saraswati Puja would begin in the morning at the Dhakeshwari National Temple.

In most temples, houses and educational institutions, the Puja will begin in between 8:00am and 10:00am. It will be followed by offering of "anjali". The children will be imparted "hatekhor" and later prashad (food-stuff devoted to the goddess) will be distributed among devotees.

According to Hindu faith, goddess Saraswati represents power, creativity and inspiration and presents herself when the weather is pleasant and nature is in its full grandeur.

Depicted as a graceful woman with a crescent moon adorning her brow, she is shown riding a swan or a peacock, or is seated on a lotus flower.

The most gorgeous Saraswati Puja will be arranged on the premises of Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall where a huge number of devotees and crowd will throng the university's largest dormitory to perform religious rituals and visit the pandals.

Puja will also be arranged at Ram Krishna Mission, Jagannath University, Siddheswari temple, Farashganj, Shakhari Bazar, Tanti Bazar, Banani, Dhaka College, Eden Girls College, Buet, Ramna Kali Mandir and Maa Anandamayi Ashram, Tejgaon College, Stamford University and different educational institutions in the city.

70 dead

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The Uttar Pradesh police have begun a crackdown on illicit liquor manufacture and sales and raids were conducted in various places.

"We will catch everyone involved, either this side of the border or that side. This will be an ongoing operation. We don't know the manufacture of spurious liquor in our areas," said Saharanpur Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar.

Uttar Pradesh government has already suspended the District Excise Officer and District Excise Inspector of Kushinagar in connection with the hooh.

The UP police says over 30 people have been arrested for the tragedy so far and stringer sections of the law including the Gangster Act and the National Security Act will be applied against them. The government says all those arrested were involved in the manufacture and distribution of illicit liquor.

Since 2011, over 175 people have died in eight adulterated tragedies across UP. Four of those incidents have happened during Yogi Adityanath's tenure as UP chief minister.