

# Not all of them

FROM PAGE 16  
committee leaders exchanged views with the leaders of Rajshahi district AL at the party's central office.

Speaking at the meeting, AL presidium member Mohammed Nasim said councils of different organisational units in Rajshahi district would be held ahead of the party's national council, slated for December 20-21. AL joint general secretaries Dipu Moni, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Abdur Rahman, Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, and AL Office Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap were present, among others.

# Don't move

FROM PAGE 1  
press release.

About 51 professionals of different sectors have voluntarily participated in TIB's social movement against corruption.

They expressed frustration over the government's failure in maintaining discipline in the universities' campuses and inaction of law enforcement agencies in preventing nonstop student violence, massive corruption and other irregularities.

Expressing solidarity to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's zero tolerance policy against corruption, they opine to make everyone accountable, irrespective of their social status, for the irregularities.

Involvement of ruling party's front organisations' leaders in corruption manifest how corruption grows with political backing, they said.

They expressed deep concern over the incidents of bullying on students and torture on female workers in Middle Eastern countries.

The members welcomed the government decision of forming banking commission in a bid to bringing reform in the banking sector, already plunged into default loan and irregularities.

They, however, opined that if the much-expected commission was formed under the supervision of Bangladesh Bank, it would turn out to be a meaningless and shortsighted decision. TIB called upon to form an independent commission.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman moderated the meeting.

# More than 500

FROM PAGE 16  
Singh added that police had also identified more than 10,000 people he described as "anti-social".

A police spokesman declined to comment to AFP.

In recent years Ayodhya has become a rallying point for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Some senior BJP members are being tried separately over their role in the mosque's 1992 destruction.

In 2010, a High Court divided the disputed land between Hindu and Muslim groups but both parties appealed to the Supreme Court which has since repeatedly put off a verdict.

Media reports say Modi has told ministers to refrain from making comments on the case that could fuel tensions.

# Kidney donors

FROM PAGE 16  
eligible for donating organs are father, mother, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts and husband and wife of a patient.

There is no scope for volunteers, she said, adding that the writ petitioner had sought a directive from the HC for amending the law.

There is no such restriction in India, she added.

One Fatema Zohra has filed the writ petition with the HC in 2017 challenging the constitutionality of sections 2 (ga), 3 and 6 of the act. These sections mainly focused on the definition of the related persons.

Fatema donated a kidney to her ailing daughter Fahmida, But, the kidney got damaged after a year.

Then, she managed a donor for her daughter, but the donor could not donate the kidney due to the bar in the law.

Later on, Fatema submitted the writ petition to the HC seeking necessary order.

During the hearing of the petition, the HC on August 28 this year ordered the authorities concerned to form an expert committee and submit a report.

# Youth lands

FROM PAGE 16  
filed a case later that night, police conducted a drive and arrested Noor in Ramnagar area around midnight.

The court sent him to jail around 4:00pm yesterday, police said, adding, that the girl was sent to Feni Sadar Hospital for a medical test.

# Cattle trader

FROM PAGE 16  
to bring cattle.

BGB officials received Sumon's body after a flag meeting with BSF men in no-man's land around 4:30pm, he added.

The body was handed over to the dead's family, he said.

# Sramik League in name only

FROM PAGE 1  
Against this backdrop, 8,000 councillors of Sramik League are going to pick their new leadership at its council at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan today. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the programme.

Talking to The Daily Star, leaders of the workers' front brushed aside the allegations.

Sramik League General Secretary Sirajul Islam said, "All these allegations are baseless. We always remain beside the workers."

"In some cases, like the protests of garment workers, we can't take stance in favour of them as they are not organised. They carry out their activities at their will. They don't contact us over their issues," he said.

Sramik League was founded in October, 1969. Sukkur Mahmud and Sirajul Islam were made president and general secretary respectively at the last council of the organisation held on July 19, 2012.

Today's council session is taking place almost five years after the expiry of the tenure of the incumbent central committee.

Several central leaders of Sramik League said the organisation currently have about 50 lakh members, including around 7.5 lakh leaders.

"We can't exactly say the number of our members, but we estimate that it is about 50 lakh," Sirajul said.

Some leaders of Narsingdi district and Jamuna Oil Company units of Sramik League alleged that the current

top leaders formed new committees of their units in exchange for money.

"We heard that several other unit committees were formed across the country in exchange for money," said a leader of Narsingdi Sramik League, wishing not to be named.

Refuting the allegation, Sirajul said, "We are executing our responsibilities for seven and a half years. Nobody raised such allegations before. Some people are now raising these allegations with ill motives," he said.

As per the charter of the organisation, Sramik League must hold the central council after completing the councils of its organisational districts units. But the platform is yet to hold councils in 33 organisational districts out of 78.

"We have completed holding councils in 45 organisational districts. Dates were fixed for holding councils in the rest of the districts, but those could not be organised due to some reasons, including movements by opposition parties," Sirajul said.

In February, the Anti-Corruption Commission had seized two government sport utility vehicles from two employees of Power Development Board (PDB) -- Jahirul Islam Chowdhury and Alauddin Mia, president and general secretary of the Collective Bargaining Agent of PDB.

Jahirul, also a vice president of Sramik League, and Alauddin, education and cultural affairs secretary, had been using the vehicles illegally for 10 years.

Besides, Tufan Sarker, then convenor of Bogra town Sramik League, hit the

headlines in July, 2017, over abducting a female student from her home and raping her. He allegedly asked his party activists and a woman councillor to make sure everything was hushed up.

Later, Tufan and his associates allegedly tortured the student and her mother for several hours and shaved their heads.

There are also allegations that Sramik League leaders often dodge their office duties.

Asked about the allegation, Serajul said, "It's a matter of a particular organisation. The management of that organisation should take action against such people if there were any."

Insiders said aspirants were lobbying influential AL leaders to secure posts in the new central committee of Sramik League.

Names of the organisation's incumbent Executive President Fazlul Haque Montu, General Secretary Serajul, vice-presidents Habibur Rahman Akand, Aminul Haq Faruk and Jahirul Islam Chowdhury, Joint General Secretary Humayan Kabir and several other leaders were being discussed among Sramik League leaders and activists for the post of president, said sources.

On the other hand, names of Sramik League joint general secretaries Khan Sirajul Islam, Safar Ali and Tofail Ahmed, Organising Secretary Shamsul Alam Milky, Publicity Secretary KM Azam Khasru, and former organising secretary of Dhaka city unit Kamal Uddin were being discussed for the general secretary post.

# Time to join hands

FROM PAGE 1  
needed to regulate fuel burning.

She further stressed that action needed to be taken right now or else the future of the next generation seems grim.

"I think building the capacity of the government and the society to respond to air pollution is important," she added.

Alice said gathering scientific evidence of air pollution was necessary, as it will guide the decision-making process and will help prioritise the area of focus.

She said the USA has a great deal of expertise on containing air pollution and from 1970 till last year, it managed to reduce air pollution by 70 percent.

The US is leading in green technology and it's government is happy to provide Bangladesh with technical assistance, hold discussions on green and appropriate technology and share experiences on the strategy of mitigating air pollution, Alice said.

The US diplomat further said that people sometimes make false assumptions that good quality air comes at the cost of economic growth but that is not the case.

"We are going to be able to grow our economies while still upholding the health of our citizens,"

She said there is a discussion on

the relationship between economic growth and environmental health.

The diplomat said the US has shown how one country can reduce air pollution while still increasing GDP.

"We think it is the perfect time to participate in that debate. We think there needs to be a scientific discussion. I think everybody knows about the causes of air pollution... But we need scientific data that lets the government know where exactly the pollution is coming from. Only then we can have the most effective intervention."

Referring to the World Bank report that around \$6.5 billion is lost every year in Bangladesh due to air pollution, Alice said the cooperation between development and environmental issues was needed to bring down the cost of pollution.

Regarding indoor air pollution, she said women and children are disproportionately suffering the most.

"A lot needs to be done through regulations. The government is going to set the tone through regulations," she said, adding that, "We would urge Bangladesh to swiftly pass the draft of the Clean Air Act."

The US diplomat said the intervention process is interrelated. It stretches from scientific research to

government regulation and more.

"It is an approach that needs to be taken by the whole society. Your government cannot solve the pollution issue [alone] and neither can an NGO. Everybody has to work together."

"It is time to act now," she said.

Regarding US cooperation to contain air pollution, she said, "We are increasing our engagement. We are engaging with the government, scientists, journalists and other actors. We would bring our experts here and are ready to support."

Pollution is already known to raise the risk of premature birth, low birth weight and life-threatening health complications for pregnant women, like preclampsia.

Studies show that Dhaka's air is contaminated not only with heavy metals like lead, chromium, cadmium, nickel, arsenic, manganese and copper, but also with other poisonous particles.

In 2017, indoor and outdoor air pollution led to deaths of 1.23 lakh people in Bangladesh, according to the State of Global Air 2019 report published recently by US-based organisation Health Effects Institute and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

It said air pollution was globally the fifth highest mortality risk factor.

# Transport owners

FROM PAGE 1  
driving, and kills or injures someone severely, the person will face a maximum sentence of five years in jail or a fine of Taka 5 lakh or both.

Earlier, the punishment was three years imprisonment.

The new law also hands hefty fines for violation of traffic rules.

**OWNERS SEEK MORE TIME**

Asked about the letter, Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of the transport owner's association, said many vehicle owners across the country need time to update documents.

Following requests, the BRTA on many occasions in the past exempted the owners from paying various dues, but this time it seemed strict about realising the money.

"We wrote the letter addressing the minister and the secretary to the ministry after the vehicle owners requested us to manage them some time," he told The Daily Star yesterday. "We supported the government decision to enforce the law and now we are seeking one month before the law takes its full course."

be named.

On Thursday, Obaidul Quader said he hoped that framing of the rules would be completed within next week, but two BRTA officials involved in rules framing said it was not possible.

In May, the BRTA submitted a draft of rules for the act and the Road Transport and Highway Division formed a 10-member committee, led by its Additional Secretary Abdul Malek, to scrutinise the rules.

However, the committee decided to make the rules afresh as the draft had many inconsistencies, said BRTA officials.

Malek on October 23 had told this newspaper "I think we have been able to complete 50 percent of our job."

A member of the committee on Thursday said they had been able to finalise three, out of nine to 10 chapters, of the draft rules. He hoped to finalise another chapter within next week.

"These [four] chapters are relevant with the day-to-day functioning of the BRTA, so we are considering to finalise the rules now. It is impossible to complete the full [immediately]," he said seeking anonymity.

"It would also take some time as those chapters have to go through vetting at the law ministry," he said.

Against this backdrop, they would have to apply the rules of Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983 in some cases, he said.

The member said the Road Transport Act does not, among others, have any definition of minibus. It also does not mention tenure of fitness clearance and route permit, description of traffic signs and signals and driving fees, he said.

Besides, the new act has a changed definition of light, medium and heavy vehicles, so the relevant software has to be updated, he said. "So we have no other option but to follow the previous rules until the new ones are framed."

Asked why his ministry could not take necessary preparations, Quader on Thursday indirectly blamed his ill health and protests of transport workers for the delay. "Better late than never. We are now going to

implement it and hope the situation will improve," he said.

**POOR CAMPAIGN**

The BRTA has published advertisements in some national dailies, informing people about the new law. The advertisements, however, do not elaborate on the changes.

Obaidul Quader, Road Transport and Highway Division Secretary Nazrul Islam, and BRTA staff members distributed leaflets in the capital's Signboard and Manik Mia Avenue areas on November 2 and October 31 respectively.

Besides, the BRTA has sent leaflets and stickers to its branch offices for distribution among the public. Police, in some intersections in the capital, were seen trying to inform people about the new law using loudspeakers.

But the government initiatives to raise the awareness seem not enough, and it may result in confusions and panic among people, said Ashis Kumar Dey, general secretary of the National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways.

Besides, involvement of two major components of the transport sector -- owners and workers -- has not been seen in the process yet, said experts.

Transport leaders deny this.

Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, said they were carrying out campaigns at bus terminals at many places.

He, however, said transport workers were afraid of the tougher punishment that comes with the law, and that it was not possible to ensure road safety keeping them in fear.

He said the implementation would have been much easier had the government started the preparations a year ago.

Enayet Ullah, secretary general of the transport owner's association, also said they asked all its 120 units across the country to raise awareness on the issue.

**POOR PREPARATIONS**

Although the act was passed 13 months ago, the authorities could not formulate its rules, which has been blamed for the delay in the implementation.

Mobile courts, run by the BRTA and district administration, could not step in as the law was not incorporated in the schedule of the Mobile Court Act, 2009, said officials concerned.

A schedule is a part of an act, often used to spell out in detail how the provisions would be in use.

BRTA officials said the home ministry is now supposed to incorporate the law into the mobile court act schedule, but it has not been done yet.

Besides, police could not impose any on-the-spot fines for traffic rules violations, as their point of sale (PoS) machines, providing instant challan, were not updated with the new law. Other relevant documents were also unavailable.

"Police may need one more month to be ready to fully enforce the law, said one of its officials, wishing not to

be named.

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# What the court directed

FROM PAGE 2  
No such lists, however, has been made public yet.

Eviction of illegal occupants: The verdict made the immediate eviction without discrimination of illegal occupants and recovery of river's Khas land a must. The government was directed to take legal action under the Code of Criminal Procedure for the offence of river grabbing.

Some intermittent eviction drives have been carried out, but most were without a complete list of grabbers and without specific survey results, according to officials.

Handover of rivers' port limit: In view of the river conservation, the land ministry would have to hand over the port limit of four rivers -- Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Turag and Balu -- to the BIWTA as part of three inland river ports in accordance to the government's gazette notification of October 19, 2004.

BIWTA Joint Director AKM Arif Uddin said that the port limit of the said rivers has not yet been handed over to BIWTA. Since the verdict, the joint survey of rivers by DCs and BIWTA has not been accomplished. As a result, the DCs could not even make the handover proposal to the land ministry.

The length and breadth of the port area: The port limit of Shitalakhya river would stretch up to Murapara (Rupganj) to the north and Gopchar to the south and 50 yards above the high-water mark on both east and west banks during ordinary spring tide.

The Buriganga and Turag would stretch up to the south and Ashulia to the north and 50 yards above the high-water mark on the banks of both Buriganga and Turag during ordinary spring tide, as they flow above-mentioned north and south limits.

The Balu and part of Turag river would stretch up to Ashulia to the west and Demra to the south and 50 yards above the high-water-mark of both banks of the Turag river, Tongi Khal and Balu river during ordinary spring tide.

Excavation of river sources: Excavating the sources of all four rivers to augment water flow was directed in the verdict or, the court apprehended, within the next decade the capital city would face an acute water crisis with the ground water table consistently depleting.

The court directed the government to dredge the river sources to get water from the Jamuna into the Dhaleswari, from Dhaleswari to Buriganga, and from the old Brahmaputra to the Bangshi river and bring back navigability in the four rivers.

Leaving the four rivers in deplorable state, the government has undertaken multiple million-dollar water projects using foreign loans to fetch water for the capital from far away Meghna and Jamuna rivers that too have got mired in alleged corruption and snail-like

progress.

Dredging of Jamuna-Dhaleswari, Dhaleswari-Buriganga, Old-Brahmaputra-Bangshi, Bangshi-Turag river systems and Pungli and Tongi canals was yet another notable directive.

Removal of earth: The court directed removal of illegal sand and earth which were used to fill in the river and the government would have to realise the cost of it from the grabbers.

The rivers, however, are yet to be freed of sand and earth filling.

Ecologically Critical Area: The environment department in keeping with the verdict declared the four rivers ecologically critical area. But ruthless filling up and pollution have been going on simultaneously as well.

Dredging and sludge removal: A few mere superficial and futile moves of dredging and sludge removal from the river bed once or twice were made following the verdict. Those, however, yielded no tangible result nor any difference, said officials.

Tree plantation: The government was directed to plant trees along the demarcated river edge in a bid to protect the river area within one year since delivery of the judgment. This, too, has not been done properly.

Freeing Bukland embankment: The 1.5km Bukland Bund (embankment) on the Buriganga is yet to be free of Badamtoli fruit market and Shyampur vegetables market.

**AN EFFECTIVE COMMISSION**

The dilemma of minister-led task force and the National River Conservation Commission: The apex court emphasised instituting an effective national river commission that the government has put in place.

The government in mid-2014 formally launched the National River Protection Commission with much fanfare as the highest authority with a vow to save the country's ailing rivers.

But a fundamental loophole in the law made that commission a recommending body without any executive power, said officials.

The law makes the commission an advisory body to recommend actions to conserve rivers, say river experts, and has nothing much to do in case such recommendations are ignored.

The government also runs a national task force on rivers led by the state minister for shipping with almost similar mandate parallel to the river commission.

Then, yet another bench of the apex court in a February judgement this year, a decade later, had to declare the river commission as the legal guardian of country's rivers to establish its supremacy as the river custodian.

The court further directed the government to amend the commission law and incorporate stringent provisions for imprisonment and hefty fines to empower the commission to contain offences against rivers.

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# Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 16  
him," said Tharoor as the discussion began.

"He became the first leader in a postcolonial system to have interrogated what a nationalistic identity really meant...One forgets that it was not just 1971, but everything going back to his student days. And the long career of action, agitation, reflection, attempted conciliation, peace-making and oppression through arrest and incarceration. We know he was also sentenced to death."

"He went through all that before reaching the ultimate goal. He articulated a vision of what that form of postcolonial identity meant, which I think has rightly continued to inspire many," said the author-politician.

Tharoor spoke about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's uncanny articulation and oratory skills, recalling a 1972 event where Mujib spoke during a stopover in Kolkata. He was returning from London via Delhi after being freed by the Pakistan regime.

Nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy were the four fundamental pillars to Sheikh Mujib's policy, he added.

Moderator Shamsad said that some argue that the birth of Bangladesh marked the success of the first armed separatist struggle in a postcolonial world, to which Tharoor said it was not just the first struggle, but the only successful struggle.

"It took a lot of courage and nerve...and vulnerability to the charge of treason and betrayal. But he felt that some things were more important than his own safety," observed Tharoor.

Afsan Chowdhury said, "In July 1947, a group of Bengal Muslim League activists sat in Kolkata and decided they did not want to have anything to do with India or Pakistan and they would want an independent state of their own. The person who gave me this information used a very

interesting quote that I use all the time: 'We can think of only one man who could become the leader of such a state, that was the tall man from Gopalganj!'"

He added, "My team and I have visited over 10,000 villages. And this strength of Sheikh Mujib came from the villages. Sheikh Mujib came from a small town, and in three years he nearly conquered Kolkata. Nobody dares to say anything against Sheikh Mujib because he has the numbers..."

He further said that Sheikh Mujib had the backing of the peasantry in Bengal, whose support was fundamental to every anti-colonial resistance movement.

"Bangabandhu is our George Washington by vision and by association Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi. He is the greatest Bangalee of our time," said poet Kamal Chowdhury.

2020 has been declared Mujib Year to commemorate his 100th birth anniversary. The DLF announced that next year's edition would be dedicated to Bangabandhu.

The session ended with an open mic session for the audience to ask questions.

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# 7 killed

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Talking to The Daily Star, SP Yusuf also echoed SP Jahangir's statement. He said locals earlier had demanded to free movement of unauthorised vehicles.

Meanwhile, DC Sabina said the district administration formed a three-member probe committee, led by Additional District Magistrate Rehanul Haque, to look into the allegation raised by the locals.

The committee was directed to submit their report within three days, she added.

All the victims of the road accident hailed from Panchagarh district. They are Labu Islam, 27, his newly wed wife Mukti Begum, 19; Akbar Ali, 70, and his wife Nurima Begum, 57; the three-wheeler driver Rafiqul Islam, 40; Masud, 43, and Nargis, 42, said police.

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# HK student's

FROM PAGE 16  
"The atmosphere in Hong Kong is like a ticking bomb," added Lo Kin-hei, a local pro-democracy councillor and activist. "HKers don't trust the police will give us the truth."

Police have repeatedly denied any allegations of wrongdoing in relation to Chow's death.

# Astronaut

FROM PAGE 16  
and gave him a secure password to open it. He made his choices and sent it back to them on October 10.

"We secured the ballot and it will be counted Friday," Allison said.