

Trump lawyers present defence

Call impeachment charges 'brazen and unlawful' effort to overturn 2016 election

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump's legal team presented Saturday its line of defence for his upcoming impeachment trial, a process they dismissed as unconstitutional and "dangerous."

It was the first time the team presented its arguments, modelled on those put forward since December by Trump and his fellow Republicans.

White House counsel Pat Cipollone will be lead lawyer, backed by Trump's personal attorney Jay Sekulow. They will be joined by Ken Starr, who was at the centre of Bill Clinton's impeachment in the 1990s, and celebrity lawyer Alan Dershowitz.

In an initial response to the president's being charged, written by Cipollone and Sekulow, the defence said that the articles of impeachment -- passed by the majority-Democrat House of Representatives -- "are a dangerous attack on the right of the American people to freely choose their president."

"This is a brazen and unlawful attempt to overturn the results of the 2016 election and interfere with the 2020 election," the team said in a statement.

Trump has been impeached on charges that he abused his office to try and force Ukraine into digging up dirt on leading Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden by withholding \$400 million in military aid and a White House meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart President Volodymyr Zelensky.

He was also impeached for

allegedly obstructing Congress.

"The articles of impeachment are constitutionally invalid on their face. They fail to allege any crime or violation of law whatsoever," the defence team said.

In a call with reporters earlier Saturday, a source close to Trump's legal team said the articles violate the Constitution because they are "the product of invalid proceedings that flagrantly denied the president any due process rights."

The impeachment process risks doing "lasting damage to our structure of government," the source said.

The sources added that Trump had met with Zelensky at the UN in September and that the military aid had been released, proving there was no quid pro quo with Kiev -- although by that point, a whistleblower within the administration had already triggered the impeachment proceedings.

The House managers, or prosecutors in the impeachment trial, filed their official brief on Saturday, in which they said that Trump's conduct "is the Framers' worst nightmare," referring to the authors of the US Constitution.

"The case against the President of the United States is simple, the facts are indisputable, and the evidence is overwhelming," the managers said in a joint statement after filing the brief.

"President Trump abused the power of his office to solicit foreign interference in our elections for his own personal political gain, thereby jeopardizing our national security, the integrity of our elections, and our democracy."

Ensure freedom of expression, press

Parties, rights bodies urge after case against Prothom Alo editor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday expressed concern over the issuance of arrest warrant for Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman and nine others.

"It seems that the case and issuance of arrest warrant are intentional," said the politburo of Bangladesher Workers Party, an ally of the ruling Awami League.

The quick steps and arrest warrant, instead of a thorough investigation, raise doubts, it said in a statement.

Leaders of the Left Democratic Alliance urged the government not to use the case as an opportunity to harass.

The case should not be used to disrupt the right to freedom of expression and to curb the freedom of press, read the statement.

Mujahidul Islam Selim and Mohammad Shah Alam, president and general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, condemned the arrest warrant.

There is a legitimate fear among

people that the actions were taken as a strategy to intimidate and harass the newspaper's voice.

Ain o Salish Kendra in a statement said, "ASK thinks that this incident will deeply affect freedom of expression and press ..."

It added: "People's concern has intensified, especially after the comments and statements made by ruling party leaders."

It urged the authorities concerned to keep the trial free from any influence.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President ASM Abdur Rab and its General Secretary Sanwar Hossain Talukder condemned the filing of the case.

Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party of Bangladesh, expressed deep concern over the issuance of arrest warrant against journalists.

There are good reasons to express fear that the whole matter is intentional and biased, the party said. Nagarik Parishad Conveener

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DSCC door will remain open

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The AL mayor candidate said he would restore panchayat system, a type of dispute resolution outside the court, in DSCC for conflict resolutions.

Taposh said he divided his plan into five sections -- heritage Dhaka, beautiful Dhaka, mobile Dhaka, good governance Dhaka, and developed Dhaka.

To achieve his goal, he has short-, mid- and long-term plans, said Taposh. "I have a 30-year plan for the DSCC to make it beautiful and more liveable."

"The heritage and pride of Dhaka has faded away. I want to present Dhaka [DSCC] before the world after reviving its pride and heritage," he added.

He said once Dhaka was a beautiful city with full of greenery, and there was no air pollution.

"When we fly over the Dhaka city, we just see buildings after buildings with almost no sign of greenery. This city does not have enough and modern playgrounds for children's amusement," Taposh said.

"If elected, I will take initiatives to build adequate number of modern playgrounds."

The AL mayor candidate said he would improve the city's traffic system. Working people, especially women, were always worried about when they would be able to reach work due to traffic jams. They were also concerned about their safety on roads.

About his plan of Buriganga revival, Taposh said, "I have a mega plan in this regard, and people will be able to ride in horse carriages again around the river."

Pointing to people's sufferings caused by frequent road and footpath digging, Taposh said he would follow guidelines strictly in this regard so that different government organisations could not dig the city streets whenever they wanted.

"They will have to work on the streets in coordination with the city

corporation. They will have to take permission from the city corporation for digging into a city street.

"Besides, the city corporation will set a deadline for the respective government organisation to complete the work. After that, no one will be allowed to dig that street again in the next three years," said the AL mayor candidate.

On waste management, Taposh said if he became mayor, he would not keep any open waste bin by the side of the roads, and the city's waste management would be brought under a disciplined system. "Cleaning of the city's waste continues for round the clock."

Taposh said footpaths would be freed from hawkers gradually and they would be rehabilitated. He had a mega plan to this end.

He said he would make it easy for the city dwellers to get various civic amenities, including birth and death certificates.

About his plan to build a woman- and child-friendly Dhaka city, Taposh said he would install adequate CCTVs at different places and set up a control centre at the DSCC office to monitor those.

"I will also make arrangements for setting up adequate street lights in the DSCC."

Taposh said there would be different types of streets in DSCC. Some streets would be dedicated to high-speed vehicles, some to slow-moving vehicles, some to horse carriages, and some for walking only.

The AL mayor candidate said he hoped voters would elect him as an honest and competent candidate to serve the DSCC people.

Taposh, son of Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and Begum Arzu Moni who were assassinated in August 15, 1975, by a group of disgruntled army personnel, was elected lawmaker from Dhaka-10 in 2008, 2014, and 2018 with AL ticket.



President Abdul Hamid meets members of the newly formed Bangladesh Press Council, helmed by Justice Mohammad Mamtaj Uddin Ahmed, at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Will press for metropolitan government

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Mentioning various issues like traffic congestion, pollution, crisis in public transport and others, he said he would work tirelessly with the authorities concerned to solve all problems and offer the city dwellers a better life.

During an interview with The Daily Star at his Gopibagh residence, he said, he would press the government to introduce metropolitan government for the city corporation.

Alongside, he said it would be his priority to decentralise the capital.

"Dhaka city must be decentralised," he said, adding that otherwise the major problems of the city would never be fixed.

"We will not be able to build a sustainable and livable city without a metropolitan government."

Mentioning his father's success, the BNP candidate said, Sadeque Hossain Khoka was a successful mayor of undivided Dhaka for the longest period of time and carried out massive development projects.

People brought his son to politics to fulfil the empty space that has been created after the departure of his father, Ishraque said.

He said that he was keen to know about the problems of city dwellers and find out solutions for those from his childhood. This made him carry out many researches and find the

possible solutions.

"I believe people will vote for me because they want change. I think neutral voters along with the party's voters will cast vote for me due to anti-incumbency factor."

Based on different indexes, the mayoral candidate compared Dhaka to a war-torn region.

The indexes show that Dhaka is on the top of the list of cities that are most inhabitable, air polluted, unsafe for people and unsafe for women, he said, adding that the city is also known as the city of traffic congestion.

"To get rid of the situation, I want to take short- mid- and long-term plans," he said.

The short-term plans would be implemented within a year whereas mid- and long-terms plans would be implemented within two to five and 25 years respectively, he added.

As per the short-term planning, I want to free all footpaths from grabbers and make them suitable so that pedestrians can use those. Traffic situation will be eased to some extent if we can ensure this, he said.

Adequate number of bus stands and bus stoppages will be ensured as part of short-term planning. At present buses stop abruptly on the roads, blocking movement of other vehicles, Ishraque said.

The BNP mayoral candidate also

said that he wanted to increase the number of roads and wants to bring order in mass transport.

The plan to operate all public buses under limited companies should be implemented immediately to bring order in public transport, he added.

According to Ishraque, he would extend all out cooperation to implement the government's ongoing metrorail and the proposed subway projects.

Asked how to prevent air-pollution of the city, Ishraque said, according to a study, fifty-eight percent of the city's air pollution could be contributed by brickfields.

"Over fifty-thousand illegal brickfields are situated around the Dhaka city. We will have to shut those down. We will have to go for energy efficient or auto brick industry to save the environment. I will work with the authorities concerned to make this happen."

About providing safe water to the city dwellers, he said, "I want to work intensively with Dhaka Wasa to ensure safe drinking water and water sanitation."

Saying that there are several new wards under the city corporation that are out of Wasa network, Ishraque said, he would sit with the authorities to bring those city wards under Wasa coverage to ensure safe drinking water.

Pointing out the failure of the previous mayor of the city corporation, he said Aedes mosquito could spread in such a scale because of inactiveness of the previous mayor.

"If we can play our due role throughout the year and apply right medicine at the right time, I think it would be possible to control mosquito in the city," he said.

About his plan on waste management, Ishraque said he wanted to set up closed trash compactor containers that would turn waste into compressed blocks. Those blocks would be taken to landfill sites to generate power or biogas or fertiliser.

Besides, he said he would take measures to increase the number of waste recycling plants.

About the polls environment, he said he did not see any possibility of holding the election in a free, fair and neutral manner.

He said they were unsure whether the Election Commission would stage another farce election like the last national election in December 2018.

"We want to observe more about the Election Commission's activities. Time is yet to come to make the final judgement regarding the city corporation election. The election commission has still the opportunity to correct themselves. And I hope they will correct themselves," he said.

Only half the targets met

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\$7.79 billion in the last four years. It will provide \$2.2 billion in the current fiscal year.

Earlier, the WB gave Bangladesh \$8.38 billion from fiscal 2010-11 to 2014-15 under the CPF.

International Finance Corporation (IFC), a sister concern of the WB, already provided Bangladesh with \$1.8 billion in the last four years. The amount was \$783 million from fiscal 2010-11 to 2014-15.

The WBG's another concern, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, gave the country \$474 million in the last four years.

The WBG now proposes extending the tenure of the partnership framework for one more year to June 2021 so that Bangladesh government can deliver results.

Yet, the overall risk to achieving the CPF objectives in the next two years remains high, says the draft report sent to the finance ministry last month for its opinion.

"Investment operations [of WB-financed projects] have faced implementation delays due to a range of issues, including the government's prolonged processing requirements, delayed procurement, weak counterpart capacity and high turnover of project staff."

"This has slowed disbursements, increased the cost of supervision, delayed achievement of results, and required frequent project extensions," the WBG points out.

In Bangladesh, the reforms that involve changes in legislation and institutions often take more time than initially envisaged, it mentions. "This may be due to the need for broad stakeholder consultation, relatively weak inter-governmental coordination, and the government bureaucracy."

Beyond enacting laws and changing policies, the biggest challenge is implementing reforms, it added.

THE RISKS

Politics and governance, institutional capacity, fiduciary management, and environment and social issues are among the factors that pose high risks to achieving the CPF objectives, according to the report.

The security situation and governance environment continue to pose significant risks. The WBG raised concerns in 2016 over potential

TARGET & ACHIEVEMENTS		
SECTOR	TARGET	ACHIEVEMENT
Power generation	2,800MW	2,531MW
Clean energy (in rural areas)	2,100,000 households	2,864,578 households
Improved living condition (in urban slums)	70,000 families	Not on track
Border crossing time (at key land ports)	36 hours	Not on track
Social protection benefits	12.1m people	12.3m people

deterioration of security and the political situation.

Security concerns rose sharply following the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in July 2016, which impacted the WBG's field work and operations. With the government support, precautionary measures were taken to ensure WBG staff security.

While the recent general elections resulted in a landslide victory for the ruling party, political tensions remain, it said, adding that the WB is mitigating the political and governance risks to CPF implementation through continued investment.

Institutional capacity and accountability issues remain a challenge to implementation, notes the report.

Though some progress was made in strengthening fiduciary capacity, fiduciary risk remains high in case of CPF implementation.

Environmental and social risks remain high, the report said, suggesting continued effort to strengthen the capacity of the government and the private sector.

Lack of staff capacity to address land acquisition and resettlement issues also delayed implementation of some operations.

STATUS OF CPF OBJECTIVES

The power generation capacity and access to clean energy are among the targets that the country has achieved.

As of the end of January last year, WBG-funded projects added 2,531 megawatts of electricity, out of the target of 2,800MW, to the national grid, the report said.

The IFC financed the first liquefied natural gas import terminal in Bangladesh, increasing the natural gas supply by 20 percent.

There was some progress in maintenance of rural roads and bridges, but the project to improve river transport connectivity is off track, said the report.

It found mixed progress in

improving basic services in urban areas.

The performance of municipalities in delivering services has improved, but there has been limited progress when it comes to increasing the number of beneficiaries with improved living conditions in select urban slums.

The report said there was progress in enhancing business environment. But the gains were fewer in regional trade.

With the WB and IFC support, \$1.8 billion in direct private investment was made in 17 special economic zones at the end of 2018, surpassing the target.

The IFC supported 232 garment factories to improve their working environment, raising productivity and providing better access to jobs for women.

However, less progress was seen in facilitating cross border trade.

"Continued effort is needed to improve the investment climate," it mentions.

Also, there has been progress in social protection area.

While access to education is improving, progress in ensuring its quality is inconclusive.

Some 700,000 out-of-school children were enrolled in primary schools, and 10.3 million poor students from 215 poorest upazilas are receiving stipends at the secondary level, surpassing the target.

But the WB's contribution to improving quality of education could not be measured because relevant data was not available.

The country also achieved some targets for improving access to quality maternal and infant health services.

Mixed progress was made in climate and environment management area.

The target for improving disaster response is on track, and the country

is expected to achieve the target for increasing the number of people with access to multipurpose shelters in vulnerable coastal districts.

"Improvements have been made in most areas measured by the WB's World Governance Indicators -- except for indicators related to voice and accountability," the report says, adding that the country's overall governance scores remain lower than regional averages.

PCJSS man shot dead in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A member of PCJSS (MN Larma) was shot dead by a group of unknown criminals in Langadu upazila of Bandarban around 1:00pm yesterday.

The dead is Pandhab Chakma, 30, of Baghaichari upazila in the district.

Quoting locals, police said Pandhab, accompanied by another PCJSS (MN Larma) activist Arjun Chakma, went to Bandar Tola village for organisational work.

All of a sudden, a group of criminals opened fire on the duo. Pandhab died on the spot and Arjun managed to flee the scene, the law enforcers said, adding that Arjun sustained injuries during the attack.

Saiyad Muhammad Nur, officer-in-charge of Langadu Police Station, confirmed the incident and said they would need time to recover the body as the incident happened in a remote area.

Alanga Lal Chakma, coordinator of PCJSS (MN Larma) for Langadu upazila, blamed the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) for the murder.

Denying the allegation, Moni Shankar Chakma, general secretary of PCJSS in Langadu upazila committee, said the murder might have taken place over PCJSS (MN Larma)'s internal conflict.

In the last two years, 70 people were killed due to inter-party conflicts in Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban.