



SPECTRUM COLLAPSE

If anything has changed since the 2005 disaster

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'LIFE IN MIRROR'

Exhibition depicts inner struggle and torment of human beings

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'TOTAL WITCH-HUNT'

Trump furious as FBI raids offices of his personal lawyer

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Protests rage on

Quota demonstrators put aside differences; protests spread to pvt univs; class boycott to go on; 2 female agitators beaten up at DU hall

STAR REPORT

In a dramatic turn of events, two factions of demonstrators, who had been demanding reforms in the civil service quota system, reunited yesterday and called for nationwide road blockade and strike at universities and colleges from today.

The blockade and strike will continue until their demands are met.

"We won't step aside from the movement until Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina comes up with a specific announcement to put an end to this," said Nurul Haque, joint convener of the Bangladesh Shadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, while briefing the media at Dhaka University Library yesterday evening.

The parishad resumed its agitation yesterday after what it said were derogatory comments made by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury and the government's reluctance to solve the matter before the budget.

The parishad had postponed its protest programmes on Monday. Even yesterday morning it asked all to refrain from protesting until May 7 or join the faction that continued to demonstrate. It, however, changed its mind in the afternoon.

The platform demanded Matia apologise in parliament

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Demonstrators chant slogans in Dhaka University's TSC area around 7:30pm yesterday demanding reforms in quota system for government jobs.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No VAT on private universities

Says PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has no plans to impose VAT on private universities, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday said quoting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The announcement comes a day after Finance Minister AMA Muhith told reporters that private university owners would have to pay VAT in the next fiscal year.

In a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council yesterday the prime minister said no such step would be taken at the moment, Mustafa Kamal told reporters.

During the ECNEC meeting, a senior minister said Muhith's statement was misleading as the government had no plans to impose VAT on private universities. He added that it could spark further agitation at a time when a movement to reform the quota system in government jobs

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JOB QUOTA REFORM

Long call falls on deaf ears

INAM AHMED and SHAKHAWAT LITON

The call for reforming the quota system for government jobs was voiced just a year after it was introduced in 1972 and since then, several public service reform committees and the Public Service Commission itself, the body that oversees government recruitment, have objected to the policy.

However, documents show subsequent governments paid no heed to the suggestions for making room for more efficient people in bureaucracy by reforming the quota structure, leading to today's anger among the youths in the midst of a slowing job market.

All these recommendations had strong arguments evidenced by statistics that while some positive discrimination is required for the disadvantaged groups, other provisions simply discourage meritocracy.

When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman introduced quota in September 1972, the reality was quite different with a country ravaged by war and suffering from

long deprivation and extreme poverty. The Pakistani rule had discriminated against the Bangalees, and the districts other than Dhaka even more suffered from a lack of education and opportunities.

So, Bangabandhu had introduced a quota system that allocated 40 percent of the jobs to districts, 30 percent to freedom fighters who had lost nine months of their educational life fighting for the country, and 10 percent for the war-affected women. The rest 20 percent were to be appointed on merit.

In 1972, two high-powered reform bodies were assigned to make suggestions for the civil bureaucracy. It recommended next year several measures for selection process based on merit and long-term career planning.

In 1976, the Pay and Service Commission was formed and that also recommended merit-based recruitment. Meanwhile, the government increased merit quota to 40 percent from 20 percent and district quota was halved to 20 percent.

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THE WAY THEY SEE IT

For the last three days, the students of different universities demonstrated all over the country demanding reformation of the government's current quota system in public service recruitment. Currently, 56 percent of the candidates are recruited on a quota-based system, without taking merit into consideration. With the demand for the reforms, The Daily Star yesterday talked to top former bureaucrats and a former PSC chairman to get their opinion on the quota system and its reforms. Finance Minister AMA Muhith spoke about the issue separately to the press.



AMA Muhith

The finance minister said quota had to be in place, but questions might be raised over its percentage.

"There are backward sections in society and they have to be uplifted. So the quota must be there to promote the interest of the backward sections. But now the quota seems to be too high," he said.

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Akbar Ali Khan

The former cabinet secretary said reform could easily be made if the quota system was reviewed, but the political leaders did not want to touch the issue.

The country's constitution had the provision of quota but as an exception. The core principle was that recruitment in the government sector would be done

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Aii Imam Majumder

The former cabinet secretary thinks reform in the quota system is a must.

"I have said time and again that the quota system must be reformed," he said.

Explaining his rationale, he said by leaving out meritorious candidates and recruiting less meritorious ones, the standard of public service was being

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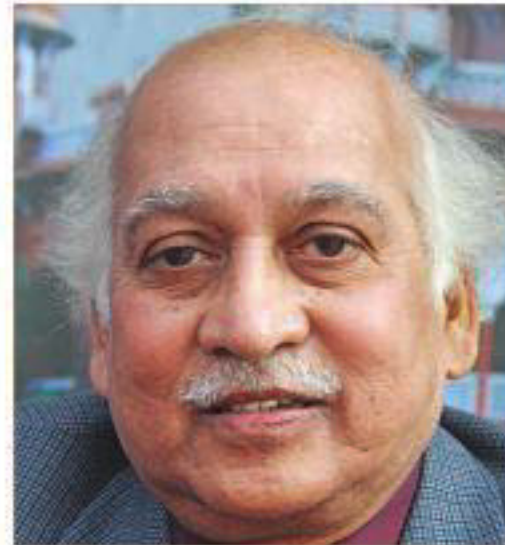


AMM Shawkat Ali

The former secretary, also in favour of reform in the quota system, said all the PSC reports since 1990 had stressed the need for reform.

"Quota system should not be a permanent system," he said, adding that the existing quota contradicted the spirit of the constitution as the

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SMA Faiz

Prof SMA Faiz, former chairman of the PSC, said the demands for quota-reforms are logical.

"A great portion of the freedom fighters' quota remains vacant. This means the need for that has really come down. This should have been reformed a long time back," he told The Daily Star.

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ARSON CASE

Khaleda's bail prayer rejected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A Comilla court yesterday rejected BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's bail petition in a case filed over instigating an arson attack on a bus in Chaudagram upazila that killed eight people in 2015.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mustain Billah passed the order after Khaleda's lawyer Sanaullah Miah moved the petition seeking bail in the case.

During yesterday's hearing, Sanaullah said Khaleda was accused in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass her politically. She could not be involved in any subversive activities as well as any killings, Sanaullah added.

On Sunday, the same court issued a production warrant against Khaleda, asking the jail authorities to produce her before it during the hearing.

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College student Rajib Hossain, who lost his right hand in a road mishap in the city a week ago, is fighting for life as doctors put him on life support at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. In this file photo, Rajib is seen undergoing treatment at a city hospital. Bottom left, his severed hand is stuck between two buses.

FILE PHOTO

Rajib put on life support

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

"I want to go home." This was a request made by college student Rajib Hossain, when he last spoke to his uncle, Jahidul Islam, around 9:30pm on Monday.

Rajib, who lost his right hand in a road accident in the city on April 4, then took a sip of fruit juice and went to sleep. Around 2:00am yesterday, Rajib, for the first time since the accident had bowel movements, a sign of his health improving.

Feeling less tense, Khadiza Begum, Rajib's aunt, who was with him at the intensive care unit (ICU) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), closed her eyes for merely an hour, but suddenly woke up to find an oxygen mask placed on Rajib's face.

"I was stunned and asked the nurses. They informed that they put the mask on, as Rajib suddenly began having breathing

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FARMERS BANK: TK 160CR SCAM

Chisty, 3 others sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chairman of Farmers Bank Audit Committee Mahabubul Haque Chisty, his son and two officials of the bank landed in jail yesterday after the Anti-Corruption Commission arrested them in a Tk 160-crore laundering case.

Mahabubul, his son Rashedul Haque Chisty, the bank's Senior Vice President Zia Uddin Ahmed and First Vice President Muhammad Masudur Rahman Khan were produced before a Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's Court that sent them to prison.

It also placed Mahabubul on remand for five days and the others for four days. Earlier in the morning, ACC Deputy Director Shamsul Alam filed the case with Gulshan Police Station, accusing six persons, including the four. The other two are Mahabubul's wife Ruzi Chisty and ex-manager of the bank's Gulshan Corporate Branch Delwar Hossain.

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Mahabubul Haque Chisty