

Next JS session to begin Aug 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 19th session of the 11th Jatiya Sangsad will begin on August 28.

The House will go into sitting at 5:00pm on this day.

Parliament secretariat said this in a press release yesterday. This will be the fourth session of this year.

President Abdul Hamid convened the session.

The President convened this session exercising his power bestowed upon him as per the Article 72 (Clause 1) of the Constitution.

Duration of the 19th session is likely to be a short one, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

On the first sitting, the parliament will elect a deputy speaker since existing deputy speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah has passed away recently.

The last session of parliament, which was also the budget session of this year, was prorogued on June 30.

Govt to amend children act soon: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will take necessary measures to amend the existing laws and policies regarding children, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

He said this while attending a panel discussion, organised by World Vision Bangladesh.

The minister also said he will advocate for establishing a separate directorate for children in consultation with the finance and public administration ministries.

“The parliamentary caucus on child rights will initiate the discussion with all relevant ministries and parliament members to amend laws and policies for the best interest of the children,” said lawmaker Shamsul Hoque Tuku, chairman of the parliamentary caucus.

World Vision made some recommendations over the existing child laws, which include strengthening the monitoring system to prevent child marriage, enacting rules for the Children Act 2013, establishing child friendly courts in every district and setting up a separate directorate for children.

Lawmaker Shamim Haider Patwary and Tony Michael Gomes, director of communications and Advocacy of World Vision Bangladesh, were present.

Legal notice seeks Tk 10cr compensation for Joj Miah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A legal notice was served yesterday on the authorities concerned seeking Tk 10 crore as compensation for Md Jalal, who had been branded as Joj Miah in connection with the August 21 grenade attack, for violating his fundamental rights.

Supreme Court lawyers Humayun Kabir Pallob and Mohammad Kawsar sent the legal notice to 11 persons -- including former BNP state minister for home affairs Md Lutozzaman Babar -- saying that he (Jalal) was wrongfully arrested and kept in custody for four years.

They requested the government to form an inquiry committee to fix the liabilities for violating the fundamental rights of Md Jalal, a man from Noakhali's Senbagh, who was wrongfully arrested on June 10, 2005.



Workers busy at work at the Nimal project site of the much-awaited four-lane, 16-km elevated expressway in the port city -- which stretches from Lalkhan Bazar all the way to Patenga.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Unauthorised, unprotected

Most level crossings in Brahmanbaria, Narail without gates or gatemen

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Fifty-seven of the 79 level crossings on the 73km rail track in Brahmanbaria pose a serious risk of accidents as those are without any gatemen or arrangement for stopping the movement of vehicles and pedestrians during the passage of trains.

The situation is similar in Narail as 38 out of 46 crossings on the 41km rail track stand unprotected.

Besides, 24 more crossings in these two districts are unauthorised and established without the knowledge of the railway authorities.

Locals say these crossings are practically death traps, where accidents are frequent.

On June 4, four passengers of a pick-up van were killed after a train ran over them at Hasnabad Bazar railway crossing near Amirganj railway station in Narsingdi.

According to Railway Police, at least 11 people have been killed in railway crossings at Brahmanbaria and Narail in recent years.

After visiting Brahmanbaria's Kachhait, Bhadeshwara, Machhihata, Paghachong and Chinair areas, this correspondent saw no gatemen at any of the crossings.

Seeking anonymity, a railway official said most of the roads with unprotected railway crossings are under the Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED).

But LGED does not take any initiative for the safety of these crossings, he claimed.

The Railway Act states that any organisations building roads over rail tracks need to take prior permission from Bangladesh Railway.

The institutions concerned will also have to bear the expenses of setting up gates and wages of at least three gatekeepers and the



cost of signal management. The approval of the crossing is given from the nearest railway station after railway engineers inspect the site.

But the railway official said people in charge of building roads on both sides of a rail line often bypass the railway authorities to reduce bureaucratic delays and additional expenses.

According to Akhaura Railway Junction Station, only 22 of the 79 level crossings in the Dhaka-Chattogram and Sylhet routes are authorised by Bangladesh Railway.

Al-Aminul Haque Pavel, chairman of Machihata Union Parishad of Brahmanbaria Sadar, said the two rail crossings near Paghachong railway station are unauthorised and have no gatekeepers.

Although students of several schools,

colleges and residents travel through this crossing risking their lives, the authorities are yet to take any action, he added.

He also claimed that a written application sent to the railways ministry on the issue has fallen on the deaf ears of the concerned officials.

Stressing the importance of gatemen, shopkeeper Tajul Islam of Akhaura said, “There was a major accident at Gangasagar rail gate in 1997. Five people lost their lives in that accident. After that, gatekeepers were appointed here. Since then the number of accidents has reduced.”

Akhaura Railway Junction senior assistant engineer (roads) Monirul Islam said, “There is already a shortage of manpower in the railways. It is impossible to appoint gateman

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SAFE LEVEL CROSSINGS BR, LGED asked to give suggestions by September 30

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As more and more people are losing their lives on unprotected level crossings, Bangladesh Railway and Local Government Engineering Department have been asked to complete an ongoing joint survey and submit a report by the end of next month.

The directive came from a meeting of the railways ministry arranged yesterday at Railway Bhaban, with Rail Secretary Humayun Kabir in the chair and in presence of BR and LGED representatives.

The two state agencies are conducting a survey to give recommendations for making level crossings safer. The survey, started a few months back, is now at the final stage, officials said.

They will state where underpasses or overpasses would have to be built, where level crossing barriers need to be installed, and which unauthorised level crossings should be closed.

On the basis of the report, LGED, which has built the highest number of unauthorised level crossings, will take a project for implementing the recommendations, they said.

The development came when accidents at unprotected level crossings continue to claim lives, as over 80 percent of the crossings under the country's railway network remain either unauthorised or unmanned.

The issues came to the fore again after 11 people died as a train hit a microbus at a level crossing in Chattogram's Mirsharai upazila on July 29. Two more succumbed to injuries later.

According to Road Safety Foundation, this year, at least 74 people were killed in 35 rail related accidents at level crossings until July 29. The number is much higher than that of the last two years.

Out of 1,412 authorised level crossings, 964 are unmanned, according to a document of BR shared at an inter-ministerial meeting last year.

At least nine government organisations are

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CHEMICALLY-TAINTED PINEAPPLES

The farmers' perspective

MIRZA SHAKIL

Despite being delicious, pineapples grown in Tangail's Madhupur upazila have grabbed media headlines for all the wrong reasons in the last few years.

They have gotten a reputation of being tainted with chemicals, as farmers use excessive hormones to grow bigger fruits and ripe them ahead of time.

The pineapple growers have been bashed for indulging in such an immoral act for some extra cash, but their side of the story is rarely featured.

But when this newspaper contacted some pineapple farmers, they claimed that they have no choice but to use chemicals, as wholesalers don't want to buy naturally ripened fruits since they start rotting en route to the selling destination.

However, chemically treated fruits stay fresh for a few days, a must for vendors.

“What can we do if wholesalers don't want to buy naturally ripened pineapples?” said Saiful Islam, a farmer from Madhupur's Beribaid.

“When these fruits do ripe naturally, the timing is horrible since we can't find buyers then,” he said.

So, we ripen a specific amount of fruits by using chemicals for getting marketers at the right price,” Saiful added.

Farmer Shamsul Islam of Aushnara in Madhupur said he wouldn't use chemicals if he got the right price for naturally ripened fruits.

“We incur losses due to lack of proper marketing facilities. The middlemen eat up the profit. The

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Pineapple growers of Madhupur claimed that they have no choice but to use chemicals, as wholesalers don't want to buy naturally ripened fruits since they start rotting en route to the selling destination. Due to this reason, farmers have been demanding food processing industries to facilitate storage and transportation.

PHOTO: STAR

CONTEMPT OF COURT HC summons Kushtia DC, SP, Brac Bank's MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned Kushtia Deputy Commissioner Mohamamd Saidul Islam and Superintendent of Police Md Khairul Alam, Brac Bank Limited's Managing Director Selim RF Hussain and two others, directing them to appear before it on August 21 for selling properties worth Tk 123 crore at a price of Tk 15 core through an auction violating a stay order.

The two are Abdur Rashid, a businessman who has purchased the properties, and OC Md Sabirul Alam of Kushtia Sadar Police Station.

The bench of Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman and Justice AKM Rabiul Hassan issued the order and a rule following a petition filed by Shafiqul Islam, proprietor of Biswas Traders, VIP Rice Mill and

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