

STRAY DOGS OF DSCC

Taposh willing to work for long-term solution

Rights groups hopeful after meeting with mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday told animal rights activists that he is willing to work towards an integrated, realistic and long-term solution for stray dog population management in the city.

During a meeting with animal rights organisations at Nagar Bhaban, he said a single meeting is not enough to resolve the matter, rather they will hold more meetings if necessary, according to a press release issued by DSCC.

The mayor asked the representatives of the organisations to give a written proposal to the city corporation based on recommendations on proper management of stray dogs, which they will try to incorporate with DSCC's working plan.

"Our target is to make Dhaka a modern city; in modern cities there is no stray dog that moves openly in parks, playgrounds and open roads," mayor Taposh said, and urged activists to identify dogs which are being taken care of by communities, so that DSCC does not relocate those.

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Representatives of various rights and indigenous organisations gathered in front of the capital's National Museum to form a human chain yesterday, protesting the increasing incidents of sexual assault and violence against indigenous people. They pointed to a culture of impunity that denies justice to victims and stated that the state cannot evade its responsibility to ensure security.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Vulgar display of power
Two activists roughed up by police while drawing anti-rape graffiti

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers roughed up and detained two activists from a street in the capital in the early hours of yesterday, allegedly for drawing graffiti against rape.

Jahar Lal Roy, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union's (BCU) metropolitan unit; and Sadaat Mahmood, education and research affairs secretary, alleged that they were hit in police custody.

"Protesting rape, two fellow activists of ours were drawing graffiti on a wall in front of Vigarunnisa Noon School at night. Around 2am, a team of patrol police arrived there and asked them to stop," said Anik Roy, president of Chhatra Union, quoting their activists.

A video filmed on his phone by an activist at the time shows Sadaat blaming law enforcers and Chhatra League activists for "ruining" youth and women of the country.

A police official was also seen threatening the video-recording activist of seizing the phone, saying she was shooting without permission. When Sadaat sarcastically retorted, "You rather seize me," the police personnel grabbed him by the neck and started pushing him towards the car.

Another police official was heard saying, "Beat him, pick him up into the car."

BCU activists yelled that the police has no right to assault them physically, and later the police officials were seen dragging the two activists towards police van and picked them up eventually.

The video did the rounds on social media all day yesterday, drawing staunch criticism from all quarters.

"Police members punched, kicked and beat the duo inside custody, but later were forced to release them after BCU activists laid siege to the police station," Anik told this newspaper.

BCU leaders and activists demonstrated in different places of the country and also brought out a procession from the Jatiya Press Club area yesterday protesting the incident.

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None held over rape of woman in N'ganj

STAR REPORT

A woman was raped while she was searching for her missing husband and sister in Siddhirganj of Narayanganj on Monday, said police. None was arrested in this connection as of filing this report.

The victim filed a case accusing two -- Mohsin Biswas (35) and Ramjan Mia (32) -- with Siddhirganj Police Station. Mohsin is a friend of her husband, while Ramjan is an associate of Mohsin, she said.

The 23-year-old woman said her husband and sister have been missing for a month. She along with her two-and-half-year-old son went to Shaheb Bazar to look for them around 8pm on September 27.

At that time, she met Mohsin, who told her he knew their whereabouts and took her to an under-construction building. The accused and his accomplice then raped her.

Confirming the incident, Siddhirganj Police Station OC Kamrul Farukh said they are trying to arrest the rapists.

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'Impunity fuels violence'

Speakers demand capital punishment for those involved in rape of indigenous women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Violence against indigenous women is increasing due to a culture of impunity in the country, speakers said at a human chain yesterday.

They demanded immediate arrest and capital punishment of perpetrators involved in repeated incidents of violence against indigenous women.

Bangladeshi Adibasi Jubo Forum, Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, Bangladesh Adibasi Nari Network, Adibasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad and Parbotto Chattagram Pahari Chhatra Parishad jointly organised the programme in front of the National Museum in the capital.

At the event, organisers also placed five demands, which include ensuring capital punishment to perpetrators, giving adequate compensation and security to family of the victims, making sure that

the local administration play an effective role in this regard and forming a special cell under the CHT affairs ministry to take actions against all kinds of repression against women.

They also demanded complete implementation of CHT peace treaty, withdrawal of temporary army camps in line with the treaty and respectful repatriation of settlers.

At the beginning of the programme, Shahanaz Sumi, deputy director, Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, presented the keynote paper.

She said three indigenous women became victims of rape and harassment between September 14 and 24 in Khagrachhari and Moulvibazar.

Violence and harassment against indigenous women increased during the pandemic, she added.

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RAPE IN MC COLLEGE

HC forms probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday formed a three-member committee headed by the judge of Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Tribunal of Sylhet to conduct an inquiry into the incident of rape of a woman on the campus of Murari Chand College in Sylhet on September 25.

Other two members of the committee are additional deputy commissioner (general) and chief judicial magistrate of Sylhet. The HC directed the committee to record statements from all concerned and submit the probe report to this court in 15 days.

Issuing a suomuto (voluntary) rule, the court ordered the DC of Sylhet to provide proper assistance to the inquiry committee and directed the superintendent of police of the district to provide security to the committee.

The HC issued a rule asking the respondents to show causes in two weeks why they should not be directed to take appropriate legal steps against the principal and hostel superintendent of MC College for their negligence and failure to save the innocent woman.

Secretaries to the ministries of home, law and education, vice chancellor and registrar of the National University, DC and SP of Sylhet and principal and hostel superintendent

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Nat'l edu strategy a must to tackle discrimination

Speakers tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-nine percent of girls in rural Bangladesh have no access to distance education through television, as only 31 percent of their families have a television with cable network. Although 97 percent of the parents use mobile phones, only 23 percent of households have smartphones, and three percent have internet connectivity, a study revealed.

The findings were presented yesterday at a webinar titled "Alternative ways of educational support during Covid-19 and way forward for safe back to school", which was jointly organised by Empowering Girls through Education (EGE) project of Save the Children in Bangladesh and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

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Solar home systems created 1.37 lakh jobs: report

ASIFUR RAHMAN

With a ray of hope, Bangladesh's solar energy industry's 5.8 million decentralised solar home systems have created around 137,400 jobs, said the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

"Although most Bangladeshi solar jobs are in sales, installation and maintenance, some 10,000 people are also employed in module assembly," said the global intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future.

IRENA reported these findings in its "Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2020" published yesterday. The report says that worldwide employment in renewable energy was estimated at 11.5 million in 2019, up from 11 million in 2018.

Bangladesh's current renewable energy capacity stands at 648.95 megawatt (MW). Of which solar technology accounts for 415.02 MW, according to Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority

(SREDA). Of this, about 327.14 megawatt comes from off-grid power sources while on-grid solar accounts for 87.88 megawatt.

"We have already installed more than 5.8 million home solar systems and this year another few lakh more will be installed in remote village areas with little access to electricity, as the government plans to provide electricity to every home," Mohammad Alauddin, chairman of SREDA told The Daily Star yesterday. However despite the success, Bangladesh is lagging behind from its goal, set a decade ago, to have about 10 percent of total electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

"That target has proved to be unachievable. Currently, less than three percent electricity comes from renewable sources," he said.

IRENA's director-general Francesco La Camera said, "While today we see a handful of countries in the lead, each country can harness its renewable potential, take steps to leverage local capabilities for industrial

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JAHA ALAM'S COMPENSATION

HC to deliver verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver its verdict today over compensating Jaha Alam, who suffered in jail for three years instead of the real accused in several corruption cases.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader yesterday fixed 2pm for the verdict.

The bench was scheduled to deliver the verdict yesterday, but it was deferred as the bench held a brief hearing on the matter, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

The bench on January 28 last year issued a rule, asking authorities concerned of ACC and the government why they should not be directed to release and compensate Alam.

It came up with the rule following a report published in national daily Prothom Alo, headlined "Sir, I'm Jaha Alam, not Salek".

On February 3 last year, the HC directed jail authorities to release Alam immediately and he got out on the same day.

Proper implementation of RTI Act imperative: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

In order to reduce corruption and ensure good governance, effective implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 is needed. Proper implementation of the law will help ensure transparency and accountability of the government, speakers said at a virtual discussion yesterday.

The discussion was organised by Right to Information Forum, a coalition of institutions and individuals working on implementing the RTI Act. The programme marked the International Day for the Universal Access to Information.

RTI Forum Convener and Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "The RTI act is not just a tool for seeking information from government authorities, the right to information actually occupies an important place in the discourse of freedom of thought, conscience and speech."

"The true spirit of this act will not be fulfilled if people are afraid to speak up," she said.

She also urged all to break the culture of impunity, which has created a culture of fear

among people.

During his speech, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said many government officials try to limit how much information is available to the public.

He said a section of political leadership and government officials consider information as government property. This essentially restricts the maxim that the public are owners of all information.

Meghna Guhathakurta, executive director of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh, alleged that in many cases government officials reprimand information seekers, which discourages them to seek more information.

Nijera Kori Secretary Khushi Kabir said the effective use of RTI rights was important to ensure rights and democracy. She also reported that the number of information seekers dropped significantly during the Covid-19 situation.

Former Chief Information Commissioner Prof Golam Rahman termed it unfortunate that the number of information seeking applications are decreasing.

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

