



A man rides a locally made three-wheeler, known as Nosimon, on Dhaka-Aricha highway near Savar, defying bans on such risky vehicles. The picture was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Govt approves

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their stocks of gold and other precious metals to the VAT authorities. Every month, they would have to submit balance sheets of their sales to the VAT authorities.

In the world market, India supplies 80 percent of the handcrafted gold ornaments, according to the Bangladesh commerce ministry. It said in 2016, India exported gold ornaments worth \$42 billion while Bangladesh officially exported ornaments worth just \$672.

According to commerce ministry documents, Bangladesh's annual demand for gold is between 20 and 40 tonnes and almost 80 percent of it is met by smuggled gold and the rest by recycled gold.

This deprives the government of a huge amount of revenue and creates scope for money laundering and accumulation of black money.

The existing rules allow import of gold, subject to permission from Bangladesh Bank. But in reality, gold has never been imported through legal channels since independence.

Between the country's independence and early 2015, 2.2 tonnes of seized illegal gold worth \$90 million had been added to the foreign currency reserves.

Big hauls of the precious metal make headlines and indicate that gold is often smuggled into the country.

The cabinet secretary said the amount of gold one could bring into the country in his or her luggage, under baggage rules, could be increased.

**EASING GOLD IMPORT**  
To ease gold import, 11 measures have been laid out in the policy.

Bangladesh Bank would appoint dealers for importing gold bars. The dealers could be an authorised bank or an individual-owned firm, or a joint venture or a limited company. Bangladesh Bank would formulate a guideline for the dealers who would import gold bars directly.

Manufacturers of ornaments would not be able to buy gold from others, apart from those dealers.

The dealers would be allowed to import gold through bonds, but for that they would have to get bond licences. They would also have to inform Bangladesh Bank about their requirement of foreign currency and have to obtain no-objection certificate from it.

The central bank would issue NOC within 15 days upon receipt of a dealer's application.

Jewellers would inform dealers of their demand and pay them 5 percent in advance.

In case a jeweller buys recycled gold from a customer, the jeweller has to preserve a copy of the national identity card or passport, and address of the customer.

**BOOSTING EXPORT**  
The draft policy proposes several incentives for increasing export of gold ornaments, including tax benefits, especially for handcrafted gold ornaments.

Gold ornament makers would also be given subsidies for exporting gold items, be it handcrafted or machine made.

Duty benefits would be given to exporters who would import bars and then export gold ornaments.

Land would also be allotted to exporters for setting up factories in special economic zones.

Bangladesh Bank would set up a central information bureau that would keep information on the annual demand for gold, its local trade, import and export, revenue collection, seizure of gold, its sale on auction, and other relevant data.

**MAKING OF POLICY**  
The finance ministry last year requested the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to come up with recommendations for formulating a gold policy.

Later, the finance ministry sent the recommendations to the commerce ministry that formed a nine-member committee with representatives from the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the TIB, gold traders, and related ministries and agencies.

The committee then formulated the draft policy and in May the cabinet committee on economic affairs approved and forwarded it to the cabinet.

**CABINET DECISIONS**  
The cabinet yesterday also approved Customs Act, 2018, and the National Environment Policy, 2018.

The cabinet secretary said in 1992 the first National Environment Policy was enacted where 15 sectors were identified for preservation. The number now has been increased to 24, including land management, water resource management, hill preservation, protection of environment through public private partnership initiative.

## Trump helped

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There were also millions of dollars in improper tax deductions and Trump helped further reduce his parents' tax bill by undervaluing their real estate holdings by hundreds of millions of dollars on tax returns, according to the Times.

The newspaper said Trump's parents, Fred and Mary Trump, who died respectively in 1999 and 2000, transferred more than \$1 billion in wealth to their five children.

This could have produced a tax bill of at least \$550 million but the Trumps paid a total of just \$52.2 million, the Times said, citing tax records.

One of Trump's lawyers, Charles Harder, decried the newspaper's allegations as "100 percent false, and highly defamatory."

"There was no fraud or tax evasion by anyone. The facts upon which The Times bases its false allegations are extremely inaccurate," he added.

"President Trump had virtually no involvement whatsoever with these matters."

Harder insisted the matter was mostly handled by other relatives who relied "entirely" upon licensed professionals to "ensure full compliance with the law."

The White House, meanwhile said that "Many decades ago, the IRS reviewed and signed off on these transactions."

Spokeswoman Sarah Sanders instead shifted blame onto the Times itself, saying "Perhaps another apology from The New York Times, like the one they had to issue after they got the 2016 election so embarrassingly wrong, is in order."

## Affront

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It is not clear why Headmaster Abdul Jabbar, also a joint convenor of Ruheha Thana BNP and a former union parishad chairman, would do that.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, one of the boys -- all class IX students of Bhelarhat High School -- said they rescued the girl as Liton stopped her and held her hand in Paikarpara village of the upazila. The girl, along with three of her classmates, was on her way to school.

Abdul should have punished Liton but he "shaved our heads instead", the boy said, adding, the teacher did not "listen to anybody" during the arbitration, attended by two other teachers, parents of the five and office assistants, inside a room of Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar High School in Akhanagar village.

"With our heads shaved, we are so ashamed that we can't get out of our home," said the boy.

The girl alleged that Liton had been harassing her on way to school for a long time and that the five were innocent. During the arbitration, Liton remained silent when he was asked whether he harassed her, she said.

Anwarul Islam, elder brother of one of the boys, said Abdul had their heads shaved without any reason. "We want answers for it".

Wishing not to be named, a school staffer who attended the arbitration said Abdul even roughed up the five when they tried to say they were innocent.

This correspondent called the headmaster several times over his phone but he did not answer. The reporter went to the school yesterday but also did not find him there.

However, talking to another journalist over phone yesterday morning, Abdul said he would not comment on the matter.

Contacted, Rukhsheul Haque Swapan Chowdhury, president of the managing committee of Bhelarhat High School, said two students from Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar High School had recently harassed two female students of Bhelarhat High School on the school premises.

The two boys were caught and when Abdul went there to have them released, a teacher from Bhelarhat High School slapped the two boys in front of the headmaster. "Abdul might have shaved the heads of our five students to avenge the insult," Rukhsheul said.

Liton was not available for comments. Local journalists visited his house yesterday but he was not there.

Upazila Secondary Education Officer Mosharaf Hossain, said, "We will take action after receiving information."

Prodip Kumar Roy, officer-in-charge of Ruheha Police Station, said, "We are yet to receive any complaint from the school authorities. We will definitely take action if needed."

## Truck

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officer in Tangail.

The truck was escorted by a car, he said, adding that the officials also seized the car and arrested three people in it. The four others were arrested in the truck, he said.

The foresters quizzed the arrestees but could not learn immediately from where the logs came and where they were heading to, he added.

The arrestees were produced before a court in Tangail after filing a case against them, the DFO informed.

## Completely on merit

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The cabinet approval comes in the wake of months-long quota reform demonstrations that saw arrests of leaders of the quota movement and attacks on students.

On September 17, the quota review committee, headed by the cabinet secretary, recommended scrapping the quota system for class-I and II jobs (from 9th to 13th grade) and submitted its report to the PM.

Quota movement leaders welcomed the move, but said they would not comment until the gazette notification on abolition of the quota system is published.

"We cannot say anything right now as there are still some ambiguities regarding the quota issue. There should not be any vagueness here," Bin Yeamin Molla, a joint convenor of the quota reform movement, told this newspaper.

He urged the government to meet their two demands -- withdrawal of all cases against protesters and punishment of those who attacked demonstrators.

Meanwhile, at a press conference at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, the PM said when she had announced that there would be no quota, a new demand was raised for reforming the quota system instead of abolishing it.

"If anyone wants quota now, he will have to wage a movement for it. And if the movement turns out to be successful, we will think about it," she said.

At present, about 56 percent of government jobs are reserved for candidates from various quotas. Of this, 30 percent are for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren, 10 percent for women, 10 percent for people of underdeveloped districts, five percent for members of indigenous communities and one percent for physically challenged people.

The quota system was introduced through an executive order in 1972 and was amended several times. From 1972 to 1976, 20 percent was recruited on the basis of merit. Merit-based recruitment was increased to 40 percent in 1976 which continued until 1985 when the percentage of merit-based recruitment was upped to 45 percent.

But in 2012, one percent quota was introduced for physically challenged people, reducing merit-based recruitment to 44 percent.

Briefing reporters at the secretariat, Shafiqul said the committee's report, placed at yesterday's cabinet meeting at the PMO, made three recommendations.

The first one was merit-based recruitment from grade-9 to 13, and the second one was scrapping the existing quota system in those grades.

The third one was that the government will make necessary decisions in the future if it feels quota is needed for the disadvantaged communities, he said.

The cabinet approved all the three recommendations, Shafiqul said.

"The summary of the first two recommendations is that all the recruitment to class-I and class-II jobs will be made directly on the basis of merit."

A gazette notification will be issued in two to three days, he mentioned.

"We will convey the cabinet's decision to the public administration ministry today or tomorrow. They will issue a gazette notification," he said.

Once the gazette notification is issued, it will come into effect, said the cabinet secretary, adding that it will not be placed before parliament.

Asked whether the decision will be applicable to the 40th BCS examination advertised by the Public Service Commission recently, he said the circular for the BCS exam mentioned

that whatever the government decides on the quota issue would be applicable here.

On July 2, the government formed the seven-member review committee comprised of secretaries to the public administration ministry, finance ministry, Liberation War affairs ministry, law ministry (legislative division), the PSC, and the acting secretary to the PMO.

Meanwhile, Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Students' Council has protested the government decision.

In a statement, the organisation said the indigenous communities will face more discrimination because of the decision.

In February this year, a large number of students of public universities and jobseekers, launched the movement demanding reforms in the quota system.

The movement intensified in April when students across the country took to the streets. They blocked key points in the capital and roads and highways elsewhere.

In the wake of mass protests, the PM on April 11 announced in parliament that the quota system would be scrapped.

But as no gazette notification was issued in this regard, the students involved in the movement began boycotting classes and examinations in all universities and colleges.

On June 30 and July 1, alleged BCL activists attacked protesters at Dhaka and Rajshahi universities, leaving a number of students injured. In the following days, law enforcers arrested and remanded a number of quota reform leaders.

The movement lost momentum following the arrests and attacks on demonstrators.

## ACC to probe

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allegations made against Sinha's younger brother.

"We've begun an enquiry into the allegation that his younger brother, Ananta Kumar Sinha, had illegally sent Tk 2.3 crore to New Jersey," Iqbal told reporters at ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters.

Former BNP minister Barrister Nazmul Huda filed the case against Sinha with Shahbag Police Station on September 27.

ACC's Public Relations Officer (PRO) Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya said they received a court order yesterday morning which directed the commission to probe the matter.

The commission has already appointed its director Syed Iqbal Hossain to probe the case, he said.

Sinha, the 21st chief justice of the country, resigned on November 10 last year while he was abroad.

An autobiography of his, titled "A Broken Dream: Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy" came out on September 16 of this year.

Lalitmoohan-Dhanabati Memorial Foundation holds the copyright of the book.

In his autobiography, Sinha wrote about his early life, his appointment as chief justice of Bangladesh, the separation of power and the independence of judiciary, the 16th amendment to the constitution and its aftermath, ethical values of judges of the highest court and politicians, and the circumstances behind his resignation.

The former chief justice on Saturday said he had sought political asylum in the United States. He also told the BBC Bangla Service on Sunday that his life was at risk in Bangladesh.

## EU mulls

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EU officials believe the formal threat of losing tariff-free access would quickly hit foreign investment in the apparel industry, where European manufacturers take advantage of relatively low labour costs in Myanmar.

"Removing this duty-free access is a measure of last resort, but we must act if other measures are not delivering," said one EU official involved in the discussions.

"In light of the deteriorating situation on the ground, the Commission is currently assessing possible ways of escalating its political and economic response," a Commission source said.

European firms sourcing apparel from Myanmar include retailers Adidas, C&A, H&M, Inditex, Next and Primark.

Rights groups say the targeted EU sanctions so far have not forced the military or civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi to protect civilians, resettle refugees or stop attacks on press freedoms that have included the imprisonment of two Reuters reporters for breaching a law on state secrets.

The European Parliament last month called for the Commission to review Myanmar's trade preferences.

**SIXTH-LARGEST TRADE PARTNER**  
Within the Commission there are differences, with the EU Trade Chief Cecilia Malmstrom leaning towards starting the process of imposing trade sanctions while the EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini is more cautious because of EU policy to avoid economic sanctions that can hurt ordinary citizens, the officials said.

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has yet to take a position, they said. A Commission spokesman declined to comment.

Myanmar's exports to the European Union were worth 1.56 billion euros (\$1.81 billion) in 2017, nearly 10 times their value in 2012, after which the bloc gave Myanmar "Everything But Arms" trade status.

## C'wealth wants

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to the 2018 general election to work alongside all in Bangladesh who are engaged in upholding and deepening the rule of law, accountability and participatory democracy in accordance with the values and principles of Commonwealth Charter."

During the visit, she also met Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and several other ministers and dignitaries.

In the letter to the BNP secretary general, she said in order to follow up on particular issues raised during the discussions, she asked senior officials of the Commonwealth Secretariat responsible for their work in those specific areas to be touch with BNP's office.

"We look forward to building on the firm foundations of friendship and goodwill which enable fruitful cooperation to flourish between the people and institutions of Bangladesh and the wider commonwealth."

Fakhruul told The Daily Star he would reply very soon.

In September, a three-member BNP delegation, led by Fakhruul, met UN officials and high officials of the US State Department.

Party insiders said a BNP delegation is likely to visit the EU headquarters in Brussels and the US to talk about the coming JS polls.

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

## 30 hurt as BCL groups

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Later, the female students informed their friend Ashik of Al Beruni Hall of the matter. Then BCL activist Ashik, along 10-12 students, rushed to the spot and beat up Sayeed.

Hearing the news, around 50 to 60 BCL activists of Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall, led by JU unit BCL vice-presidents Azim Ratan and Debashish Mitra and BCL activist Robiul Islam, attacked Al Beruni Hall around 12:15am yesterday,



the sources added.

Contacted, Sayeed denied the allegation of stalking. He also submitted a complaint to the university proctor, demanding justice.

Abu Sadat Sayem, JU unit BCL vice-president and also a resident student at Al Beruni Hall, said the BCL activists of Mir Mosharraf Hossain opened fire on them. Some 15 to 20 students of their hall were seriously injured and 30 more students also took first aid at the university medical centre.

BCL activist Robiul Islam of Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall said they did not attack the Al Beruni Hall and did not fire bullets. They went there to solve the dispute.

On the other hand, Khalid Saifullah, a BCL activist of Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall unit, also the motorcycle

owner, demanded compensation from the university authorities for his burnt motorbike.

Meanwhile, an admission test was delayed by half an hour yesterday as the BCL men of Al Beruni Hall unit blocked the Biological Sciences faculty to press home their four-point demand, including punishment of the attackers.

After getting assurance from JU Vice-Chancellor Prof Farzana Islam, they



withdrew their blockade and issued an ultimatum for punishing the attackers by yesterday.

Asked, JU unit BCL President Jewel Rana said students of the two halls were involved in the clash. No BCL activist was involved in the incident, he claimed. If they find any involvement of BCL men, they will take action, he said.

The university authorities have decided to form a probe body for taking action regarding this incident after the admission tests end on October 10, JU Proctor Sikder Md Zulkarnain told this correspondent after a meeting with the BCL men of Al Beruni Hall unit last night.

The proctor said the authorities also decided to bear treatment costs of the injured students.