

Will recover DSCC canals before next monsoon: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday said they will recover all the canals from encroachers and clean those properly before the next monsoon.

The DSCC mayor made the assurance while visiting the ongoing Shyampur canal cleaning work.

Responding to a question, the mayor said they are going to take short-term and long-term plans to solve the waterlogging problem of Dhaka.

He said initially they are starting short-term work with DSCC's own funds and their first priority would be to recover canals from encroachers, based on CS map.

He said they will ensure water flow and capacity of canals.

The mayor also visited Trimohini canal and directed authorities concerned to demolish illegal structures in alignment of CS map and directed to set up boundary pillars as early as possible.

Responding to another question, the mayor said the box culvert in Panthapath and Dholaikhal have not been cleaned properly for a long time.



Workers of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban were yesterday seen huddled up to buy milk from the government dairy farm at the subsidised rate of Tk 50 per kg. But to avail such an opportunity, they put their lives at risk, as all ignored the danger of Covid-19 by disregarding social distancing.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A2i Digital Centres in Dhaka City
Entrepreneurs allege zero cooperation from ward councillors

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Despite having a clear guideline issued from the Local Government Division, entrepreneurs under the government's a2i programme are not getting proper support due to lack of coordination with ward councillors, they alleged.

They even alleged that they have been harassed by the councillors when they attempted to open "digital centres" under the project.

They were supposed to be provided with an office alongside the councillors' by the city corporation, but no such space has been arranged by the city corporation, they added.

Many of them have set up separate office spaces on their own, from where they are running the digital services, entrepreneurs from both city the corporations of Dhaka complained.

According to the officials concerned, ICT Division's a2i programme began an initiative to introduce digital centres at union levels across the country. Their aim was to strengthen local government units and provide digital services to people through pourasabha, municipality, and ward level interventions. While the initiative initially focused on rural areas, it was expanded to Dhaka's wards in 2013 with support from the city corporations and the Local Government Division (LGD).

The centres go under three names, UDC for Union Parishad Digital Centre; PDC for Pouro Digital Centre and CDC for City Digital Centre.

WHO ARE THE ENTREPRENEURS?

There are 92 a2i entrepreneurs under the two city corporations' 129 wards.

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'No structure will be allowed on riverbanks'

Says river commission chair at visit to Dhaleshwari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

"No structure can be set up on lands along rivers. If anyone tries to harm rivers, we will take strict action," said Dr Muzibur Rahman Howlader, chairperson of National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), while visiting Dhaleshwari River in Savar yesterday.

On Shahid Rafiq Uddin bridge, he said, "You can build bridges, that is fine, but you must ensure the river's safety. We would recommend reconstructing the [Shahid Rafiq Uddin] bridge to make it bigger to save Dhaleshwari River."

"Huge sediments are consolidating on both sides of the riverbank, as roads were constructed occupying land on both sides to connect with the bridge. Unscrupulous people are also taking the chance to grab land there," he further said.

"Such practices are criminal offences, and it doesn't matter if you're a government officer. Nobody has the right to harm rivers," he added.

The NRCC chairperson also said they

want industries and development, and there is no conflict there between development and conserving rivers. Authorities must do everything it takes to ensure that rivers flow in the right condition.

Classification of land along rivers cannot be changed; such land is non-transferable and cannot be occupied. None can use such land for business, or setting up houses and any other structures, he added.

When asked about groups grabbing the Bangshi riverbank in Savar's Namabazar and Nayarhat area, Dr Muzibur replied that they are aware. They will visit the spot soon and take proper initiative to free the land.

Sayed Abul Maksud, vice-president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said, "We noticed that politically influential people usually these land by misusing their power in most cases."

"Every law of our country...is in favour of saving rivers. So, we urge the government to support our administration for evicting land grabbers," He said. "We want industries and development, but that does

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SK SINHA MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

HC questions bail of four accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned a lower court order that granted bail to four accused in a Tk 4 crore money laundering case against former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha.

The accused are: former vice presidents of Farmers Bank Ltd Md Lutfol Haque and Swapan Kumar Roy, and two businessmen Md Shahjahan and Niranjana Chandra Saha.

They secured bail from a Dhaka court on August 18 after they surrendered to the court in connection with the case.

Yesterday, the HC issued a rule asking the state why their bail order should not be scrapped.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohail came up with the rule following a petition filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission in this regard.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star there are specific allegations against the four of laundering money and therefore, they cannot be granted bail.

ACC filed the case with its Segunbagicha office on July 10 last year against former chief justice SK Sinha and 10 others on charge of laundering Tk 4 crore.

Sinha sent his resignation letter to the Bangabhaban on November 10, 2017 from abroad.

Bangladesh to organise world peace conference next year: foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will organise a world peace conference next year, marking the 50th year of the country's Liberation War and birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as part of promoting a culture of peace and tolerance.

"Bangabandhu was a proponent of peace and addressing problems with dialogue, diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts. We should inculcate the culture of peace and tolerance," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

He was speaking at the first lecture of the year-long "Bangabandhu Lecture Series" hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen will deliver lecture next month.

Former Finance Minister AMA Muhith delivered the first lecture yesterday.

At the inaugural address via a virtual platform, Foreign Minister Momen said there cannot be development without peace, and peace is hampered when there is

a lack of tolerance for difference of opinions and faith. The Rohingyas in Myanmar were uprooted because of venom of intolerance, he said.

Stating Bangabandhu's foreign policy principle, "friendship to all and malice to none", he said Bangladesh continues to maintain the policy and opposes violence and wars.

Momen said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman spent his entire life to empower people, alleviate poverty, promotion of democracy and rule of law. He wanted to ensure food for all who faced serious deprivation and injustice during the Pakistan regime.

He said Bangladesh today is a food-sufficient country and a vibrant economy from what was once dubbed as bottomless basket. Bangladesh is rapidly developing in economic and social terms.

However, given that the country has undertaken a number of mega infrastructures, critics are fearing of debt

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Interfaith dialogue to be held at different levels : state minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan yesterday called upon all to exercise restraint from using provocative statements.

Regarding the recent protests from religious groups against sculptures, he said there is a misunderstanding centering the issue, but it can be solved through discussion.

The state minister made the remarks while exchanging views with leaders of Religious Reporters Forum (RRF), a platform of journalists covering news on Islamic parties, hajj and religious affairs ministry at his office in the Secretariat.

He said inter-religious dialogue would be organised at different levels of society with representatives of all religious communities to maintain communal harmony.

In reply to a question, the state minister said the government's ongoing anti-militancy and anti-terrorism activities will continue.

On a different topic, Faridul Haque Khan said it has not been decided yet to perform Umrah Hajj from Bangladesh. "Even if the decision is made, people will be able to perform Umrah hajj on a limited scale," he said.

The state minister said digital Hajj management, increase in the number of pilgrims, hassle-free Hajj management, completing immigration formalities of pilgrims in Bangladesh and going to Saudi Arabia for performing hajj have become easier and safer.

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Human remains found in Rangpur well

Locals say Pakistan army dumped bodies there during 1971 Liberation War

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The people of Rangpur had witnessed the Pakistani armies brutally killing their loved ones. They saw their houses burning down before their own eyes. And evidence of such atrocities during the Liberation War is gradually piling up.

Human remains were found in a well near Town Hall at Rangpur city on Monday, in what is presumed to be bodies dumped by Pakistan army after torturing them during the Liberation War.

There is a mass graveyard beside the well.

According to locals, Pakistani occupation army and their aides used the Town Hall as a torture cell during the war.

Local administration started constructing a memorial on war at the site on November 16. The workers started digging the well on Monday, and after digging around seven feet deep, they found the remains.

As the news circulated in the city, many gathered there to see the remains.

Among the visitors, Dr Mafijul Islam -- president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, Rangpur chapter -- said it is now evident that Pakistanis used the town hall as a torture cell and the bodies were dumped in the well.

"Pakistani army caught many unarmed people from different places of Rangpur and tortured them to death there. They raped many girls," he said.

More remains could be found there, he added.

Rezaul Karim, a local journalist, urged to preserve the remains. Comrade Shahadat Hossain, a freedom fighter in Rangpur, also urged the government to take steps to preserve them.

Construction work of the memorial will end next year.

Prof Hasna Begum no more

DU CORRESPONDENT

Eminent philosopher and Dhaka University (DU) teacher Prof Hasna Begum died from Covid-19 yesterday at Bangladesh Specialised Hospital, at 85.

Her daughter Prof Lala Rukh Selim of DU's sculpture department confirmed it to The Daily Star. Prof Hasna was earlier admitted to hospital on November 27, as she was suffering from acute shortness of breath.

"My mother died around 8am at Bangladesh Specialised Hospital. She was undergoing treatment for the past few days after being diagnosed with Covid-19," said Prof Lala.

She was buried in Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard yesterday.

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No open-air events for Victory Day: home boss

Bss, Dhaka

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said there will be no open-air events on the occasion of Victory Day (December 16) this year due to the ongoing pandemic.

"Indoor programmes could be held marking Victory Day by following health guidelines," he said at an inter-ministerial virtual meeting on the day's security measures.

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has undertaken the celebration programmes for Victory Day.

"On the Victory Day, national flag in correct size and colour should be hoisted at all government, semi-government, autonomous and private buildings as per instructions of the Cabinet Division," the minister said.

He said measures will be taken to initiate 31 gun salutes in districts and upazilas along with the capital as soon as the sun rises.

The law enforcement agencies will take necessary security measures to avoid any untoward situation, the minister said.

Kamal said appropriate security measures will be taken during the movement towards National Memorial Monument at Savar and placing of floral wreaths at the monument following proper health guidelines.

"Adequate measures will be taken to ensure security of diplomats (who will visit the memorial)," he added.

The home minister said special prayers will be offered at various religious places. On Victory Day, improved diet will be served in prisons, hospitals, old homes and orphanages. Medical teams and fire service personnel will be engaged in various programmes.

Public security division secretary Mustafa Kamal Uddin, Inspector General of Police Dr Benazir Ahmed, Liberation War Affairs Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam, representatives of law enforcement agencies and various ministries were also present in the meeting.

N'GANJ MOSQUE BLAST

SC stays HC order on Titas to pay each victim Tk 5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday extended its chamber judge's order that stayed a High Court directive which asked Titas Gas Ltd to give Tk 5 lakh as initial costs to each family of the victims, who died and suffered burns in the Narayanganj mosque blast.

The apex court, however, asked the HC to hold hearing on the rule it issued over giving the victim families Tk 50 lakh each and dispose of the matter expeditiously.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain came up with the order after hearing a petition filed by Titas Gas Ltd challenging the HC order.

Thirty-seven people so far died and several others sustained burns in the blast at Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque after Esha prayers at night on September 4. There was widespread allegation that the explosion was caused by gas leaked from underground pipeline and accumulated inside the ground floor of the mosque.

Following a writ petition filed by SC lawyer and a resident of Narayanganj Mar-um Khondaker, the HC on September 9 directed Titas to give Tk 5 lakh as initial costs in seven days to each victim family. The HC also issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government and Titas Gas to explain why the Titas authorities should not be directed to give Tk 50 lakh to each victim family. Later on, Titas filed a petition with the Appellate Division, seeking a stay on the HC order.

On September 13, the chamber judge of the Appellate Division stayed the HC order till December 1.

The apex court judge also sent the stay petition to its full bench for hearing yesterday.



Nobody prefers torn, old and battered banknotes over crisp, fresh ones -- except these businessmen who set up shop at Gulistan. They exchange people's old banknotes with new ones after keeping a commission for themselves, and later bring the old notes to the bank.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

JU students for holding of final exams immediately

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University students demonstrated on the campus yesterday, demanding holding of their honours final year examinations that have remained postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Over 100 students from different departments under 2015-16 academic session gathered in front of the new administrative building around 11:30am, campus sources said.

Addressing the programme, Amirul Islam Sujan of the public administration department, said, "Earlier, we submitted a memorandum to the university authorities to press the demand, but to no avail. We will follow health rules during the exams that have to be held immediately."

"Although the government has already published 43th civil services circular, we wouldn't be able to apply there," he added.

Nuruzzaman Shuvo of history department said many universities including Chittagong University and some private universities decided to hold partial exams maintaining health directives.

Earlier, the JU students formed a human chain on the campus.