PHOTO OF THE DAY

RASHED SHUMON

Demolition work of a building goes on in the capital's Kalabagan without any measures to contain the dust and debris, as Dhaka continues to grapple with severe air pollution this dry season. Despite directives from the High Court to ensure construction sites are kept covered and water is sprinkled at places where a lot of dust may be produced, such scenes are common across the city.

POLLUTING BURIGANGA

Wasa responsible for 68 underground drains, sewerage lines: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is responsible for controlling 68 underground drains and sewerage lines connected to the Buriganga river.

These drains and sewerage lines have been polluting the river, and the pollution must be stopped, HC said, adding that Dhaka city corporations are responsible for the surface pipelines.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) recently submitted a compliance report to the HC, saying that there are 68 underground drains and sewerage lines connected to Buriganga river.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore and Justice Mohammad Ullah set December 8 for passing an order on this issue.

The bench made the observation and set the date while hearing a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh in 2010, seeking necessary orders to prevent pollution of the Buriganga.

Meanwhile, the High Court ordered BIWTA to identify whether there are any waste disposal lines connected to both shores of Buriganga in Dhaka except the 68 underground drains and sewerage lines, and to seal them by January 7 next year.

BIWTA has been asked to submit a report before the HC after complying with the directive by January 7, as its lawyer Advocate Syed Mafizur Rahman sought time for this purpose.

At the same time, the HC yesterday refused to accept the unconditional apology offered by the Managing Director of Dhaka Wasa, Taqsem A Khan, as the apology application was not properly filed with the court.

Khan on Monday submitted the application through Wasa lawyer, offering unconditional apology to the HC bench for making an untrue statement about sewerage lines connected to the Buriganga.

Wasa lawyer Barrister AM Masum sought time from the HC for submitting another compliance report to it.

The HC bench expressed dissatisfaction at Barrister AM Masum as he sent a junior lawyer -- Advocate M Nahiyan-Ibn-Subhan -- on Monday to represent him (Masum) before the court in connection with the case.

Taking fees as a senior lawyer and sending a junior lawyer as representative

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FREEDOM FIGHTERS' INSOLVENCY

A matter of shame for state, says High Court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Observing that insolvency of freedom fighters is a matter of shame for the state and the allowance they are receiving is their right, not a token of charity, the High Court yesterday directed the government to include names of 208 freedom fighters in the official gazette and take necessary steps to provide them monthly allowance.

The court also asked the Liberation War affairs ministry to comply with the directives within 90 days of receiving the full text of the judgement.

The bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Ahmed Sohel delivered the verdict following eight separate writ petitions filed by 208 freedom fighters from four districts -- Chandpur, Magura, Kushtia and Pabna.

They filed the writ petitions in 2016, challenging legality of the government's decision of refusing to include their names in the official gazette.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta told The Daily Star that the selection committees concerned of the districts had recommended to include names of the 208 freedom fighters in the official gazette but the ministry rejected the selection committees' recommendations.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Not govt's job to decide what people will eat: Mirza Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday alleged that the incumbent government has been snatching away people's happiness, after snatching away their voting rights.

Party general secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir blamed ruling party-backed businessmen for the skyrocketing prices of daily essentials.

Addressing a press conference at party's Nayapaltan headquarters, he said price of onion is around Tk 220-230. Price of rice has increased Tk 10-15 per kg and for flour it has increased Tk 5-10 per kg, he added.

"The government is asking people not to have onion, as it failed to control the price hike. Will the government now ask people to stop eating rice? Price of oil has also gone up; will government ask people to stop consuming oil?" the BNP leader questioned.

He said it is not up to the government to decide what people will eat or not. "It means the government has completely failed to control the market."

Fakhrul said during the 2008 election campaign, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said if she was voted to power, rice would be sold at Tk 10 per kg. "But according to calculations, in the last year prices of everything has increased 437 times."

The BNP leader said, "The incumbent government does not have any accountability to the people, because they were not elected by people's votes."

Fakhrul demanded fresh election under a non-partisan interim government, saying that otherwise sufferings of people will escalate further.

The BNP leader said if the syndicate backed by the ruling party is not broken and TCB is not strengthened, then prices of daily essentials will not decrease.

Fakhrul said it would not be possible to reduce prices of daily essentials with speeches. "Because people who are responsible for price hike are people of Awami League."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

DHAKA TODAY

DIALOGUE
Present situation in CHT and the role of citizens
Organiser: ALRD
Venue: Cirdap, Topkhana Road
Time: 10:30am

RALLY
Protesting onion prices
Organiser: Ganosamhati Andolan
Venue: Jatiya Press Club
Time: 3:30 pm

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION
My Care, My Right
Organiser: Palliative Care Society of Bangladesh, WCC and WHPCA
Venue: Bangladesh National Museum
Time: 4pm

WORKSHOP
Human Centric Design for Social Innovation
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 4pm

ACADEMIC SESSION
University and Scholarship Search Process
Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi
Time: 2:30pm

PERFORMANCE
Comedy Open Mic
Organiser: Naveed's Comedy Club
Venue: Chef's Table BD, Gulshan-2
Time: 8pm

Khaleda eligible to get bail: Dr Kamal

UNB, *Dhaka*

Jatiya Oikyafront Convener Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is eligible to get bail from the apex court in the corruption cases she was convicted for.

"I'd like to say she definitely has the scope to obtain bail (from the Appellate Division)," he said.

Dr Kamal, also a legal expert, came up with the remarks while talking to reporters after a meeting of Oikyafront's steering committee at his Motijheel chamber.

He said their meeting demanded Khaleda's release on humanitarian grounds. "In our written statement, we've clearly said she's eligible to get bail for humanitarian reasons."

Earlier, reading out a written statement, Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said, the meeting discussed the health condition of Khaleda and expressed concern. "We know Khaleda has been kept in jail for 664 days with a motive."

Stating that the BNP chief has been convicted in "motivated" cases, he said considering her latest health condition,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Govt has nothing to do with Khaleda's bail

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said granting bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is a discretion of the court, and therefore the government has nothing to do in this regard.

"Khaleda Zia was sentenced to imprisonment by a trial court at first and then by the High Court for embezzling money meant for orphans. She has also been sentenced to imprisonment by a lower court for misappropriating money of Zia Charitable Trust. There is no question of government's vindictiveness here," he said.

The minister said this while replying to queries from reporters after attending the inauguration of a special training for government pleaders and public prosecutors, at Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI).

"Courts were kept confined inside the then government's pocket during BNP-led government regimes. There is no such situation in the country now," he said.

The law minister said a bill on the amendment of the land survey tribunal act will be placed before the parliament in its next session.

"A joint district judge discharges duties as the judge of the land survey tribunal now. Seniors assistant judges and even assistant judges too can serve as judge of the land survey tribunal along with joint district judges, after the law is amended," he added.

Earlier, Anisul told the programme that the government has taken significant steps to reduce backlog of cases and to modernise the judiciary.

JATI Director General Justice Khondker Musa Khaled presided over the event.

Rickshaws parked on the wrong side take up almost the entire road from Banglamotor to Hatirpool, leaving one narrow lane for vehicles to pass through. A police tow truck is parked right beside, but law enforcers appear to be turning a blind eye. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Residents of Azimpur gathered in droves on Chapra Masjid Road yesterday, forming long lines to get onions sold by TCB at an affordable price of Tk 45 per kg. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

WAR CRIMES TRIAL

SC verdict on Qaisar on Jan 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court has set January 14 to deliver its verdict on an appeal filed by convicted war criminal Syed Mohammad Qaisar challenging the death penalty handed to him by a war crimes tribunal in 2014.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain fixed the date after concluding hearing on the appeal yesterday.

During the hearing, Qaisar's lawyer Khandaker Mahbub Hossain argued that his client was not involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes in 1971.

The charges were brought against him in order to politically harass him, he said.

The defence lawyer prayed to the apex court to acquit Qaisar considering his old age (80 years) and illness.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam requested the SC to uphold the judgement of the war crimes tribunal, saying the charges brought

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

CPB condemns 'false cases' against party men

Says police yet to arrest those who attacked its November 28 rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday strongly condemned the police for still not arresting those who attacked its protest procession in the capital's Shantinagar on November 28, although a case was filed in this regard the following day.

In a press statement, the party also condemned filing of "false cases" against its injured leaders and activists.

"The ruling party goons, led by Chhatra League's Dhaka metropolitan (north) unit organising secretary Al Hasan Shovon attacked our Shantinagar procession held in protest against Jubo League and Chhatra League attacks on another rally at Madarganj Shaheed Minar in Jamalpur the same day [November 28]," the party said in the press statement.

The left-leaning party also claimed the party's Shantinagar unit secretary Manzoor Moin, Chhatra Union central general secretary Anik Roy and labour leader Hosen Ali were injured in the attack that day.

"Police are yet to arrest any attacker; on the contrary, a case was filed against our injured leaders and activists," the party said.

Claiming that the country is witnessing a tenure of fascism, they urged countrymen to initiate a mass movement to oust the incumbent government.

In the statement, CPB also demanded exemplary punishment of attackers and withdrawal of "false cases" filed against the party men.