

# Shajahan Khan offers apology

*Says he is saddened, ashamed of his smile, remarks on 2 students' death in road crash*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid widespread criticism over his smile and remarks on Sunday's road accident, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan yesterday offered his apology, saying he was "saddened and ashamed".

He said if any driver drove recklessly and killed people, he would get his due punishment as per law and no organisation would stand by him.

"If anyone do any wrong and commits a crime, he has to take the punishment," the minister said at a meeting of Bangladesh Samik-Karmachari-Peshajibi-Muktijoddha Shamannay Parishad, a pro-government organisation, at the BCIC auditorium in the capital's Motijheel.

On Sunday, a bus of Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan ploughed into a crowd waiting for transport near the Airport Road flyover ramp in the city's Kurmitola, killing two college students and injuring at least nine others.

Shajahan, also the executive president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, apparently tried to downplay the incident that day.

When reporters asked him about the deaths caused by an unhealthy competition between two buses, the minister grinned and threw a counter question at them.

"A road crash has claimed 33 lives in India's Maharashtra; but do they talk about it like the way we do?"

This caused uproar among people as many expressed their anger on social media.

Yesterday, Shajahan said he was at a programme on Sunday for signing a deal related to Mongla Port and at one point a journalist asked him questions about the road accident.

The minister said he smiled in the context of the remarks of journalists. "However, I am saddened and ashamed. I am requesting all to accept my apology for my remarks."

"My fault is that I smile. People and God love those who smile.... However, if you consider my smiling an offence, I won't smile anymore," he said.

Shajahan, also the convener of Shamannay Parishad, said he had been involved with the workers federation for the last 47 years. "It is not true if anybody said I always take a stand in favour of a driver after an accident."

The minister blasted former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and Nagarik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna over the issuance of a statement criticising him. He, however, said he would not comment about the other signatory to the statement, ASM Abdur Rob, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

The Samannay Parishad organised the meeting to press home their six-point demand which includes expelling members of Jamaat-Shibir and

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## SHAJAHAN-NAMA

Things transport leader and Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan said sparking outrage

"The incidents of sexual assault on women on Dhaka University campus during Pahela Baishakh celebrations in 2015 were not a big issue."

At a programme at Dhaka University on March 8, 2016. The next day, he withdrew his comments following huge criticisms.

"The oil spill would cause little harm to the Sundarbans."

On December 13, 2014 after an oil tanker sank in the Shela river in the Sundarbans, outright rejecting the environment ministry's pleas to permanently ban playing of commercial vessels on the river.

"If a driver can sign his name, can understand traffic signs and signals, can tell a cow from a goat and has good driving skills, what is the problem in giving him a licence?"

At a press conference at his ministry on August 18, 2011. His recommendations had generated a lot of media outbursts and eminent citizens observed that the minister was actually recommending to let loose 28,000 potential killers on the country's roads.

"A road crash has claimed 33 lives in India's Maharashtra; but do they talk about it the way we do?"

The minister fired back after a journalist asked him about the deaths of two college students in Dhaka on Sunday. The accident happened apparently because of competition between two buses for passengers in Uttara. He was smiling all the while.

"If my smiling is an offense, then I will smile no more."

He told a discussion yesterday, still smiling.

"Besides the drivers, victims of road accidents should be tried."

At the national representative meeting of Bangladesh Government Driver Association at Gias Uddin Milky Auditorium in the capital on May 12, 2018.

"The ministry is my first priority since the prime minister gave me the portfolio, but trade unionism has become part of my blood. I have been involved in this for 40 years."

He told The Daily Star on August 22, 2011 amid outrage over his role in making recommendation for issuing driving licences to 28,000 transport workers without proper tests.

## BARISAL ELECTION Manisha vows to fight for re-polling

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, from Barisal

A day after the Barisal City Cooperation election, Manisha Chakraborty, a mayoral aspirant from Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, yesterday castigated the Election Commission for the alleged rigging and massive irregularities in the polls.

At a human chain formed near the Town Hall of the city around 11:30am, she demanded cancellation of the city corporation polls, saying it was not an election; rather, it was a vote robbery.

It has been proved that the Election Commission completely failed to hold credible polls, said Manisha, adding that she would go to court if a fresh election is not arranged.

She also had filed a written complaint with the EC for cancellation of the election in the afternoon on the polling day.

Manisha, the youngest contender for the mayoral post in the city, came under the spotlight for her campaigns accompanied by the common people.

Her courageous acts of catching red-handed those rigging vote were widely appreciated and the video of her activities against the irregularities went viral on social media.

Manisha claimed she got 1,917 votes before 8:30am as the vote rigging started at different centres afterwards.

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## GOVT EMPLOYEES Home loan at only 5pc interest rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government employees are going to get low interest loans at 20-year repayment periods for buying houses or apartments, says a circular issued by the finance division yesterday.

The circular, effective from July 1 this year, says any government employee under the age of 56 can get the low interest housing loan.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith had announced the low interest housing loans for government employees in his budget speech in June.

He said the move would motivate government employees to be more proactive in delivering public services and establish good governance everywhere.

Based on the location and grade of a government employee, he or she can now take loans starting from Tk 20 lakh to Tk 75 lakh with a 10 percent interest rate.

Of the 10 percent, the government will grant five percent subsidy to the

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## Protests flare up

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different educational institutions joining in.

They want a safe road, student-friendly transport system and exemplary punishment of the bus drivers involved in the accident on the Airport Road.

They also demand resignation of the shipping minister, or at least an unconditional apology, for his remarks with a smiling face about the accident that left two students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College dead and at least nine others wounded.

Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib were killed on the spot when a Jabal-e-Noor bus ploughed through a crowd while competing with another bus of the same company. It was later revealed that a third bus was also involved in the race.

All the three drivers -- none of whom have professional driving licences -- were arrested on Monday, police said.

Protesting the deaths of their fellows, students took to the streets at Farmgate, Science Laboratory intersection, Mirpur-1, Mirpur-10, Mirpur-13, Uttara, Motijheel, Rampura, Nabisco intersection, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and Shyamoli in the morning amid huge presence of law enforcers.

Traffic system collapsed across the city due to the demonstrations, causing much trouble for office-goers and other commuters. Also, some transport operators did not run their vehicles, resulting in a shortage of transport.

Normalcy returned around 5:00pm.

Police first swung into action near BRTA office in Mirpur-13 around noon as a couple of hundreds college students gathered there to press home their demand, witnesses said.

As the students marched towards Mirpur-10, police intercepted them and beat them up, they added.

A number of witnesses said they saw blood oozing from the wounds of the

head of a student and from the hand of another.

In response, the students vandalised at least five vehicles, mostly buses.

Around 700 students, including from City College, Dhanmondi Ideal College and Birshreshtha Noor Mohammad Public College, took position at the Science Lab intersection blocking Mirpur Road for about two hours from 11:45pm.

Students vandalised and then torched



Students block the Farmgate intersection in the city yesterday demanding justice for the death of two college students.

PHOTO: STAR

a bus there.

Some of their placards read: "Children's corpses on father's shoulder -- how many more?"; "We want justice"; "Step down shipping minister immediately"; "We don't want 4G, we want to return home safe".

All roads connected to the intersection were closed and no vehicles were allowed in except for ambulance.

As the students stood their ground, some 150 police tried to disperse them.

Being chased by police, students threw brickbats and vandalised a number of vehicles while leaving the area through different points. Pieces of broken glass were seen from Science Lab to Shahbagh. At least 20 vehicles, including a police SUV, were vandalised in the area, witnesses said.

Two City College students and a Dhanmondi Ideal College student were detained from the area on charges of throwing brickbats. They were released

from different educational institutions of Uttara, Tongi and even from Gazipur took to the street and blocked both sides of the highway near Jashimuddin Road area since 11:30am. They only allowed ambulance and vehicles carrying hajj pilgrims to pass through, witnesses said.

As police tried to persuade them to free the road, they agreed to leave the road at 4:00pm. But at 3:40pm police tried to move three buses through the road which infuriated the students, who then vandalised the buses.

Police and Rab members charged baton on the students who retaliated by throwing brickbats, leading to a clash for around half an hour that turned the Jashimuddin Road area into a virtual battlefield. A policeman was injured when hit by a piece of brick.

Students torched two buses and vandalised several others in the area.

Nur-e-Azam Miah, officer-in-charge of Airport Police Station in Uttara, denied that law enforcers used any force. He instead blamed the students for the situation.

Students of Government Science College, Tejgaon Government Boys High School, Sher-e-Bangla Boys High School, Notre Dame College, Government Science College and Rajarbagh Police Lines School and College also took part in the protest, blocking the road near their institutions.

CONDITION WORSENER

The bleeding student seen in the video on social media was later identified as Ahad Ali, 19, of Shaheed Police Smriti College.

He had lost sense immediately for excessive bleeding from the head. He was first taken to a local hospital and then to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, his classmates said.

"We later shifted him to the Square Hospital for better treatment," Shikder Shamim Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kaful Police Station, told The Daily Star

## No valid papers, no plying the road from Aug 3 Say transport leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three leading associations of transport owners and workers last night made several decisions to bring discipline in the transport sector, amid growing protest over Sunday's road accident.

These include checking the documents of buses, such as fitness certificates and driving licences, before they leave terminals.

The associations made the decisions at a special meeting attended by four top leaders of the organisations and an office of a transport owner.

They will hold a meeting with the home minister regarding the decisions today and brief the media about it, Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, told The Daily Star last night.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, also the executive president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, General Secretary Osman Ali and Faruk Talukdar Sohel, chairman, Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association, took part in the meeting.

Osman said representatives of the owners and workers would start checking documents of buses at every terminal in the capital from August 3.

"Without proper documents, no vehicles would be allowed to ply [on the roads] from that date," he told this correspondent over phone.

They will ask the authorities to take action against owners of unfit vehicles and drivers with fake licences, and their associations will help the authorities to do so, he added.

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last night.

A doctor at the emergency unit said Ahad's condition worsened and that he was being treated at the Intensive Care Unit.

FOUR PRODUCED BEFORE COURT

Rab arrested five people -- three drivers and two helpers -- over the accident and handed them over to the police on Monday.

"They told us that they had nonprofessional driving licence for light vehicles



Ahad, a victim of police beating, now being treated at the ICU of Square Hospital.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

such as microbus and car. But they could not show even those," said Kazi Shahan Haque, officer-in-charge of Cantonment Police Station.

The cantonment police produced two drivers and two helpers before a Dhaka court yesterday, seeking a seven-day remand in a case filed over the death of the two students.

They are drivers Jubair and Md Sohag and helpers Md Ripon and Md Enayet.

The court will hear the remand petition on August 6.

Masum Billah, the driver of the bus that hit the students, was not produced before the court.

Asked why, sub-inspector Riad Ahmed of Cantonment Police Station, said Masum was in the custody of detectives, who are now investigating the case.

## BNP surprised over Sylhet

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insiders say.

"We thought that the government will take away all the mayoral posts. But it played a game in Sylhet. This election is a part of the government's evil strategy. It was actually an attempt to show that a free and fair election is possible under this government," said a joint secretary general BNP, wishing anonymity.

Sylhet polls, on the other hand, frustrated the top AL leaders.

"Those who have joined the Awami League from the BNP-Jamaat betrayed the party during the vote on Monday. So it's a message for the party. They may do the same in the national polls," said a senior leader of the party, wishing not to be named.

Awami League General Secretary and

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader welcomed Ariful Haque and came up with a different view.

"The BNP candidate won the Sylhet city polls due to our organisational weaknesses. Now we want to know if Ariful still wants re-election in the city," he said at a press conference.

During the polling on Monday, Arif claimed that vote was rigged in 41 centres and he will reject the results whatever that may be. However, he later gladly accepted the result when it showed he was leading by a small margin, securing 90,496 votes while AL candidate Badruddin Ahmed Kamran got 85,870.

Polling at the city's two centres, which have 4,787 voters listed, was suspended

due to violence. Returning Officer Alimuzzaman referred the matter to the Election Commission headquarters in the capital.

The vote difference between Arif and Kamran was 4,626.

Some BNP leaders said the ruling party's "miscalculation" is the reason behind the defeat of AL candidate.

The AL thought that the Jamaat candidate would get 25,000 to 30,000 votes but he secured only around 11,000.

"They [the AL] never expected that Jamaat would secure such a small number of votes. They indulged in massive irregularities in Sylhet but Jamaat's results changed the game," Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, party's standing committee member, told The Daily Star.

In Uttara, several hundred students

DEMAND FOR RE-POLLING Kamran yesterday filed a complaint with the EC alleging that the BNP men took control of 17 centres and demanded re-election in these centres.

On the other hand, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir during a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan office rejected the election results of Barisal and Rajshahi city corporations and demanded re-election in the two cities.

The party will stage demonstrations in all the towns and metropolitan cities tomorrow to press home its demand.

About Sylhet polls, Fakhrul said their mayoral candidate could have won with a margin of over one lakh votes had the election been free and fair.

He also alleged that at least in 12 centres in Sylhet saw cent percent votes cast even though hundreds of people were in the queues outside.

Also yesterday, Obaidul Quader said people have rejected the BNP in the local body elections for its "negative politics".

"Like the elections, people will also reject BNP's movement," Quader said while addressing the press conference, held at AL President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi political office in the capital.

Conveying his party's formal reaction, Quader said BNP has staged a drama in the name of participating in the three city corporation elections.

## WI's pedigree or Tigers' momentum?

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Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Bangladesh side in the ODIs, a lot of their stars like captain Carlos Brathwaite, Marlon Samuels and Andre Fletcher will feature in the T20Is. While the hosts have rested the best T20 batsman in opener Chris Gayle, they will be boosted by the return of the hard-hitting Andre

Russell -- who missed the last two ODIs against Bangladesh through injury -- and there will be the continued presence of explosive opener Evin Lewis.

Bangladesh on the other hand will be weakened by the absence of the inspirational Mashrafe, who retired from T20Is in April 2017. T20I cap-

tain Shakib Al Hasan will seek to continue the momentum and as Bangladesh's most experienced T20 player, will have to play a central role to do so.

The senior cricketers -- Shakib, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad -- did the lion's share of the work with the bat in the

ODIs, and they will once again be needed to make the difference in the T20I series. Tamim's opening partner is an area of concern, and it will be interesting to see who among Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das are chosen to reprise the role they played in the format in recent times.

The two countries have played six

T20Is against each other, with Bangladesh winning two and losing three, while the other game, the sides' last encounter in Basseterre in 2014, ended in a no-result.

The second T20I will take place on August 4 in Florida, which will also be the venue for the tour-ending third T20I on August 5.