

# WORLD CLEANUP DAY

# Trash crisis on spotlight

AFP, Sydney

Thousands of activists fanned out across beaches and rivers throughout Asia yesterday, picking up rubbish and drawing attention to the amount of trash that is dumped worldwide, a day after millions marched to urge world leaders to act on climate change.

The volunteers turned out for World Cleanup Day -- an initiative that has got millions into the streets and cleaning up litter across the globe since it began just over a decade ago.

The Pacific island nation of Fiji swung into action early, with people scouring palm-fringed beaches for rubbish, heaving discarded car tyres and engine parts from the coast just west of the capital Suva.

On Australia's Bondi beach activists sifted through the sand, carting off bits of plastic and cigarette butts.

In the Philippines, some 10,000 people swept across a long stretch of beach on heavily polluted Manila Bay, clutching sacks they filled with rubbish.

Plastic pollution is a major problem across Southeast Asia, but particularly in the Philippines, which -- along with China, Vietnam and Indonesia -- is frequently listed among the world's worst offenders.

"It's for us to help the environment, especially here in Manila, there's a lot of garbage," Mae Angela Areglado, a 20-year-old student told AFP as she pitched in

with the cleanup -- held right next to the city's huge Baseco slum.

"(Plastic is) affecting the marine life because they think that it is food", she added.

The mass cleanup is coordinated by the Let's Do It Foundation, which aims to "connect and empower people and organisations around the world to make our planet waste free", according to its website.

It attracted around 1,400 volunteers in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, where they scoured different areas of the city for litter under the scorching sun.

"Although our actions are very small -- like cleaning trash from the sidewalk -- it could spread a meaningful message," 18-year-old Hoang Thi Hoan told AFP, as motorists zipped by on a busy street.

In China, a group of about 30 gathered by the Xiaotaihou River in Beijing to pick up rubbish along the manmade waterway.

"You can't get permission to organise large events in Beijing due to tight security ahead of the 70th anniversary celebrations," organiser Zhang Hongfu, from the environmental group Friends of Nature, told AFP.

Seventy-nine percent of the plastic ever made has ended up dumped, with little reused or destroyed despite recycling and other initiatives to curb use, a UN report from 2018 said.

Just nine percent of the nine billion tonnes of plastic the world has produced has been recycled.

# Fakhrul asks AL to quit power

UNB, Dhaka

Following arrests of some leaders of ruling party affiliated bodies in drives against illegal casinos and businesses, the BNP yesterday demanded "resignation of the government".

"The high tone of the government has now been lowered as they've been caught. They themselves are catching their people," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Talking to reporters after a meeting of the BNP standing committee members at party chairperson's Gulshan office, he said, "We would like to tell the government, please quit power as you have failed to run the country."

The BNP leader also called upon the government to hold a fresh election under a neutral administration to ease public sufferings.

He said gambling has badly spread all over the country during the rule of the current government as it has lost control on the state machinery. "They're failing to control those who helped them grab

power on December 29. Their party men and law enforcers have gone out of their control."

Fakhrul said all the state organs are collapsing as the government has no "accountability and legitimacy".

He said relatives of their party chairperson Khaleda Zia met her on Friday, and found her in a serious condition.

The BNP leader said Khaleda lost weight as she is unable to eat anything on her own due to her fragile health condition.

He demanded the government free Khaleda from jail so that she could receive proper treatment at a hospital of her choice.

Fakhrul alleged that the government was slowly pushing the BNP chief towards death by depriving her of her right to be freed on bail. "We want her to be freed immediately through the legal process."

BNP standing committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Jamiruddin Sircar, Mirza Abbas, Goyeshwar Chandar Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, and Nazrul Islam Khan were present at the meeting.

# GK Shamim on remand

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contractor, and his seven bodyguards were accused of these in the case filed under the Arms Act with Gulshan Police Station.

The accused bodyguards are: Delwar Hossain, Murad Hossain, Zahidul Islam, Shahidul Islam, Kamal Hossain, Samsad Hossain and Aminul Islam.

Two other cases filed against Shamim with the police station are under the money laundering and narcotics control acts.

Naib Subeda Mizanur Rahman of Rab 1 filed the cases yesterday afternoon.

During a raid at Shamim's house and office in the capital's Niketan, Rab seized eight firearms, a huge amount of ammunition, Fixed Deposit Receipts of Tk 165 crore and around Tk 1.8 crore in cash, a large stash of the US and Singaporean dollars and some foreign liquor.

Shamim is known to be an influential contractor of the Public Works Department and other government organisations. His firm GKB and Company (Pvt) Limited is handling 15 big construction projects of the government, involving around Tk 3,000 crore, said its Marketing Manager Shafaeth Hossain.

**PLACED ON REMAND**

Shamim was placed on a 10-day remand in the cases filed under the Arms Act and Narcotics Control Act.

In one case, the prosecutors appealed for a seven-day remand each for Shamim and his seven bodyguards, but the court granted Shamim five days and seven bodyguards four days each.

Shamim was placed on another five-day remand in the drugs case in which he is the lone accused.

His lawyers pleaded to the court for cancellation of the remand, saying Shamim was a special contractor. They argued that he needed the armed bodyguards because of his 18 construction projects involving several thousand crores.

They also argued that the firearms were legal and the liquor seized during the raid did not belong to him.

The prosecutors asked how a man could win the contract for 18 government projects.

Shamim needs to be interrogated in remand to solve the mystery, they added.

**KALABAGAN CLUB PRESIDENT**

Kalabagan Kira Chakra President Shafiqul Alam Feroz was placed on a 10-day remand in a case filed in connection with possessing an illegal firearm and drugs.

A Dhaka court passed the order after police produced him before it with a 20-day remand prayer in two cases.

The prosecutors said as the law enforcers found a foreign pistol and 990 yaba pills in his possession, it was necessary to interrogate him in remand.

Shafiqul's lawyer told the court that an influential quarter, conspiring against Shafiqul, implicated him in false cases.

The lawyer alleged that Shafiqul was "threatened with crossfire" while in custody and asked why he would keep a firearm and yaba pills at his office at a time when law enforcers were conducting raids one after another in sporting clubs.

He also pointed out that Rab didn't allow journalists inside the club during the raid which was unusual considering the other recent raids.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, commanding officer of Rab-2, didn't comment on this.

The two cases were filed against Shafiqul with Dhanmondi Police Station.

Shafiqul is a central executive committee member of the Krishak League, a body of the ruling Awami League. He is also the senior vice president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.



Members of different environmentalist organisations hold banners and placards near Shahbagh intersection yesterday to mark World Rivers Day. A river is a living entity and it has legal rights, they said. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# No let-up in river grabbing

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Asked whether there is a conflict of interest in getting the lists made by the deputy commissioners, as they are the authorities who lease out river foreshores and flood plains of rivers, Howlader said legally they are the trustees of public property like rivers and are entrusted with taking care of it.

It is the DCs who have to identify and prepare the lists of land and river grabbers as per laws like State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, he said.

"For now, we are happy with the lists because this is the first time in the country's history we have got such lists of river grabbers."

The river commission will examine if there are any lapses and if any grabbers are found to have been left out, he added.

The lists have been submitted to the commission in phases over the past six months. The DCs got the lists done with the help of local assistant commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers.

## DIVISION-WISE GRABBING

In eleven districts of Chattogram division, the total number of grabbers is 18,411 with the highest 5,906 in Cumilla, followed by 4,704 in Chattogram district.

In nine districts of Khulna division, the total number of river grabbers is 6,518 with the highest 3,134 in Kushtia district, and in four districts of Sylhet division, the total is 2,044.

In six districts of Barishal division, a total of 5,215 grabbers have been identified with the highest 2,272 in Barishal district. The total grabbers identified in six districts of Rangpur division is 2,154 with the highest 1,047 in Dinajpur.

In three districts of Mymensingh division, the number of river grabbers is 1,335, excluding those in Mymensingh district.

The High Court in a landmark verdict in February ordered the government to make a list of the grabbers and expose them by publishing the lists in the

media.

According to the HC orders, the Election Commission is supposed to make the river grabbers ineligible for contesting any elections and the Bangladesh Bank is to make them ineligible for bank loans.

The court said playing any blind man's buff over protection of rivers had to stop since the grabbers return and occupy rivers after their evictions.

Sources said the national river conservation commission, not having any executive power, has so far made only recommendations.

According to the law on which it was constituted, it cannot hold government officials accountable for ignoring river conservation. It, at best, can file cases against river grabbers and report to the HC on non-compliance of court orders.

The HC in a judgement in February had directed the government to amend the commission law and incorporate stringent provisions to empower the body.

# Authorities' inaction put rivers in peril

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said Muzibur, also a former secretary.

"Rivers are a national property that cradles the country's economy, ecology, culture and heritage and provide plenty of precious sweet water. But they have been victims of greed of the wealthy grabbers, who are politically and socially powerful, and blessed by the government's executive machinery," he told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview recently.

Though 99 percent of the country's people want the rivers to be protected, the government has failed to take action against the remaining one percent -- the grabbers.

Year after year the river commission requested Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), deputy commissioners, Water Development Board (WDB), superintendents of police, and Department of Environment (DoE) to protect rivers. But the conditions of the rivers have become deplorable due to the authorities' apathy, dilly-dally, inaction and inefficiency in reclaiming rivers.

Most recommendations the commission made over the last one year for eviction of the encroachers have been ignored. The BIWTA has carried out several drives to remove illegal structures from the Buriganga and the Turag in recent months. But they are yet to remove the massive amounts of earth and sand filling the rivers.

"If the authorities do not save the rivers and recover them from grabbers, it is obvious they are complicit in

this," the former secretary noted.

So far, the authorities have not acted in the way they should have. As a result, river grabbing has snowballed into a complicated issue and the authorities' inaction led to the rivers being in a woeful state today.

Non-implementation of the commission's recommendations naturally leads to waning public confidence in the commission's authority, he said.

Shortage of manpower and fund is often a big challenge for officials, but if any official shows negligence in their duty, they must be held accountable, Muzibur said.

He recommended making crimes against rivers a cognisable offence to punish grabbers. To this end, the commission is going to propose forming a special tribunal to try these offenders.

About determining the actual river area, he said the BIWTA, the Water Development Board, the district administrations and the Directorate of Land Records and Surveys have to play their due roles in this regard.

Those who are responsible for demarcating the river boundary and evicting grabbers have not done their job in time, for which they should face action, he said.

"But it will be unfortunate if the authorities do not bring them to book. What we see is the authorities are silent. We have not seen any authority taking action against their officials for their failure to protect rivers," he said.

The structures within the rivers were not built overnight; they took decades to be built. The authorities that have recently pulled down hundreds of structures, including tall buildings on Buriganga and Turag, in fact allowed grabbers to build those in the first place.

"So, what does it mean? They have not enforced the river laws all these years," he pointed out.

"Why did the BIWTA and the district administration allow hundreds of buildings and structures to be built on the Buriganga, Turag, Balu, and Shitalakhyia? Are not the officials liable?"

He also squarely blamed the shipping ministry, under which the commission operates, for its failure to save rivers.

The River Commission wants to ensure accountability in river conservation efforts, but the shipping ministry is neither willing nor comfortable with it because "the ministry itself is liable" for the failure to protect rivers, he added.

The commission's inspection reports and recommendations for saving rivers sometimes go against government departments and authorities that are often complicit with the grabbers.

"So, can we expect funds through them for the commission's work? It is natural that they will not give us money. At times, they demonstrate hostile and non-cooperative attitude towards the commission," he said.

# Outsiders attack students; 20 hurt

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VC Nasiruddin had denied all the allegations while talking to The Daily Star earlier.

This newspaper tried to contact him several times yesterday for comments on the attacks, but there was no response.

Earlier in the day, the authorities suddenly declared a 10-day vacation ahead of Durga Puja and asked the students to vacate dormitories by 10:00am.

Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindus, would be celebrated in the first week of next month.

The demonstrators alleged that the authorities also severed power and water connections to the dormitories and shut the dining halls there, apparently to force the students to leave the campus.

They said the steps were aimed at "gagging the voice against corruption and irregularities that have plagued the university for long".

The agitating students said the first attack was carried out around 10:30am yesterday near Gobra Madrasa when students, failing to get any transport, were walking to the campus.

More than 100 young men, many of whom were carrying sticks and sharp weapons, attacked the

demonstrators, who included female students, they said.

To escape the attack, many students jumped into a waterbody in the area, said Sairul Islam, a third-year student of chemistry.

"A number of students were caught and beaten. Anyone found trying to capture the incident on their mobile phones were severely beaten up," said an injured female student, wishing not to be named.

Protesters were also intercepted and beaten in Balurmath, Sobhan Road and Sonakur areas.

"I saw an attacker grabbing a female student by her hair and assaulting her. He was also scolding her for joining the protests," said a student at the management department, who was attacked in Sobhan Road area.

The injured were rescued and taken to hospital by fellow students.

Defying the university order and despite the attacks, the students demonstrated in front of the VC's office for the third straight day yesterday. They vowed not to leave until the VC steps down.

The movement was triggered by the university suspending Fatema Tuz Zinia, a student and also a campus reporter of English newspaper The Daily Sun, on September 10 over a Facebook post.

**CONDEMNATIONS**

Talking to this daily, Humayun, a lecturer of the sociology department, said, "I resigned from the post of assistant proctor as I can't be ethically holding the post anymore following attacks on my students."

Yesterday, at least 10 teachers of the university went to the demonstrators and condemned the attacks. They expressed solidarity with their demand.

Gopalganj Chhatra League also condemned the attacks on general students and said it wanted the attackers punished.

In a press release, the BCL unit extended its support to the "logical" demand of the students.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi university correspondents of different dailies and television channels demonstrated on the campus, protesting yesterday's attacks that left three journoas at BSMRSTU injured.

In the capital, quota reform activists brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus demanding that the VC Nasiruddin step down.

Speaking there, Nurul Haque Nur, quota reform leader and Vice-President of Dhaka University Central Students' Union, said, "Students come under attack whenever they demonstrate for a logical demand. We demand the VC's resignation."



Mijanur Rahman Ashrafur Islam

# Two Kushtia

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former general secretary of IU Chhatra League Shamsuzzaman Tuhin, and Jubo League leader Anisur Rahmn Bikash.

According to the case statement, Mijanur and Ashrafur had been putting pressure on Al Amin for paying Tk 50 lakh in extortion money.

A former general secretary ward-7 Jubo Dal in Kushtia, Ashrafur joined Jubo League, the ruling Awami League's youth front, two years ago. He was made convener of Kushtia town Jubo League about six months back.

Police said a local court sent the two arrestees to jail after they were produced before it yesterday.

Campus sources said development works involving Tk 550 crore were underway at the university. The tender process of the projects was allegedly being manipulated by some ruling party men.

Asked about the allegation of extortion, Kushtia district AL President Sadar Uddin Khan said the party has "zero tolerance" for extortion and anyone involved in such a crime will not be spared.

# Shakib powers

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final three overs, Shakib smoked Rashid Khan for a four and a six in the 18th over, which Mosaddek started with a four of his own. That over saw 18 runs being tacked onto the scoreboard, which made all the difference in the end.

It was not an ideal start for the Tigers as they came in to chase, with both openers Liton Das and Nazmul Hossain departing cheaply to leave Bangladesh struggling on 12 for two inside four overs.

Liton departed for four after he handed a simple catch to Asghar Afghan while attempting to clear the offside off the bowling of Muejeb Ur Rahman. Nazmul, who failed in his T20I debut against Zimbabwe in the previous game, once again disappointed. The left-hander added just five runs before departing, hanging a simple catch while misreading a slower delivery from pacer Naveen ul Haque.

Bangladesh's two experienced cricketers, Mushfiquur Rahim and Shakib, steadied the ship with a 58-run third-wicket stand. But despite being given a lifeline through a dropped catch when he was on 14, Mushfiquur departed as he went after Karim Janat for a second six in the same over. He was caught and walked back for a 25-ball 26.

Mahmudullah and Sabbir Rahman also failed and things began to look difficult for the Tigers. Shakib, who reached his fifty at the other end, was the biggest hope for the hosts.

The game was also delayed for 12 minutes in the 13th over as a technical problem led to one of the floodlights failing to function properly.

Earlier, Bangladesh made just one change by bringing in Sabbir Rahman to replace injured leg-spinner Aminul Islam, who required three stitches to his left hand after sustaining an injury during his impressive debut against Zimbabwe in the previous game.

The hosts made a good start after electing to field as seamers Shafuil and Saifuddin maintained a tight line and length initially, keeping Afghanistan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Hazratullah Zazai quiet.

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The hosts were almost rewarded for that in the second over when Gurbaz, on just three runs, top-edged a short delivery from Shafuil and popped a regulation catch to Mahmudullah, who incredibly dropped the dolly.

The Afghan openers then grabbed the opportunity and started to punish the Bangladesh bowlers and were eventually cruising on 75 without loss after nine overs before Shakib introduced Afif Hossain into the attack for the first time in the series.

The 19-year-old provided the breakthrough with his off-spin, picking up two wickets in his first over. He removed Zazai for a team-high 35-ball 47 and then removed Asghar Afghan for a duck.

After that, Bangladesh gained momentum and the Afghan middle order collapsed. The visitors could add just 34 runs with their last five wickets, ultimately posting 138 for seven in 20 overs.