

Major reshuffle
in the judiciary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday brought a major reshuffle in the judiciary by promoting and transferring a total of 132 lower court judges.

It promoted 112 joint district and sessions judges to the posts of additional district and sessions judges and also transferred 19 additional district and sessions and one joint district and sessions judge.

The law ministry issued three separate notifications to this effect, mentioning the promotions and transfer of subordinate court judges were made in consultation with the Supreme Court.

In the notifications, the promoted and transferred additional district and sessions judges were requested to join their new work places after vesting their responsibilities to their superior authorities concerned on September 28.

Law Minister Anisul Huq could not be reached for his comments on this issue as he is now abroad.



Covering their faces, two friends waded through a cloud of dust while crossing the Demra road. Dhaka continues to top the list of cities with the worst air quality. With no sustainable measures being taken by the authorities concerned, the capital's residents keep on suffering from various health hazards due to this menace. This photo was taken in Jatrabari area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Adopt price control
mechanism

Speakers urge govt at public
meeting on SDG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should take measures for the marginalised people's development for sustainable food security, said speakers yesterday.

They also suggested the government adopt a price control mechanism as the ongoing price hike will push people further into poverty.

They were speaking at a public meeting on Sustainable Development Goals.

Wave Foundation and Noakhali Rural Development Society – NRDS jointly organised the meeting to mark “The Global Week to #Act4SDGs” at the capital's Cirdap.

People from marginalised communities, belonging to different professions, pointed out their miseries and problems at the meeting.

President of Kendrio Krishak Moitri Munir Uddin said it is not possible to ensure sustainable development without prioritising marginalised farmers. “Food security will not be ensured if marginalised farmers' situation does not improve,” he said, underscoring the need for building family-based agro farms.

He also urged the government to provide loans at low-interest rates and simple conditions so that farmers will be encouraged to grow food.

Pointing out their sufferings, Bimal Rabidas, a member of an indigenous community in Bogura, said people of their community do not get any kind of support from the government.

“During the pandemic, we became jobless. We do not get any from the government despite ensuring our votes,” said Bimal, a cobbler by profession.

Fatema Begum from Noakhali's Subarnachar, said people, women in particular suffer a lot due to the lack of a community clinic in their area.

Dr Azreen Karim, research fellow, Bangladesh Institute

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A CURIOUS GIFT!

JS body members receive free phones from telecom
ministry; TIB terms it conflict of interest

RASHIDUL HASAN

In a show of conflict of interest, members of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology yesterday received mobile handsets produced in Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City.

The information and communication technology division of the ministry gave each lawmaker of the parliamentary watchdog a “high-quality” handset worth Tk 14,000 for free, according to the meeting of the JS body.

The meeting was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

In the previous meeting, Nurul Amin, a member of the JS body, said the gadgets manufactured in Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City are produced under the ministry and their quality needs assessment.

The committee members were also promised the mobile phone sets. Later, State Minister for ICT division Zunaid Ahmed Palak said, Md Nurul Amin wanted to buy laptops and smartphones produced by the Telephone Shilpa Sangstha (TSS) at a fair price.

The junior minister mentioned that Nokia sets are being manufactured at the Hi-Tech Park, costing Tk 14,000 each and the sets manufactured in Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City will be bought and given as a gift to all committee members.

Minister of Post and Telecommunication Mustafa Jabbar said currently 15 mobile companies are producing mobile sets in Bangladesh to meet the demands of nearly 90 percent of

domestic customers. A portion of these phone sets are also being exported, he mentioned. He said arrangements will be made to provide mobile sets and laptops at minimum prices according to the needs of lawmakers.

It is a clear instance of conflict of interest which compromises the capacity of the standing committee to independently discharge their responsibilities. Questions can also be raised if and on what basis such expenses by the committee can be justified, and why phone sets need to be bought with taxpayers' money for highly-paid JS body members.

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN
TIB Executive Director

Later, in the meeting, it was decided that these high-quality Nokia sets will be bought and presented to all committee members. When asked, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman told this correspondent that it is a clear

instance of conflict of interest which compromises the capacity of the standing committee to independently discharge their responsibilities.

“Questions can also be raised if and on what basis such expenses by the committee can be justified, and why phone sets need to be bought with taxpayers' money for highly-paid JS body members,” he added.

FAILURE OF DOEL LAPTOP

In the meeting, Zunaid Ahmed Palak wanted to know the reasons for the failure of the “Doel” laptop production project of the Telephone Shilpa Sangstha.

The state minister said those responsible will be identified and punished after a proper investigation.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Doel project. “The pride which we took with that initiative is lost and we are embarrassed,” he said.

Agreeing with Palak, Mustafa Jabbar instructed the secretary of the ministry to take action in this regard, according to the meeting minutes.

The minutes were approved in the parliamentary committee's meeting held yesterday.

In 2011, state-owned TSS assembled the country's first laptop Doel, showing promises to deliver the device at an affordable price and help the government implement its digitisation agenda.

Hasina launched the laptop named after the country's national bird.

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None will boycott
polls over EVM

Hopes EC Alamgir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All registered political parties will participate in the next general elections if it is held through electronic voting machine, hoped Election Commissioner Md Alamgir.

Alamgir also said the Election Commission believes that no parties will boycott the polls protesting its decision to use EVM.

He made the comments yesterday after Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader a day before told a meeting in Chattogram that JP will not take part in any elections if EVM is used.

BNP and its allies have long been opposing EVM, saying that such devices will allow the ruling party to “steal votes”.

On August 23, EC took the decision to use EVM in up to 150 parliamentary seats in the next general election, although major opposition parties still have no confidence in the voting machine.

When asked whether the EC will take the responsibility if any party boycotts the polls, Alamgir said, “We believe, they will not do that.”

He said EVM is helpful for holding a peaceful election. If the commission had capacity, they would have used EVM in all 300 parliamentary constituencies.

Alamgir said EC is considering to prepare an election management app. Alongside the EC officials, people will be able to avail of the service using the app. It will have information about a map of the constituencies, voting centres, candidates and others.

A technical committee has been formed for this purpose, he added.

It's still about
controlling
citizens' data

TIB on new draft of Data
Protection Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh has stated that the new draft data protection act is still about controlling the data of the country's citizens.

It stated that if the government-regulated agency is given the duty to oversee the implementation of the law, it will create scope for abuse.

The draft law stated that a solely government-controlled agency with unbridled powers to implement the law will be in charge of the personal data of the citizens.

In a statement sent yesterday, TIB feared that the agency will be similar to the Digital Security Agency, which was created as a specialised agency to ensure digital security, and “whose role in surveillance and quashing differences of opinion is not unknown.”

TIB recommended that an independent commission be created to implement the data protection act, such that it is above government intervention.

“On one hand, the government is recommending that a new agency be set up, while on the other hand, the law gives exemptions to certain controllers for accessing personal data. The law also states that all sensitive personal data must be stored inside the physical boundaries of the nation.”

“It is clear that the government is ensuring their ability to access and conduct surveillance on citizens' data,” said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB in the statement.

They stated that the government is being

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A rare move in
investigation

Magistrate accompanying DB to South Africa
to record trafficking victim's statement

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Milon Hossain wanted to send his unemployed 21-year-old son Riaz abroad so that he could make a better living there. The father-son duo arranged with one Al Amin that he would send Riaz to South Africa in exchange for Tk 3 lakh.

Little did they know what awaited Riaz on the way.

In May last year, Riaz was trafficked to South Africa through five countries. Once he reached the destination, the traffickers held him hostage for a ransom.

The transnational syndicate released Riaz three months after receiving ransom worth Tk 6 lakh from his father on August 7, 2021.

Riaz's horrific trip to South Africa came to light after the Detective Branch (DB) of police started their investigation after Milon filed a case with Jatrabari Police Station on August 14, 2021, accusing three known and other unnamed members of the organised trafficking racket.

Meanwhile, sources said DB arrested four, including the three accused in the case – Nur Alam (45), Al Amin (30) and Ruhul Amin alias Chanchal (46), and Shafiul Alam Chowdhury (38).

DB also found that Riaz was first taken to Dubai and then to Nairobi. He was then handed over to a Kenyan human trafficker named Ezaz Ahmed.

From Nairobi, he was sent to Swaziland, now known as Eswatini. He had to make another trip to Mozambique, where he was handed over to a trafficker named Sayeed.

Sayeed took Riaz to a bordering area in South Africa and handed him over to a Pakistani member of the syndicate, named Amir.

Amir informed Riaz's father of his whereabouts and asked for a ransom. Milon then deposited Tk 40,000 to an account number that was sent to him via arrestee Nur Alam's phone.

They asked for an additional \$6,000, which Milon sent to Nur, who in turn sent the money to a Dubai-based Bangladeshi hundi trader Shah Alam. Later, Shah Alam deposited the amount to an account owned by one Zuned M Shivam.

After that, they freed Riaz in South Africa. DB contacted Lt Col T Moremi, an official of the kidnapping task team at National Crime Intelligence of South African Police Service, who informed them that a case was filed in this regard.

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‘We must celebrate books’

Razzaq Foundation's Grantha Alapan features Prof Azam's
Sangskritik Rajniti O Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is an absence of the type of education in the country that encourages people to involve in knowledge-based discussions, said eminent educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam.

“Such education was never in place in our country. It is absent till now,” he said while addressing an event at the capital's Bengal Shilpalaya.

Gyantapash Abdur Razzaq Foundation organised the event “Grantha Alapan” on Saturday featuring discussions on the book “Sangskritik Rajniti O Bangladesh” by Prof Mohammed Azam of Dhaka University's Bangla department. The book was published this year.

Chairing the event, Prof Manzoorul said the key criteria for the flourishing of education and culture is to ask questions and look for answers. He said at the societal



level, there is an absence of democratic practices in Bangladesh. “What is going on in the name of democracy in our country is rhetoric,” he said, adding, democratic practices must start from the family level.

Addressing the event, Prof Ahrar Ahmad, director general of the foundation, said a lack

of zeal for research and theory-based books among people could be visible at present in the country.

Referring to Bangla Academy statistics, he said during the latest Amar Ekushey book fair, as many as 3,461 new books were published.

However, he also mentioned that the academy has identified

only about 900 of those books as “quality publications”, and stressed the need for building reading habits among people.

“We must celebrate books,” Prof Ahrar said.

Discussing Prof Azam's book, Prof Sumon Rahman of media studies and journalism at University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh, said the author has strongly incorporated fragments of thoughts into a larger canvas in the book.

Speaking about his book, author Prof Azam said the best way to understand political culture is by going through cultural politics.

“These thoughts have encouraged me to write the book,” said Prof Azam.

“Grantha Alapan” is a new venture of the foundation, which will be held regularly. It aims to encourage critical thinking and create spaces for freedom of thought and speech, organisers said.