

# Rangs Bhaban

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sixth floor of the beautiful building constructed at a cost of around Tk 700 crore.

Within hours of the court's order, the authorities announced that demolition of the building would start at 7:00am today. Microphones blared out sharp yesterday afternoon, asking companies housed in the edifice to vacate it by midnight.

Rangs Group however appealed to the government to allow 15 days for shifting its machinery and other goods from its building.

Abdur Rahman, a general manager of the Rangs Group, told the news agency over phone that 30 companies with 35,000 officials and employees used to operate from the commercial building -- one of the tallest in Dhaka's rising skyline.

"It's a humanitarian disaster," Rahman said in a pensive mood, adding that both officials and employees were perturbed as to what is to be done at such short notice to clear their offices, furniture, equipment, papers and documents.

He said they were informed that over 600 labourers of Rajuk would join the demolition drive to break the building with bulldozers and other tools.

#### THE CASE

The High Court, in its 2000 verdict upon a writ petition filed by the Rangs Group, declared the Rajuk notices illegal, saying that the construction of Rangs Bhaban was done as per the plan approved by Rajuk following the terms and conditions.

It further said Rajuk notices canceling sanction of the plan and its other letters asking the petitioners to remove the construction beyond the sixth floor have been done without lawful authority and has legal effect.

Later, the government appealed against the verdict. The long-pending hearing of the appeal began at the Appellate Division on July 24 this year.

When BNP was in power (1991-96), it made an abortive bid to pull down the building. Later, Awami League during its rule (1996-2001) also took an initiative to follow up the plan of its predecessors, but was restrained by the High Court order.

On the other hand, the present caretaker government in a meeting of the Advisory Council in April decided in principle to demolish the building at Bijoy Sarani intersection on Old Airport Road in the capital.

After losing the long legal battle, Rangs lawyer Barrister Rafique-ul Huq told reporters that the Supreme Court judgment was "not clear" and they would move a review petition against it. "I'm frustrated and disappointed at the court's order," said Huq.

Attorney General Fida M Kamal conducted the case on behalf of the government.

#### MAINUL RANGS BHABAN

Public Works Adviser Mainul Hosein said the planned road connecting Bijoy Sarani and Tejgaon would now be constructed demolishing the Rangs building.

"This is not only a building, but also a monument of illegal structure," he told reporters after the Supreme Court judgment was pronounced in the morning.

The adviser said new notice would not be served upon the owners of the Rangs Bhaban and the government would acquire the building up to the sixth floor and demolish the

entire building for the construction of the road in public interest.

The plan of the road has already been prepared by Rajuk.

"We do not do anything out of anger...

We'll not be able to set all the examples, as we are an interim government. But we are cooperating with the nation," said the

# Business leaders

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Dr Kishore arrived here earlier in the day on a three-day visit to exchange views on economic management of the country as Bangladesh representative in the IMF executive board.

Kishore told reporters after the meeting with the BB governor that he is here to hear the authorities in Bangladesh and said the country's economic management is on the right track.

"The biggest challenge for Bangladesh is bringing budgetary and fiscal policies in order," he said.

About newspaper reports on 12 trade bodies' criticism about the IMF role in Bangladesh's economic policies, he said Bangladesh is a sovereign country to take decision on its own.

"No," Kishore said, replying to a question whether it is true that the IMF suggestions to raise energy prices and trade liberalisation are to make Bangladesh products uncompetitive at home and abroad.

"We've only given suggestions to the authorities on the trade policies and fiscal policies," he added.

Replies to another question whether the suggestions of raising energy prices simultaneously, if implemented, would put extra price burden on the people, he said: "Welfare of the people must be obliged while imposing any measure."

After his meeting with the finance adviser, the IMF executive said whatever the IMF may suggest, it is for the

adviser.

#### RANGS APPEALS FORTIME

Rangs Group of Companies yesterday appealed to the government to allow 15 days for shifting its machinery and other goods from its building.

In a press statement, the company said it is impossible to shift machinery and important documents of different industries and banks with a few hours' notice.

In a verdict yesterday, the Supreme Court ordered demolition of upper portion of the building from sixth floor.

Following the verdict, Rajuk asked the owners to shift their machinery and other goods by last night and announced over microphones that the building would be demolished from today.

Rangs group said it is very loyal to law but it needs at least 15 days to move the goods and machinery.

The company said there are Tk 200 crore worth of machinery of RangsTel on 14th and 15th floors, Tk 100 crore machinery of Rangs IT on 12th floor, Rangs Pharmaceuticals on 10th floor, Bank Asia on 8th floor, Apollo Ispat on 7th floor, SQ Group on 9th floor and Shannin Group on 6th floor of the building.

It is not possible to shift all the machinery and other goods within a night, the company said.

Meanwhile, a good number of electric switches of Grameenphone had to be shifted from the Rangs Building within last night, which would disrupt Grameenphone network.

The company in a statement said Grameenphone will shift the switches and restore normalcy in its network coverage within the shortest possible time.

A high official of Grameenphone last night told The Daily Star that the GP subscribers in the districts of Jamalpur, Munshiganj and Tangail, and Jhikatola, Rayerbazar and part of Dhammendi in the capital would face network problem due to relocation of its tower and equipment from Rangs Bhaban. He hoped that the network would be restored within 72 hours.

## Not paid

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"I do not know what is to be done at this moment," said Motahar, to whom the factory owes Tk 5 lakh.

The workers are also uncertain how they would educate their children and more importantly where would they live as the BMC is yet to give a specific deadline to vacate the Peoples Jute Mills Ltd colony.

On July 11, the factory authorities in a notice asked workers to vacate the colony immediately or rents would be deducted from their arrears. No further notices were issued.

A number of workers left the colony for their village homes yesterday. However, some do not even have the money to move their families.

Delwar, who in the last 30 years did not go to his village home, left for his village home in Pirojpur to see if there was anything left to fall back on.

"Delwar left for his village home to find a place to stay as we could be ordered or forced to vacate the colony. Besides, we have no money with which we could rent a house here," said Jahura, wife of Delwar, to whom the factory owes Tk 3.5 lakh.

Jahura fears her two sons would not get further education as she now cannot provide the costs. Jahura's elder son Al-Amin is an SSC examinee while the younger son Hemayet is a student of class-VII in the Peoples Jute Mills High School.

# Green chilli

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poor supply and huge demand of green chilli in the capital.

Iman Ali, a green chilli wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, said that supply of local green chilli was 200 to 250 tons every day before floods hit the country. Now, the supply is reduced to 6 to 7 tons everyday as Narsingdi, Pabna, Rajshahi and Manikganj districts, which had been the main sources of green chilli, were affected by recent floods. The supply of green chilli from these districts, which was about 100 tons every day, has fallen drastically, he added.

Another green chilli wholesaler Mohammad Rezaul Karim said that he sold green chilli at Tk 120 per kg on Wednesday night while the price shot up to Tk 140 per kg yesterday morning and Tk 150 in the evening.

He said that he bought about 150 kgs of green chilli from Narsingdi on Wednesday night. Later, he purchased 600 kgs of green chilli at Tk 40 per kg from an importer of Indian green chilli. Of those, 30 to 40% was rotten. He sold the chilli at Tk 60 per kg on Wednesday night and Tk 80 yesterday morning.

Wholesalers at Karwan Bazar said about 100 tons of Indian green chilli was brought at the market four days back when the price of green chilli was Tk 70 per kg.

Green chilli was sold at Tk 160 per kg in Khulna yesterday while the price was Tk 100 per kg on Wednesday, reports our Khulna correspondent.

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