

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Number of filing cases in village courts on decline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The rate of filing cases with the village courts in all 60 unions of the district has declined due to coronavirus outbreak, which has created obstacles to ensure justice for common people in rural areas.

As per the law, a village court would be constituted consisting of five members headed by respective Union Parishad (UP) chairman to settle down disputes like family conflict, stealing and realising compensation. It can realise compensation up to Tk 25,000.

Each court is empowered to locally dispose criminal and civil cases within 90 days which may exceed up to 120 days in special situation.

It also can solve dispute over assets having valuation up to Tk 75,000.

Farmer Kartik Chandra Roy, 50, of Kisamat

Bhutian village in Sadar upazila, said he got justice from the village court a year ago as his powerful neighbour damaged banana orchard out of enmity.

The court consisting of five members, led by the UP chairman, fined the neighbour Tk 25,000, said Roy.

According to deputy director's (DD) office of local government (LG) department in district collectorate, it is learnt that the number of filing cases with all the village courts in Nilphamari was less from January to March last year. It was stood at 575.

Following the outbreak of coronavirus in Bangladesh, there was general leave from March 26 to May 30 and since then the number of filing cases started declining.

In April-June period, number of cases has come down to 491 and in July-September, it

was stood only at 406.

This shows that averagely around seven cases are filed with each village court in the last three months from July, which was 10 to 12 in number in usual time.

Due to coronavirus situation, total 603 cases in the courts have remained pending till September, which were only 544 in March.

Abdul Wahab, former president of Nilphamari Lawyers' Association, said "Lower and upper courts are burdened with manifold cases and to ease pressure, there is no alternative to make the village courts more functional.

DD of LG department in Nilphamari Abdul Motaleb Sarker said the adverse impacts of pandemic have fallen on everywhere, including village courts.

They were monitoring the situation to restore normal activities soon, he added.

BRIDGE ON KALIGANGA RIVER IN PIROJPUR

Two years' deadline over, LGED wants 2 years more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The deadline to complete construction of the bridge on the Kaliganga river in Pirojpur ended in November last year, but without any visible structure at the site, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) claims that 15 percent of the work has been done.

The work order for Pirojpur's longest bridge to be built under LGED was awarded to Navana Construction Ltd, with an estimated cost of over Tk 115 crore.

The bridge will have a width of ten metres and there will be 1,200 metres of approach road on both ends -- at Kalakhali village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila and Chandkathi village in Nesarabad upazila.

When the construction work of the 600 metre-long bridge started in April of 2018, people on both sides, especially residents of six unions in Nesarabad upazila, were delighted as their long wait for direct road communications with the district headquarters would end soon.

But to the frustration of the locals, more than two years after the work started, they still cannot see any sign of development or any structure on either side of the Kaliganga river, said Julfikar Ali Khan, a member of Kalakhali Union Parishad in Pirojpur Sadar.

The bridge would bring huge relief to people in six unions of Nesarabad as they would be able to save precious time during medical emergencies or while transporting critical patients to hospitals in Pirojpur town, said Tarikul Islam, a member of Guarekha



Except for a few equipment and some construction materials in Kalakhali village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila, on the bank of the Kaliganga river, no significant sign of development or activity was found as part of the ongoing work to build the bridge between Pirojpur Sadar and Nesarabad upazilas. The photo was taken in last week of December last year. PHOTO: STAR

Union Parishad in Nesarabad upazila. Locals said the work on the bridge had been going on at a snail's pace from the beginning and there had been no work at the site for the past several months.

However, when contacted, LGED Executive Engineer in Pirojpur, Sushanta Ranjan Roy, said the construction work only slowed down due to the Covid-19 situation.

A request to extend the deadline by a couple more years has been sent to the higher authorities and they hope to finish the work within the extended period, he added.

Lengthy rape trials frustrate victims

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hearing stage, while charge sheets have been filed in 22 cases six months after the case was filed, according to the findings.

Section 18 of the law, however, mandates that investigation has to be completed within 15 working days after the arrest of the accused. If the accused is not arrested, investigation has to be completed within 90 working days of the FIR being lodged or the tribunal order.

In 20 of the 22 charge sheets, dates of hearings have been fixed some 8-23 times and the hearings were postponed due to non-appearance of most of the witnesses.

According to the findings, in most cases, victims' parents were unwilling to go to court out of their frustration about the legal battle, while poor parents are reluctant to continue legal battles due to financial constraints. The public prosecutors, meanwhile, do not take any initiative to produce the victim and the witness in court on the date of the case.

MJF's partner organisations also found that nine cases filed during 2014-15 and 12 cases filed during 2016-17 are yet to get verdicts, although the law mandates completion of cases within 180 days of the date of receipt of documents for trial.

And, once the hearing has begun, it will have to be conducted every working day, but that is not being followed properly.

No progress has been noticed in two cases, no charge sheet has been filed in three cases, and documents of four cases were unavailable, MJF said.

It was also found that children and female victims are being blamed and mistreated in the judicial process by police and the defendant's attorneys.

Besides, even though adjudicating the crime of rape is uncompromising under the law, courts often compromise under circumstantial pressure.

Two differently abled women gave births to two children, but the fathers of these two children have not been identified yet and although the state is supposed to bear the responsibility of children born as a result of rape, that guideline too is not being implemented, MJF found.

According to MJF, even though the two-finger tests have been banned by the High Court, the process is still followed in remote areas. In addition, although rape cases are closely related to the age of the victim, medical reports do not accurately state the age and most district hospitals in the country do not have a

system to determine the age of the victim.

In many cases, DNA testing is not done, while the accused sometimes influences the results of the test, according to MJF.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, who moderated the conference, said, "Unless the justice system is fully strengthened and people's attitude towards women and girls are transformed positively, the menace of rape will continue and the subsequent trial process will continue to remain unhelpful to rape victims."

Senior lawyer Elina Khan said, "There is no 24-hour forensic lab in the country, which we need urgently."

Placing several recommendations, MJF demanded reforming rape laws, enacting witness protection laws, completing investigations and trials on time, and instituting strong monitoring of whether or not legal provisions are being properly observed and taking swift action against those responsible.

It also suggested amending relevant laws so that persons with language, hearing and intellectual disabilities can testify in rape cases.

Programme coordinators Nazrana Hira and Ruma Sultana presented the documents at the event.

Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh. Office of the Superintending Engineer. E/M Circle, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229. Ref. No. 30.31.0000.411.02.149.20-77. Date: 12-01-2021. e-Tender Notice. e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP System Portal. This is online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed Name of the Work, Package No., Tender ID, Tender Closing Date & Time are as follows:

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. College Education Development Project (CEDP). College Name: Mohammadpur Kendriya College. E-mail: mkc_1972@yahoo.com. Website: www.mkc.edu.bd. Memo No. 11/mkc/2020. Date: 14/01/2021. e-Tender Notice 02/2020-2021. e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following package:

Fire guts 500 houses at Rohingya camp. OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar. At least 500 houses were gutted in a fire that broke out at Noyapara Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila early yesterday. Meanwhile, at least 30 people sustained injuries while trying to douse the fire. Station Officer at Teknaf Fire Station Mukul Kumar Nath said the fire originated at Block-E of the camp around 2:00am soon engulfed the adjacent area. On information, two firefighting units from Teknaf and Ukhiya fire stations rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control after two hours of frantic effort. Local claimed that the fire might have been originated from a gas stove, the officer added.

BARAPUKURIA COAL SCAM. 22 officials granted bail. OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur. A court here yesterday granted bail to 22 officials, including six retired managing directors (MDs), of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL) in Parbatipur upazila in a case over the disappearance of 1.45 lakh tonnes of coal from the mine. After spending a night in the prison all the 22 officials walked out of Dinajpur jail around 8:45am yesterday. Earlier on Wednesday, Dinajpur District and Sessions Judge Mahmudul Karim rejected their bail prayer after the accused appeared before it seeking bail. Nuruzzaman Jahani, defence lawyer, said his clients were denied bail as they failed to submit the relevant documents from the High Court (HC) in time. The court granted their bail when the defence lawyers submitted the papers around 5:00pm the same evening. Faridul Rahman, jailer at Dinajpur Jail, said they received the bail certificate around 7:30pm on Wednesday, but according to the provision, jail authorities cannot release any prisoner after the sunset. On July 24 in 2018, Anisur Rahman, manager (admin) of BCMCL, filed the case with Parbatipur Police Station against 19 officials of the coal mine. After investigation, the Anti-Corruption Commission pressed charges against 23 BCMCL officials, including seven MDs, over the coal scam.

College Education Development Project (CEDP) IDG Sub-Project. Ananda Mohan College, Mymensingh. Email: anandamohan1908cedp@gmail.com. Memo No. AMC/CEDP-IDG-058. Date: 14-01-2021. e-Tender Notice 01/2020-2021. e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following package:

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা। ই-মেইল : khulnavathq@gmail.com. নথি নং- এস/০২/১৯/ক্রমিক (অনিয়মিত) মঞ্জুরী/২০১৯/অংশ-১/২০২০. তারিখঃ ১৩/০১/২০২১. "দপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি". কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা এর অফিস ভবন পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন করণের লক্ষে সরবরাহকারী/ সেবারদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ এর পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট রুলস, ২০০৮ এবং Standard Request For Quotation (SREQ) for Procurement of Goods অনুযায়ী নিম্নের লটার হেড প্যাডে সীলমোহরকৃত আবেদন নামে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাবলী অনুযায়ী প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী/ সেবারদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকের নিকট হতে এতদ্বারা নিম্নলিখিতভাবে কোটেশন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।