

Scramble, chaos for 3-taka egg

STAR REPORT

People from across the city started gathering on Krishibid Institution Bangladesh premises well before 8:00am yesterday. Within half an hour, the place swarmed with hundreds of people, with some of them carrying egg boxes, plastic bags, buckets, and cartons to buy eggs at less than half of the market price.

The crowd swelled as time passed and queues of willing buyers stretched for around a kilometre from sales booths. But only a few people were lucky to have bought eggs as most of them had to return home empty handed. For many, it was a bitter experience as they were chased by police amid a chaos, mainly due to mismanagement of the organisers.

To mark the World Egg Day 2017, Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council (DPICC) in collaboration with the Department of Livestock Services organised a much-hyped Egg Fair, offering the city dwellers eggs at Tk 3 each. One could buy a maximum of 90 eggs.

The fair, scheduled to be held from 10:00am to 1:00pm, was aimed at encouraging people to eat eggs. The organisers started selling eggs at

9:00am, but stopped within a few minutes as they failed to manage the huge number of customers.

Frustrated, some fair-goers then started chanting slogans against the organisers. A few makeshift shops at the fair venue collapsed due to crowds' pushing and shoving there. Many eggs in cages were seen smashed. Police intervened and used baton charges to stop the protest.

"It was a total farce. They [organisers] announced about the fair with hype, but gave us nothing. I have come here at 9:00am and returning home after being chased by police," said Abu Raihan, a resident of Kazipara.

Sweating in the scorching heat, Hashem Ali was more furious.

"I stood in a long queue for about two hours only to be in the midst of a chaos. I'll never forget the World Egg Day ever in my life," said a frustrated Hashem, a primary school teacher.

"What is the point of inviting people when you cannot do the job properly?" questioned the man in his forties.

Solaiman, a resident of Nakhla, was also there with three egg boxes.

"Seeing the advertisement, I came here with much enthusiasm to buy eggs

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An offer of eggs at Tk 3 each yesterday drew a huge crowd but the event soon descended into chaos as the organisers stopped the sale failing to cope with the rush. The fair was held in the capital's Khamarbari marking the World Egg Day 2017.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

I'm not sick

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long."

He also said he was a "bit worried about the independence of the judiciary". "Because citing the senior most judge [of the Supreme Court] who is now acting as the chief justice, the law minister yesterday [on Thursday] said that the judge acting as the chief justice will bring changes to the Supreme Court administration soon.

"There is no precedence of interference in the administration of the chief justice by the judge acting as the chief justice or the government. He [the judge acting as the CJ] will only discharge daily work as per the routine. It has always been like this.

"If any interference is made in the chief justice's administration, it can be easily assumed that the government is interfering in the higher court and this will further deteriorate the relationship between the judiciary and the government. It would not bring any good to the state," he concluded.

The Daily Star has a photograph of his written statement.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq, who first broke the news of the CJ's "sick leave," declined to comment instantly.

"I will make comment after going through the statement of the chief justice," he told The Daily Star.

On October 2, the Supreme Court authorities informed the president about Justice Sinha's leave in a letter, according to the law minister.

The law minister the following day told the media that the CJ was going on a month's leave as he had cancer. A few days later, he also showed what he claimed was a copy of the CJ's letter informing the president about his leave.

The BNP and the Supreme Court Bar Association, which is dominated by pro-BNP lawyers, have been alleging the government forced the CJ to go on leave, but the law minister and the attorney general dismissed it.

CJ's relatives visited him at his residence earlier in the day yesterday.

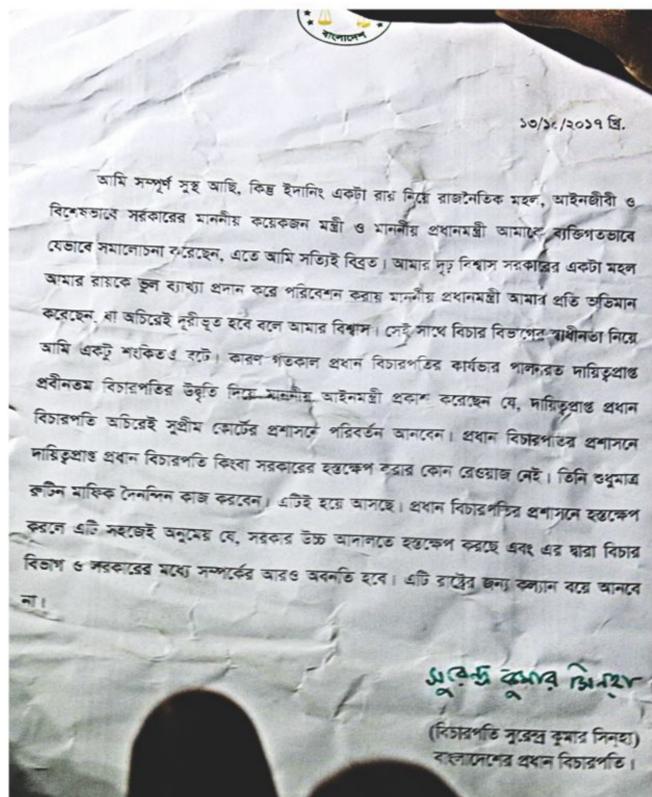
Journalists started gathering in front of his house since evening.

On Wednesday, President Abdul Hamid consented to the chief justice's plan to go abroad. The prime minister and law minister earlier signed the relevant order, which is mandatory for any government official travelling abroad. The law ministry issued a circular on Justice Sinha's leave on Thursday.

The chief justice will stay with his daughter in Australia till November 10, said a top official at the Supreme Court, asking not to be named.

Although the law minister told reporters on Thursday that Justice Sinha would travel to Australia, Canada, the US and the UK, the SC official said the CJ did not speak about travelling to any other country but Australia yesterday.

According to the circular on the



The statement Justice Sinha handed over to newsmen. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

chief justice's leave, Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, the senior most judge of the SC after Justice Sinha, will carry out the CJ's duties till November 10 or till the CJ rejoins office.

Justice Sinha was appointed the 21st chief justice of the country in January 2015. He is scheduled to go into retirement on January 31 next year, said SC sources.

He came under fire ever since the SC on August 1 released the full text of its verdict in the 16th amendment case, scrapping the 16th amendment that had empowered parliament to remove SC judges for misconduct or incapacity.

Following the verdict, the prime minister and senior ministers came down heavily on the CJ, with many of them calling for his resignation.

Some pro-AL organisations, including Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad, held protest programmes against the CJ. Parishad leaders threatened to launch a tougher agitation if the CJ didn't step down.

The Jatiya Sangsad on September 13 passed a resolution calling for legal steps to nullify the SC verdict. The law minister on several occasions said the government would seek review of the judgment.

In its full verdict, the SC made some observations, which were critical of the country's present political culture.

Talking to the media on August

13, the law minister was particularly critical of CJ's observation that "no nation, no country is made of or by one person".

Anisul Huq said this was irrelevant in the case at hand and also contrary to the history. "There is no doubt that history has been distorted here."

He said neither the country's independence nor its declaration happened overnight. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced it after earning the people's mandate through a political movement.

"It will be a crime if I distort it," he said.

Hours before the CJ's departure, the BNP once again claimed the government was sending him abroad by "force" to establish its full control over the judiciary, reports UNB.

"It's now clear to the entire nation that the government has taken all the steps to send the chief justice abroad by force. It's also clear to all that the government is making all efforts to control the judiciary," Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told reporters.

He said the government made the move against Sinha for scrapping the 16th amendment and for unveiling the truth and the current situation of the country in the verdict. "The government can't accept and tolerate the verdict as they think it may put them in trouble."

fire and died when he was trying to flee from the police van, the DB official added.

Police claimed to have recovered a pistol, four bullets and a machete from the spot.

Shahin's father confirmed that his son was arrested from home. Yesterday morning, they came to know that his son was killed in a "gunfight", he added.

9 DAYS OF CONFUSION

Oct 2

Law minister says, "The chief justice will go on a month's leave from tomorrow [Oct 3] on health grounds." A gazette mentions that Justice Wahhab will now discharge the duty of CJ.

Oct 3

SCBA says Justice Sinha has been forced to take leave; law minister and attorney general reject the allegation. Justice Wahhab takes charge of the CJ's office.

Oct 4

BNP alleges Justice Sinha has been forced to refrain from carrying out his duties on the pretext of illness.

Oct 5

Justice Sinha visits the Dhakeshwari Temple in the capital on the occasion of Laxmi Puja. Law minister assures Justice Wahhab of full cooperation from the government. Moudud Ahmed alleges CJ has been put under "house arrest".

Oct 6

Law enforcers allegedly bar SCBA president and secretary from meeting Justice Sinha. PM's international affairs adviser meets Sinha at the latter's residence.

Oct 7

SCBA calls a five-day nationwide demonstration protesting "police obstruction" of its attempt to meet the chief justice.

Oct 8

Justice Sinha goes to ICDDR,B for blood and urine tests. Several newspaper reports say CJ is going to Australia to see his daughter and receive treatment.

Oct 10

The SC authorities send a letter to the president informing him that Justice Sinha is going to Australia. SCBA demonstrates protesting "confinement" of CJ.

Oct 12

BNP in a briefing for foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka raises issues relating to the 16th amendment verdict and Justice Sinha's leave.

Nato warns against N Korea military action

Says move would have 'devastating consequences'

AFP, Brussels

Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday told AFP that a military intervention against North Korea would have "devastating consequences", after US President Donald Trump said diplomatic efforts had failed.

Stoltenberg, who will visit South Korea and Japan in the coming weeks as a show of support, stressed that Washington had the right to defend itself and its allies, but called for greater diplomatic efforts.

"The use of military force will have devastating consequences, I think nobody really wants that, therefore we need to continue to push for a negotiated solution," Stoltenberg said in an interview at Nato HQ in Brussels.

"The US has the right to defend itself, to defend its allies, but at same time I am absolutely certain no one wants a military solution, so we still see a united effort to try to step up the

pressure against North Korea."

Trump met his national security team on Tuesday and discussed a "range of options" to respond to Pyongyang's repeated recent nuclear and ballistic missile tests.

The meeting came days after Trump, who last month threatened to "destroy" North Korea, said on Twitter that years of talks with Pyongyang had achieved nothing and "only one thing will work".

The United States and South Korea will kick off a major navy drill in the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea in a show of force against the North next week and there has been a flurry of military hardware movement in the region in recent days.

Earlier this week two supersonic US heavy bombers flew over the Korean peninsula, staging the first night-time joint aviation exercises with Japan and South Korea, the latest in a series of flyovers.

Big promises

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copy of the manual with signature of the authorities concerned, which was later sent to the Bank.

A top finance ministry official said all the requirements had been fulfilled and that they were now waiting for the "letter of final loan activation".

Both Bangladesh and China have to deal with a series of bureaucratic red tape for implementing projects under soft loans. On the Bangladesh side, the projects must have approval of several committees, which causes delay, said the official.

On the Chinese side, the process is more complex as they too must complete a number of lengthy procedures. Besides, the Exim Bank has some limitations. Only four officials of the Bank deal with foreign loans, which can cause unwanted delay, the official added, asking not to be named.

Also, Chinese firms looking to get the contract lobby hard in both the countries, causing further delay, said an official of the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

Normally, the Chinese government grants soft loans (at 2% interest; payable in 20 years, including five years of grace period) on a calendar year basis. Bangladesh initially sought funds for six projects in 2017, but the progress remain confined to paperwork.

State Minister for Finance and Planning MA Mannan acknowledged this, saying, "We did not get the funds as expected."

But he hoped that the projects would pick up pace in future.

In case of soft loans, the Chinese government examines various aspects after the submission of the loan proposals, he added.

ERD Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam said they were trying to sign loan agreements for eight projects worth about \$7 billion by the end of this fiscal year.

Over the last few years, Bangladesh received promises of big soft loans both from China and India. The loans from both the countries are, however, conditional.

In case of Indian soft credit, loan agreements are signed first and all other formalities, including selection of projects and their approvals, are completed later.

A month after Xi Jinping's Dhaka

visit, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the ERD, and the line ministries prepared a roadmap in November last year for implementing the projects.

Initially, the Chinese government expressed its interest in financing three projects in telecommunication and energy sectors. But Dhaka had been pursuing for six projects, especially the 172km Padma Bridge Rail Link project worth about \$3.14 billion.

The PMO even sent a special letter to the Chinese government emphasising the political and economic importance of the rail link project for Bangladesh. The letter noted that the planned rail link is also part of the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation) economic corridor.

The letter further said PM Hasina wished to open the train services over the Padma the same day the bridge is opened. The government also sent a high-powered team to Beijing this year so that the deal for the project could be signed by December.

After the communication China has agreed to sign the deal this year, and the ERD last month sent all necessary papers for signing the loan agreement with Exim Bank.

The project would be implemented by 2022, but a portion of the rail line would be completed by December 2018 when the government plans to open the Padma Bridge to traffic.

Loan agreements for three projects are expected to be signed by the end of this month, ERD officials said.

The projects are Installation of Single Point Mooring with Double Pipelines (\$550 million), Development of National ICT Infra-Network for Bangladesh Government Phase III (\$157 million) and Modernisation of Telecommunication Network for Digital Connectivity (\$231 million).

Bangladesh has also been seeking Chinese funds for two power projects -- Expansion and Strengthening of Power System under DPDC Area (\$1.65 billion) and Power Grid Network Strengthening Project under PGCB (\$1.32 billion).

China has agreed to finance the projects but they will give commercial loans instead of soft loans, meaning the rate of interest will be higher, finance ministry officials said.

2 'criminals' killed in 'gunfights'

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accused of killing Malaysia expatriate Rafiqul Islam, was arrested in his village home early Thursday, according to police.

Rafiqul was killed on Wednesday night over family feuds, police said. Police suspected that Shahin was a hired to murder Rafiqul.

Sabbirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kushtia DB, said after gleaming

information from Shahin, a DB team with him went to Shelaidah in Kumarkhali upazila to arrest other killers of Rafiqul.

Shahin's accomplices opened fire on the DB men when they reached Kashba village around 3:30am. A "shootout" took place when the law enforcers retaliated, the police official said.

Shahin was caught in the line of