

City corporations take over 13 canals from Rajuk, BWDB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government yesterday decided to hand over 13 canals that are under the management of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) to two city corporations of Dhaka.

This was disclosed by LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam yesterday after a follow-up meeting on the city's canals and drainage system at a conference room of local government division.

Tazul said they handed over 26 canals of Dhaka and drainage lines to city corporations with a view to evicting all encroachers and constructing walkways, planting trees along the bank of the canals and beautifying all of them.

"We have found the existence of 39 canals in Dhaka city and we have asked DC office Dhaka to submit the area list of the canals to the city corporations in phases, based on CS and RS record within the next three months," said the minister.

He said people have occupied the canals and adjacent land by creating false documents and all illegal structures will be demolished.

Tazul said the two city corporations have already started cleaning and eviction work.

About the unplanned construction of culverts at different points, the minister said they have decided to identify the unplanned culverts and construct necessary culverts in a planned manner.

About the box culverts, the minister said the two city corporations have already started cleaning box culverts which were piled with garbage of almost 20-30 years.

The minister said they are trying to establish better

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A worker of Dhaka Wasa braves the cold to get down into the water inside a pothole in the capital's Nazirabazar, Bongshal yesterday. While authorities responsible for maintaining the city's utility services often get flak for negligence in serving citizens, such commitment of field-level employees is certainly heartening. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT DU students demand release of Kishore, Mushtaq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University students yesterday stood in solidarity with incarcerated writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore at the Central Shaheed Minar, demanding the release of the two.

Heralding poster printouts of the cartoons that got Kishore prosecuted, the students pressed home a clear message – nobody should be imprisoned for drawing cartoons.

By obstructing the voices of journalists, the state mechanism is being hostile to the exercise of intellect, said the protesters.

"We want freedom. The kind of freedom that would allow one to write and draw as they wish, and where the state or law enforcers will not intervene," said Kazi Rakib Hossain, a student of law at Dhaka University, and the organiser of the protest.

They called the Digital Security Act, a gagging law. "Is Bangladesh at such

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Neo JMB' man arrested in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter Terrorism officials claimed to have arrested a member of "Neo JMB", who attempted to go to Syria but returned home from Turkey recently, in Dhaka's Darussalam on Saturday.

Minhaz Hossain (38), an active member of the militant outfit, was captured around 6:30pm while meeting other operatives to plan for sabotage, said Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He had communicated with members of international militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), said Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit.

Officials said they were on high alert after receiving information that a man attempted to go to Syria but returned from Turkey in December last year. Then Minhaz was identified and subsequently arrested.

As he failed to enter Syria, he returned home, went into hiding in Khulna and set up communication with "Neo JMB" in the country, the sources said.

According to law enforcers, Minhaz was born in Bangladesh but spent most of his childhood in Pakistan after their family shifted there. He later moved to USA, and visited some other countries including Malaysia and Brunei before returning to Bangladesh in 2017.

Act neutrally: CEC

Tells police, election officials; 410 of 723 polling stations in CCC risky; no holiday on polls day

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Calling upon the law enforcement agencies to act neutrally, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda has asked them not to harass innocent people ahead of Chattogram City Corporation election, scheduled to be held on Wednesday.

However, amid the ongoing tense situation over the growing violence among Awami League rebel candidates, the CEC said, "There is no risk and voters are secured. The election will be free and fair."

"If there is any allegation of criminal offense against anyone, I have told officials to bring them to book... but do not harass the innocent," he said while talking to the media after holding a views-exchange with election officials and law enforcement agencies yesterday.

The meeting was held at Chattogram Circuit House in port city.

Regarding BNP's allegations of raid, arrest and intimidation by police, the CEC said, "We do not have any such report. Police can raid houses of those accused in criminal cases with arrest warrants."

About BNP's demand for deploying army on the election day, he said there is no need to deploy army as they are satisfied with measures taken by the law enforcement agencies.

Earlier in the meeting, the CEC said, "The election should start with a contest but should not end with violence. Life is more valuable than election. Lives must not be lost in clashes and conflicts."

To CCC polls candidates, the CEC said, "Competition cannot get out of hand. Lives of some people have been lost centring election. This cannot continue."

He thanked the CCC mayor and councillor candidates for making the election "festive".

Urging election officials to treat candidates as just candidates rather than being influenced by the political party or community they belong to, the CEC said, "It is your duty to give legal assistance to all the candidates."

He also called upon the candidates to abide by the electoral code of conduct.

The CEC said around 35 complaints lodged with the commission centring the election have been disposed of.

Presided over by Chattogram Divisional Commissioner ABM Azad, EC senior secretary Md Alamgir was also present at the meeting as special guest.

NO GENERAL HOLIDAY ON POLLS DAY

There will be no general holiday on the day of the election

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Womens' issues neglected in candidates' pledges

RASHIDUL HASAN and DWAIPIYAN BARUA

Women make up 48.83 percent of the electorate in the Chattogram City Corporation polls, but they feel neglected in the pledges made by the two major candidates. Women voters of Chattogram feel that the candidates did not place enough importance in tackling gender-based issues.

Talking to The Daily Star, several women mentioned that the two major candidates – Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and Dr Shahadat Hossain – should have emphasised initiatives to make Chattogram a women-friendly city and ensure hassle-free movement and safety. Voters feel they did not pay enough attention to these issues in their campaigning activities and manifesto.

Both the candidates mentioned maximum four gender-based issues, which female voters find inadequate.

Out of 19,38,706 voters in the CCC polls, 9,46,673 are women.

On Saturday, Awami League-nominated mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury announced a 37-point manifesto while BNP candidate Shahadat Hossain announced his nine-point manifesto with 75 pledges.

The notable promises made in Rezaul's 37-point manifesto are: eliminating waterlogging, 100-day priority projects, resolving traffic congestion, restoring discipline on roads, evicting occupants of canals and rivers, managing waste, developing Chattogram as the country's tourism capital and ensuring 100% holding tax collection.

Shahadat made 75 promises on nine points that include water-logging, health care, education, holding tax and housing, cleanliness, safety, communal harmony, aesthetic and tourism, and IT.

Among his 37 points, Rezaul mentioned – setting up public toilets for women in the busiest points of the city, introducing separate transport services, mandatory training for self-defence, aiding women entrepreneurs in each ward and developing modern maternity services.

On the other hand, Shahadat made

two promises including setting up modern public toilets for women and establishing special cells for female patients at the CCC-run health centres.

Earlier in the 2015 CCC polls, BNP-backed mayoral candidate M Manjur Alam in his manifesto had promised to set up separate swimming pools for women. He had also mentioned setting up two buses for women and children and a hostel for working women.

Manjur's rival, AL-backed candidate AJM Nasir Uddin had pledged separate bus services for women. He had also promised to allocate plots or flats for working women.

But those promises were not materialised. "Women want a safe and women friendly city free of walking and sexual harassment. These are major concerns for us. The candidates should have spoken on this vital issue," Arafat Ara, a student of Chattogram University, told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Echoing the same, noted writer Ferdous Ara Alim said, "Social security is now a major concern for women. Things are getting worse day by day as we see women are subjected to rape and torture in public vehicles in the city, just like other parts of the country."

This issue should have been addressed more widely for a modern city, as female-friendly services is still absent everywhere in society, she said.

Pointing out that separating transportation services for women would not be a good long-term solution, she said CCC should instead try to arrange adequate number of seats in public transport and train the operators so that women can use transportation without hassle.

Jannatul Ferdous Popy, a former CCC ward councillor under a reserved seat for women, said on safety issue, complaint centres need to be set up in every ward so women can get urgent assistance if needed.

The mayor needs to address the acute accommodation problem faced by huge number of working women and students coming from different districts, she added.

No achieving SDGs without changes to edu system: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Underscoring the need for technical education to reach sustainable development goal, speakers at a webinar yesterday asked the government to build necessary infrastructure to attract students.

The virtual event, "EduSummit 2021" was jointly organised by The Daily Star and Asia Foundation. Speakers emphasised the need for change in the education system and making it more career-oriented to solve unemployment problems.

Former governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Atiur Rahman said the existing curriculum is producing clerks. "If we fail to give good education, it would not be possible to reach the SDGs," he said.

He said due to the unprecedented crisis presented by the pandemic, the government introduced online class system.

"Teaching methods have to be blended in the post-pandemic period and the government needs to build necessary infrastructure," he said.

Atiur said the whole world is facing the drastic impact of climate change. "But it seems our students are not much aware of climate change issues. How would they cope with the world in the coming days if they have no knowledge of climate change," he questioned.

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said the limitations in the country's education system must be addressed to produce effective human resources who can aid in Bangladesh's transition to a middle-income country.

He said one-third of educated people are not getting jobs as the current education system fails to create skilled human resources.

Nazneen Ahmed, senior research fellow at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, feared many girls will drop out of schools during the pandemic.

She suggested building necessary internet infrastructure so that students from remote places of the country could get education.

Korvi Rakshand, founder of JAAGO, opined that three different mediums is creating obstacles to proper education.

"Students in Dhaka can avail a different type of education at English medium schools... whereas students in remote place don't even get the chance to go to a good Bangla-medium school. This disparity needs to be resolved," he said.

Seven sessions were held in the day to mark International Day of Education, observed with the theme "Recover and Revitalise Education for the Covid-19 Generation."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

2 women awarded for addressing climate crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two grassroots women leaders have been awarded for their contributions to addressing the climate crisis.

ActionAid Bangladesh virtually announced the awards at the closing ceremony of a seven-day annual "Gobeshona Global Conference" yesterday, hosted by International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD).

Of the two awardees, Lake Begum has been practising climate-resilient agriculture for over a decade and inspired many women farmers to understand the agroecology approach and scale-up.

On the other hand, Jannatul Mouwa has set an example of "Courage of Conviction" by challenging the social norms in leading a group of young women to engage in social transformation.

The awardees were given Tk 25,000 each.

While announcing the winners' names, ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir urged to invest further in women leadership to address reliance on climate change and disasters.

She also stressed bringing women's voices, especially young women's, to policy level for gender-responsive policy formulation, financing and implementation in all aspects of policies in all levels.

Gobeshona Global conference aims to stimulate actions amongst the participants, inspire people to start their own initiatives through research or practice and encourage collaborations.



Roads and Highways Department has been demolishing illegal structures on Khulna city's Sher-e-Bangla Road for a week, to turn the two-lane road into a four-lane one. Till yesterday, around 70 buildings were demolished during the ongoing eviction drive. The photo was taken from Amtola intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

DIPAN MURDER

Verdict on Feb 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set February 10 for delivery of judgment against eight members of banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam in a case filed over the murder of publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in November in 2015.

Judge Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal set the date after conclusion of arguments from both sides.

The accused are: Ansar Al Islam's top commander Sayed Ziaul Haque alias Maj (sacked) Zia, killing squad leader Moinul Hasan Shamim alias Samir alias Imran, trainer Abdus Sabur alias Samad alias Sujon alias Raju, and top operatives Khairul Islam alias Fahim alias Jishan, Sheikh Abdullah, Abu Siddiq Sohel, Mozammel Hossain alias Saimon and Akram Hossein alias Hasib.

Of them, Zia and Akram are still at large while the rest are behind bars.

The tribunal recorded statements of 23 prosecution witnesses including the case's complainant.

On October 13, 2019, the tribunal framed charges against Zia and the seven others in the case.

Dipan (43), publisher of Jagriti Prokashani, was hacked to death at his office in Dhaka's Shahbagh on October 31, 2015.

Later, his wife filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing unknown persons.

On November 15 of 2018, Assistant Commissioner of Detective Branch Fazlur Rahman submitted the charge sheet to the chief metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka.