

Allow us to keep shops open before Eid: store owners

Demonstration held in Rajshahi
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

With plates in their hands, shop owners demonstrated in Rajshahi city yesterday, demanding withdrawal of the lockdown ahead of Eid.

"Give us food, or withdraw the lockdown," they kept on shouting during their one-hour demonstration since 11:30am in Shaheb Bazar area.

Rajshahi Babosayi Oikya Parishad, an alliance of 110 local business bodies, organised the event. Yasin Ali, its joint secretary, said they submitted a memorandum to the city mayor on Wednesday with a seven-point demand.

"Our income has come down to zero but we are paying our employees, utility bills and holding taxes," he said. "Our sells have already reduced amid the pandemic. If we can't do business ahead of Eid, our existence will be at stake."

The memorandum said lockdown will not be a solution without awareness among people and vaccinating them.

Their seven-point demand includes immediate vaccination, increasing number of ICUs in the city, suspension of collecting bills and holding taxes and incentives and loans for small and medium businesses.



A group of police personnel surrounding a mango seller's van and bargaining for the summer fruit in the capital's Keranganj area yesterday in a way sums up the strictness of the "strict lockdown". At least seven people, including two law enforcers -- who are presumably on duty to ensure the government's stay-at-home instructions for people, can be seen in the picture without their nose and mouth covered.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

8TH DAY OF LOCKDOWN

Public movement continues to rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the country witnesses a record number of Covid-19 infections and deaths, the 'strict lockdown' has loosened up in just a week as public and vehicular movement has increased ominously in Dhaka and elsewhere, violating restrictions.

Private cars, rickshaws, auto-rickshaws and motorbikes were aplenty on the streets, though operations of public transport remained shut. Vehicles were even seen stuck at different traffic signals, specially in the office hours.

As banks, industrial factories and other emergency services remain open, public movement continues to rise, despite 5,264 people having been detained in the last eight days in the capital alone by Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Alleys and kitchen markets remained crowded yesterday as well, with people ignoring health guidelines en masse.

Yesterday, Dhaka streets witnessed an increased number of vehicles on the eighth day of the 14-day nationwide "strict lockdown", enforced to contain coronavirus transmission.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday detained 1,077 people from Ramna, Lalbagh, Motijheel, Wari, Tejgaon, Mirpur, Gulshan, Uttara and other places in the capital, according to DMP's media wing.

Besides, mobile courts fined 318 individuals and business establishments a total of Tk 16.07 lakh. Traffic division of the DMP fined 937 vehicles Tk 21.53 lakh for violating Covid-19 restrictions.

Yesterday, Rapid Action Battalion teams conducted 195 patrols and set up 200 check posts across the country, said a statement, adding that 36 mobile courts, accompanied by Rab, fined 217 people a total of Tk 2.18 lakh.

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Making derogatory comments on FB a 'heinous offence': HC

Barguna couple granted bail in DSA case
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday said making derogatory comments about a person through Facebook post is a "heinous offence", as the victim can be seriously affected psychologically and socially.

The court, however, granted bail to a couple from Barguna in a case filed under the Digital Security Act for posting a derogatory comment about a teacher of a primary school in the district.

The High Court bench of Justice JBM Hassan granted bail to Md Akhtaruzzaman, a bank official, and his wife Tamanna Begum till reopening of the court after the ongoing suspension of regular court functions.

The bench passed the order following a petition filed by the two.

The HC granted bail to the couple on humanitarian grounds as they have two children -- a 14-year-old son and a

four-year-old daughter, Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy told The Daily Star.

Md Sagir Hossain Leon, lawyer for Akhtaruzzaman and Tamanna, said there is no legal bar to his clients' release from jail following the HC order.

He said one Dolly Akhter, a teacher of Latabaria Government Primary School at Barguna Sadar upazila, filed the case against the two with Barguna Police Station on June 4.

In the case, Dolly alleged that Tamanna made a derogatory comment about her on May 13 through creating a fake Facebook ID.

Therefore, her reputation has been damaged and she has been seriously affected socially and mentally.

Police arrested Akhtaruzzaman and Tamanna in the case the same day, said DAG Tushar Kanti.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ONLINE Space shrunk more than ever: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Squashed between cyber-harassment and the surveillance state, the space for freedom of expression on the internet has now shrunk more than ever, said speakers at a virtual discussion yesterday.

"Social media is caught between cyberbullying at a grassroots level, and the state's surveillance," said Prof Din M Sumon Rahman, of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

The discussion was arranged by a platform called Nagorik and moderated by barrister Jyotirmoy Barua.

The public has enormous power in their hands, but do not have the literacy to operate it, he added.

"This digital divide exists because we live in such a society where income inequality is so stark and a wide gender inequality exists," said Prof Mirza Taslima Sultana of the department of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University.

"But other than this group there also exists structured institutions who refuse to make space for diversity in thoughts and beliefs, who are agents of surveillance, but they do not know it in the interest of the general public."

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'Uncle spreading false news against me and mother'

Alleges Eric Ershad; GM Quader terms it 'baseless'
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eric Ershad, youngest son of Jatiya Party founder and late president HM Ershad, yesterday claimed that the allegation of money laundering against Bidisha Ershad, the wife of Ershad and his mother, was baseless.

Eric also alleged that his uncle -- JP chairperson GM Quader -- was involved in the matter as a conspirator.

He made the allegation at a brief press conference at Ershad's President Park residence in the capital's Baridhara.

Eric said his uncle GM Quader will be responsible if anything happens to him and his mother. He also appealed to the prime minister for exemplary punishment of GM Quader.

Eric said there is no evidence of money laundering against his mother. "Still, he [GM Quader] is spreading propaganda." "I am the son of former president

Hussein Muhammad Ershad. My father is no more at present. Amid this situation, my uncle GM Quader is engaged in publishing news in different media against me and my mother for the last two days."

In the press conference, Kazi Mamunur Rashid, chairman, Ershad Trust, among others, was present. Bidisha, however, was not present.

Mamunur said, "News on Eric and Bidisha is being shared on the official page of Jatiya Party. GM Quader is responsible for all the conspiracies. If Eric can be removed, he will be able to capture the trust's assets. GM Quader is involved in a conspiracy to destroy Ershad's family."

He said few media outlets and social media have been spreading fabricated and baseless news against Eric. Besides, there is a conspiracy to deprive Eric of his rights as Ershad's successor.

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WORLD POPULATION DAY DISCUSSION

Widen telemedicine services amid pandemic

Say speakers on addressing reproductive health, family planning issues properly
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an online discussion yesterday suggested for widening telemedicine services amid the pandemic to reach people -- especially women -- in hard-to-reach areas to address reproductive health and other family planning issues properly.

While the pandemic caused increase in child marriage and also disrupted family planning programmes, it also made it hard for many people -- including the newly-married -- to get right information regarding family planning, they said.

Marie Stopes Bangladesh in association with TEAM Associates and The Daily Star organised the

discussion on "World Population Day: Ensuring Choices and Rights".

Prof Mainul Islam of Dhaka University's population science department said in their latest survey conducted amid the pandemic, they found that child marriage was a major obstacle to ensuring reproductive health.

He said although Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) recently showed the country's total fertility rate (TFR) at 2.0, other surveys such as reports of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) between 2011 and 2017-18 and BBS and Unicef's joint survey "Multiple Cluster Indicator

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RMG workers block highways in N'ganj, Gazipur over arrears

STAR REPORT

Garment workers in Narayanganj and Gazipur yesterday staged demonstrations and blocked roads demanding their wages, Eid bonus and other arrears.

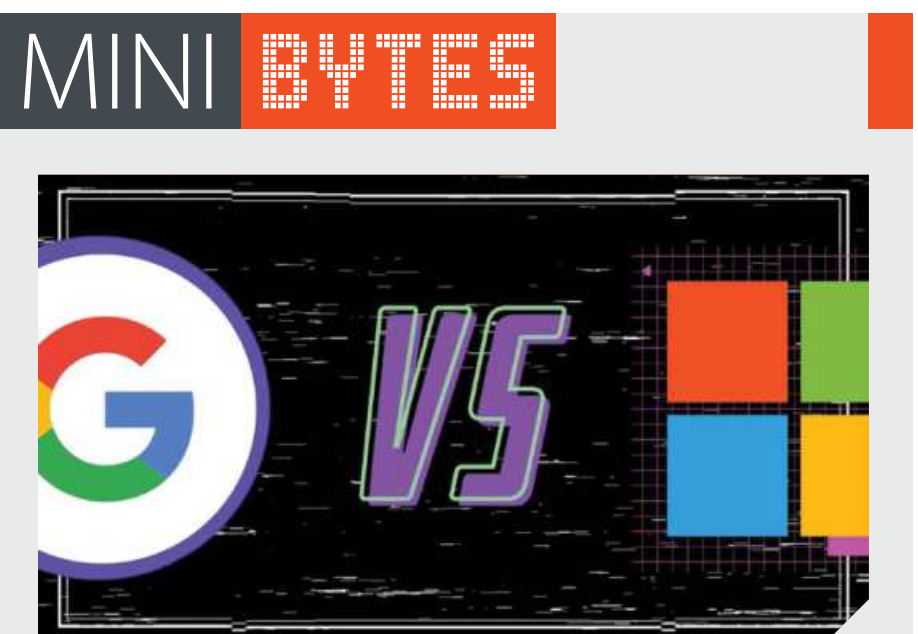
Goods-carrying vehicles and ambulances got stuck for hours in three highways due to the demonstrations.

In Narayanganj, several hundred workers of a garment factory and a textile mill of Opex and Sinha Group took to the streets around 9am at Sonargaon upazila's Kanchpur point, which connects Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways.

They blocked the road for around eight hours, halting vehicular movement on the two highways.

"We did not get wages for around four months. The authorities have promised us multiple times to pay our dues, but the

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Microsoft and Google prepare to fight it out, again

ZARIF FAIAZ

According to reports, a six-year legal truce between Microsoft and Google has come to an end. According to reports in The Financial Times and Bloomberg, Microsoft and Google reached an unusual truce in 2015, which expired in April of this year.

After 2012's Scroogled incident, where Microsoft's aggressive ads treated Google like a political opponent, the two tech giants were publicly seen criticising each other, largely thanks to the truce agreement.

Because of the legal truce, the rivalry between the two has been unusually quiet over the last five years. Despite being the number two search engine at the time, Microsoft was noticeably silent during the US government's antitrust suit against Google last year.

But Microsoft and Google are seemingly warming up to get back in the ring.

After Microsoft publicly supported a law in Australia that required Google to pay news publishers for their content, Google slammed Microsoft for attempting to "break the way the open web works" earlier this year.

Microsoft urged Congress to advance the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, which would "allow news organisations to negotiate collectively with online content distributors."

On the other hand, Google believed that its Google News Initiative, which aims to collaborate with the news industry, is sufficient to assist news organisations.

Microsoft also chastised Google's ad market dominance, claiming that publishers are forced to use Google's tools, which feed Google's profits.

According to The Financial Times, the Microsoft-Google agreement was intended to improve cooperation between the two companies, with Microsoft hoping to find a way to run Android apps on Windows. That clearly did not work out, and Microsoft has instead turned to Amazon to get Android apps running on Windows 11.

Before this agreement, there were some heated battles between Microsoft and Google, and they're likely to erupt again. There was a particularly bitter battle between Microsoft and Google over YouTube during the height of Windows Phone in 2013. Despite a promise of collaboration between the two companies, Google had blocked a YouTube app developed by Microsoft for Windows Phone. Microsoft was outsourcing anti-Google mugs and T-shirts and acting nervous about Chromebooks a few months later.

Since the days of Scroogled, a lot has changed for both Microsoft and Google, including new leadership on both sides, but Google's scathing attack on Microsoft earlier this year proves that these tech behemoths are ready to fight once more.



SOMEONE DIED HERE A DAY AGO

On Wednesday, 64-year-old lawyer Farid Uddin was crossing the road through broken grilles of a road divider in the capital's Shyamoli Road 3, when a truck crushed him to death, according to media reports. The very next day, people of all ages and social classes were seen doing the exact same thing, even though there is a footbridge not far from the spot. With the lockdown in place, heavy vehicles often zoom through the rather empty streets, and such reckless jaywalking bears testament to the level of traffic awareness among people.

The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN