



A vehicle of the Bangladesh army, the flag bearer of discipline in the country, takes to the wrong side of the road, *top left*, in front of Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka. At the same intersection, buses of Jagannath University in convoy, *top right*, take to the wrong side as students try to make way for their vehicle, putting other vehicles in danger. A sport utility vehicle does the same, *bottom left*, and a police van escorts the flag-carrying vehicle of apparently a minister against the traffic.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN/AMRAN HOSSAIN/RASHED SHUMON

People obey law

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But the DMP removed the device after about two weeks. Police sources said they had to do so after government high-ups asked them not to use the device after the wheels of a prominent minister's SUV got ripped.

The minister even raised the issue in a cabinet meeting, sources said.

A few months ago, some Chhatra League activists beat up two traffic sergeants in two separate incidents as the police officers stopped their president and general secretary's vehicles for violating traffic rules.

Policemen on the ground said drivers of Dhaka University buses often take wrong sides.

If anyone -- be it a traffic cop or any other person -- causes any obstacle or protests the infraction, he has every chance of being manhandled by the students on board.

Several months ago, an ex-DU student and his father were beaten up by some DU students as they protested the university bus driving on the wrong side of Mirpur Road near Dhanmondi-6.

In a similar incident, two members of a law enforcement agency were also assaulted in Mirpur-1, university

sources said.

Right in front of a traffic sergeant at Mirpur-10, a double-decker bus of Dhaka University went on the wrong side.

"What should I do? They are the students of the country's most prestigious educational institution," the frustrated sergeant told The Daily Star.

DU acting proctor Prof Amzad Ali claimed the frequencies of such violation of traffic rules had declined after they warned the president and secretary of the bus committees last month.

He said they warned of withdrawing a bus from service if it was found driving on the wrong side. "We have also threatened the drivers with suspension."

Journalists are also among the rule breakers. Small vehicles of media houses, especially television channels, are often seen driving on the wrong side. Policemen do not dare to stop them fearing the occupants are well connected people and they could have the law enforcers transferred or even suspended.

It is not that traffic police are too bothered about vehicles running on the wrong side either. On New Eskaton Road, for instance, the law enforcers actually instruct rickshaws to take the wrong side.

Not in interest of country, people

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SC judges on grounds of misconduct or incapacity. A bill on the amendment is expected to be placed in the current session of parliament.

At the discussion, Dr Kamal, one of the framers of the constitution, said it was not a democratic practice that parliament passed an amendment bill immediately after the cabinet hurriedly approved a proposal.

Dhaka City Corporation was split in four minutes, which is also against democratic norms, he added.

In 2011, several renowned jurists, including him, and some former chief justices gave their opinions to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, suggesting that the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), having authority to probe allegations against a judge and make recommendations to the president, should be upheld.

But the government in July hurried to bring about the 16th amendment to scrap the authority of the SJC and confer the power on parliament, though it had many urgent tasks pending at the time, Kamal said.

"Why was the move made so hastily?"

Parliament was given such power in 1972 considering that it was neutral, the jurist said, and then raised the question whether parliament had become impartial in the last 43 years since independence.

To ensure transparency in the appointment of judges, he said, the government should frame guidelines determining how judges should be appointed to the SC.

Necessary amendments to the constitution should be brought about after an evaluation of performance of the House and the SJC, he added.

Kamal also suggested making a law to ensure checks and balances between the authority of the judiciary and the executive.

Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, a former SC judge, said the power to impeach judges should remain in the hands of the Supreme Judicial Council and a specific law should be formulated for appointing SC judges.

Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque, another former SC judge, who moderated the discussion, said he very often heard

allegations against some judges, for which he felt insulted.

He suggested the formation of a committee comprising a senior Appellate Division judge, a senior High Court judge and a senior lawyer nominated by the Speaker for probing allegations against any judge.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder, who presented a written statement, expressed concern that parliament would in a similar fashion be given power to remove officials of other constitutional and statutory bodies and that all independent institutions would finally come under the control of the government.

He said questions had been raised if the current parliament had any public representation since it had come into being through a voterless election and most of its members had been elected unopposed.

Certainly, the judges have to be accountable, but the accountability of the lawmakers, who possessed unlimited powers, should also be guaranteed, Badiul added.

A larger section of the lawmakers of the present government is involved in

different offensive and illegal activities. Many of them are harming the dignity of parliament and so their accountability must be ensured first, he said.

Columnist Syed Abul Moksud said opinions of former chief justices, sitting and former attorney generals and incumbent and former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association could be solicited for determining a system to impeach judges.

If parliament gets the impeachment authority, judges appointed during the BNP rule will be impeached during the ruling of the Awami League and vice versa, said Asif Nazrul, a Dhaka University teacher.

A one-party fascist rule will be established if the 16th amendment is passed, he added.

Brig Gen (ret'd) M Shakhawat Hossain, former election commissioner; Prof Dilara Chowdhury, a former teacher of Jahangirnagar University; Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of civil society platform Nagorik Oikya, and journalist Mizanur Rahman Khan also spoke at the programme.

BNP 'legally'-trapped

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whom were Moudud, Fakhrul, Abbas, Goyeshwar, Abdullah Al Noman and Zainal Abdin Farroque.

The accused were charged with creating anarchy, vandalizing and

torching vehicles, hurling crude bombs at policemen, assaulting police and obstructing them in the discharge of their duties.

The courts will begin trials in the seven cases any time.

In the last eight months, police have submitted 59 charge sheets against BNP men. Already burdened with busy schedules, they will be absolutely on their feet after police submit more charge sheets, said party leaders and their counsels.

Most of the cases are now at the stage of charge framing.

Accused in 24 cases, Goyeshwar said he has to attend court almost every work day. "It is difficult for me to find time to do other work," he told The Daily Star.

According to Syed Zaynul Abedin Mesbah, a BNP counsel who looks after the cases against BNP leaders, police had filed more than 500 cases only in Dhaka district against around 24,000 BNP leaders and activists in 2013 alone, when the anti-government agitation was at its peak.

About 300 cases were filed with the Paltan and Motijheel police stations. The areas under the two police stations were the hub of the opposition parties' activities.

BNP leader Tariqul Islam said the government is doing this to foil the opposition's movement.

Except for RA Ghani, M Shamsul Islam, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman and Nazrul Islam Khan, all from the 18-member BNP standing committee are facing dozens of cases.

Mirza Fakhrul has been facing more unpleasant experiences. He has already been indicted in at least 15 cases. And he has also been accused in around 37 more cases. Earlier, he was

detained thrice and kept in jail for weeks.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was not accused in any case filed in connection with the political violence. But she has been facing five graft cases.

Her elder son, Tarique Rahman, senior vice-president of the BNP, is facing 16 cases, including the one for the August 21 grenade attack. Tarique has been living in London since the middle of 2008.

Leaders and activists of the BNP's front organisations, who in the past used to play an active role in street agitation, also stand accused in dozens of cases.

As many as 106 cases have been filed against Rafiqul Alam Manju, secretary of Dhaka South Jubo Dal; 90 against Abdul Quader Bhuiyan Jewel, president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, and 96 against Habibur Rashid Habib, general secretary of JCD.

Moazzem Hossain Alal and Saiful Alam Nirob, president and general secretary of Jubo Dal, have respectively 50 and 92 cases against them.

The experience of Habibun Nabi Khan Sohel, president of Swechchhasebak Dal and secretary of the newly formed convening committee of Dhaka city BNP, shows how cases can keep a leader busy.

Sohel, accused in 70 cases, was scheduled to chair a discussion on August 25 to mark the founding anniversary of Swechchhasebak Dal in the capital. But he announced a postpone-

ment of the programme in order to appear before a court.

Sarafat Aki Safu, Swechchhasebak Dal's general secretary, is facing 70 cases.

Many leaders and activists are now behind bars on different charges or are in hiding to avoid arrest in the cases. In such a situation, the BNP is now struggling hard to reorganise itself to wage a fresh agitation against the government.

In the opinion of senior party figures, the BNP founded in 1978 has never experienced such a bad time as it is facing now. Along with organisational weaknesses, the government's tougher stance has made the BNP unable to fight back. This situation has frustrated many grassroots leaders and activists.

"The BNP is passing through the hardest time in its history. The party is facing manifold challenges as well," BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said.

He said the government was desperate to destroy the BNP.

When the BNP was in power in 2001-2006, numerous cases were filed against the AL men who had waged street agitation against the BNP government.

After assuming office in January 2009, the AL-led government withdrew more than 7,000 cases filed against the party's leaders and activists during the BNP's tenure.

The cases were termed "politically motivated".

Zia Sarani

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Like Mizanur, around 20,000 residents of the area have to deal with the appalling road on a regular basis to get to the two main roads.

Nazrul Islam said he bought a house in the area but was trying to sell it off due to the dilapidated condition of the road, but he couldn't get a buyer.

He is a Bangladeshi living in the USA who has been in Dhaka for around two months now.

Nobody dares to use a car on the road, he said, adding that he had used his car but had to spend Tk 40,000 in the last one and half months on repairs.

Children going to school suffer the most. They have to walk and sometimes wade into knee-deep water after a downpour.

"I showed up for my English first paper exam on August 11 in dirty and wet uniform as I had fallen while going through the water," said Rabeya Akhtar, a class-X student of Sheikhdi Abdullah Mollah High School at Matuail.

Her classmate Afroza Akhtar said, "My uniform was ruined just three days ago when the entire road went under knee-deep-water."

"We want nothing from our public representatives and the government, we just want them to do something about this," said Abdur Rob, a trader of the area.

Union Parishad chairman of Daniya, Md Jumman Miyah, said a contract worth Tk 5 crore had already been awarded for repairs of the road and the contractor has started work.

"We are expecting the work to finish before the coming Eid," he said.

Locals said there was no sign of work beginning and the UP chairman's claim was a lie.

NAME	DESIGNATION	NUMBER OF CASES
Fakhrul Islam Alamgir	Acting secretary general	52
Mirza Abbas	Standing committee member	73
Moudud Ahmed	Standing committee member	14
Goyeshwar Chandra Roy	Standing committee member	24
Jamir Uddin Sircar	Standing committee member	5
MK Anwar	Standing committee member	9
Rafiqul Islam Mia	Standing committee member	5
Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain	Standing committee member	6
Brig (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah	Standing committee member	5
Abdul Quader Bhuiyan Jewel	President, JCD	90
Habibur Rashid	General secretary, JCD	96
Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel	Member-Secretary, Dhaka City president, Swechchhasebak Dal	70
Sarafat Ali Sapu	general secretary, Swechchhasebak Dal	70
Shafiul Bari Babu	Organizing secretary, Swechchhasebak Dal	30
Moazzem Hossain Alal	President, Jubo Dal	50
Saiful Islam Nirob	General secretary, Jubo Dal	92
Rafiqul Alam Manzu	Secretary, Jubo Dal, Dhaka South	106
Amanullah Aman	Joint secretary-general, BNP	25
Rizvi Ahmed	Joint secretary-general, BNP	10
Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee	Student affairs secretary, BNP	40
Abdul Awal Mintoo	No 1 joint convener, Dhaka City BNP	5