

SIX MONTHS OF SUST MOVEMENT A story of unkept promises

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Six months have gone by since the students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) suspended their movement for the removal of the vice chancellor and other demands.

Six months ago, the protesting students were promised by Education Minister Dipu Moni and Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury that all their demands will be fulfilled.

Residential students of the university's Begum Sirajunnnesa Chowdhury Hall started a demonstration on January 13 this year over a few demands, which was later joined by other students on January 16.

On that day, the students confronted their VC, who was confined to MA Wazed Miah IICT Building.

In a mission to rescue the VC, police charged truncheons, and opened rubber bullets and sound grenades on the students, injuring at least 30 of them. After this move by the authorities, the protest took an anti-VC stance, demanding his removal.

On January 19, 24 students started a hunger strike, and later, five more joined in.

The strike was withdrawn after being publicly assured by Prof Muhammed

Zafar Iqbal and Prof Yasmeen Haque, both former professors of the university, that "higher ups" in the government promised them that the demands will be fulfilled.

On February 11, Dipu Moni and Mohibul Hasan went to Sylhet and met the protesting students.

On assurance of fulfilling all demands in the quickest possible time and forwarding the demand of VC's removal to the president, the students on February 12 suspended their movement.

However, Vice Chancellor Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed remains seated in his post even after six months.

Mohaiminul Bashar Raj and Shahriar Abedin, who were among the protesting students, said two cases filed against the protesting students and former students have not been withdrawn.

Some students are also being harassed academically and administratively for participating in the protests.

"I have 80 splinters in my body. With 30 splinters, my right hand is losing its functionality, while two splinters near my lungs are causing breathing difficulties," said Sazal Kundu, a student who was critically injured in the police brutality that took place on the campus on January 16.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



This busy road in front of KCC Market in Khulna city has become a regular parking spot for motorcycles. This long line acts as an inconvenience for numerous commuters and vehicles using the road every day. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Three-member panel elected for appointing next JU VC

JU CORRESPONDENT

Senators of Jahangirnagar University yesterday elected a three-member panel for appointing the next vice chancellor.

Prof Amir Hossain of the economics department secured the first position with 48 votes.

The other two panel members are Prof Nurul Alam of the physics department (46 votes) and Prof Ajit Kumar Majumder of the statistics department (32 votes).

The polls were held during a special senate session at the university's senate hall at 6:00pm.

The session was chaired by current VC Prof Nurul Alam, while Registrar Rahima Kaneez conducted the polls as election commissioner.

Seventy-six senate members, out of the 82, cast their votes at the panel election. The results were announced at 8:00pm by Rahima Kaneez.

Earlier, Pro-Awami League teachers announced three panels to contest the election, while "Bangabandhu Shikkhak Parishad" announced two separate panels.

The Jahangirnagar University authorities decided to hold the panel election on July 27.

The last VC panel election was held on February 20, 2014, where Prof Farzana Islam was elected, along with Prof Abul Hasan and Prof Amir Hossain.

Disappearing fish, dying land

BSCIC industries pollute Khanjar haor, putting farmers at risk in Moulvibazar

MINTU DESHWARA

Khanjar haor in Sylhet's Moulvibazar is being polluted at an alarming rate due to waste discharged from Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) Industrial Estate.

Factories dealing with ready-made garments and other products have been discharging waste into the nearby haor in an unrestrained manner for almost two decades now, taking no effective measure to curb it, said locals.

Besides, nearby arable lands have depleted and fish population has declined significantly as chemical-laden water enters Khanjar haor through the drains, they added.

Often times, locals suffer from skin diseases as a result of using this water.

"Fertility of agricultural land has been lost due to factory waste and toxic water. It's impossible to produce aus, aman or any kind of crop near the industrial area," said local farmer Imon Mia.

Villager Jaber Mia said, "Hundreds of farming families are being affected due to industrial waste. No remedy was found even after appealing to the BSCIC authorities."

"There are no fish in the haor now due to the chemical's effect. Many have contracted skin diseases using polluted water," said Nurul Amin, another villager.

A delegation of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) visited Gomra



village, adjacent to the industrial area, on June 13 to investigate the matter.

Contacted, Bela Sylhet divisional coordinator Shah Shabeda Akhtar said the plants and soil in the village have turned black due to pollution.

"Agricultural lands of the village have become uncultivable, and the waste discharged from BSCIC industries is falling into the haor."

"We're not against industrialisation, but it should be in accordance with environmental laws," she added.

Experts alleged that wastes are being discharged from the factories as the effluent treatment plants (ETP) aren't being utilised properly.

Mentionable, there are 101 plots in the industrial area. Of these,

61 have been allotted to various business organisations. However, 38 of them are currently in use. Other spaces remain empty due to entrepreneurs' lack of interest -- mainly because of poor road conditions and lack of security services.

Billal Hossain Bhuiyan, deputy manager of Moulvibazar BSCIC Industrial Estate, said, "Chemicals are used in four factories operating in the area. These four have ETPs installed."

He said the factory owners have committed to use the ETPs every time they are under production.

"We also monitor whether the ETPs are being used properly for waste management. But it is impossible to keep an eye on everything all the time," added Billal Hossain.

He said the authorities are

trying to come up with a way so that chemical-laden wastes can be diverted into a big drain without dumping those in the haor.

Badru Huda, assistant director of Department of Environment in Moulvibazar, said, "BSCIC installed ETPs in four out of five factories. However, there's some truth to the allegations that factories don't often use them to cut costs."

The official also said they will install CCTV cameras in the factories to monitor the situation.

He also agreed that the water management of BSCIC authorities is far from the standard benchmark.

"I'll write a letter to the higher authorities about this. This needs a lasting solution," he added.

Sylhet all set to inaugurate modern bus terminal

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

After the 1897 Assam earthquake, the greater Sylhet region adopted a sustainable design for buildings. Known as "Assam type" structures, they are now considered a heritage.

This heritage can be appreciated by looking at the red, steel roofs of the newly constructed terminal at Sylhet city's Kadamtali, as they are a spitting image of the traditional architecture.

Moreover, the terminal, built on around 8.5 acres of land, has all modern facilities of an international airport, except the fact that it is meant for buses. People behind the project said this will give commuters an experience they have never seen before.

Spending around Tk 67 crore, Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) under Municipal Governance Service Project (MGSP) has constructed the terminal.

Architects Subrata Das, Robin Dey and Mohammad Jashim Uddin jointly designed the terminal. Dhaly Construction completed the construction work on contract.

Architect Subrata Das, assistant professor of architecture at Shahjalal University of Science and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



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PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Students' stipend money goes 'missing'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The challenges of rural children to pursue education are manifold. Poverty can be singled out as the biggest barrier.

Amid such realities, many children are being provided with stipends, which help them continue their education.

However, money meant for primary school students have reportedly disappeared from the Nagad accounts of their parents in Patuakhali's Baful upazila.

As per information provided by the local education officials, there are some 3,000 students studying in 239 primary schools of the upazila.

Recently, Tk 97 lakh (Tk 2,800 for each student) was allocated for them as stipends. The money is withdrawn two times a year after six months' interval.

But many parents alleged that their Nagad account might have been hacked, because after

My son is a fourth-grader at Bakultala Model Government Primary School. When my wife went to a Nagad agent to withdraw the money, she was informed that there was no money in the account.

GM Milon, a guardian

entering their PIN while withdrawing the money, it either did not match or there was no trace of any cash.

This correspondent, however, could not find out the actual number of accounts that are facing this issue as Nagad, schools or the education officials did not know the exact number.

GM Milon, a guardian, said, "My son is a fourth-grader at Bakultala Model Government Primary School. When my wife went to a Nagad agent to withdraw the money, she was informed that there was no money in the account."

Journalist Jitendra Nath Roy and General Secretary of Upazila Swachhasebok League Safiqul Islam Sipon echoed the same.

Naima Ruma, another guardian, said when she went to withdraw her son's stipend money through Nagad, the agent said, "There is no money in your account. The money has already been withdrawn."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Two boys, woman killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed in road accidents in two districts yesterday.

In Dinajpur, a boy was killed on the spot, after a truck hit the motorcycle the 12-year-old was travelling on in Birol upazila.

The boy -- Kawsar Ahmed -- was riding pillion while his father Mohammad Alam was riding the bike, said police.

Meanwhile, Partha Kumar Das (12), son of Pori Kumar Das, died on the spot and his relative suffered injuries as a truck hit their motorbike at Daspura in Bochaganj of the district.

In Rangpur, Nur Jahan Begum (40) was killed as a truck hit her from behind while she was walking along a road in Pirganj area.

Following the accident, an angry mob set the truck on fire. Later, fire service doused the blaze.

PRAYER TIMING AUG 13

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrab	Esha
Azan	4:25	12:45	4:45	6:41	8:00
Jamaat	5:00	1:15	5:00	6:44	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION