

Accept demands to join unity

BNP to AL
UNB, Dhaka

BNP's senior leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said Awami League will be included in the national unity process if the government accepts people's five-point demand for holding the next general election in a credible manner.

"Obaidul Quader has questioned how the national unity can be formed without Awami League. I would like to tell him a national unity has already been forged as different political parties came together with people's five-point demand for a fair election," he said.

Speaking at a discussion, the BNP leader further said, "If you apologise to people for your misdeeds and accept their five-point demand, we'll include you in the national unity, and we'll welcome you."

He said the five demands of people are: dissolving the parliament before the announcement

Not national but a 'hotchpotch unity'

Obaidul Quader says about Jatiya Oikya Prokriya

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Criticising Dr Kamal Hossain-led Jatiya Oikya Prokriya, Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said what they have formed is not a national but a "hotchpotch unity".

"I don't think their unity will survive," he said while exchanging views with local journalists at a Cox's Bazar hotel.

Expecting something from this will be futile for BNP, Quader further said.

Quader said BNP and Oikya Prokriya leaders are resentful and not making sense because they are incapable of drawing people comparable to the crowds seen at a single rally during his roadshow.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif, Organising Secretary AKM Enamul Haque Shamim, and Cox's Bazar District AL President Sirajul Mostafa, among others, were present.

On Sunday, Obaidul Quader addressed couple of rallies in Cox's Bazar -- organised as part of the ruling party's two-day roadshow from the capital to the beach town -- ahead of the national election.

The programme's main objectives are to warn grassroots activists and leaders against infighting and convince all local leaders to accept and support the candidates to be nominated by the central leadership, say party sources.

On the first day [Saturday] of the roadshow, AL organised three rallies in Cumilla and one in Feni. It postponed another rally in Sitakunda of Chattogram for a lack of preparations.

At the rally in Feni town, Quader said, "People of the country will not accept any unity without Awami League."



A rickshaw-van puller on his way to deliver bundles of used polythene bags to a recycling factory. Although there is a ban on the use of polythene because of the damage it inflicts on the environment, it is in widespread use across the country. The photo was taken on Topkhana Road in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Rivers can't be saved unless NRCC is legally empowered

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Empowering the river commission is essential to save rivers across the country, as most of the commission's recommendations have remained unimplemented, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Speaking at the Jatiya Press Club, Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said: "NRCC [National River Conservation Commission] was formed to protect rivers, but it was not given legal and institutional capacities, which are essential to protect rivers. Due to this, though the commission has good intention to protect rivers, they are not capable to do so under existing government system."

Bapa, Buriganga Riverkeeper and NRCC jointly organised the discussion

on pollution in the rivers around Dhaka.

Sharif, also the river-keeper of Buriganga, said to protect the rivers of the country, the commission will have to be strong legally as well as in administrative capacity.

Addressing the programme as chief guest, Dr Muzibur Rahman Howlader, chairman of NRCC, said they can only make recommendations to authorities concerned but cannot take action against river grabbers or polluters. If the commission had the power to take action, they would demolish illegal encroachments from the rivers.

He said they have been given an important work by the government to save rivers, but they need the power to take action against grabbers and polluters when stakeholders fail to take action.

Muzibur said there are necessary laws to protect rivers but

there is no execution.

Around 6,000 fishermen of Barogram are now jobless and many have left the village to seek new professions due to the pollution in Norai, Debdholai and Balu rivers, said Suruj Miah, president of Barogram Unnayan Shangstha.

Though tanneries in Hazaribagh were shifted to Savar, 50 to 60 factories are still continuing their operation there, which is polluting the river Buriganga, said Sohag Mohajon, general secretary of Dhaka Youth Club International.

Some dyeing factories at Shyampur are polluting Buriganga by discharging untreated waste, keeping the drainage line underground, he said.

Referring to 2008 data of the government, general secretary of

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The purple colour of Karnopara Canal's water bears the evidence of indiscriminate discharge of toxic waste into it. Dyeing factories set up on both sides of the water body reportedly contribute to such pollution. The photo was taken near Bank Town, Savar recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Seized food items don't belong to OMS: dealers

Rab denies claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 215 tons of rice, wheat and flour seized by Rab on September 8 and 9 did not belong to Open Market Sale (OMS) programme, Dhaka City OMS Dealers' Association claimed yesterday.

Harun Ur Rashid, member secretary of the association, made the claim at a press briefing at Bangladesh Crime Reporters' Association in Dhaka.

The association has investigated and found that the seized goods were rationed food items for various government forces, he said.

With the unjustifiable claim, law enforcers have defamed OMS dealers, he added.

However, Rab Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, who led the operations that seized the food items, denied the OMS dealers' claims. Rab has substantial proof that the seized goods were supposed to be for OMS, he told The Daily Star. The type of sacks and writings on those match those of OMS goods, he added.

A case was filed with Tejgaon Industrial Police Station in this connection, he said.

DSCC's cleanliness campaign sets new Guinness record

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation's (DSCC) cleanliness campaign in the capital held earlier this year has set a new Guinness World Record.

DSCC's Dhaka Cleanliness Campaign, an event held on April 13 at the Central Shaheed Minar premises -- to create awareness among city dwellers -- has set the new record in the category for 'Most people sweeping the floor (single venue)', according to the website of the Guinness Book of World Records.

Guinness World Records made the announcement yesterday and presented DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon with a certificate in recognition of the feat, an official of DSCC said.

A total of 7,021 people participated in the cleanliness programme, breaking the previous record made by 5,026 people joining a drive to clean a one-kilometre stretch of road in a city near India's Ahmedabad.

Over 30,000 people registered for the event titled 'Dettol Clean Dhaka' campaign, jointly organised by DSCC and Reckitt Benckiser for building awareness among Dhaka residents on cleanliness and hygiene, DSCC officials said.

Members of National Scout, Bangladesh National Cadet Core, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Fire Service and Civil Defence, actors, different social organisations and educational institutions participated in the programme.

Retain 30 percent freedom fighter quota

Muktijoddha Sangsad Santan Command urges govt

DUI CORRESPONDENT

Muktijoddha Sangsad Santan Command, an organisation of the children of freedom fighters, yesterday demanded keeping of 30 percent quota privileges for freedom fighters in government job recruitment system.

They came up with the demand at a press conference held at the Dhaka University Journalists' Association (Duja) office.

They alleged that recommendation of scrapping all quotas, including the freedom fighter quota, in civil service is contrary to the spirit of Liberation War.

"The review committee made the recommendations without even talking to the people who are beneficiaries of the quota privileges and it contradicts our constitution and the spirit of Liberation War," said Al Mamun, general secretary of the organisation, while reading out a statement.

They demanded Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina's intervention to keep 30 percent quota privileges for the wards of freedom fighters.

The organisation also placed their six-point demand at the programme including removal of the family members of Jamaat-Shibir men and war criminals from public offices and taking actions against those making derogatory remarks about Liberation War, freedom fighters and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on social platforms.

In the face of nationwide demonstrations staged by students, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 11 decided to scrap the quota system in government job recruitment.

The PM, however, cited a High Court order on July 12, saying it was not possible to reform the freedom fighters' quota.

On September 17, a seven-member government committee, led by Cabinet Secretary M Shafiul Alam, recommended abolishing the quota system for class-I and class-II jobs in civil service.

Shahidul's bail hearing likely today: DAG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) may hold hearing on acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam's bail petition today, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Nazibur Rahman said yesterday.

Although the petition was included in yesterday's cause list as item 355 of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman's bench, the judges could not hear it, he said.

This is Shahidul Alam's second plea moved before the HC seeking bail in the same case.

Shahidul submitted the petition on September 18 seeking bail in a case filed under section 57 of ICT Act for "spreading propaganda against the government".

A godsend for working mothers

Phulki daycare centres strive to provide better childhood

SHADMA MALIK

Riyas wakes up early every day, eats his breakfast, and then heads to "Phulki" in the capital's Mirpur. Once there, he greets his friends and supervisor, then quickly gets on to business at hand: running in circles, building castles out of blocks, and herding a menagerie of stuffed animals.

Three-year old Riyas is one of 16 children attending Phulki daycare centre in Mirpur-11, an initiative that is proving to be a boon to working parents, especially garment workers.

The daycare centre is one of 20 based in industrial zones of Mirpur, Gazipur, Mohammadpur and Ashulia to cater to children of female garment workers.

Run by Phulki, a non-government organisation, it was founded in 2015 under the Urban Childcare Project of Aga Khan Foundation. At present, over 600 children are being looked after at the daycare centres (crèches) in exchange for a nominal fee from their parents.

Both of Riyas' parents work in garment factories. His mother, Shathi, drops him off at 7:00am at the crèche six days of the week, except for Friday.

Shathi neither had the support of her parents or in-laws, nor any network of friends or relatives to look after the toddler.

"We are a small family. No one is there to look after my son at home when my husband and I are at work. I can go to work only because there is a place where I can keep my son without any worries," she added.

Shathi's colleague Tanju also sends her child to the same crèche. "We would have sent our children to village if the childcare centre was not here," Tanju said.

She visits her five-year-old daughter every day during lunch break. "I feel recharged when I get to see my daughter amid work, and it is possible as the daycare is situated near my workplace," she added.

Sandoz Halder, programme coordinator of Urban Childcare Project at Phulki, said, "Over 60 percent children at our crèches are

of garments workers. Children from other low-income families are also there."

Every month, a healthcare provider visits the centres and provides primary healthcare services to the children.

Each facility is equipped with indoor playing area, sleeping space, a toilet and a pantry -- to ensure that the toddlers are well taken care of.

The centres also offer early learning opportunities and pastoral support for children aged between two and six years, after which parents can admit their children to schools.

Each crèche is housed with three rooms to accommodate a maximum of 35 children. With three caregivers and a supervisor for each crèche, Phulki has created a safe, colourful and nurturing environment for children. The female caregivers are trained in early childhood development, nutrition, and hygiene by the foundation.

Over 2,000 children have so far been registered with the 20 crèches since 2015. Of them, 532 children

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Children sit in a circle and play with a caregiver at the Phulki daycare centre in Mirpur 11. The centres have all necessary facilities for children, including sleeping space, inset, toilet and pantry.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON