

'What steps were taken to preserve Shaheed Minar?'

HC asks govt to report in 4 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know what steps have been taken to implement its 2010 directives for preserving the dignity and sanctity of Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, which was set up to maintain the spirit of the 1952 Language Movement and show respect to the language heroes.

The 2010 HC directives include preparing a list of language heroes, publishing the list in a gazette notification, and constructing a library and Language Movement museum beside the Shaheed Minar.

Yesterday, the HC ordered authorities concerned of the government to submit a report on the steps taken to comply with the directives in four weeks and also fixed April 25 for passing further directives.

The bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil came up with the order following a contempt petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) on March 4 against the authorities on charge of not implementing all the 2010 directives.

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A man carefully steps onto a rickshaw with his child in tow, mindful that one misstep might cause them to fall into ankle-deep sewage water. For the past two weeks, movement has been disrupted in this road front of Haji Abdur Rashid Lane in old Dhaka. Locals complain that the ward commissioner has taken no initiative to resolve the issue.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Some contents of Baksal should be brought back'

Gowher Rizvi says at webinar on Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some of the contents of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 1975 reform programme known as 'Baksal' should be brought back, Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi said yesterday.

"We should look at it. We should carefully and critically analyse the contents of his 1975 reform programme," he said, "This is to bring back the dimension of social justice as well as to create an equitable, egalitarian and secular society."

Dr Rizvi was addressing a webinar on the topic "Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla: Bangladesh at 50" organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

Addressing as chief guest, Dr Rizvi said the ideas in Bangabandhu's 1975 reform programme are still very much a need of the time.

He said the reform scheme got discredited even before it was given a try, and Bangabandhu was assassinated before he could implement his ideas of Bangladesh Krishak Sromik Awami League (Baksal).

The scheme that was provided in 1975 was a detailed programmatic framework for how to restructure the society, he said, adding that unfortunately, Baksal got popularly condemned as a one-party system which is far from the truth.

He said, "Even today inequality and intolerance prevail, which was not Bangabandhu had imagined. We need to reflect on it. Yes, we are celebrating, we will be celebrating (success in 50 years), but we need to reflect on these issues."

Addressing the webinar, analysts said although Bangladesh has achieved

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'Violence against girls has reached barbaric levels'

Says NHRC chairperson at webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's empowerment has progressed significantly, but violence against women has increased as well, said National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairperson Nasima Begum, ndc, yesterday.

Violence against girls has reached a barbaric level. At the same time, the most noticeable injustice they are facing in current times is child marriage, which is increasing in number, she said at a webinar organised by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum to observe International Women's Day.

"Due to Covid-19 induced income loss, many parents are marrying off their girls, considering the situation as one less mouth to feed. We must look into this," she added.

Praising the initiatives of women leaders, lawmaker Dr Shamil Uddin Ahmed Shimul, also member of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights, said although child marriage has emerged as a serious issue in the pandemic, women

leaders at union and district levels played an important role to prevent it.

Lawmaker Adiba Anjum Mita, also member of the caucus, said women are also not free from the patriarchal mindset. Women must unite in supporting each other to flourish.

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum Executive Member Wahida Bantu, also executive director of Aporajeyo Bangladesh, focused on the necessity of socialisation and changing the mindset of people towards girls.

There must be more employment opportunities for women, she said.

"Although we have so many achievements, the ongoing violent incidents are forcing them to fade away," she added.

Two women leaders -- Birangana Kanan Gomez (72) and young journalist Rabeya Akter Shuborna from ATN Bangla -- were honoured with crests and provided Tk 10,000 each at the event.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, global

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Monirul Islam new chief of police's special branch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Monirul Islam, the chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, to lead the Special Branch of police.

With the new assignment, Monirul, also the additional commissioner of DMP, has been made an additional inspector general of police (current charge), according to a home ministry gadget notification issued yesterday.

Monirul replaced the SB's additional IGP Mir Shahidul Islam, who went on retirement yesterday after leading the unit for more than two years.

According to insiders, though more than 10 additional IGP (full fledged) exist in the force now, Monirul was appointed additional IGP (current charge) for his competence.

Being an officer of the 15th batch of BCS, Monirul earlier was promoted to the post of deputy inspector general on February 15, 2016 and additional deputy inspector general on April 7 of 2015.

On leaving CTTC, Monirul said he started working for the unit in February 2016 and worked for five years



PHOTO: STAR



A sign saying "Thank you for using the footbridge" stands in irony on Pragati Sarani in the capital, as work continues on the structure. Inset, workers were recently seen replacing the railings of the bridge.

ABRAR MEMORIAL FOOTBRIDGE

Half-baked structure now being 'retrofitted'

MATHEWS CHIRAN

When private university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury died in a tragic road accident on March 19, 2019 in front of Jamuna Future Park on Dhaka's Pragati Sarani road, many students took to the street in protest, and in an instant move, the DNCC mayor announced to build a footbridge on that very spot to avoid further tragedies.

As per a decision, Dhaka North City Corporation let a business conglomerate build the bridge as part of the company's social corporate responsibility. No tender was floated for the work, but DNCC monitored the project, according to its officials.

In less than two years, the bridge is having to undergo further work.

The footbridge was completed in the end of August 2019. However, a week later, it had to be closed, apparently due to the sheer volume of users.

According to locals, the situation was so bad that people had to wait for 10-15 minutes to get on the 95-foot footbridge and get to the other side. Due to the overloading, the bridge literally shook, they said, adding that it also sparked complaints and criticisms on social media.

Asked about the situation, DNCC superintendent engineer Arifur Rahman had told The Daily Star a year back

that they closed it as they needed to do some paint job and once escalators were installed on both sides of the footbridge by DNCC, the problem will be solved. He said there was no other reason for them to close the bridge. Meanwhile, the road median was kept open for people to cross the road.

DNCC set up escalators on both sides of the bridge last year. However, the 'charitable' work done by the first contractor proved to be inadequate, as DNCC had to contract another company to fix up quite a few issues.

Maisha Construction (Pvt) Ltd started the task of retrofitting the bridge last year, after getting the work tender from DNCC, said its officials.

A sign was also put up, which said the project -- "Retrofitting Works of Abrar Footover Bridge at Pragati Sarani Under DNCC" -- is ongoing, and the work duration was from 20-9-2020 to 9-3-2021. A week after the deadline, the work is still ongoing.

But there is a new problem now. According to construction officials, when the escalator is turned on, the bridge starts shaking.

"It has been only one year and within this time, the bridge needed to go through renovation work again. This shows how the bridge was built in the first place!"

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ABRAR MURDER CASE

22 accused claim innocence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two accused in Abrar Fahad murder case yesterday claimed innocence and demanded justice, after a Dhaka tribunal read out the charges from statements of 45 prosecution witnesses.

Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 recorded their self-defence statements for over two hours.

After recording their statements, the judge fixed March 31 for the defence witnesses.

During yesterday's hearing, 22 accused, who are now behind bars, were produced before the tribunal.

Earlier, the tribunal recorded 46 prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case.

The same tribunal on September 15 last year framed charges against all 25 accused in the case.

On October 7, 2019, Abrar, a second-year student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet),

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SHEIKH RUSSEL ECO PARK, RANGUNIA

150 trees felled in a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 150 trees have been felled at Sheikh Russel Aviary and Eco Park in Rangunia upazila of Chattogram, which remains abuzz with people and is guarded round the clock by dozens of forest staff.

Yet, loggers managed to fell the trees and take the timber away right under the nose of forest staff, from an area situated about one kilometre from the park's entrance. The trees, most of them teak and acacia, were situated across 20 acres of land. The stumps of the felled trees now lie strewn among other smaller trees in the area.

Inside sources say the loggers have been felling the trees for about a month.

Hasibur Rahman, forest guard of the park who lives in barrack no-6 in the park, told The Daily Star that the area from where the trees were felled is a "remote place", which makes it difficult for them to look after the area.

He alleged that Danu Mia, chairman of Hosnabad Union Parishad and his son Sekandar Islam had played the key role in felling the trees as they were trying to grab the teak for long.

Hasibur said that portion of the eco park is yet to be walled off, so loggers took the chance to fell

the trees.

Forest department sources said officials found 150 stumps on Saturday.

Md Shafikul Islam, divisional forest officer (DFO) of Chattogram South Forest Division told The Daily Star that they seized the logs and will file a case regarding the felling. "A section of people previously attempted to fell the trees, as far as I remember," he said.

"We assume those people got to the trees. No matter who was involved in this, they will be brought to book. We will investigate whether there is any negligence on the part our staff. If we find any, they will be punished," added Shafikul.

Sekandar Islam, who is being accused of felling the trees, told The Daily Star that those trees were planted by them with the forest department's permission over eight years ago. "It was part of a social forestation initiative. The land was later declared part of the eco park in 2013," he explained.

"We planted the trees years ago and sought permission to cut the trees from forest department. But they did not allow it. We are the people who informed the forest official of the tree felling. If they now accuse us, that is unfortunate for us," said Sekandar.

SC clears way to shut down illegal brick kilns in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court directive that asked the government authorities to shut down all brick kilns without valid licenses in Chattogram.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order rejecting a petition filed by the owners of 18 brick kilns, seeking a stay on the HC directive.

Newly-elected president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and senior lawyer Abdul Matin Khasru, who appeared for the brick kiln owners, told the court that his clients have invested crores of taka for running the brick kilns where thousands of people are working.

If the brickfields shut down, they will face huge losses, the lawyer said. Lawyer Matin Khasru prayed to the Appellate Division to stay the HC order and allow his clients to operate for the next two months.

Writ petitioner's lawyer Manzil Murshid opposed the petition saying that brick kilns, which have no valid license, cannot run as per the provisions of relevant laws.

The owners of brick kilns have moved several petitions before this court earlier to stop shutting down their operations in Chattogram.

Manzil Murshid told The Daily Star that, following the apex court order, there is no bar to shut down the brick kilns running illegally.

The local administration has started shutting down the illegal brick kilns following the HC's January 31 order, he added.

Following a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC on January 31, directed authorities concerned of the government to immediately shut down all the illegal brick kilns in Chattogram and submit a report after complying with the directive to it.



A sign by a canal at the capital's Hazaribagh tells residents not to dump waste into the waterbody, as directed by Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, otherwise legal action would be taken. Incassant dumping of waste has blocked the many canals of the city, and now authorities are trying to bring the waterways back to life. This photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

KIDNAP OF MADRASA BOY

Twin brothers arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested two twin brothers for allegedly kidnapping a madrasa boy and realising ransom from his father in the port city's Bakalia area early yesterday.

The arrestees are Jisan Uddin Rokon and Jiam Uddin Arman (21).

They were arrested from Maijartek, said Assistant Commissioner (AC) (Chawkbazar Zone) Raisul Islam of CMP to The Daily Star.

"Before their arrest, police rescued the victim Iqbal Hasan (13) in the city," he said. Bakalia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ruhul Amin said, "Iqbal is a student of Madam Bibir Hat Hafizia Madrasa in Sitakunda. He came to Bakalia to board a bus to go to his Cox's Bazar residence."

"The twins lured the boy with a job in Bakalia, and took him to a secure place. The duo later phoned victim's father and asked him to pay Tk 40,000," said the OC.

"The boy's father gave them Tk 9,000 through Nagad but the accused did not release the boy. The father informed police, and we traced their location," he said.

Following police movement, the kidnappers freed the boy to avoid arrest. AC Raisul said. "The boy has identified the criminals," he added.