

Abolish mobile court's power to impose jail sentence

Proposes reform commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Judicial Reform Commission has recommended abolishing the mobile court's power to impose jail sentences on people for committing offenses, saying that the imposition of imprisonment by such a court is contradictory to the constitution.

It also suggested keeping this court's jurisdiction to impose financial penalties intact and increasing the scope for judicial magistrate-run mobile courts instead of those conducted by executive magistrates.

Mobile courts are mainly conducted to ensure environmental protection, safe food supply, consumers' rights, price control, and similar public-related issues, so they have special popularity among people, according to the commission.

"A maximum of two years' imprisonment can be imposed through conducting a mobile court. In case of imposition of fine by mobile court, any amount of fine can be imposed within the limit prescribed in the law, which is recoverable immediately. However, if it is not realised immediately, a maximum of three months' imprisonment can be imposed."

"Imposition of imprisonment without giving proper opportunity to any person to get shelter of law is inconsistent with the fundamental rights recognised in Articles 32, 33 and 35 of the Constitution. So, it is necessary to abolish the power of the mobile court to impose imprisonment by amending the Mobile Court Act."

"As a result, the mobile court will be able to impose the penalty prescribed in the law based on the confession, and its powers related to search, seizure and disposal of seized

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A large part of this road has been dug up and left in this state to accommodate underground electric line work. As a result, there is little space left for vehicles and pedestrians to pass. The photo was taken in the Hatirjheel area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Govt delaying polls so BNP can't come to power

Says Shamsuzzaman Dudu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is delaying elections so that BNP cannot come to power through the people's vote, claimed the party's Vice Chairman Shamsuzzaman Dudu yesterday.

"The nation is deeply concerned about the government's actions. We no longer understand what they [the government] want. We believe elections are being avoided to sideline the BNP so that the party cannot form a government by earning public support and securing votes," said the BNP leader.

He made the remarks while addressing a rally organised by the Bangladesh Democratic Council in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Urging the government to clarify its position, Shamsuzzaman said, "The question is not what

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SHIBSA RIVER IN KHULNA

Once a lifeline, now a fading stream

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Once a thriving artery of communication in the Khulna region, the Shibsa River is now a shadow of its former self. In the past, it was navigated by large boats, ships, launches, and steamers. The river connected Khulna with Kolkata.

In recent decades, however, this vital waterway has been in decline. Waterlogging has become a persistent issue in areas along the river due to the drying up of canals.

Once, water from Tala and Satkhira Sadar used to flow out through the Shibsa. But over the past 20 years, that flow has all but ceased, causing prolonged waterlogging in large parts of Tala and Satkhira Sadar upazilas.

The stretch of the Shibsa that flows into the Sundarbans still functions as an inland waterway and remains part of the sea route under the Bangladesh-India Naval Protocol. But just east of Paikgachha upazila Sadar, near the Shibsa Bridge, the river has withered to a narrow trickle.

The mighty current that once surged under the bridge has vanished, and during high tide, only a small stream offers a faint reminder of its past.

This dried-up condition spans roughly 27 kilometres of the river

as it flows through Paikgachha. From there, the Shibsa continues eastward through Soladana and Garuikhal before entering the Sundarbans and merging with the Pasur River. Further downstream, the river branches off again before emptying into the Bay of Bengal as the Kuda River.

Though the 64-kilometre



stretch of the river running through the Sundarbans still receives tidal water, heavy siltation is rapidly reducing its depth. Structures have cropped up on the dried sections, and people now cross the former riverbed on foot. The total length of the Shibsa is approximately 100 kilometres.

Mizanur Rahman, a 73-year-

old retired schoolteacher from Paikgachha's Sona Potti, said, "Launches and other vessels used to carry goods from Khulna city to other upazilas. Locals depended on the river for almost every aspect of life."

Torab Ali, a fisherman from Soladana, said the community now sees very few fish in the river. "Many fishermen in my village

entirely dry.

Professor Hashem Ali Fakir, a river researcher, said the Shibsa is now dying due to siltation caused by polder systems built in the 1960s. "The northern part of the river in Paikgachha upazila has almost dried up. The rate of sedimentation is very high in the southern section flowing into the Sundarbans," he said.

"To save the rivers of the south-western region, implementing Tidal River Management (TRM) is essential. This method helps restore the natural flow of tidal water, reduces waterlogging, and enhances soil fertility. Without TRM, the rivers will continue to silt up, leading to severe environmental and socio-economic consequences for local communities."

Dilip Kumar Dutta, former professor of environmental science at Khulna University, said coastal embankments have cut off floodplains from the river, halting natural sedimentation processes.

"This has hindered land formation in the region, which is part of the lower Gangetic Delta and still geologically immature. Settlement and river management activities were implemented before land formation was complete. Now the river has lost its existence and put us in danger," he said.

have had to change professions," he added.

A recent visit to the river basin near Paikgachha Bridge revealed a nearly dry riverbed with only a faint current.

Around a hundred ponds and various structures have been built by villagers along its banks. The eight-kilometre stretch from Shibbati to Soladana is now



Water accumulates inside these discarded tyres, providing an ample breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes. The photo was taken in the Beribandh area of Mohammadpur yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Consensus commission to hold talks with NCP today

UNB, Dhaka

The National Consensus Commission is set to hold talks with the National Citizen Party (NCP) today as part of its ongoing dialogue with political parties to build consensus on the state reform initiatives undertaken by the interim government.

The discussion will begin at 10:30am at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the capital, said Paban Chowdhury, public relations officer of the commission, yesterday.

On March 24, the NCP submitted its written opinions on the reform proposals to the commission.

Out of the 166 recommendations made by the commission, the party fully agreed with 113 and partially agreed with 29 others.

The commission launched its dialogue series with political parties on March 20, aiming to build a unified political stance on key reforms.

So far, it has held talks with 12 political parties to finalise recommendations on a wide range of state reforms.

HAKALUKI HAOR

Harvesting the field of gold



MINTU DESHWARA

A festive spirit now fills the Hakaluki haor as farmers in Kulaura, Barlekha, and Juri upazilas of Moulvibazar, as well as Fenchuganj and Beanibazar upazilas of Sylhet, are busy harvesting their boro crop.

The vast haor fields, glowing with golden rice, have become a hive of activity.

Farmers said this year's yield has been good thanks to favourable weather and timely cultivation. Since dawn, they have been working tirelessly - harvesting, threshing, and transporting paddy home.

"Our lives depend on this haor," said Syed Roni Hasan Salam, a farmer from Bhatara union in Kulaura upazila. "The harvest is good this time.

I hope the paddy gets a good price so I can meet my expenses. If the government had given us more assistance, such as modern machinery, it would have been easier."

In the Bhukshimuil area, farmer Sajjad Mia said producing each maund of paddy now costs around Tk 800 to Tk 850, including the use of modern harvesting machines. "If I could sell it for at least Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,200 per maund, I'd be able to make a meaningful profit," he added.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent observed thousands of farmers working from dawn to dusk. Some were harvesting, others threshing, while many carried the golden crop home by bullock cart, boat, and trolley.

Every corner of the haor echoed with the joy of the harvest.

Shaidul Hasan Shipon, general secretary of the Kulaura Sangbadik Samitee and a resident of the haor, said Hakaluki is one of the country's largest freshwater wetlands. "The livelihoods of thousands of farming families depend on this haor."

Md Mahi Uddin, UNO of Kulaura, said during the Boro season, a kind of agricultural festival

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One held over Shewrapara mugging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested one of three suspected muggers who allegedly robbed a woman in Dhaka's Shewrapara early Thursday.

Imran Khan Shakil, 35, was arrested from the Pubail area of Gazipur early yesterday by a team from Mirpur Police Station with the help of Gazipur police, said Mirpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sazzad Romon.

Some of the looted items were recovered, and efforts are ongoing to arrest the remaining suspects, the OC added.

During primary interrogation, the arrestee admitted that they roamed city streets on their motorbikes and robbed people in deserted areas and alleys, police said.

According to a press release from the DMP media wing, Shakil was accused in several cases with different police stations for mugging and drug peddling.

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To protest Israeli barbarity and express solidarity with the freedom-fighting Palestinians

Mass Gathering and Rally

Today at 4 pm

at Central Shaheed Minar, Dhaka

Please join and ask others to join

Palestine Solidarity Committee, Bangladesh