

No scope to oust govt without polls Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said without polls, there is no scope to oust the government through clandestine means.

He said this in a statement, protesting BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's comments on the government ruining the nation's existence, describing those as "baseless, ill-motivated and conspiratorial".

Responding to Fakhrul, Quader said BNP itself is the major barrier to Bangladesh's existence, progress and prosperity.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said Bangladesh's footing has become stronger than ever in all aspects, including the socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions. He also said BNP has promulgated Indemnity Ordinance to save the killers of Bangabandhu and perpetrated gruesome grenade attacks on Awami League's anti-terrorism rally on August 21, 2004.

Termining BNP acting chair Tarique Rahman as the killer and perpetrator of the August 21 massacre, Quader said Tarique and his party leaders are the key obstacles to the country's peace and stability.

"It is now a major question whether BNP's existence will sustain or not," he added.

About BNP's goals to bring back Tarique Rahman to the country, Quader said, "Awami League and the government want Tarique to come back to face his sentences. If Tarique has the courage, let him return home. There is no need for a movement for this."



Compensate road crash victims

Jatri Kalyan Samity demands intensifying activities of relevant bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity yesterday demanded the government make the trustee board, the body formed by the government to manage compensation money for road crash victims, functional to settle claims.

The passengers' platform also urged to intensify activities of National Road Safety Council (NRSC), a top policymaking body for road safety, for taking initiatives to reduce road crashes and deaths.

The organisation made the demands at a press conference at Bangladesh Shishu Kalyan Parishad Auditorium in the capital's Segunbagicha to mark National Road Safety Day, to be observed today.

Under the Motor Vehicles Ordinance-1983, victims or their family members had the opportunity to seek compensation at the Motor Accident Claim Tribunal for death, injuries, and damage to properties caused in road crashes.

But the ordinance was repealed after the Road Transport Act-2018 came into effect in November 2019, narrowing victims' scope for getting compensation. In some rare cases, victims file writ petitions with the High Court, seeking compensation.

As per the new act, the government will create a fund for compensating and



PHOTO: STAR

treating, if necessary, road crash victims. The fund will be created with one time or annual "contributions" from motor-vehicle owners, transport associations, and the government. The rules of the act will determine the amount.

The government in October last year

formed a trustee board to manage the fund and related works, but could not formulate the rules yet, and so the trustee board could not function, officials said.

Citing an analysis of Accident Research Institute of Buet, Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Jatri

Kalyan Samity, said in 54 percent of the accidents in the last decade, people aged between 16 to 40, the most productive section of the population, were killed.

So, accidents are harming the socio-economic status of families, and so they require compensation from the state, he said.

But victims are not getting the compensation even after the law came into force three years ago. He demanded the government start functions of the trustee board immediately so that victims get compensation, he said.

SKILLED DRIVERS FOR SAFER ROADS
Meanwhile, prominent transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque yesterday emphasised on skilled drivers to reduce road crashes, which has become a major concern now.

He was speaking at a dialogue over road safety, jointly organised by Bangladesh Initiative, Sebok and Driving Training Center at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

Prof Shamsul, also a former director of ARI, said these incidents should not be called "accidents", because they occur because of people's negligence in most cases. Thus, they should just be called road crashes.

He said road crashes will increase unless authorities provide drivers proper training and make them skilled.

Low pressure over Bay may intensify in 24 hours Met office warns

UNB, Dhaka

The low pressure area over the Andaman Sea and the adjoining south-west Bay persists, and it is likely to intensify in the next 24 hours, the weather department said yesterday.

However, the weather may remain mostly dry over the country, the department said in its weather bulletin.

But, the weather may deteriorate in the next 72 hours, according to the extended forecast.

Maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been advised to watch further necessary instructions carefully, according to a special bulletin.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay and the deep sea have been advised to proceed with caution. They are also advised not to venture into the deep sea.

'PBI resorted to victim-blaming'

Women's rights activists on probe report of Munia murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-one women's rights activists yesterday condemned the final report of a rape and murder case submitted to a Dhaka court by Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), saying the report tried to establish that accused Sayem, also managing director of Bashundhara Group, was "innocent".

The investigators also tried to assassinate victim Mosarat Jahan Munia's character.

"In short, it appears that PBI resorted to a 'victim-blaming method,'" reads the statement.

Sayem and seven others were accused in a case -- filed on September 6, 2021 -- over Munia's rape and murder.

PBI in its sought a court order for the acquittal of the accused.

Signatories of the statement include Prof Geeti Ara Nasreen, Prof Mirza Taslima Sultana, Rani Yan Yan, Kajalie Shehreen Islam, Samina Luthfa, Nasrin Siraj, Taslima Akhter, Sayema Khatun, Saydia Gulrukh, and Rahnuma Ahmed.

Controlling population or raising inequality?

Experts at loggerheads over DAP's provision

SUMON ALI

Criticising the new Detailed Area Plan (DAP), a group of experts and stakeholders have claimed that the middle class will become poorer and the rich will get richer if the DAP is implemented.

They said in the new DAP, the authorities have given areas like Mohammadpur, Kalyanpur, Pirebagh, Agargaon and Badda low floor area ratio (FAR) values.

FAR is the ratio of a building's total floor area, meaning the total area of all the floors of a building, and the size of the piece of land upon which it is built. The higher the FAR, the taller a building can be built and vice versa.

So, buildings taller than three to four stories cannot be built in the aforementioned areas in general. On the other hand, areas like Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and Dhanmondi have high FAR values. Hence, 10-storey buildings or even taller structures can be built there, they added.

However, planners of Dhaka city supported the DAP, saying the values are justified as they were determined based on the areas' civic facilities, infrastructural development and population density.

According to the authorities, if FAR values of underdeveloped areas are low, then the number of new flats will go down, resulting in people choosing less populated areas to live in, where flats are more available. This will ultimately balance out the population density of areas.

On August 23, the government published the gazette notification for the 20-year DAP, which covers



REASON FOR SUPPORT

Values of floor area ratio (FAR) are justified as they were determined based on the areas' civic facilities, infrastructural development and population density.

REASON FOR DISAPPROVAL

In developed areas, the high FAR values will better facilitate the construction of buildings. Now, people will not find flats to buy in underdeveloped areas.

Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total floor area, meaning the total area of all the floors of a building, and the size of the piece of land upon which it is built. The higher the FAR, the taller a building can be built and vice versa. Underdeveloped areas have been given low FAR values in the new DAP, while developed areas received high values.

1,528 square km of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk).

Blasting the new DAP, Mubasshar Hussain, president of Institute of Architects Bangladesh, said in Dhaka, buildings with more than five floors account for 8 percent of all the structures and buildings with two to five floors make up 24.6 percent. One-storey buildings, which are mainly in underdeveloped areas, account for 67.46 percent.

In developed areas, the high FAR values will better facilitate the construction of buildings. In essence, FAR values have been taken from the poor and given to the rich, he said.

Now, people will not be able to buy flats in areas like Mohammadpur and Kalyanpur

for cheap, as the dearth of flats will hike prices, he explained.

"And if you want to buy a flat in a developed area you have to spend Tk 4 to 5 crore, which is quite impossible for most people. This will make the rich richer and the poor poorer," he added.

Mubasshar said there is no record, anywhere in the world, of reducing population density in an area by decreasing the number of flats. It will just create a housing crisis.

Speaking in favour of the DAP, Fazle Reza Sumon, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said the infrastructural and civic facilities of Badda are not similar to those of areas like Gulshan and Banani, which have high FAR values.

Higher average FAR values

have already harmed Dhaka as they have negatively impacted different utilities, communication, infrastructure and land use, he said, implying that raising the values of underdeveloped areas will not help.

Architect Iqbal Habib said the government is stating that 67.46 percent of underdeveloped areas do not have playgrounds, educational institutions, community centres, parks and other facilities, so they have been given low FAR values.

"But the question is, who is responsible for ensuring these facilities?" he asked.

Now, facilities in the surrounding areas of Dhaka must be increased. "If you

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Plastics used in farming piling up in soil: UN

UNB, Dhaka

Plastics used in farming activities are accumulating in agricultural soil worldwide at an alarming rate, said the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in its latest report.

Plastics are used extensively in agriculture, from plastic-coated seeds to protective wraps used to modify soil temperature and prevent weed growth over crops.

These synthetic materials are also added intentionally to fertiliser, which is spread on fields, and are used in irrigation tubes, sacks and bottles.

While all these products have helped increase crop yields, there is growing evidence that degraded plastics are contaminating the soil and impacting biodiversity and soil health, said the UN report published on Monday.

"There is only a finite amount of agricultural land available," said the report's co-author Professor Elaine Baker from the University of Sydney. "We are starting to understand that the build-up of plastic can have wide-ranging impacts on soil health, biodiversity and productivity, all of which are vital for food security."

The single-biggest source of microplastic pollution in the soil now is fertilisers produced from organic matter such as manure.

The single-biggest source of microplastic pollution in the soil now is fertilisers produced from organic matter such as manure.

Although these can be cheaper and better for the environment than manufactured fertilisers, the manure is mixed with the same plastic microspheres that are known to be commonly used in certain cosmetics.

While some countries have banned these microspheres, other microplastics continue to enter people's water systems via discarded cigarette filters, tyre components, and synthetic clothing fibres.

Progress is being made to improve the biodegradability of polymers used in agricultural products. However, some protective films used to prevent moisture loss are now being marketed as fully biodegradable and compostable, which is not always the case.

"Plastic is inexpensive and easy to work with, which makes trying to introduce alternatives a hard sell," Elaine said.

However, the expert recommends governments disincentive the use of agricultural plastics, following the path of the European Union, which earlier this year restricted certain types of polymers from being used in fertiliser.

Two held over gang-rape of RMG worker

UNB, Gazipur

Two youths were arrested over the gang-rape of an RMG worker in Gazipur's Salna yesterday.

The arrestees are Hriday and Monir of Gazipur's Bariali area.

Sharp weapons and a motorcycle seized recovered from their possession, said Mosharrar Hossain, sub-inspector of Sadar police station.

According to the victim, she went to visit her friend near her house in search of a new job yesterday afternoon. On her way back home, two youths threatened the victim to go with them to an abandoned house, where they raped her.

Tanveer Ahmed, councillor of ward-19 of Gazipur City Corporation, said they caught the accused after hearing the screams of the victim and handed them over to police.

On information, police rushed to the spot and took her to the police station after rescuing her, said SI Mosharrar.

Further legal action will be taken after the victim's medical examination, he added.

Ganga Jamuna cultural festival begins

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

After about a year, the Ganga Jamuna Cultural Festival returned to the premises of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) yesterday.

Throughout the 11-day-long festival, 172 different theatre troupes from Bangladesh and India will perform several plays, elocution, and musical and dance performances at BSA and Mahila Samity every day till October 31.

Eminent thespian Manchasharathi Ataur Rahman inaugurated the opening ceremony at the auditorium of the National Theatre Hall. The programme was presided over by Ghulam Kuddus, convener of Ganga Jamuna



Eminent cultural personalities at the inauguration ceremony of Ganga Jamuna Cultural Festival.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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