

# Govt 'sold out' to superpower

## Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP yesterday alleged that Bangladesh had turned into a "failed state" as the government "sold out itself" to global superpowers.

"This government has been there in power illegally since it is not elected with people's vote. They have already turned Bangladesh into a failed state," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a token hunger strike programme, he further said this government was working with a motive to build Bangladesh as a subservient country dependent on others.

"They [government] have already sold out themselves to superpowers. They and their leaders are working as service providers of the superpowers," he said.

BNP Nawabganj and Dohar upazila units observed a one-hour token hunger strike from 1:00pm to 2:00pm on the ground floor of BNP's Nayapaltan central office.

Fakhrul said the government had usurped power by using the state machinery and guns. "I don't find any difference between them [government] and the Pakistani occupation forces."

About the growing road accidents in the country, the BNP leader said there were no justice and the rule of law in the country while the administration had become "dysfunctional".

"Many people are getting killed in road accidents every day. The incidents of crime have also marked a rise, but there is no action to prevent those as virtually there is no government in the country," he said.

Fakhrul said there was no alternative to ensuring the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail to protect the country and its people. "Let's get united and free Khaleda Zia and democracy."

Earlier at a discussion, the BNP leader alleged that the entire country had turned into a jail as the

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# Minor boy killed after abduction in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A seven-year-old madrasa boy has been killed after abduction in Noakhali's Begumganj upazila.

Locals found the body of Meheraj Hossain, a class-II student of Jhirloli Kasimul Ullum Madrasa in the upazila's Daulatpur village, in a paddy field last evening.

Meheraj mother Runa Akter said her son had gone missing on Thursday. She filed a general diary with Begumganj Police Station the next morning, after receiving phone calls from abductors for ransom.

Firoj Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police, confirmed the matter.

Sudharam Police Station OC Anwar Hossain said on information, they recovered the body and sent it to Noakhali General Hospital for autopsy.

"We are investigating," he said.

# Deadline

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4,000 chemical warehouses and factories from Old Dhaka. The decision was made at a meeting between the industries secretary and acid and chemical traders at the ministry office on February 27.

Different quarters have been critical of the delay in the relocation as nine years have passed since the Nimtoli tragedy in which 124 lives were lost.

The government at that time had instructed moving the warehouses.

"We have found six acres of land in Gazipur's Tongi and 6.17 acres in Postogola area," Halim had said on February 27.

The site in Tongi is empty and owned by state-run Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation. The land in Postogola was previously owned by state-run Ujala Match Factory and is now unused, the secretary had said.

Meanwhile, a taskforce of the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has been conducting drives to remove warehouses with "dangerous chemicals" from Old Dhaka, including Chawkbazar.

Balayet Hossain, chairman of the standing committee on chemicals and industries at the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said since the temporary sheds were not ready, the traders have been storing chemicals in different areas of Dhaka, like Keraniganj, Shyampur, Demra, Savar, Basila, Jatrabari, and Badda.

Some have also moved chemicals to Gazipur, he said.



Students protesting the death of their fellow, Md Wasim, in Kadamtali area of Sylhet last night. Inset, tyres burn on street.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR



# Set up a road safety authority

FROM PAGE 1

Amid growing concern over frequent road accidents, the government formed the body on February 17. But the appointment of Shajahan as its head sparked controversy with many describing the decision as hilarious.

Hours after two college students were killed by a speeding bus in the capital in July last year, Shajahan smirked when reporters sought his reaction as a transport leader. On many occasions in the past, his other comments and actions regarding road safety issue sparked widespread criticism.

Initially, the committee had 15 members. Seven more were co-opted into it later, taking the total number of members to 22.

Eight of them, including Shajahan, are involved in transport organisations that are often blamed for the very indiscipline they will seek to put an end to.

Nirapad Sarak Chai, a platform working to ensure safe roads, said at least 4,439 people were killed in 3,103 road crashes while Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said 5,514 road crashes claimed 7,221 lives last year.

The committee was asked to submit its report in 14 working days. Later, it got extension.

One of the committee members, Kazi Md Saifun Newaz, an assistant professor of Buet's Accident Research

## SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Allocating 5pc funds of road dev projects as road safety fund
- » Implementing franchise system for public transport
- » Setting limit of all commercial vehicles' economic lifeline
- » Keeping first aid boxes in all long haul buses
- » Giving priority on producing female drivers in govt and non-govt organisations

Institute, said they hoped to submit the report to the road transport and bridges ministry by April 4.

They prepared the report on the basis of the prime minister's directives, recommendations of a committee formed in 2011 under the leadership of former Jahangirnagar University vice chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain and taking the present situation into consideration.

The body set December 2019 as deadline for taking some immediate steps in this regard while 2019 to 2021 as deadline for short term and 2019 to 2014 as long term initiatives.

It said many of those need to continue for years.

## IMMEDIATE STEPS

As its first recommendation, the committee called for taking steps for boosting awareness about traffic rules and road uses.

It said different relevant short dramas and advertisements should be made and aired in the media for free. It also stressed taking up awareness programmes at the educational institutions.

The committee said the media must refrain from "spreading negative and confusing information" on road accidents.

Besides, it recommended making all footpaths free of illegal occupation, setting up new ones and ensuring their round-the-clock monitoring.

The body said no structure should stand within 20 metres of highway and all lease of markets in such areas must be cancelled.

One of the major recommendations was formulation of rules of the Road Safety Act.

Besides, drivers of long-haul buses and truck should get rest after every five hours. The drivers should not be at the wheels for more than eight hours at a stretch.

The committee also pushed for preventing illegal three-wheelers from plying highways and bringing them under a mechanism so that they could

ply regional highways and local roads.

## SHORT TERM INITIATIVES

The short term recommendations include creating 1,000 skilled driving instructors within 2020.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) would take measures to create those instructors with public money. It would give priority to those who retired from police and army services.

The committee said all driving schools must be registered with the authorities concerned and that the drivers without licences should be identified and trained.

One recommendation is that all professional drivers must attend a two-day training before renewal of their licences.

The committee also recommended incorporating traffic laws and road safety issues into the curriculum of students from grades I to X.

The committee said rickshaws should be removed from the main thoroughfares and plans need to be worked out to phase out the vehicles from the capital.

Also, a driver cannot be appointed on daily basis and the owner must give him or her appointment letter mentioning his or her salaries. Besides, nobody should be allowed to buy motorcycle without valid licence, it said.

# Quader now even better

Doctors say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader's health condition improved further after the successful bypass surgery in Singapore, Prof Dr Abu Nasar Rizvi said yesterday, quoting the medical board of Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

"His endotracheal tube (artificial ventilation) has been removed. Besides, the dosage of sleeping pills has also been reduced," said the physician at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), who is accompanying Quader in Singapore.

He made the remarks while talking to the family members of Quader at the hospital.

Rizvi said he talked to Quader after the removal of his tube.

Quader, also the Road Transport and Bridges Minister, underwent a successful bypass surgery at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital by a team of surgeons led by Cardiothoracic Surgeon Dr Sebastian Kumar Swami on Wednesday.

Quader was admitted to BSMMU on March 3 following breathing complications and tests that revealed three blockages in his coronary arteries.

He was flown to Singapore the next day.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal visited Quader at the Mount Elizabeth hospital on Friday afternoon, reports BSS.

# Ducsu finally gets going

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However, Ducsu Vice-President Nurul Haque Nur opposed the proposal, made by Shahrina Tanjina Arni, international affairs secretary of the Ducsu.

The VC, also the ex officio president of the Ducsu, said the PM would be conferred with the honour as the election was held because of her sincere will.

Most of the members agreed to it.

But disagreeing with the proposal, Nur said, "A large number of students alleged that rigging took place during the election. A highly respected person like the prime minister should not be included in the Ducsu which was formed through a questionable election."

The meeting began at 11:30am at the hall room on the first floor of Ducsu Bhaban and ended around 1:30pm.

While briefing reporters after the meeting, the VC said the proposal of giving lifetime membership to Sheikh Hasina was raised in the meeting and everyone agreed to it.

"We will examine the legal procedures regarding the decision and undertake the noble step officially in the next meeting in line with the Ducsu constitution," he added.

Ducsu General Secretary Golam Rabbani said all the members agreed to the decision except for Nur. So the point he raised is not acceptable in democratic system.

"The decision has already been taken and it's a solved issue," he said.

Nur said he also urged the VC to stop the "guest room" and "gono room" culture in the dormitories and allot seats based on the students' merit.

At the meeting, the Ducsu leaders proposed a ban on public transport on the DU campus. They also proposed introducing separate lanes for rickshaw and cycle and a special rickshaw service in the university area.

While the meeting was taking place, several activists of Chhatra Federation



Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman flanked by Ducsu General Secretary Golam Rabbani and Vice President Nurul Haque Nur, talks to reporters in front of Ducsu building yesterday after the first meeting of the newly formed students' union. Inset, activists of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation form a human chain demanding reelection of Ducsu.

PHOTO: STAR

were seen staging a demonstration to press home their demand for reelection. They also formed a human chain in front of the Ducsu building.

Around 11:00am, members of

different left-leaning student organisations gathered at the Raju Sculpture and showed symbolic "red cards" to the entire electoral process of Ducsu saying it was marred by anomalies.

Meanwhile, several hundred activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal marched on the campus wearing black badges demanding immediate reschedule of the Ducsu polls scrap-

ping the results of the March 11 polls.

The 28-year-long wait to Ducsu election ended in boycott by all the major panels over allegations of irregularities and vote rigging.