

Writ petition filed to reopen edu institutes immediately

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday, seeking its directive on the government to reopen all educational institutions, including schools and colleges, immediately, considering the present situation.

Abdul Kaiyum Sarkar, principal of Bhawal Mirzapur Public School and College, submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC, requesting it to order authorities concerned of the government to reopen academic institutions immediately, strictly following health guidelines.

In the petition, he also prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking authorities to explain why the January 15 notification for extending closure of institutions till January 30 should not be declared illegal, petitioner's lawyer Faruque Alamgir Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

He said the HC may hold a hearing on the petition any day next week. Citing the petition, Faruque said educational institutions of the country have remained closed since March last year due to the pandemic situation, hampering study.

The closure was extended 12 times so far, he added.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Block-C of Mirpur-11 almost looked like a warzone yesterday, as hundreds of locals attempted to obstruct DNCC's eviction drive, claiming it would displace people from three Bihari camps. Inset, police showed up to bring the situation under control, and ultimately threw teargas canisters at the locals.



DNCC drive met with resistance at Mirpur-11

Locals say 3 Bihari camps facing eviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials of Dhaka North City Corporation faced obstruction from locals while conducting an eviction drive in Mirpur section 11, block-C yesterday. A chase and counter-chase took place when locals pelted brick chips targeting the DNCC officials and police.

Around 10:30am, a team of DNCC started the drive at Nannu Market area, but the drive was halted in the face of resistance from locals. Some brickbats were thrown from surrounding houses as well.

On information, additional police members rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Officer-in-Charge of Pallabi Police Station Kazi Wazed Ali. Police used five rounds of teargas shells.

The eviction drive resumed after a 20-minute break, Wazed Ali said. DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam also visited the spot around 11:15am and stayed there for a while. He said the drives will continue.

He said around 150 structures were demolished in the drive which continued till 6pm and they will resume it on Friday (today).

Md Sadaqat Khan Fakkur, acting president of Mirpur-11 New Society Market, on the other hand said three Bihari camps were demolished during the drive.

He said they did not get any notice before the drive and the drive was conducted violating a Chamber Judge Court order.

Around 300 houses would be demolished in the drive, he said. Atiqul said DNCC will construct a two-kilometre long, 60-70 feet wide road from Mirpur 11 to Kalshi via Bounia. There will be a huge improvement in connectivity for locals after completion of the road, he added.

The DNCC mayor said a project of Tk 29 crore has already been undertaken and the work will begin after completing the eviction drive.

He said it will be a parallel road to Kalshi, which will improve connectivity with the airport. Atiqul added that late mayor Annisul Huq

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Future of news media 'digital-first': speakers

MRDI report looks at country's media viability

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the Covid-19 pandemic having severe impact on the media industry at large in Bangladesh, the future will be "digital-first", experts of the field said at a programme yesterday.

Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) organised the virtual discussion to launch a report, titled, "Leadership or Stagnation: The Future of Media Viability in Bangladesh". It was conducted by MRDI in conjunction with Fojo Media Institute of Sweden. The report was authored by Ross Settles, adjunct professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre of Hong Kong University; and Tanim Ahmed, adjunct faculty at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

"I do not think any [print] media can go back to their January 2020 circulation figures," said Matiur Rahman, editor of leading Bangla daily Prothom Alo, commenting on the impact of the pandemic on the media industry.

"A media should be run by its own money, not money from the government, not money from the corporate, otherwise no media will survive," said Matiur Rahman.

On the electronic media front, "There is a huge difference between the operational demand of television channels and the actual money available," said Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, managing partner and country head of advertising agency Grey Bangladesh.

"Channels are underselling themselves. As a result they do not have the money to run an organisation the way it should be run. Media as a business took a backseat to media as a political tool," he added.

"Most of the so-called corporatised media are the major victims of this pandemic, and this is because of the lack of investigative reporting, and lack of content diversification. All channels and newspapers have the same type of coverage," said Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Editor-in-chief of TV Today.

Rejoanul Haq Raja, head of news at Maasranga TV, said, "Free to air channels are not viable, and owners are thinking of getting out of this model. Cable operators are taking all the money. Channel owners are now interested in a paid subscription model. All operators have to form a digital network that will be payment-based."

"There should be strict rules and policies

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Three-hour transport chaos to file a case!

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Supporters of a ward-level ruling party leader in Barishal on Wednesday night blocked a highway, shut down bus and launch services for over three hours.

Their demand -- police have to accept a case against the chairperson of a shoe company in the city's BSCIC area.

They withdrew the blockade after a case was filed by the AL leader against Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Fortune Shoes Limited.

So why did the said leader -- Sohag Hawlader, the organising secretary of Awami League (Ward-1) -- do so? Retribution.

According to locals and eyewitnesses, Mizanur stopped Sohag from harassing female workers of the company on Wednesday morning. Locals said Sohag has allegedly been involved in harassing workers and extortion for a long time.

Around 10:30am on the day, Sohag was caught by Mizanur while he was "bothering" some female workers of the factory, they said.

Mizanur told The Daily Star yesterday that he tried to stop Sohag. Later, factory officials and informed police and Rapid Action Battalion about the incident, he said.

Once the law enforcers arrived, they handed Sohag to them, claimed Mizanur.

"Around 10 to 12 days back, Sohag was found doing the same," he said, adding that at least 50 female workers of the factory did not come to work for a long time out of fear as Sohag is an influential person.

Sohag, however, while talking to this newspaper, claimed that he went to the factory to ask for his payment, which remained unpaid after delivery of cement some days

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Govt planning diplomatic zone at Purbachal: Momen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to build a new diplomatic zone in Dhaka's Purbachal area due to a shortage of land in Gulshan and Baridhara diplomatic zones, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

"Necessary coordination with the authorities, including Rajuk and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, is under process in this regard," Momen informed the parliament.

He said this in reply to queries from a lawmaker. His answer was tabled at the onset of the day's sitting.

Currently, 10 foreign embassies have applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for plots to set up their missions. In particular, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Oman, Kuwait, Myanmar and Afghanistan have requested for plots since opening their diplomatic missions in Bangladesh.

Moreover, there are indications that those among the 50 foreign missions in Dhaka that are not using the allocated or purchased plots may also be interested in getting land, said Momen.

Several embassies and high commissions have demanded for land in Baridhara

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CHATTOGRAM CITY CORPORATION POLLS

Over 100 BNP activists accused in three cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Over 100 leaders and activists of BNP have been made accused in three cases over violence centring the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) elections.

The cases were filed with Bakalia, Kotwali and Akbarshah police stations, said police sources.

"The city unit of BCL committee's executive member Mosharuful Haque Pavel filed a case accusing 35 BNP men in connection with a clash between Awami League and BNP activists," said Nezam Uddin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, yesterday.

"Police arrested four FIR accused

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Rebels beware: AL

Party mulls disciplinary action against rogue candidates

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Awami League may take disciplinary actions against party's "rebel candidates" before the Chattogram City Corporation elections.

The party high command may take a decision within a day or two in this regard as the councillor candidates who are contesting in the CCC polls defying party decision did not step down despite repeated warning from central leaders.

The election will be held on January 27.

AL joint general secretary Mahubul-Alam Hanif, while talking to journalists in the port city on Wednesday, said disciplinary actions will be taken against the "rebel" candidates in a day or two.

On the very day in Dhaka, AL general secretary Obaidul Quader also told journalists that the party is going to take tough action against the rebel candidates in CCC.

Earlier on January 15, AL organising secretary in Chattogram division Ahmad Hossain in a views-exchange with party leaders and activists expressed similar sentiments.

According to AL sources, the party high command is planning to send a clear message to others throughout the country through CCC polls.

An AL leader, preferring anonymity, said the high command also has information that some local AL leaders are backing the "rebels". They fear this intra-party rivalry might end up affecting the polls result.

Besides, the central leaders are also worried over the violence that took place in different areas of the city between the activists of pro-AL councillor candidates, said another AL leader, adding that BNP candidates might capitalise the division within their party.

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MINI BYTES



Why the overnight popularity of BiP in Bangladesh?

BY SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

WhatsApp is being criticised globally for its security issues and forced to delay the enforcement of its newest privacy policy. This resulted in a rise of non-mainstream apps like Signal, Telegram and Line to rise up. Among these, BiP seems to have caught on with Bangladeshi netizens.

Launched in 2013, BiP is an instant messaging platform developed by Turkey's largest telecom operator Turkcell. The majority of shares are owned by the Turkish government through a sovereign wealth fund. Right when WhatsApp dropped the news of their new privacy policies, like many governments, Turkey shared their discontent openly. On January 10, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's media office announced that it will switch to local app BiP to brief journalists from now on tipping the scale in favour of BiP's market share.

Upon inspecting the news media of the last several months, news appearance of Turkey was prominently visible. As Turkey has religious, political and historical ties with Bangladesh, news about Turkey might have worked as an echo chamber which might be the reason why Bangladeshis were drawn to BiP, according to Umme Salma Tarin, Assistant Professor of Department of International Relations, Bangladesh University of Professionals. "Religion plays a strong role in the sentiment of Bangladeshis. Starting from the membership in OIC back in 1970s to Turkish first lady's visit to Rohingya camps a few years back, Turkey has been able to portray a positive

image in the minds of our people," she said. She also added, "Turkish TV shows and celebrities are quite popular in Bangladesh now. These all indicate growing affinity towards Turkish products and BiP's newfound popularity is probably reflects that very sentiment."

Many Facebookgroups that discuss Islamic topics were seen promoting the app terming it an app 'for Muslim ummah'. Many of the posts displayed Bangladesh and Turkey flags with Erdogan in the background. Some YouTubers were seen promoting the app in their video. Industry experts think that these are nothing but a content makers way of generating content that is in demand and has the future scope of monetisation.

Special Correspondent of Channel I and President of Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB), FaridurRahamanPantho pointed out it the rise of BiP has a direct relation with the digitisation of Waz and Milad (Islamic religious congregation). "We can see live telecast or recorded streams of Waz and Miladnowadays. Often these are under scrutiny as the content of these congregation are sensitive in nature. Followers of these might think BiP as a way out."

Tech experts are accepting the popularity of BiP positively though. "Over dependency on one app is never a good thing", said CEO of BDJobs and former BASIS President FahimMashroor. "It's a good thing that we are seeing people opting for multiple messaging app. Every app will try to enforce their policies so it is best not to be reliant on just one", he added.



Many individuals from different platforms yesterday gathered at port city's Cheragi intersection and held a candle-light programme to demand punishment for the killers of Lakingme Chakma. The 14-year-old was abducted, converted and married off to one of her abductors, and eventually murdered in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar last year.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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