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GOVT JOBS 30pc quota for children of freedom fighters restored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared illegal the government decision that in 2018 cancelled the 30 percent quota for the freedom fighters' children in the civil service of ninth to 13th grades (first and second classes of government jobs).

The 30 percent quota for the freedom fighters' children has been restored following the HC verdict, Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman told The Daily Star.

He said the government may move an appeal before the Supreme Court challenging the HC verdict.

The bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu delivered the judgement following a petition filed by Ohidul Islam Tushar and six others, who are children of freedom fighters, challenging a circular issued by the Ministry of Public Administration on October 4, 2018 that cancelled the quota system.

Details of the HC verdict will be known when its full text is released.

Two held for killing child after rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police yesterday arrested two teenagers for raping and killing a three-year-old in Gazipur's Konabari upazila.

The arrestees, aged 16 and 14, are from Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila, said KM Ashraf Uddin, officer-in-charge of Konabari Police Station.

According to the victim's family, the child went missing on Tuesday.

Her body was found in a sack near a house in the upazila's Madhyapara area around 11:00am yesterday, the OC said.

The family filed a case with the police station.

The arrestees confessed to the crime during primary interrogation, the OC said.

Govt alone felled over 7 lakh trees last year

Says RDRC study



Sat Masjid Road, September last year.

FILE PHOTO

MD ABBAS

At a time when heatwaves and rise in temperatures have become a headache for the country, different government agencies felled over seven lakh trees across the country last year in the name of development work, according to a new study.

The study, titled "Logging off Plants in Bangladesh," presented statistics on tree felling from March 2023 to March 2024, conducted by the River and Delta Research Centre (RDRC), a research organisation.

The study report, unveiled yesterday, said a total of 7,46,465 trees were chopped down during this period.

In the report, the Forest Department was identified as the government agency that was behind the felling of most trees.

Additionally, 24 other government organisations were also named in the report for felling trees.

Apart from that, private organisations and influential people have also cut trees during this period.

According to the study report, the Chattogram district experienced the highest tree cutting, with 506,222 trees being felled, while the Rangpur district saw the least amount of tree felling.

A total of 1,081 trees were logged last year in Dhaka, meaning 83 trees per month and about 3 trees per day, said the report.

On average, approximately 88,190 trees were logged per month, amounting to

STUDY AT A GLANCE

Chattogram district experienced the highest tree cutting, with 506,222 trees being felled, while Rangpur district saw the least amount of tree felling.

A total of 1,081 trees were logged last year in Dhaka, meaning 83 trees per month and about 3 trees per day.

On average, approximately 88,190 trees were logged per month, amounting to around 2,902 trees per day over the last year, it added.

Meanwhile, the felling of 400,152 more trees is ongoing under different projects. The Teesta Irrigation Project in Nilphamari alone is the single largest contributor to tree felling, with 400,000 trees being cut down for its implementation, the report also said.

RDRC Chairman Mohammad Azaz, who led the research, said, "Though some projects are ongoing, this report took into account the newly reported tree-cutting figures."

However, experts said the actual number of felled trees would be three times the reported figures.

They added that there is no estimation of how many shrubs, small trees, and

biodiversity have been lost with these trees.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said these figures show the government's insensitivity towards protecting the environment and its slogan-based, so-called environmental protection initiatives.

"The government has purposefully prioritised development over the environment, which is completely unacceptable. The government does not make laws to prevent the felling of trees because many government projects involve extensive cutting down of trees," she said.

The government does not have the licence to cut trees in the name of development, she added.

"We must carry out development work while preserving trees and planting more to combat the effects of climate change," she said, advocating for strong laws to prevent the felling of trees.

She opined that it should be made compulsory to save trees while implementing development projects.

Amir Hosain Chowdhury, chief conservator of forests at Forest Department, said the department has marked 116,000 trees for cutting so far and has felled 86,000 trees under the social forest scheme.

"If we cut any trees, we plant more trees in their place. We have already signed a MoU with the Water Development Board to plant 71,000 trees once they allocate the land," he added.

'Girls are assets, not burden'

Speakers stress education, investment to eliminate early marriage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marrying off children at an early age is a waste of the country's most valuable asset, said Simeen Hussain, state minister for Women and Children Affairs, at a programme yesterday.

"If we invest in children, particularly girls, the returns will benefit the family, society, and the country," she said while inaugurating a joint Global Programme to End Child Marriage at a hotel in the capital.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh, in collaboration with UNFPA and Unicef, launched the third phase of the programme. "Eradicating child marriage is a keystone of our commitment to safeguarding the rights of children in Bangladesh," said the state minister.

"We commend the collaborative efforts of UNFPA and Unicef and affirm our commitment to working closely and effectively to implement the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage and roll out the Child Marriage Restraint Act."

Keya Khan, director general of the Department of Women Affairs, said the early marriage rate rose to a new level during the Covid-19 period; however, the government is not sitting idle.

"We have been working on identifying the reasons behind it and working on impactful solutions to reduce the rate," she added.

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Include women's unpaid care work in GDP calculation

Speakers tell MJF seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is high time to give economic recognition to women's unpaid care and domestic work, said speakers at an event yesterday.

Along with policymakers, women themselves must come forward to implement this, they said.

They made the remarks at the national women's conference titled "Role of Women's Rights-Based Organisations in Bringing Gender Equality," organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at the capital's Gulshan.

Speaking as chief guest, Sagulta Yasmin, lawmaker and chairperson of parliamentary standing committee on Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, emphasised the need to include unpaid care work in GDP calculation.

"The path of women's progress may never be easy; women themselves have to make their own safe roads," she said.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam chaired the conference. She highlighted the collective responsibility to protect women's rights.

"Underprivileged women, local organisations, government, and citizens must come forward to protect women's rights," she said in her welcome speech.

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Fate of 17,000 still uncertain

KL determined not to extend deadline despite Dhaka's requests

MD ABBAS

While Bangladesh wants to send the remaining aspirant migrant workers to Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur has said it will not extend the deadline for the entry of foreign workers.

Despite receiving clearance, around 17,000 aspiring migrants who failed to fly to Malaysia within the deadline are uncertain whether they will be able to go there.

"We stand by the deadline because we have 15 source countries, and we want to ensure uniformity in the application of this deadline," said Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Haznah Md Hashim.

She said this applies to all 15 source countries and is not specific to Bangladesh. "The state minister requested us to reconsider the deadline, and I will convey the message to Kuala Lumpur," she informed.

Regarding allegations from Bangladesh

Association for International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) that the Malaysian government issued e-visas on June 2 even after the deadline, Hashim said, "We cannot entertain any allegations without proof. So far, the entire Malaysian government, including those who issue visas, has adhered strictly to the deadline."

In response to a question about workers not getting jobs in Malaysia, she said, "This is something our government is looking into. I will not make any comments regarding it."

Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said they requested Malaysia to reconsider the deadline and are actively working on it.

"The investigation committee will determine why the workers could not go to Malaysia. For those who have BMET cards or e-visas, arrangements will be made to ensure they receive compensation," he said.

Most workers, who could not travel to

I paid Tk 5.30 lakh to the recruiting agencies and brokers, and now if the government provides only Tk 79,900 as the government fee, I will be destroyed.

Anisul Islam
An aspirant worker



Four teens pose for a selfie standing on a railway track, without having any bother about a train approaching through another track just beside them. Many others are also seen walking carelessly along the tracks. Such actions can lead to tragic accidents. The photo was taken near the Airport Railway Station recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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