

Govt plans

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flood and drought forecasts, surveys, research and knowledge discrimination of water related works, ensure participation of local people in different projects, make independent proposals for land acquisition and rehabilitation of affected people, conduct impact assessment work on agriculture, environment, water transport, fisheries and human habitation due to any certain project.

The contribution of officials in both the engineering and general categories are required with equal importance for these tasks.

When asked about the issue, Kabir Bin Anwar, secretary for the ministry of Water Resources, said, they were upgrading the WDB to Directorate of Water Resources as they need to enhance the capability of the agency to implement the Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100).

The government approved the BDP 2100 on September 4, 2018, with the aspiration of achieving a safe, climate resilient and prosperous delta by 2100.

The formation process of the Directorate of Water Resources is in its initial stages and it has not yet been decided who would be included in the cadre services.

"It is too early to comment on the cadre service as it is just a draft law and will take at least six months to finalise. I do not think those officials have anything to worry about yet."

The government agency responsible for surface water and groundwater management was established in 1972, when the then Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority was broken down into two parts -- WDB and Bangladesh Power Development Board.

5 get death penalty

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internationally-recognised principles of justice, it said. RSF Secretary General Christophe Deloire tweeted the sentencing of the five may be "a way to silence them for ever and to conceal the truth."

Turkey yesterday criticised a Saudi court verdict, saying it stopped short of meeting expectations to shed light on the killing and deliver justice.

RINGLEADER?

Qahtani, who led fiery social media campaigns against critics of the kingdom and was seen as a conduit to the crown prince, has not appeared publicly since the murder and his whereabouts are a subject of fevered speculation.

Maher Mutreb, an intelligence operative who frequently travelled with the crown prince on foreign tours, forensic expert Salah al-Tubaigy and Fahad al-Balawi, a member of the Saudi royal guard, were among the 11 on trial, sources have told AFP.

It was unclear if they were among those who were sentenced to death.

The sources said that many of those accused defended themselves in court by saying they were carrying out orders by Assiri, describing him as the "ringleader" of the operation.

According to the prosecutor's statement, of the 11 unnamed individuals indicted in the case, five were sentenced to death, three face jail terms totalling 24 years, and the others were acquitted.

The Riyadh court hearing the case held a total of nine sessions attended by representatives of the international community as well as Khashoggi's family, it said.

The Khashoggi murder rattled the world at a time when Saudi Arabia and its de facto leader, Prince Mohammed, were pushing an aggressive public relations campaign to rebrand the ultraconservative kingdom as a modern state.

The United Nations and human rights groups have called for an independent investigation into the killing.

World's oldest

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This find was made in Cairo, about 40 miles south of Albany. Previously, scientists thought a fossilised forest in Gilboa, New York, was the earliest, but the one in Cairo is two or three million years older and dramatically different.

A person from the New York State Museum was the first to spot the large, root-like structures in the bottom of the quarry.

Christopher Berry, study co-author and a paleobotanist at Cardiff University in the United Kingdom, told CNN he was a bit sceptical the first time he visited the site. He thought a modern tree might have grown into the rock and been removed.

Upon closer inspection of the soil profile, researchers quickly confirmed they were looking at the footprint of something much, much older.

"The scale of the root systems were really striking," said William Stein, lead author and emeritus professor of biological sciences at Binghamton University, located about two hours west of Cairo.

The team carefully swept away layer upon layer of dirt, meticulously mapping the extraordinary find.

The team hypothesises a catastrophic flood killed most of the trees in the forest and preserved the root system as fossils. They even found fish fossils near the largest trees.



Supporters and activists of the All India Forward Block (AIFB) take part in a rally against India's new citizenship law in Siliguri, West Bengal yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Protests rage across India

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Students staged a demonstration outside an Uttar Pradesh government house in New Delhi demanding a probe into police action against anti-CAA protester in the state where 16 people were killed in violence. The students were detained.

In Chennai, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and its allies yesterday took out a protest rally against the amendment act and seeking its withdrawal.

DMK president M K Stalin along with leaders of allies, including senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, and state unit leaders of the Left parties held a march in Chennai.

While Stalin, Chidambaram and other top leaders held placards against the CAA, cadres of DMK and allies raised slogans against the contentious act amidst elaborate security arrangements, including deployment of drones and about 5,000 police personnel are on security duty, police said.

In Bengaluru, thousands of people from Muslim community yesterday staged a "Peace Rally" against CAA and NRC. Waving the national flag and holding placards, the protesters raised slogans demanding withdrawal of CAA.

The rally, called by around 35 organisations under the banner of Joint Action Committee of Bengaluru, culminated at the Qudus Saheb

Eidgah Maidan.

Elaborate security arrangements had been made to avert any untoward incident, which by-and-large remained peaceful till the afternoon, police said.

A report from Mangaluru, which was rocked by violent protests over the CAA last week leaving two people dead in police firing, said the city remained largely peaceful after curfew was lifted yesterday morning.

BJP Working President J P Nadda yesterday spearheaded a street march in Kolkata in support of the law critics say discriminates against Muslims.

Nadda, accompanied by senior BJP leaders, including West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh and national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, participated in the march that originated from Hind cinema in central Kolkata and culminated at Shyambazar.

BAR ON MEDIA CAMPAIGN

In an apparent jolt to the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal, the Kolkata High Court yesterday directed suspension of all state-sponsored media campaigns against CAA and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

A division bench of the court, in an interim direction, asked the state government to suspend all such advertisements till it gives a final order on the issue. The next hearing in the case is slated for January 9.

The High Court direction by a division bench of Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan and Justice Radhakrishnan came on six pleas that were filed against state government advertisements which allegedly claimed that CAA and NRC will not be implemented in the state.

Mamata Banerjee has been highly critical of the amended act passed by parliament and proposed countrywide NRC and undertook street marches vowing not to allow their implementation in the state.

The CAA seeks to give citizenship to "persecuted" non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who have taken shelter in India till 2014.

The bench has been hearing petitions on issues like state's campaign against the CAA in various forms of media, "breakdown" of law and order situation and damage to railway property.

The bench also asked the railways to give a detailed report on what action it has taken to prevent loss of public property and the monetary amount of damage caused during the violent protests against CAA, NRC.

In Kolkata's Jadavpur University, student owing allegiance to Leftist outfits yesterday showed black flags to West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar and surrounded his car for about half an hour protesting his views in support of CAA and NRC.

Installation of tracks begins Jan 1

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will be able to carry 60,000 passengers per hour, reducing travel time from Uttara to Motijheel to at least less than an hour from the current two hours.

Construction work of the passenger coach for the MRT started in Japan in April and the first set of trains is expected to reach Bangladesh within mid-June next year and the trial run would start in July, MAN Siddique told this newspaper earlier this month.

In order to inform people about the new mode of public transport, the first of its kind in the country, a mock-up of the metro trail will be displayed at the exhibition and information centre of MRT-6 in Uttara within this month, he said.

There, people can learn about what the inside of the train looks like and how to buy tickets to ride on it, he added.

The construction of the project has seen significant progress in the last few months, according to the project documents.

While progress of the first phase from Uttara to Agargaon was 47.18 percent in September, it reached 65.07 percent in November. The second phase from Agargaon to Motijheel was 23.50 percent till September and 34.54 percent till November.

During a recent visit to the project site in Uttara, this correspondent found workers building a parapet wall on the viaduct. Other workers were making two lanes on both sides of the viaduct for electric lines.

Railway sleepers have already been brought to the site.

MAN Siddique said rail lines would be placed on one of sort of pad and track ballasts would not be used there,

but would be placed in the depot.

About the stations, he said they would not block any footpaths for its construction but would acquire additional land instead.

The MD said they had already acquired the land for the first three stations and the land for three others would be acquired within this month.

"We hope all stations would be constructed by June 15, 2020," he added.

The authority would install a "trial track" first inside the depot, which the trains would use for test runs before going to the main track, an official said.

The authority would have to install total around 60km rail line, including 20km inside the depot, he said, wishing anonymity.

The original implementation period of the project was 2012-2024, but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had directed that the services from Uttara Phase-3 to Agargaon be made operational within this year and the service from Agargaon to Motijheel by 2020.

After failing to meet these deadlines, the DMTCL now plans to make the entire line from Uttara to Motijheel operational by December 16, 2021, instead of making half of it operational first.

Meanwhile, the government decided to extend the line -- now under construction from Uttara to Motijheel -- up to Kamalapur Railway Station so that people can avail the rail service directly from the country's largest railway station.

The topographical survey for it has already been done and now a "social survey" is being conducted. After

completing the extension work, the total length of the rail route would be 21.26km with 17 stations.

The government aims to build five metro lines -- an elevated one, an underground and, three elevated and underground -- in the capital and its adjacent areas by 2030 mainly to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

China slams Pompeo criticism of Syria aid veto

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday hit back at the US for criticising its blocking of a UN Security Council resolution over civilian aid, accusing Washington of "politicising humanitarian issues."

On Saturday US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described as "shameful" Russia and China blocking the UN resolution, which would have extended for a year cross-border humanitarian aid to four million Syrians.

"To Russia and China, who have chosen to make a political statement by opposing this resolution, you have blood on your hands," Pompeo said in a statement.

China reacted angrily yesterday, saying it voted on the basis of "right and wrong".

"We firmly reject the unjustifiable accusations made by the US side on China's voting position," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing in Beijing.

Errant DMP cops

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deliver better services to people."

The DMP actually transferred 1,400 policemen during the period but half of them were routine transfers.

Some of them were transferred for their inefficiency and some for serving more than five years at the same units.

The transfer list also includes 32 inspectors (investigation) and 31 inspectors (operation), 26 traffic inspectors, around 150 sub-inspectors, and some 1,100 assistant sub-inspectors.

The reshuffle started after Shafiqul Islam took charge as the DMP commissioner on September 13.

Shafiqul instructed officials concerned to create profiles of every officer in the DMP.

There had long been dissatisfaction among many police officers as a group of inspectors, blessed by some influential political leaders and police high-ups, were influencing the postings of OCs at different DMP police stations for years.

The reason behind an officer's eagerness to get posted as an OC in the DMP is an open secret.

Several police officials, wishing anonymity, said police stations illegally collect a huge amount of money every day from hawkers and drug dealers.

Many OCs, who have recently been transferred, used to get a large cut, they added.

In three orders issued since October 1, the DMP commissioner transferred OCs of 16 police stations

and brought in some new faces.

The transferred OCs were sent to units where making illegal money is hardly possible, they said.

"There were some powerful officers who thought they could never be touched. Now they are getting a message that they would not be able to retain their posts without discharging their duties with transparency," city police chief Shafiqul said.

The commissioner said he had considered officers' capability and reputation before appointing them as OCs.

Under the DMP, there are 50 police stations, each having an average of 50 officers.

"The good ones are being chosen for the OC posts and we are doing it transparently. There is no lobbying and nothing is exchanged," he added.

Joint Commissioner (headquarters) of DMP Sha Migan Shafiqul Rahman said, "We are taking tough measures to ensure better services to city dwellers."

In February last year, the then DMP deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division Biplob Kumar Sarkar at a quarterly crime conference said, "An OC has to pay a bribe of Tk 30 lakh to Tk 1.5 crore for his posting. A sub-inspector needs to pay lakhs of taka for his transfer."

He then suggested that senior police officials must stop taking bribes for postings of OCs and SIs.

The DMP has around 34,000 members. Of them, 643 are inspectors, 2,600 are SIs, and 3,982 are ASIs.

We will take them back

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office.

He also blamed BNP, particularly its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, for "trying to hide the truth regarding the post-election atrocities against religious minorities in 2001".

Anti-liberation party Jamaat-e-Islami was a key member of the four-party alliance.

On Sunday, BNP criticised Indian Home Minister Amit Shah for "unwarranted labelling" of BNP as repressive while passing the much-discussed Citizenship Amendment Act in the country's parliament.

Quader, however, asked, "Was what the Indian home minister said untrue in the context of Bangladesh?"

The brutal "minority persecution" that had taken place after the 2001 election could only be compared to what had happened in 1971, he said.

"You journalists know how

minorities, especially members of the Hindu community, were tortured. In that situation, it was normal for Hindus to leave the country. Many fled [the country] fearing for their lives and property."

He said Fakhrul Islam would not be able to hide the truth.

No incident of religious persecution took place after Sheikh Hasina came to power, he said, adding that some isolated incidents had taken place but those did not create any such situation for minorities to leave the country.

Quader said the government has brought the perpetrators of the violence committed in Ramu, Rangpur, Gobindganj and Nasirganj to book.

Mentioning the post-election repression in 2001 again, Quader said that at the time they were the opposition and they expressed solidarity with the minorities.

6-year-old

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EIGHTH GRADER RAPED IN SATKHIRA

Meanwhile, two youths were arrested on charge of raping an eighth grader in Satkhira's Kolaroa upazila on Sunday.

The arrestees are Shuvo Hossain, 22, and Md Abhi, 24. Both of them are residents of Jugbari village in the upazila.

Quoting the victim's family members, police said the girl went to Kolaroa market for shopping on Sunday afternoon.

On her way back to home, the two

picked her up and carried her to a remote area in Telkara village where Shuvo raped the girl.

Later, they left the girl off in a garden in Mandartala Bridge area.

After a while, local noticed the girl and informed her parents. Informed, her parents rushed to the spot and took her to a local health complex.

The victim's father filed rape case against four people. The two other accused are Md Ghalib, 35, and Al-Amin, 25, who stalked the girl on December 20, said Munir-ul-Gias, OC of Kolaroa Police Station.

An invite

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and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar said Grameenphone has sent a legal notice to President Hamid through a legal agency in Singapore seeking arbitration with the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) over its dues.

Lund said, "It's Telenor Group's position that we believe the disputed audit should be solved through dialogue, and that an amicable and transparent solution should be reached between the authorities of Bangladesh and Grameenphone."

"It remains our hope that this can be solved without international arbitration. It's an agreement establishing the terms and conditions for private investment by nationals and companies of one state in another state."

The statement said, "Bangladesh has around 30 bilateral investment treaties. The procedures adhered to by Telenor are agreed in the treaty, and Telenor is following due process."

"The process itself is governed by the treaty, and includes a period of six months for discussions after initial invitation letter, before any further steps towards international arbitration can be taken."

On November 24, the Supreme Court's Appellate Division asked mobile phone operator Grameenphone to pay within three months Tk 2,000 crore of the Tk 12,579.95 crore dues as claimed by BTRC.

The BTRC claims dues of Tk 12,579.95 crore in 27 sectors from GP. Having failed to recover the money, the telecom regulator on April 2 sent

a notice to GP threatening to revoke its licence.

Later, GP moved to a lower court seeking a temporary injunction on the BTRC's notice which was turned down on August 28. Later, it filed an appeal with the High Court.

Contacted, Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star Telenor hurt Bangladeshi peoples' feeling by sending the legal notice to the president, and it may now be trying to divert the issue to a different direction.

Asked, he said, "I have nothing to say about their new statement. I am speechless."

He also said he had copies of the legal notice and its reply. "There is no confusion that they have sent the legal notice to president of Bangladesh."

The notice was sent through Singapore-based international law firm Allen & Overy LLP and a reply was sent from the Attorney General's Office on November 17.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the reply, signed by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, which said there was no scope for arbitration over the Tk 12,579.95 crore audit claim dispute between the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and the mobile operator.

The reply also acknowledged the notice and said Grameenphone (sister concern of Telenor) has already filed a title suit with the joint district court and subsequently appealed before the High Court.

At present, the matter is pending with the Appellate Division, it read.

Khandaker Reza-E-Raquiab, a legal counsel for BTRC, said he also saw the copy of the legal notice and its reply.

On this day in 1971

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Siddiqui, other leaders -- Shahjahan Siraj, ASM Abdur Rab, and Abdul Kuddus Makhan -- are present in the press conference.

Fifty four intellectuals in a joint statement demand appropriate investigation of the genocide in Bangladesh. They say those who were related to this brutal event could not be treated under Geneva Convention.

Sufia Kamal, Syed Ali Ahsan, Joyrul Abedin, Kamrul Hasan, Samar Das, ABM Musa, Kamal Lohani, Faiz Ahmad were among the signees. They demand of forming an international tribunal to bring the culprits -- Al-

Badr, Al-Shams, Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, PDP -- under justice.

A report of BBC says that Pakistan President Bhutto has formed a commission led by Justice Hamudur Rahman to probe military failure in Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan border truce.

More than 100 masterminds of genocide driven by Pakistani military held, a report says. A list of names is published from the police directorate. The arrestees are: Dr Syed Sazzad Hossain, vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, SM Nawab, DIG of police, Fazlul Haq, MNA, Lt Col Golam Ahmad Chowdhury, deputy chief engineer,

Maj Afsar Uddin former parliament secretary, Zahurul Haq, deputy director of Razakar, Dr AA Baset, Dhaka Medical College, ABM Nurul Islam, MNA, SB Zaman, MPA, ABM Abdul Khalek Mazumder, Al-Badr leader, Moktar Gunda, commander of Mirpur Mujahid Party, Ashraf Ali, Al-Badr member, Fazlul Quader Chowdhury of Chittagong, Hakim Intajur Rahman Akhunjada, member of central peace committee, Inspector Abdul Halim Sikdar, CIA of Kotwali, SI Kaykobad, former OC of Lalbagh police station, SI Khorshed Kha, former OC of Lalbagh PS, Maolana Bazlur Rahman and Faridabad Madrasa in Dhaka.