

BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,139

New cases in 24hrs



4,34,472

Total cases



6,215

Deaths



3,51,146

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



1,329,857

Deaths



55,178,450

Total cases

Individuals cannot own this land

HC says in verdict upholding govt decision to declare 13,000 acres in Sylhet as reserved forest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld a government decision that declared 13,000 acres of land in Sylhet's Jaintiapur and Gowainghat upazilas as reserved forest area.

Delivering the verdict on two writ petitions, the HC observed that the 13,000 acres is state property and cannot remain under the ownership of individuals.

The HC bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque through the verdict rejected the writ petitions challenging the legality of a gazette notification issued by the then government in 1985 declaring the 13,000 acres as reserved forest area.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Sheikh Saifuzzaman told The Daily Star that the 13,000 acres had been acquired after the Partition of India in 1947 and some of the land was allocated to refugees who had come to that area from Assam of India.

The then Bangladesh government in 1985 issued a gazette notification declaring the land as reserved forest area. The total land area is now under the forest department of the government.

Nineteen people, including Abdul Motaleb and Md Rafiqul Islam, had filed the two writ petitions with the HC in 2012 and 2014 challenging the legality of the 1985 gazette notification.

A vacation in Dooars was his last wish

FROM PAGE 1
biopic played by Parambrata Chatterjee."

Soumitra was looking forward to spending some time close to nature once the Covid-19 restrictions would completely be lifted.

Not a fan of idle pleasure, the actor, however, was longing for a vacation this time. "He had even spoken about this to Horeram Kaku [uncle], his friend, who owns a tea garden at Dooars," Poulam said.

"But that was not to be... His last wish remains unfulfilled!"

Poulam said even in hospital, Soumitra wanted to keep writing. "Baba told me to keep a pen, paper and his spectacles beside his bed. He

claimed in their petitions that they were the Mohajer (refugees) from Assam and they owned the land.

The HC then issued two rules asking the government to explain why the gazette notification declaring the land as reserved forest area should not be declared illegal.

After holding hearing on the rules, the HC bench yesterday rejected the writ petitions as the petitioners could not prove that they were refugees and they could not produce any documents in support of their claim, DAG Saifuzzaman said.

Relying to a query, the DAG said the total land area is now under the possession of the forest department.

He, however, could not give details about the writ petitioners.

This newspaper could not reach the petitioners' lawyer Chowdhury Sanwar Ali for comment.

SM Sazzad Hossain, deputy conservator of forests and also the divisional forest officer in Sylhet, said, "Other than the self-claimed refugees, a large area of the land has been grabbed by stone crushers. Over the years, we have evicted many people from the area, but this type of cases [filed by the petitioners] makes our efforts difficult.

"Once we receive the High Court order, we will conduct drives to evict all occupiers from the area with the help of the district administration," he added.

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He said his office also sent letters to all of their divisional and district level offices to ensure the "No Mask, No Service" policy.

THE CABINET MEET

The cabinet yesterday approved the Bangla and English drafts of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, a proposal to ratify draft "Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters between Bangladesh and Turkey", and the Bangla and English drafts on "National Nuclear and Radiological Emergency Preparedness and Response plan".

"The plan has been taken up for the Rooppur Power Plant. ... There is a requirement of the International Atomic Energy Commission for preparing safety guidelines and response plan before the plant operation. Otherwise, they will not allow it to open," said the secretary.

"The guideline is prepared according to the structure of IAEA," he said.

The move came at a time when most transport workers and passenger do not care to use masks.

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said they already sent letters to the associations of transport owners and workers, asking them to make sure that all workers and passengers wear facemasks. Otherwise, no one would be allowed to board the vehicles, he warned.

Mobile courts to start penalising within days

FROM PAGE 1

Authority (BRTA) directed its mobile courts to intensify drives to ensure that people wear masks while travelling in public transport like buses and minibuses.

The BRTA will also request the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges to write to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division for the introduction of "No mask, No Fuel system" at filling stations.

The decisions came at a BRTA meeting held on November 9 at the directives of the cabinet division, BRTA sources said yesterday.

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He also said the disaster and relief ministry plays a key role in tackling disasters. The plan is prepared, and we did not speak about religion at the time. When we had concluded, I had to get in the car but some of the roads were closed.

"So, I had to take the road through the mandap and I did that. Then the person who invited me made a request, so I lit a candle. Because I have played for Kolkatta [Knight Riders in the IPL] for a long time, their journalists were very excited. So, because of everyone's request, I stood there and took a picture," Shakib said in the video, and went as far as reading the part of his invitation card that mentioned the name of the man who actually inaugurated the puja.

"I would like to first say that I am a proud Muslim. I was at our programme and I want to say again that we did not talk about religion. Those two minutes at the mandap are now being shown. As a practising Muslim, I would never take part in the puja.

"If you think that my going there was wrong, then I am very sad and apologetic and I hope you can forgive it and I will try not to repeat such things in the future," Shakib said in the video.

Meanwhile, police in Sylhet are looking for the man who threatened to kill Shakib in a Facebook live video posted at 12:07am on Sunday.

BM Ashraf Ullah, additional deputy commissioner (media relations) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, "We just got the video link and forwarded it over to the cyber forensic unit. We are looking for the man and he will be dealt with according to law."

BNP activists

FROM PAGE 1

government will earn a bad name by setting fire to buses. Besides, it is our duty to ensure people's security."

Thanks to the technological advancement, those who are setting fire are being caught red-handed as there are CCTVs in all places. It is clear who were behind the attack, Hasina said, adding that there are images of the culprits in her hand.

Several persons from their procession were seen setting fire to buses with a gas lighter, she went on.

Noting that now technology is advancing fast and technology speaks, the PM played the record of a phone call conversation between a leader and a female activist of BNP in the House.

Hasina said it is their old habit that they shift blame on the government in the party's foundation. Because there was a problem in the party's foundation.

The PM said the party lost public confidence as it made a fugitive convict of a murder and 10-truck arms haul case its acting chairman.

Hasina said the BNP was trying to get political mileage banking on the trying times of Covid-19 and to give the government a bad name.

Pointing at BNP MP Harunur Rashid, the PM said he should have raised the issue in parliament after knowing his party's information better.

She asked him not to mislead people by raising untrue information in the House anymore.

About the BNP's participation in the elections, Hasina said, "My question is whether they are taking part in the elections at all."

She added that BNP candidates do not campaign or even provide polling agents after securing nominations. They do nothing for the election and at one stage, they withdraw from the race, saying that the election is not held properly.

She advised the BNP to take the polls seriously.

Earlier, speaking on a point of order, Harunur Rashid from Chapainawabganj-3 demanded that the Speaker form a parliamentary committee, comprising of treasury and opposition lawmakers, to reveal who were behind the arson attack.

"[Speaker] set the terms and conditions, we will complete the work in seven days. It should be revealed who were behind the incident and this should be placed before the nation," he said.

He said the BNP does not want to take blame over the incident.

He said, "Police are saying that actions will be taken after examining video footage [of the incident]. But I want to tell you that Ishraq Hossain [BNP Mayoral candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation], Jewel [Swechchhasebha Dal leader] are infected with Covid-19 [whose names are included in the case]," Harun said.



Carrying pedal-driven knife sharpeners, two men look for work as they hawk on a street in the capital's Basabo area. Some 40 such daily wage earners in Basabo have hardly found any work since the pandemic struck the country in March. On a usual day, they used to earn Tk 200-300 each. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shakib denies inaugurating Kali Puja

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh cricketer Shakib Al Hasan in a video on his YouTube channel yesterday denied that he had inaugurated a Kali Puja mandap on his recent trip to Kolkata.

Shakib went to Kolkata last Thursday for business purposes and was then pictured at a Kali Puja festival in Kolkata's Kakurgachi area.

Rumours then started circulating on social media that Shakib had inaugurated the puja, and that drew some backlash. The most extreme reaction came from a Facebook live video early Sunday morning by a Sylhet user brandishing a sharp weapon and saying Shakib must be killed for "hurting Muslims' feelings".

Yesterday evening in the video on his YouTube channel, Shakib said he had attended a programme adjacent to the venue of the puja and he had to get past the mandap in order to get into his car. He explained that he had been invited to take a picture, which was now being taken out of context.

The place where we had our gathering was definitely not the puja mandap, it was an adjacent stage. I was there for 30-40 minutes and we did not speak about religion at the time. When we had concluded, I had to get in the car but some of the roads were closed.

"So, I had to take the road through the mandap and I did that. Then the person who invited me made a request, so I lit a candle. Because I have played for Kolkatta [Knight Riders in the IPL] for a long time, their journalists were very excited. So, because of everyone's request, I stood there and took a picture," Shakib said in the video, and went as far as reading the part of his invitation card that mentioned the name of the man who actually inaugurated the puja.

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