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Protect pond in Rayerbazar

BELA issues legal notice to authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) yesterday issued a legal notice demanding immediate action to protect Potari Pukur, a pond at Sher-e-Bangla Road in Rayerbazar, Dhaka.

Through the notice, BELA called for an immediate halt to the illegal filling of the pond and the re-excavation of the portion already filled in. They also urged the authorities to properly preserve the pond, carrying out necessary renovations while maintaining its natural character.

According to the notice, a multi-storey building is currently under construction on the filled-up portion of the pond, allegedly without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Department of Environment (DoE).

BELA reported evidence

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Children's faces light up with joy as they see cartoon-like murals created by students of Rajshahi University's Faculty of Fine Arts. The murals depict scenes from the city's heritage, blending both urban and rural life. They were painted on the walls at the entrance gate of the city protection embankment. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

July killings strategic, state-orchestrated

Says rights body Sapran

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the security forces in the country used lethal weapons to kill people during the July uprising, said rights-based think tank Shokol Praner Nirapotta (Sapran) yesterday.

In a position paper titled "They Aimed at Our Heads: Anatomy of Targeted Headshots and State-sponsored Violence in Bangladesh's 2024 Mass Uprising", Sapran said the killings were not accidental or collateral damage but were systematic, strategic, and state-orchestrated.

The paper was presented at a seminar held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in the capital.

According to the report, most of the headshots were carried out by the Bangladesh Police, followed by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

The paper said these killings were a calculated form of authoritarian repression, designed to silence dissent, terrorise the public, and enforce political control through fear and intimidation.

Analysing 54 documented headshot cases, the organisation said they could not separate the cases between Bangladesh Police and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), but these two forces were involved in 31 incidents. Rab was found responsible for three cases, and the army was linked to one case.

In some 11 cases, the perpetrators could not be

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Country gets first robotic rehab centre

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh is set to take a significant leap in healthcare innovation with the launch of a pilot project at the country's first Robotic Rehabilitation Center for patients suffering from stroke, paralysis and long-term neurological disorders.

The project will begin at the Super Specialised Hospital of Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) in Dhaka's Shahbagh today.

It will initially operate on a limited scale and will mark the start of a new era in neuro-rehabilitation for the patients.

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ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT

36% migrants forced to return within 3 months

Finds OKUP study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A staggering 36 percent of Bangladeshi migrant workers are forced to return home within just three months of arriving abroad due to illegal recruitment practices by recruiters and employers, a new study has found.

These premature returns not only crush their hopes of economic improvement but also trap many in debt and a life devoid of dignity.

The study, titled "A Far Cry from Justice for Migrants: A Critical Analysis of Migrants' Experiences in the Arbitration System in Bangladesh", was conducted by the grassroots migrant rights group Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP).

OKUP Chairperson Shakirul Islam presented the findings of the study at a programme in the capital yesterday, highlighting how

AT A GLANCE

75% migrants didn't receive any contract before departure

64% male and 100% female migrants had no contract

THOSE WHO RECEIVED CONTRACTS: 62% got it just hours before their flight.

11% received it a month in advance.

47% received no work permit after arriving abroad.

Of the 53% who got permits, 24% got the promised jobs

All male migrants paid excessive fees

systematic failures in recruitment and arbitration systems leave thousands of migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation and injustice.

One of the report's main concerns is the lack of a standard, independent arbitration mechanism in Bangladesh to resolve migrant workers' complaints.

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), which handles arbitration cases while also issuing recruitment licenses and emigration clearance, faces a conflict of interest that undermines the fairness and effectiveness of the process, the report said.

It also found that legal

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DHAKA SOUTH

Ward-based teams formed to tackle waterlogging

STAR REPORT

Amid continuous rainfall over the past few days, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has formed ward-based emergency response teams to tackle potential waterlogging under its jurisdiction.

The corporation has also activated a central control room, according to a DSCC press release issued yesterday.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, a low-pressure system over Gangetic West Bengal and its adjoining areas is causing cloudy skies and light to moderate rain in Dhaka and surrounding regions. Winds from the southeast or south are expected to blow at a speed of 10-15 kilometres per hour, accompanied by rain.

In the last 24 hours till yesterday, Dhaka had recorded 45 millimetres of rainfall. Forecasts suggest this rain is likely to continue for several more days.

The press release, signed by DSCC Public Relations Officer Md Rasel Rahman, said DSCC has taken urgent measures to ease public suffering. Workers from the Waste Management Department are actively working in every ward to ensure that the drainage system remains unobstructed and water can recede quickly.

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EC to register voters in five more countries

STAR REPORT

The Election Commission (EC) has received approval from the foreign ministry to begin voter registration of Bangladeshi expatriates in five additional countries, including the US.

ASM Humayun Kabir, director general of the EC's National Identity Registration Wing, confirmed the development to reporters yesterday afternoon.

"We had sought approval to start voter registration in eight new countries. The foreign ministry has allowed us to proceed in five countries – the US, Maldives, Jordan, South Africa, and Oman," he said.

The EC aimed to extend its voter registration efforts for expatriates to 40 countries.

Currently, registration is active in 16 centres across nine countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Italy, the UK,

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Halt Santal eviction in name of EPZ

Demand 32 eminent citizens, call for probe into corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-two eminent citizens have demanded an immediate halt to the eviction of Santal farmers in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj, under the pretext of establishing an Export Processing Zone (EPZ).

They also called for a high-level investigation into corruption related to EPZ projects.

In a joint statement, they expressed deep concern that, following in the footsteps of past authoritarian regimes, a group of corrupt bureaucrats and vested interest groups are trying to forcibly acquire fertile agricultural land – often inhabited by poor farmers and indigenous communities – for so-called special economic zones or EPZs.

Citing the case of Bagda Farm in Gobindaganj, the statement alleged that a corrupt syndicate, with tacit support from some government officials, is aggressively trying to evict Santal families to make way for an EPZ, without conducting the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or Social Impact Assessments (SIA).

This reflects past practices under previous regimes, where many EPZs were proposed or built without proper environmental or social evaluations, said the citizens.

They also noted that, of the 100 EPZs or special economic zones announced in the last 16 years, only 10 have been implemented – eight by the government and two by private initiatives – on about 33,000 acres of acquired land.

Most of these lands were fertile and capable of producing two or three crops a year, many of which still remain unused.

In many cases, farmers were never compensated for

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A mother helps her son drink from a bowl using a straw as he sits under a mosquito net at Mugda Hospital in Dhaka. The child has contracted dengue amid a nationwide surge in cases that has left most dengue wards filled to capacity.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Jamaat team heads to China tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-level delegation from Jamaat-e-Islami, led by its Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman, is set to begin a five-day visit to China tomorrow at the invitation of the Chinese government.

This marks the party's second trip to the country.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar described the visit as "significant for both Jamaat and Bangladesh," noting its potential to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties with China amid the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Parwar said the nine-member delegation will hold discussions with various Chinese institutions, organisations, and the Communist Party of China.

The visit comes after a reception hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka on Tuesday evening, attended by Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen and Dr Shafiqur Rahman, both of whom addressed the gathering.