



As part of a drive by the Roads and Highways Department, illegal structures are being demolished and illegally parked vehicles removed on the government land beside Mirpur Road in Gabtoli. The land will be used for the metro rail project.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BNP wants UN's effective

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Fakhrul was accompanied by assistant international affairs secretary Humayun Kabir and executive committee member Tabitha Awal. Four other UN high officials were also present there.

The BNP secretary general later told the media that they discussed the upcoming national election, violation of human rights and repression on opposition leaders and activists.

BNP sources said the delegation gave a written statement and some paper clippings to the UN.

The UN officials told the BNP leaders that the incidents of human rights violation in Bangladesh came in UN reports and that it was gathering information on the recent incidents, according to the sources.

The BNP delegation was likely to hold meetings with high officials of the US State Department.

The three party leaders will fly to London from the US to meet acting BNP chairman Tarique Rahman. They had left for New York on Tuesday night.

A number of diplomats said there was nothing wrong with the BNP talking to the UN.

Political parties, especially the opposition, seek support or help for a peaceful election, sending of observers and other electoral help, one of them said.

BNP standing committee member Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain told this newspaper that the UN was concerned about the country's political situation and the parliamentary elections.

"That's why they invited the BNP as a main opposition to hold talks. United Nations have taken such initiative in 2013 but that attempt failed. Let's see what happens this time," he said.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "We won't bow down to any unconstitutional pressure from outside and the polls will be held as per the constitution ... The government will provide necessary support to the Election Commission which can perform its duties independently."

On Fakhrul's trip to New York, he said the BNP has now turned into a "complaining party" and they have proved it, reports BSS.

"We don't have any headache why they [UN] have called Mirza Alamgir ... Therefore, we don't want to make any comment now."

"We don't know whether the UN will talk to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about the election. They may want a free and fair election ... We also want to hold a free, fair and peaceful election."

On August 24, Mia Seppo, UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in Bangladesh, handed over the invitation to Fakhrul.

A diplomat said there was nothing unusual about BNP leaders meeting the UN secretary general. The UN secretary general is not for any country or any government.

The UN secretary general or his department concerned helps resolve crisis and conflict in a country. Political leaders and civil society members also meet the commonwealth secretary general and talk about their domestic issues, the diplomat said.

Another diplomat told The Daily Star that he does not see anything wrong in BNP meeting officials of the UN since the UN is a neutral body and the Department of Political Affairs' (DPA) mission is there to help prevent and reduce violent conflict and sustain peace through inclusive political solutions.

Obviously, the UN is not going to do anything at the suggestion or complaint of the BNP but the DPA can play an important role in the election process by providing various electoral assistance and expertise, the diplomat said.

In the past, the UN secretary general sent special envoys, including UN assistant secretary for political affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, to mediate political deadlocks in Bangladesh.

In 2013, ahead of the 10th parliamentary election, the UN chief had asked the leaders of the two major parties to sit for talks.

In 2015, the then UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon wrote to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to sit for talks to end political violence.

BNP hires

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engage in message development and narrative; outreach to elected and appointed US Executive Branch officials; outreach to US Congress; international financial, health, labour, human rights, women's empowerment and election monitoring organisations; public policy institutions in the US; former US officials and ambassadors; the private sector and diaspora community," Politico quoted a Justice Department disclosure as saying.

ABM Abdus Sattar, personal assistant of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, told The Daily Star that he didn't know anything about the matter. "My name has come in the report mistakenly."

BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said the party didn't think that hiring of such lobbying firms was necessary.

Shamsuzzaman Duda, adviser to the BNP chairperson, said the party didn't discuss any such issue during any meeting.

The BNP is now at loggerheads with its main political rival Awami League over the upcoming general elections, likely to be held in late December.

Rights defenders

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anti-government then, logically, the state appears to be anti rights, she added.

Rights defenders should unite and strongly protest the criminalisation of their activities, she said.

The event, supported by the Australian Aid, was attended by some 100 activists representing indigenous communities of the plains and hills.

She also said an environment of fear was created through putting rights defenders in a precarious condition.

"Culture of fear and democracy cannot exist side by side."

Sultana also commented on the findings of New York-based research firm Wealth-X that the number of ultra-wealthy people grew most rapidly in Bangladesh between 2012 and 2017.

"It means, we could not fulfil the promise of equal distribution of wealth."

It also shows that corruption and looting of people's wealth is continuing in different sectors.

Marginalised people are the worst victims, said Sultana.

Former chairman of National Human Rights Commission Prof Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Head of Mission at Australian High Commission Penny Morton, and General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Sanjeeb Drong also addressed the event.

Order on trial

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to allow her two lawyers to meet her in jail to get information about her health condition. In response, the court instructed the jail authorities to take steps as per the jail code.

On Wednesday, the court adjourned hearing of the case, saying that it would hear the following day whether it should continue its proceedings in the absence of BNP chief.

Judge of the court said this after the jail authorities informed the court about Khaleda's unwillingness to appear before it.

Khaleda's lawyers filed a petition on Wednesday, stating the makeshift court inside the prison could not continue its proceedings without permission from the Supreme Court.

Previously, the trial used to be at a makeshift court in Bakshibazar area, but the law ministry on September 4 issued a gazette notification, mentioning that the trial in the graft case would be held at Old Dhaka Central Jail on Nazimuddin Road. The decision, it said, was made taking Khaleda's security into consideration.

On February 8, the same special court awarded Khaleda five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case and sentenced her elder son Tarique Rahman, now acting BNP chairman, and four others to 10 years' imprisonment each.

The ACC filed the Zia Charitable Trust graft case with Tejgaon Police Station in August 2011, accusing Khaleda and three others of abusing power to raise funds for the trust from unknown sources.

Bus driver

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baby succumbed to her head injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on August 30

The following day, Akifa's father Harunur Rashid filed a case with Kusthia Model Police Station against bus owner Joynal, driver Khokon and his helper Altaf Hossain.

Rab officials said they were trying to arrest Altaf.

ICC's Rohingya

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"Although the decision doesn't specifically address the crime of genocide, it offers real hope for accountability for the crimes committed," she said addressing the 39th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Thursday.

The Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC decided last week that the court had jurisdiction over the deportation from Myanmar of Rohingya, and possibly other crimes.

In her statement at the high-level panel to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, she said support for the court is indispensable for both justice and deterrence.

"I urge all States to support the court, and in this, the year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of its founding with the Rome Statute, I call upon all remaining countries to sign or ratify the Statute," said the UN human rights chief in the statement.

Genocide is always shocking but it is never committed without clear, multiple warning signs: a pattern of abuse against a group, intent to harm, a chain of command and finally a brutal and horrifying outcome, Bachelet said.

"In the case of the Rohingya, warning signs abounded: a people oppressed from birth to death, an army answerable to no one, and systematic, state-led human rights violations that went unpunished for decades, including arbitrary deprivation of nationality."

States have the primary responsibility for prosecuting perpetrators, but the court's use is wholly appropriate in cases where the state is unwilling or unable to deliver justice, she said.

The Council's Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar issued its shocking report on the military-led campaign of murder, rape and assault against the Rohingya people of Rakhine State.

CMP bans

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entrance or exit" -- has been hung at the entrance to the CMP headquarters in Chittagong city's Dampara Police Lines.

Police officials have said though there is a traffic law to wear helmet during riding, many of the riders don't care about it. The CMP has taken the initiative to ensure implementation of traffic law and build awareness among people.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Kusum Dewan, CMP's additional commissioner (traffic), said, "The CMP put the banner in front of its main entrance a week ago, asking everybody, including the policemen, to abide by the traffic law. The feedback is very good."

From 11:30am to 12:30pm yesterday, this correspondent found that the on-duty police personnel did not allow bikers to get in or out the headquarters without helmets.

Following the countrywide students' protest demanding safe roads, the CMP observed the Traffic Week from August 5 to 14 as per the decision of Police Headquarters.

Some 11,712 cases were filed and 945 vehicles were seized during the Traffic Week in the port city, said CMP's traffic department.

Currently, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority has been conducting a mobile court with two magistrates for the last one week to check driving licence and documents of vehicles.

"A conservative estimate of 10,000 dead, countless more bereaved, maimed, raped and traumatised, and nearly three-quarters of a million people forced to flee to Bangladesh."

Accountability matters -- not only because it provides justice for victims and punishment for perpetrators, she said.

"It matters because ending impunity is central to ending genocide. Prevention and punishment -- the explicitly stated twin aims of the genocide convention -- can never be seen in isolation from each other. Punishment is key to prevention. Impunity is an enabler of genocide: accountability is its nemesis."

Trump okays

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US intelligence chiefs declared in January 2017 that Russian President Vladimir Putin presided over a concerted effort via hacking and social media manipulation to boost Trump's chances in 2016 to defeat Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

The outgoing administration of Barack Obama hit Moscow with sanctions and expelled a large number of alleged Russian spies in retaliation.

But since becoming president, Trump has repeatedly dismissed the idea that he was helped by Moscow, calling it "fake news," and has avoided criticizing Putin.

Instead, the strongest action taken since then has been the issuing of indictments by Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating possible collusion with Russia.

In the past year Mueller's team has filed charges against 12 hackers of the Russian GRU intelligence agency, and 13 people, including a top Putin crony, linked to the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, which US intelligence says is a major source of online disinformation.

The order sets up a 90-day time frame for assessing reports of any kind of interference by foreign individuals and companies, and then deciding on the appropriate sanctions, which include freezing assets, banning business dealings with Americans and locking the actors out of the US financial system.

While such powers already exist in the White House and US Treasury, Coats said the new order would set up an automatic and formal review, while giving Trump flexibility on what actions to take.

"We felt it was important to demonstrate the president had taken command of this issue, White House National Security Advisor John Bolton said Wednesday.

It came as Congress has been weighing its own legislation to punish those interfering in elections, which the White House reportedly fears could overly tie the president's hands.

Senators Marco Rubio and Chris Van Hollen, who have proposed legislation to attack foreign election interference, said Wednesday that Trump's action was too restrained.

The executive order "recognizes the threat, but does not go far enough to address it. The United States can and must do more," they said in a statement.

"Mandatory sanctions on anyone who attacks our electoral systems serve as the best deterrent," they said.

In a statement the Democratic National Committee said Trump's order "does nothing to hold Russia accountable" for 2016.

Nigeria troops repel fresh Boko Haram base attack

AFP, Kano

Soldiers have thwarted another Boko Haram attack on an army base in northeast Nigeria, the latest in a series of offensives against military targets in the remote region.

Scores of fighters attacked the base in Damasak, in the far north of Borno state, on Wednesday evening, firing heavy artillery in an apparent bid to overrun it.

Hours of fighting ensued but the attack was repelled with the help of aerial support, military sources in the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, told AFP yesterday morning.

Nigerian Army spokesman Brigadier General Texas Chukwu confirmed troops from 145 battalion were fighting the jihadists, calling the battle "fierce".

"The troops are dealing with the terrorists," he said on Wednesday evening.

Chukwu's statement was a departure from the military's repeated denials of Boko Haram attacks in recent weeks, which have seen dozens of troops killed and weapons stolen.

Last month, 48 soldiers were killed in a raid in the village of Zari, near Damasak, while last Friday, a base was sacked in the town of Gudumbali.

Gudumbali is 80 kilometres (50 miles) from Damasak. Thousands of civilians were forced to flee and Boko Haram temporarily seized the town before withdrawing the next day.

Mozammel

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Md Mazharul Islam denied police's petition after Kafrul police Sub-Inspector Kazi Raihanur Rahman, also the investigation officer of the case, produced Mozammel before the court.

The IO also submitted a 10-day remand prayer for Mozammel saying that they needed to interrogate the arrestee over blasting of cocktails in front of the Mirpur office of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) on February 4.

In the order, the magistrate said there was no cogent reason for showing Mozammel arrested in the case as the IO submitted the prayer over seven months after the incident took place.

On Monday, the SI filed the petition with the court to show Mozammel arrested in the case over creating anarchy.

Police had arrested the road safety campaigner at his Sanarpar house in Narayanganj on September 6, two days after an extortion case was filed against him with Mirpur Police Station.

Hours after his arrest, Mozammel was placed on one-day remand for interrogation.

A Dhaka court granted him bail in the extortion case on Tuesday.

Earlier, Mozammel's family members and several leaders of Jatri Kalyan Samity said he was implicated in the "false case" to gag his voice as he has been vocal against anarchy in the transport sector.

They said the Samity often faces wrath of transport owners, workers and even the government, as it speaks against irregularities in the sector and regularly comes up with statistics on road accidents.

Pvt medical colleges

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Hasina said the South Korean government was providing a loan of Tk 1,047cr for the project. She expressed gratitude to the Korean government for its financial and technical support to the project.

The premier said a centre-based healthcare service system would be introduced at the hospital, with specific outdoor departments for each centre.

The Emergency Medical Care Centre would offer 24-hour emergency services and nearly 4,000 people would receive treatment there every day, she added.

Referring to a survey, the PM said Tk 300 crore would be saved annually after the launch of the hospital.

Hasina said the trend of patients going abroad for treatment would slow down after the opening of the new hospital.

Medical universities would be set up in all divisions of the country in phases to provide better medical services to the people and ensure higher education for medical students, the PM told the programme.

"We've set up two medical universities in Chittagong and Rajshahi, while an approval has been given to establish another in Sylhet."

Besides carrying out research, the medical universities would offer post-graduate degrees, she mentioned.

The PM urged all teachers, doctors, officials, nurses and employees of the BSMMU to devote themselves to providing medical service to the people properly.

She said the Awami League after assuming power in 2009 had taken various initiatives for the health sector.

"We've formulated a pro-people health policy and are implementing it... We've increased the number of hospital beds and improved the services of the general and specialised hospitals."

About the development of the BSMMU, Hasina said her government has taken various initiatives to turn the university into a "centre of excellence".

The government has allocated Tk 525 crore for overall development of the BSMMU and allocated more land for the expansion of its campus, she added.

The PM said 10 new departments were opened at the university for medical education and research and evening specialised consultation centres were launched in 25 departments.

"I hope such services will be offered in other departments soon and the people of the country will be able to get the services of expert physicians at a low cost."

Health Minister Mohammed Nasim and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Health Ministry Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim were present at the programme as special guests, with BSMMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Kanak Kanti Barua in the chair.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, ministers, PM's advisers, parliament members, foreign diplomats, academics and top civil officials were present.

Tk 1.15 lakh

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at the victim's house. The alleged rapist's family was also present there.

The arbitrators "settled the matter" by asking Mamtajul's family to pay Tk 1.15 lakh to the victim's family, who, on the other hand, was requested not to file a case in this connection or acknowledge the incident as Mamtajul's family "was influential", he said.

Altarfur Rahman, 32, a villager, on Tuesday told The Daily Star that he heard from others that the arbitrators took Tk 3 lakh from Mamtajul's family on Sunday, from which Tk 1.15 lakh was given to the victim's family and the rest was split amongst them.

Officer-in-Charge of Thakurgaon Police Station Abdul Latif Mia told The Daily Star that he is yet to receive a complaint in this regard.

The victim's father, when visited on Tuesday, chose not to make any comment about the incident while Shafiqul Islam, the main arbitrator, when contacted on the same day, refused to make a comment and stopped receiving this correspondent's phone calls afterwards.

Mamtajul and his family were not found when their house was visited.