



## I'm not sick

Chief justice tells journos before leaving for Australia, expresses concern over 'interference in judiciary', alleges a quarter is misleading govt, says he's not fleeing



Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha hands over a statement to journalists before getting into a car in front of his residence last night.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha last night said he was not sick as he left the country for Australia, contradicting the government's claim that he went on leave on health grounds earlier this month.

He briefly spoke to the reporters in front of his official residence at Kakrail and handed them a signed statement, typed in Bangla, before heading to the airport around 9:50pm.

"I'm not sick. I'm not fleeing. I'll come back. I'm a little embarrassed. I'm the guardian of the judiciary. I'm leaving for a brief period in the interest of the judiciary, and so that the judiciary is not polluted," the CJ told reporters.

"I've no antipathy to anybody. It's my firm belief that the government has been misled. This is my statement [the written statement]. I won't say

anything more," he said.

It was the first time he spoke to the local media since the government announced his "sick leave" beginning October 3, the day the apex court opened after over a month-long annual vacation.

Immigration officials confirmed the CJ left on board a Singapore Airlines flight at midnight.

In the written statement, he said, "I'm fully well, but the way a political quarter, lawyers, and especially some honourable ministers of the government and the honourable prime minister are criticising me recently over a verdict made me embarrassed."

Some in the government have wrongly interpreted the verdict (in the 16th amendment case) and presented it to the prime minister, making her upset, he said. "I firmly believe that it will not last 9 DAYS OF CONFUSION -- PAGE 2 SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Another eyewash?

Myanmar military opens internal probe into conduct of soldiers

STAR REPORT

Myanmar's military has launched an internal probe into the conduct of soldiers during an offensive that has sent more than half a million Rohingyas fleeing to Bangladesh, many saying they witnessed killings, rape and arson by troops.

A committee led by Lieutenant-General Aye Win has begun an investigation into the behaviour of military personnel, the office of the commander in chief said yesterday, insisting the operation was justified under Buddhist-majority Myanmar's constitution.

According to a statement posted on Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's Facebook page, the panel will ask, "Did they follow the military code of conduct? Did they exactly follow the command during the operation? After that [the committee] will release full information."

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**ROHINGYA INFLUX**  
**5,36,000**  
AND COUNTING

## Big promises, little progress

One year on, projects under \$21.5b Chinese loan confined to paperwork



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Exactly a year ago, China committed an estimated \$21.5 billion in soft loan to Bangladesh for 27 projects, but Beijing is yet to release any fund mainly due to lengthy bureaucratic tangle.

The deals were signed on October 14 last year during Chinese President Xi Jinping's Dhaka visit.

Among the agreements was Karnaphuli Tunnel Loan Agreement, which was inked in the presence of the Chinese president who said he wanted "to elevate practical relations between the two countries to a higher level".

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Jinping even inaugurated the construction work of the tunnel through a video conference from the Prime Minister's Office.

Bangladesh officials said they could not start the construction work as the Chinese Exim Bank, with which the loan deal was

- A year ago, Chinese govt committed \$21.5b soft loan
- MoU signed at that time for 27 projects under the loan
- So far loan agreement signed for only one project
- Govt hopes to sign 6 more agreements by this fiscal year
- Progress very slow because of procedural delay
- Exchange of files, examining proposals taking time

signed, did not release the fund. The project cost has been estimated at \$700 million.

The initial agreement for the project was signed in 2014 during Hasina's visit to China. In case of projects under Chinese soft loans, signing of a loan agreement is the last step, meaning the project can start in full swing immediately afterwards.

Since January, Dhaka sent a series of letters and relevant documents to the Bank for loan activation. A government delegation also visited Beijing to expedite the release of the fund, said officials at the Bridges Division and the finance ministry.

As per the Exim Bank's demand, Dhaka sent it a manual on how the tunnel would be used, but the manual was not signed by the appropriate authorities. So the Bank requested the Bangladesh officials to send a

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