

Call it ‘Discrimination Elimination Bill’

Say civil society members on proposed Anti-Discriminatory Bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed Anti-Discriminatory Bill should be named as “Discrimination Elimination Bill” and some changes must be brought to it in terming the transgender and Dalit community to uphold their dignity, said civil society members yesterday.

They made the recommendations at a seminar titled “Review and Recommendations on Proposed Anti-Discriminatory Bill” held at Cirdap auditorium yesterday.

They observed that properly defining the Dalit community and the term “untouchability”, and replacing “third gender” with “gender diverse community” in the draft law would be better accepted.

Uttam Kumar Bhakto, general secretary of Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Right Movement, said, “Discrimination is a reality in every sphere of society for us and the law has sparked hope among us. We hope the government will execute the law-keeping provision for punishment in case of any violation.”

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said in Bangladesh, there is a culture of not implementing law. The task does not end

with the formulation of law but with the execution.

“But we have to keep in mind that we must change our mindset before the law’s implementation. The discrimination will exist if we don’t have the mentality of extending our friendly gesture towards others,” she observed.

Joya Sikdar, executive director of Somporker Noya Sethu, said, “If we

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identify transgender as the third gender, then a question naturally arises who is the first and second gender.”

“Representation from the indigenous community must be ensured in the national level committee to be formed for implementing the law,” said Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adibasi Forum.

On April 5, the law minister submitted the draft law to parliament, which was later sent to the Parliamentary Standing

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On Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, the driver of a small truck, going the wrong way, signals large vehicles to slow down, as he tries to take a shortcut to the road leading towards Dhaka. With the dividers on the road missing, the driver is able to pull this illegal manoeuvre, while endangering his life as well as others’ in the process. This photo was taken from Gazipur’s Hajirpukur area recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Crisis created to make quick money

Says Fakhrul on rice, food grains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday alleged that an artificial crisis over rice and food grains has been created to raise prices in the market and make quick money, adding that the government is playing a role in this. “The problem with the present government is that they want to make profits from everything, even from essential food items, illegitimately,” Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party, said.

Talking to reporters in front of a hospital in the city, he said the famine Bangladesh faced in 1974 was caused by misrule and corruption, not by the food crisis. “In the same way, they are now unjustly raising the prices after stockpiling the food grains. They are raising the prices in the market by creating an artificial crisis.”

Fakhrul went to Health Aid Diagnostic and Hospital in Basabo area to visit JCD leaders, who were seriously injured in attacks by BCL members on May 24 at Dhaka University.

PRAYER
TIMING

JUNE 3

Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-30	5-00	6-45	8-15
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-50	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Running behind schedule

Two rail projects worth Tk 5,000cr delayed; BR finally selects consultants for study, design

PROJECT 1	PROJECT 2
Building double-rail line along existing single track from Khulna to Darshana	Turning 67km of metre-gauge lines into dual-gauge from Parbatipur to Kaunia
Cost Tk 3,506.75cr	Cost Tk 1,683cr
STUP-Aarvee-EDC to do consultancy work for Tk 87cr	Aarvee-STUP-EDC to do consultancy work for Tk 75cr
Reason for delay: Approval process from lender took too long; pandemic	

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway (BR) took up two projects worth Tk 5,187 crore in early 2018 to expand two railway lines, for boosting internal and inter-country rail communication.

Physical works of the projects – to be implemented with Indian lines of credit (LoC) – have not started yet, although the deadline is only seven months away.

However, after many delays, the authorities have been able to select the consultants to conduct the feasibility study, make detailed designs and do other works.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase on April 20 approved the purchase proposal for engaging consultant firms from India, and the project authorities have already issued notification of award to the firms on May 17, said sources.

“We hope to sign contracts with the consultants within a month and start the works,” Monirul Islam Firoz, BR chief engineer (west zone), told this correspondent yesterday.

However, the deadline would still need to be extended for two or three years. Costs are also likely to increase, said BR sources.

BR is currently implementing seven projects with Indian LoCs and grants. All of them are currently running behind schedule.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, who is currently visiting India, requested his Indian counterpart to ease the project billings on Wednesday.

The state-run transport agency is currently implementing 40 projects involving Tk 1,42,407 crore, with joint funding from the government, Asian Development Bank, India, China, Japan and Korea, BR documents show.

Twenty-six of the projects had to be revised – 19 of them last fiscal year – mainly due to problems over land acquisition, unavailability of funds, shortage of required manpower, poorly done feasibility studies and Covid-19 pandemic, BR sources said.

THE 2 PROJECTS

The government in May 2018 approved a project to build another line along the existing single track from Khulna to Darshana at a cost of Tk 3,506.75 crore. India will provide 77 percent of the cost as loan.

The project aims to increase transportability through BR’s Dhaka-Khulna and Khulna-Chilahati corridors. The existing Khulna-Darshana section of Dhaka-Khulna corridor is a single broad-gauge line. Under the project, the section will be upgraded to a double line by installing a 126.25-km broad gauge track with a 14.40-km loop line.

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Simplifying visa process for tourists

Says state minister for civil aviation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Work is underway to simplify the visa process to attract foreign tourists to Bangladesh, State Minister for Civil Aviation Md Mahub Ali said yesterday.

He said this while speaking as chief guest at the inaugural programme of the 17th International Tourism Fair titled “Triplover Dhaka Travel Mart-2022” at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

“We will have a quick inter-ministerial meeting with the Ministry of Home Affairs in this regard. We will also invite all the stakeholders related to the tourism sector there,” said Mahub Ali. About bringing cruise ships into the country, he said, “I will talk to the home minister so that we can bring cruise ships plying on international routes to Bangladesh quickly.”

“We want foreigners on cruise ships to be able to complete immigration onboard so that they can visit the tourist attractions in the country without any hindrance,” he added.

Regarding the tourism sector, he said, there are many historical, religious and archaeological monuments and haors in Bangladesh.

“A tourism master plan is being prepared for the planned and integrated development of these tourist attractions,” he said.

2 held for trying to smuggle \$230,000 out of country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials detained two persons, including a Turkish citizen, while they were trying to smuggle out \$230,000 at Dhaka airport on Wednesday night.

The detainees are Mahmuda Feroz, an US-bound Bangladeshi national, and Mehmet Remzi, a Turkish citizen going to his country, said Harun or Rashid, assistant revenue officer of Customs.

The customs officials, with the help of airport security officials, first detained Mahmuda from boarding gate area around 6:30pm as she was trying to board an Emirates flight. They recovered \$30,500 from her.

Three hours later, officials detained Mehmet as he was trying to board an Istanbul-bound flight of Turkish Airlines around 9:30pm. They recovered USD 200,000 from his possession.

STOCKHOLM+50 CONFCE Bangladesh seeks support to combat climate change

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has highlighted the plights of people displaced by the impacts of climate change and the need for addressing their vulnerabilities, when he met his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde in Stockholm. Momen is attending the two-day global Stockholm+50 conference on June 2-3 that is being joined by world leaders and representatives from government, business, international organisations, civil society and youth.

Co-hosted by Sweden and Kenya, Stockholm+50 is taking place under the theme “A healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity.”

During his meeting with Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, they agreed to strengthen and expand cooperation to combat climate change.

Four arrested for duping job seekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They used to impersonate former police officers and target job-seekers, promising employment at government institutions.

To gain credibility, the leader of the racket used to rent a car and claim it as his own. He then visited government offices along with the job-seekers.

First, the gang members assured that they would take money only after the job is confirmed. But on that night before the recruitment test, they pressurised job-seekers to pay in advance, saying that otherwise they might not get the job.

Falling into the trap, many gave them money to secure jobs. But later, they found out that they got cheated.

Rab claimed to have arrested four fraudsters, including the leader, of such a racket in Dhaka on Tuesday night.

“For the last five years, the racket cheated at least 50 job-seekers and their guardians, and pocketed around Tk 2 crore,” Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed told a press briefing at his office in Tikatuli recently.

The arrestees are Helal Uddin (51), leader of the racket, Mofizul Islam alias Lebu (47), Khandaker Maruf (37) and Abdul Quader alias Raju (29).

‘Quality healthcare not possible without specialist doctors’ Says health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is not possible to provide quality healthcare service to people without specialist doctors, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

“We have developed enough infrastructures, but there is a lack of doctors and nurses,” Zahid Maleque said while addressing an event marking the inauguration of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Dhaka.

The minister said this a day after the government regularised a total of 2,001 doctors around 10 years since their appointment under the health directorate on an ad hoc basis. To tackle the shortage of human resources, the ministry appointed a total of 4,133 doctors in 2010-11 fiscal, who were deprived of promotion since appointment.

At yesterday’s event, the minister said the government will now work on appointing new human resources in the health sector. He said there is sufficient medical equipment in the hospitals. “However, those are not repaired once they go dysfunctional. We will now concentrate on this matter.”



People gather around an elephant -- used by extortionists to extract money from different shops and establishments in the city. The owner of the mammal usually keeps it shackled in Mirpur’s Diabari area when he is away. Locals seem to have grown a soft spot for the animal, feeding it vegetables and fruits from time to time.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON