

‘Will resist any obstacle’ Says Fakhrul about BNP’s movement

STAR REPORT

There will be no national election in Bangladesh without a caretaker or interim, neutral government, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

BNP will not participate in the polls under the Awami League government, he said while talking to reporters at his Thakurgaon residence.

Reiterating the determination to continue their movement, Fakhrul said, “We will resist any obstacle, and the country’s people will propel the movement. We proved this through Chattogram’s rally.”

Fakhrul said Bangladesh was recognised internationally as a country ruled under dictatorship, rather than it being a democratic nation.

Amidst such circumstances, BNP, along

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



INTO THE WILD... A part of the Eidgah and playground in Mirpur’s Golartek is occupied by vehicles seized by Darussalam Police Station. The vehicles have been there for so long that weeds have grown out from the inside -- creating a jungle like scene. Authorities concerned don’t repurpose these seized vehicles, and so they remain to rust away. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Battery-rickshaw drivers attack cop, police boxes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drivers of battery-run rickshaws vandalised five traffic-police boxes in the capital’s Mirpur and Pallabi yesterday, leaving a traffic constable injured.

The incident took place around 8:30am in front of Adarsha School in Mirpur-10, when traffic constable Mizanur Rahman stopped two battery-rickshaws, said Elias Hossain, assistant commissioner of Traffic Division (Pallabi Zone).

Enraged by this, 25 to 30 rickshaw drivers attacked Mizanur. At this time, another traffic officer ran away, witnesses said.

Mizanur’s face was bruised in the attack. Hospitalised by two passers-by, he had to get 13 stitches on his face.

After the incident, the drivers left the scene.

Later, they unitedly attacked a few traffic police boxes -- including the ones at Mirpur-12, Kalshi and Sagufta areas. A police motorbike was also vandalised.

The rickshaw drivers alleged that they have been facing police harassment, which include filing of cases and bribes.

Elias said police are conducting regular raids to enforce a High Court order banning the operation of battery-powered rickshaws. The drivers continue to defy the ban, leading to various accidents.

“Yesterday, when we were conducting an operation against these illegal rickshaws, the drivers unitedly attacked the police boxes with bricks and sticks. There might have been instigation from the owners who are some local influential people,” he said.

No one was arrested in this connection as of filing this report. A case was filed with Pallabi police station yesterday, accusing 100 to 150 battery-rickshaw drivers. Another case was in the process of being filed with Mirpur police station.

Earlier, sources told The Daily Star that crores of taka circulate in this sector, as many ruling-party members and local influential people are behind running these vehicles.

Kazi Md Shifun Newaz, assistant professor of Accident Research Institute at Buet, said there is a huge safety concern centring the battery-powered three-wheelers as they move fast but do not have the structure to control such a high speed.

Park, coffee cart or biryani shop?

Bangshal Park becomes eatery, with almost no space to walk

DIPAN NANDY

In Old Dhaka’s Bangshal stands a park in the shape of a triangle. It used to provide citizens with an avenue to go on morning and evening walks, or spend their leisure surrounded by greenery.

This park, which dates back to the pre-independence era, had a library, 10 to 12 benches to sit on, and a small field, where children used to play.

But due to sheer apathy of the authorities concerned, this park soon lost its glamour.

The size of the park gradually shrank, as land grabbing went on



unabated, while the remaining parts were too dilapidated to visit.

To salvage whatever was left of the park, the first elected mayor of Dhaka, Mohammad Hanif renovated it, and installed a water fountain and two dove sculptures, as a symbol of peace.

To carry on his father’s legacy, former Dhaka south mayor Sayeed Khokon renovated the park and inaugurated it for the public in



2020.

New walkways, fresh grass, extended seating arrangements and lights were installed at the place under this project, and the water fountain was made functional.

Soon after, the park was leased out to Bangshal Thana Bangabandhu Parishad president Haji Ahsan Ullah. Under the lease agreement, Ahsan and company were supposed to run a coffee shop, on condition of selling coffee in a wheeled cart alongside taking care of the park.

Building any permanent structure to sell anything other than coffee wasn’t permitted under this arrangement.

But in a recent visit to the Bangshal Park, this correspondent

saw that a permanent steel structure has been built there, occupying at least one-third of the place. There are lines of chairs and tables centring it, but rather than coffee, what’s being served is biryani.

Even the water fountain has been shut down to facilitate the biryani shop. There are a few washing basins, a deep freezer, and rows of plastic chairs and tables inside Haji Ebadullah Biryani House, owned by one Liton Baburchi.

Biryani is also served at benches on all three sides of the park.

Contacted, Liton Baburchi said he has rented the place from Ahsan Ullah.

Locals said they cannot walk or

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

‘Independent commission crucial’

Conservationist Taimur Islam on saving heritage buildings

HELEMU ALAM

An independent commission is essential to protect all heritage sites, as authorities concerned are not working properly, said Taimur Islam, chief executive of the conservation organisation Urban Study Group.

In a recent interview with The Daily Star, Taimur, who has been fighting to protect Old Dhaka’s archaeological buildings since 2004, said it is crucial to implement the verdict of the High Court to protect heritage buildings, and the Department of Archaeology’s role is crucial in this regard.

A High Court directive issued in 2018 ordered authorities to stop changing, modifying and demolishing 2,200 British-era buildings, which were listed by the group as heritage sites in Old Dhaka.

Taimur said although Dhaka South City Corporation is taking the initiative to protect landmark buildings like Lalkuthi or Ruplal House, 2,000 more such buildings remain, which need its protection.

“At least forty percent of the old houses in Shakhari Bazar bear the architecture of the Mughal period even today. In recent times, many houses have been demolished and redeveloped, while many changes were made during the British period,” he said.

“Through our work, we could make locals understand the necessity of heritage buildings



A collective effort is very important to save these heritage buildings, otherwise we will lose them all gradually. A group of volunteers from Urban Study Group have been working relentlessly to protect these heritage buildings. However, it is certainly not enough.



and how the area will be maintained properly. Even the authorities agreed that safety issues and protecting heritage sites do not contradict each other,” he said.

In 2008, when an important heritage building at Farashganj was on the verge of being demolished, a huge campaign was launched to protect that building. A heritage committee was formed at that time, which placed importance on area-based conservation,” said Taimur.

“Initially, a list of 93 heritage buildings and four heritage areas was prepared for area-based conservation, and later, we continued to incorporate more buildings in the list. In 2018, the HC finally gave a status quo on 2,200 buildings in Old Dhaka, listed by Urban Study Group. However, even after the listing, over a dozen important heritage buildings have been demolished.”

“We have already lost too much. The bright side is, though it took time, the government included provisions for transferring development rights to third parties in the latest Bangladesh National Building Code,” he said, adding that similar points are present in the new Detailed Area Plan.

Taimur said financial constraints are a major problem for the residents of heritage buildings, which is why making the development rights of such properties transferable to an appropriate third party is crucial.

According to Taimur, it is deeply unfortunate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

Climate change harsher on women in coastal areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Climate change is forcing locals of coastal areas to use excessive saline water in daily life, which is subsequently causing various uterine diseases and disrupting the menstrual health and hygiene of girls and women, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

They said this while speaking at a virtual press conference organised by National Committee for International Rural Women’s Day Observation. The event will be observed today.

“The amount of salt that’s entering women’s bodies with drinking water is causing more miscarriages in women in coastal areas than in other parts of the country. Due to the lack of financial ability to get long-term treatment, most marginal women consider a hysterectomy as a permanent solution,” said Tamanna Rahman, national committee member, while presenting the keynote speech.

She said the lack of clean water force most girls to wash their menstrual clothes with salt water, which causes various diseases in the uterus. Women living in hilly areas suffer from malnutrition, and many of them often fall ill while fetching water along the mountainous paths.

“The risk of child marriage is increasing in climate-affected areas,” she added.

Addressing the programme, Masuda Farooq Rata, a committee member, said, “The children of affected families are being forced to join work to earn money. Apart from other forms of child abuse, many families are marrying off girl children early.”

Syed Aminul Hoque, another committee member, advised creating alternative employment opportunities for women in haor and coastal areas, and providing necessary training and raw materials to those interested.

“The amount of salt that’s entering women’s bodies with drinking water is causing more miscarriages in women in coastal areas than in other parts of the country.”

TAMANNA RAHMAN
Member of National Committee for International Rural Women’s Day Observation

The committee chairperson, Shamima Akhter, said women are suffering from common water-borne diseases, including leucorrhoea, due to the use of salt water for daily household work.

Speakers also urged for water-purifying plants at government expense in salinity-prone areas and specialised services to women and girls in community clinics.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

No matter what the season, if one needs flowers in the capital, every resident would tell them to go to Projonmo Chattar in Shahbagh. These flower sellers have been here for generations now, and bear great sentimental value for the Dhaka resident. This photo was taken yesterday.