

## Why inmates on trial in condemned cell

HC asks authorities  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of keeping convicts who got the death penalty in condemned cells before their cases are finally disposed of by the High Court.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why Regulation 980 of Bangladesh Jail Code, which allows such use of condemned cells, should not be declared unconstitutional.

The inspector general of prisons was ordered to submit to the court in six months a report on the number of convicts in condemned cells, and the facilities available in the death rows across the country.

Regulation 980 says, “Every prisoner sentenced to death shall, from the date of his sentence, and without waiting for the sentence to be confirmed by the High Court Division, be confined in some safe place, a cell if possible, within the jail, apart from all other prisoners.

“The cell or room in which a convict condemned to death is confined shall invariably, before he is placed in it, be examined by the Jailor, who shall satisfy himself of its fitness and safety, and shall record the result of the examination in his report book.”

Secretaries to the ministries of home and law, inspector general of police and inspector general of prisons are respondents to the rule issued in response to a writ petition filed in September last year by three convicts who urged the HC to order prison authorities to transfer them to regular cells from the death row.

The bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Ahmed Soheli issued the rule and passed the order.

At yesterday’s hearing, SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



CNG drivers wait in line at a gas station in the capital’s Shewrapara yesterday afternoon. Due to Ramadan timings and the low pressure of gas, the drivers say they have to wait three to four hours to refuel their vehicles. This slashes their running time as vehicle owners give them a certain number of hours per day.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## ‘Act immediately’ on Russia

Zelensky tells UN; Moscow accuses Kyiv of ‘staging’ new footage of dead civilians

AGENCIES

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky challenged the United Nations to “act immediately” or “dissolve yourself altogether” during a blistering address in which he showed a harrowing video of dead bodies – including children – he said were victims of Russian atrocities.

Likening Russia’s actions in Ukrainian cities such as Bucha to violence carried out by “terrorists” such as the Islamic State group, Zelensky called on the UN Security Council – which aims to ensure international peace and security – to expel Russia “so it cannot block decisions about its own aggression, its own war.”

Russia, as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, has a veto, which it has repeatedly wielded to block resolutions and negotiations on the global stage.

“If there is no alternative and no option, then the next option would be dissolve yourself altogether,” Zelensky continued.

The United Nations could be “simply closed,” he said via video link. “Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to close the UN? And the time of international law is gone? If your answer is no, then you need to act immediately.”

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres opened the meeting by warning of the global fallout from the conflict, with soaring food, energy and fertilizer prices affecting up to 1.2 billion people in 74 countries.

“The war in Ukraine must stop – now,” Guterres told the Council, after calling it “one of the greatest challenges ever to the international order.”

“We need serious negotiations for peace, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter,” he said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday said the killing of Ukrainians in Bucha was part of a deliberate campaign “to kill, to torture, to rape.”

“As this Russian tide is receding from parts of Ukraine, the world is seeing the death and destruction left in its wake,” he told reporters as he flew to Brussels.

US President Joe Biden has called for a “war crimes trial” over the alleged atrocities and Western officials have vowed new economic sanctions this week in response to the harrowing discoveries in Bucha and other towns near Kyiv.

Russia, however, accused Ukraine of staging new civilian deaths in a number of locations in an effort to pin the blame on Moscow, reports AFP.

The Russian defence ministry said yesterday that the Ukrainian military recorded a fake video that purported to show “peaceful civilians allegedly killed by the Russian armed forces”.

The video was made on Monday evening in the settlement of Moshchun some 20 kilometres northwest of Kyiv and was designed to be distributed through Western media, Moscow said.

Meanwhile, Italy, Spain and Denmark joined EU allies yesterday in expelling Russian diplomats amid increasing outrage over the Ukraine conflict, with around 150 sent home in the last 48 hours.

The expulsions – many for alleged spying – follow international condemnation of killings in the town of Bucha, near Kyiv.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday that the mass expulsions of its diplomats was “a short-sighted move”.



## Commerce minister under fire in JS

FROM PAGE 1  
THEIR WOES.

**OUTCRY IN JS**  
Fazlur asked why the commerce minister and his ministry couldn’t control the syndicates that are raising prices of essentials almost all the time.

Whenever the minister tried to bring down the prices of essentials by reducing VAT, the move failed to bear fruit, he said.

“It was reported in newspapers today [yesterday] that he [the commerce minister] went to a kitchen market yesterday [Monday] and bought five kg onion for Tk 28 a kg.

“If the minister makes announcements before going to kitchen markets, people will get to buy essentials at lower prices from those markets,” Fazlur said in a veiled dig at the minister.

JP lawmaker Shameem Haider Patwari said, “People are being forced to compromise on food quality and nutrition due to the price hike.”

Mentioning that many neighbourhoods in the capital are suffering from a severe gas crisis, BNP MP Harunur Rashid said prices of gas, oil and almost all essentials have gone up and the government has

“totally failed”.

Questions have been raised as to whether businesspeople are accumulating huge wealth by becoming public representatives, he said.

“The government has to take visible steps instead of blaming BNP unreasonably for the price hike.”

Rumeen Farhana, BNP MP from a seat reserved for women, said the country recently saw an uproar over the rise in edible oil prices.

“In 15 days, a syndicate looted Tk 1,000 crore. The government itself is the syndicate. There is no difference between the government and the

syndicate.”

Gonoforum MP Mokabbir Khan said the Russia-Ukraine war should not be used as a pretext for increasing commodity prices. The syndicates had increased the price and looted money from the people even before the war had begun.

“When a businessman becomes the commerce minister, it is quite natural that the government would be business-friendly, not people-friendly,” he added.

About the price hike of edible oil, Tipu Munshi pointed out that he had never said its price went up because of the war.

“The price of edible oil is fixed every month. Now, its price is on the rise in the global market.”

He told the House that the government does not control businesses, rather it assists the businesspeople.

Pointing to the opposition MPs’ remarks regarding the government’s failure to control the syndicates, the minister said those who are involved in the syndicates are not in politics, and they are not lawmakers.

“The government is trying... The prime minister is constantly monitoring the situation,” he added.

## No germs in Wasa water!

FROM PAGE 1  
challenging for Wasa to provide safe drinking water to a population increasing day by day.

“We did not get any germs or E. coli in the water [that are] harmful for the human body,” he claimed, adding that they tested water after collecting it from the source, pipeline and water tanks of houses.

He said they tested water of those areas based on the information from the icddr,b last month.

Experts, however, brushed off his claim.

“Such claims are baseless. Diarrhoea is a waterborne disease. If there are many patients in an area at a time, it has to be understood that a single source [of water] is causing the disease,” Dr Ahmed Abu Saleh, a professor of microbiology at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, icddr,b officials said they were receiving a majority of diarrhoea patients from 10 areas of the capital.

Those areas include Commissioner Road and Sutı Khalpur in Dholpur, Kazla Bridge School Goli and Gobindpur in Jatrabari, Mollapara and Foyedabad in Dakshinkhan, Baro Biga Mor in Badda, Rayer Bazar, and West Jurain Railgate near the Shyampur Bridge.

“Despite not finding harmful germs, we have

directed to increase the amount of chlorine in the water in those areas to destroy the germs, if any,” Taqsem told reporters.

While referring to the bad smell, he said it was due to severe pollution of the Shitalakkhya river, which needs to be pre-treated before it is treated at Sayedabad Treatment Plant.

He claimed, “Ninety-five percent of Wasa’s supply water is pure. But in five to eight percent areas, water sometimes becomes contaminated due to leakage of old pipelines.

“We repair those pipes after getting complaints. When a portion of a pipeline leaks, then, for instance, contaminated water enters at least 10 houses,” he said.

He said water becomes contaminated in three ways – at source, in the supply line and in overhead tanks and water reservoirs of households.

“As we do not know where the five percent water is contaminated, we are advising everyone to boil the supply water before drinking,” Taqsem said.

On March 16 this year, the number of diarrhoea patients admitted at the icddr,b per day surpassed the 1,000-mark for the first time in the past 60 years. In the past week till Monday, an average of 8,986 diarrhoea patients were admitted there per day.

Earlier on April 20, 2019, Taqsem boasted that Wasa water “is 100 percent pure” while also admitting that sometimes he himself boils the water at his home.

“I fail to understand why people would burn gas to boil supply water that is 100 percent pure and safe,” Taqsem A Khan told a press conference, organised to contest a Transparency International Bangladesh report that painted a dismal picture of Wasa water.

On April 17, the TIB published its year-long study, which found that 91 percent Wasa subscribers have to boil the supply water to make it drinkable and, in the process, they burn gas worth Tk 332 crore a year.

Findings also show that nearly 45 percent subscribers do not get the desired amount of water while about 35 percent complain of poor-quality water throughout the year.

Wasa has around 8,000-km of supply lines – around 3,000 km of which consist of derelict 150-year-old pipes – for around 3.9 lakh connections in its 360 square-kilometre service area. It can produce 270 to 275 crore litres of water daily. Of this, 34 percent is surface water with five water treatment plants and the rest is extracted from underground with 906 deep tube wells, according to an official of Wasa.

## Trade Organisation Bill passed by voice vote in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Trade Organisation Bill 2022, aiming to allow foreign traders to form joint-trade bodies in Bangladesh, was passed by voice vote in parliament yesterday.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi placed the bill which will replace the Trade Organisations Ordinance 1961.

The draft law stated that some legal bases have been laid down for women entrepreneurs in trade organisations through licensing.

A provision has been made for a joint chamber of commerce and industry (between countries) and a chamber of commerce and industry alliance.

RANGPUR-DHAKA ROUTE

## Drivers’ work abstention causes passengers’ hardship

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Drivers, helpers and supervisors of several inter-city bus operators on the Rangpur-Dhaka route observed a daylong work abstention over non-payment of wages yesterday, causing services to be suspended and resulting in hardship for passengers.

The agitating workers – including drivers, helpers and supervisors – told journalists that their leaders in Dhaka are supposed to hold a meeting with owners to settle the matter.

Sohel Rana, a helper of Shyamoli Paribahan, in Rangpur said workers of several operators started the abstention on Tuesday morning as they are not paid wages regularly.

MA Majid, the general secretary of the Rangpur unit of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, said he was unaware of the work abstention.

## 60-year-old dies after being run over by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A 60-year-old woman died after falling under the wheels of a train in Dinaipur’s Birampur upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was Mazeda Begum, 60, wife of Mozammel Hossain of Uttar Doudpur village under the upazila.

Rafiq Chowdhury, stationmaster of Birampur Railway Station, said the woman was walking near the railroad close to the platform when the inter-city Kurigram Express hit the woman, leaving her dead on the spot.

Police handed the body to family members, said the stationmaster.