

Bangabandhu's homecoming day observed

BSS, Dhaka

The historic Homecoming Day of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was observed yesterday across the country in a befitting manner.

Bangabandhu, the undisputed leader of the nation and supreme commander of the country's Liberation War, returned to the sacred soil of independent Bangladesh via London and New Delhi on January 10 in 1972, after 290 days of confinement in Pakistan jail.

The Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu this year came with an extra significance as it coincided with Father of the Nation's birth centenary celebrations, just three months ahead of the golden jubilee of the country's independence.

All programmes marking the day this year were observed maintaining health guidelines in face of the global pandemic coronavirus.

To commemorate this historic day, the Department of Posts issued commemorative stamps. Besides, the day was also observed in a befitting manner in missions abroad.

On the night of March 25, 1971,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The launching event of "Sobar Dhaka" took place in the capital's Krishibid Institute auditorium. Along with filing complaints, the smartphone application also allows users to access national emergency hotline numbers, has a children's feature, and an events section to help citizens keep up with going-ons in the city.

'SOBAR DHAKA'

DNCC launches app to ensure citizen services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To make access to citizen services easier, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday introduced an app - "Sobar Dhaka".

"Residents of DNCC will be able to enjoy the civic facilities through the app easily," said Mayor Atiqul Islam at a launch event.

The app was inaugurated at the capital's Krishibid Institute auditorium at a programme to commemorate Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day.

The mayor said the app will help improve the accountability of government services. "As a mayor I, along with councillors, have to be accountable to citizens," he said.

The main objective of the app is to improve the living standard of DNCC residents by ensuring that services are delivered and accurate information is provided.

The app lets residents make complaints to DNCC directly on eight issues - mosquito, road, street lights, garbage, waterlogging, public toilets, drainage and illegal structures.

Users will also be able to advise the city corporation through the app to help build a healthy, moveable and modern city, the mayor said.

The process involves a user posting a comment with a relevant picture. This will in turn reach the relevant authorities of DNCC wards and zones, said Atiqul.

The app will allow residents of DNCC to be able to identify the area of their problems through GPS tracking. It also includes an emergency service where people will get national emergency helpline numbers like 999 and 333. There will be a special feature for children named "Emergency Alert", and emergency numbers of different government agencies.

A section of the app, "Ajker Dhaka", will let citizens get information about the day's events like exhibitions, training and different social programmes.

Rohingya repatriation top priority: foreign minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Myanmar will take back the Rohingya refugees and the issue will be resolved through discussion, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

"History shows they [Myanmar] took back over 2 lakh Rohingyas who fled here in 1992. So, we are hopeful that this time also they will take them back. But it is difficult to say when it will happen", he said.

Informing that the government has taken all the necessary steps to send back Rohingyas to Myanmar, Momen said, "We are continuously in discussion with Myanmar. We are doing bilateral negotiations with them as well as have taken multilateral arrangements and talked to the regional powers like India, China and other countries to solve the issue."

The minister was addressing unveiling ceremony of a book named "Rohingya: Nisongo Nipirito Jatigosthi" by Maj (ret) Mohammad Emdadul Islam at Chattogram Press Club.

"All the countries that we have approached acknowledged that it was Myanmar who created the problem and the solution depends on them," said Momen, the chief guest at the event. They all said

repatriation of Rohingyas is the only durable solution.

Mentioning that 132 countries have voted for Bangladesh in a resolution, co-tabled by the OIC and European Union, and adopted by the United Nations recently, the foreign minister said, "Some countries including our neighbour abstained from voting."

But they (the neighbouring country) had earlier told us that they would prefer to be neutral, which would help them negotiate with Myanmar.

"We believe those countries who did not give the 'yes' vote did so for strategic reasons, which is fine. Our main priority is to send back the Rohingyas," he said.

He also informed that Japan is interested in a tri-party arrangement to negotiate with Myanmar.

In the last tri-party meeting in presence of China held on January 20 last year, Myanmar seemed positive as they made some promises, he mentioned.

Informing that the government has so far tried to repatriate Rohingyas twice, but they did not go as Rohingyas do not believe in their government.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PK HALDER'S Tk 3,500CR SCAM

ACC summons four high-ups of People's Leasing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has summoned four high-ups of Peoples Leasing and Financial Services Limited to quiz over misappropriation of Tk 3,500 crore allegedly by Prashanta Kumar Halder, known better as PK Halder.

In separate letters, ACC's Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Proddhan asked Peoples Leasing's chief executive officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) Sami Huda, executive vice president Kazi Ahmed Jamal, chief financial officer Manik Lal Samaddar and head of credit Mahmuda Kaisar to appear before the ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters on January 14.

Sources said while PK Halder was managing director of Reliance Finance, he made some of his relatives and cohorts directors of some other leasing companies and got hold of these companies, People's Leasing being one of them.

"They dragged the company [People's Leasing] down to the street. They not only sold immovable properties of these companies but also shared portfolio of depositors," said an ACC official, preferring to be unnamed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT OF MD ARMAN

IGP seeks stay on HC order for compensation to victim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inspector general of police (IGP) has filed a petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court seeking stay on the High Court verdict that directed him (IGP) to give Tk 20 lakh as compensation to Md Arman, a technician at a Benarasi Palli in Mirpur, as police personnel have wrongly arrested him and kept him in jail for around five years instead of the original accused in a drug case.

The stay petition was submitted recently to the office concerned of the Appellate Division saying that the HC has ordered the IGP to give Tk 20 lakh to Arman without assessing the damage.

Besides, departmental action has been taken against the police officers who are responsible for wrongly arresting and keeping Arman in jail and therefore, the IGP is not liable for giving any compensation, Deputy Attorney General Amit Das Gupta told The Daily Star citing the IGP's petition.

He said the stay petition was placed before Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Nuruzzaman for hearing yesterday. The apex court judge, however, did

not hold hearing on the petition yesterday, saying that the matter will be heard later on, DAG Amit Das Gupta added.

Meanwhile yesterday, the same court refused to stay the part of the HC directive that asked the IGP and DMP commissioner to withdraw four police officers from duty, who were working under Pallabi Police Station during the incident, from their present workplaces.

The four police officers are then OC Dadan Fakir, now inspector under DMP; then SI Md Nazrul Islam, now court inspector under DMP; SI Md Sirajul Islam Khan, now inspector at the Sports and Culture department under Police Headquarters, and Md Russell, now SI of Mirpur Model Police station, court sources said.

The Appellate Division judge passed "no order" on the petitions filed by the four police officers seeking stay on the HC verdict on them.

The apex court also asked them to file separate leave-to-appeal petitions with this court against the HC verdict after receiving its full text. Senior lawyer Munsurul Hoque

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

KAKRAIL DOUBLE MURDER

Verdict on Jan 17

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set January 17 for the judgment over the murders of Shamsun Nahar and her 17-year-old son Sajjadul Karim Shaon in Dhaka's Kakrail in 2017.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka set the date after conclusion of arguments, Assistant Public Prosecutor Mohammad Salauddin Howladar told The Daily Star.

During yesterday's hearing, the three accused - Abdul Karim, Nahar's husband; Sharmin Akter Mukta, his third wife; and Al-Amin Johny, Mukta's brother - were produced before the court.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 17 out of 22 prosecution witnesses including the complainant.

On November 1 of 2017, 46-year-old Shamsun Nahar and her son Shaon, an A-level student, were murdered inside their six-storey building in Kakrail.

Police found Nahar's body in her bedroom on the fourth floor while Shaon's on the staircases of the third floor.

AKHAURA-LAKSHAM RAIL PROJECT

Ministry removes project director, three months after PMO directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The railways ministry has changed the project director of the Akhaura-Laksham Dual Gauge Double Line Project.

Signed by a deputy secretary on Thursday, the ministry released a circular in this regard yesterday.

The move came more than over three months after the Prime Minister's Office directed the railways ministry to remove existing director Ramzan Ali after a corruption case was filed against him. Ramzan Ali denied the allegations.

Shahidul Islam, joint director general (engineering), will now take charge of the important project of Bangladesh Railway (BR), according to the circular.

The circular, however, did not mention any specific reason behind the change, rather said the order would come into action immediately for public interest. It did not mention what would be the new post of Ramzan Ali either.

In August, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed two separate cases against Ramzan Ali and his wife Dilruba Parvin Elora for allegedly amassing around Tk 4.28 crore beyond their known sources of income.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Protecting reserve forests from de-reservation

LAW DESK

At a time of increasing need to protect reserve forests, a local lawmaker has put forward a proposal to change the status of nearly 600 acres of reserve forests and wildlife sanctuary in Cox's Bazar into khas land for leasing them out to people living there.

Jafar Alam, elected from Chakaria-Pekua (Cox's Bazar-1) constituency, sent a DO (demi official) letter to the Cox's Bazar district administration this month to proceed with the proposal to the secretaries of the land ministry and environment, forest, and climate change ministry.

It is of note that Jafar himself is a member of the parliamentary standing committee, on the environment, forest, and climate

change ministry.

The proposal of de-reservation goes against the spirit of the constitutional provisions on environmental protection, environmental laws in place and an array of observations made by the High Court Division on many occasions regarding the protection of reserved forests.

De-reservation of forests has the potential to pave the way for use of forestland for non-forest purposes and make them vulnerable to land grabbing and commercial exploitation.

The lawmaker's proposition has surprisingly coincided with an observation made by the High Court Division. On January 2, the HC directed the government to take necessary steps to protect the reserve forestland for any use other than

forestation.

The court observed that any notified forestland, reserved or otherwise, cannot be allocated or leased out for any purposes that damage the country's forests. The HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Khandakar Diliruzzaman came up with the verdict following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

With the said observation, the court had declared a lease agreement illegal. Under the agreement, the deputy commissioner of Chattogram issued the lease of 7.1 acres of notified forest area at Uttar Salimpur in Sitakunda to BBC Steel.

It will not be out of place to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A van full of used polythene cruises through an empty Kakrail road yesterday. The seller is on his way to Kamrangirchar, hoping for some profit on the discarded materials he has collected.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

GRAFT CASE

Samrat not produced at court for illness

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday could not take cognisance of charges against expelled Jubo League leader Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat in a case filed for siphoning off around Tk 222 crore, as he was not produced before it due to illness.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka set March 31 for the next hearing after jail authorities informed the court that Samrat was earlier admitted to BSMMU for treatment and he was not in a position to move.

The court also directed jail authorities to produce Samrat before it on March 31.

The case was filed against him for siphoning off the money and channeling it to casinos in Singapore and Malaysia between 2011 and 2018.

On December 7 last year, Anti-Corruption Commission's Deputy Director Jahangir Alam, also the case's investigation officer, submitted the charge sheet against Samrat, a "kingpin" of illegal casino businesses in Dhaka, to the Senior Special Judge's Court.

'Stop Myanmar military from using FB for gains'

Rohingya advocacy group urges

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Burma Campaign UK, a Rohingya advocacy group, has called for Facebook to stop the Myanmar military from using the social media platform to recruit members and promote its businesses -- profits from which help fund genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The call comes after Facebook suspended US President Donald Trump's account, on the ground of inciting violence.

"Donald Trump has been suspended for inciting violence, but the Burmese military commit violence against civilians every day and are free to use Facebook to recruit soldiers to commit that violence," said Mark Farmaner, director of Burma Campaign UK, in a statement released yesterday.

As a result of continuing violence, some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown against them and took shelter in Bangladesh in 2017, while nearly 24,000 Rohingyas have been killed, according to the Ontario International Development Agency. During the period, thousands of Rohingyas were tortured, women raped and their homes burned and vandalised.

Mark Farmaner said military-owned companies are allowed to use Facebook to promote products, the profits from which fund the military and help fund violations of international law, including genocide of the Rohingyas.

Facebook has faced severe criticism of its failure to tackle hate speech against Rohingyas and other minorities in Myanmar, and has taken down some military pages, including that of Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military. Numerous official military Facebook pages still exist, including some with the official Facebook blue tick, Burma Campaign UK said.