

Anti-liberation 'evil force' still active Says president

UNB, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday said the defeated evil forces are still continuing their relentless efforts to tarnish the achievements of the country even after 53 years of independence.

He said this while delivering a speech at the eighth council of the Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city.

He also said the evil quarters are engaged in various conspiracies against the country and have joined hands with the "foreign evil forces" to destabilise the spirit of the Liberation War.

The president urged all to build all-out resistance against the defeated forces of 1971 to continue the current spree of development and keep the country's independence and sovereignty intact.

Stressing the need for strengthening bonds between religious and ethnic communities, he said any form of discrimination against citizens is against the rule of law.

He urged the government as well as the civil society to play an effective role in this regard.

Ju-Jitsu association GS held on rape charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested two persons, including Rafiqul Islam Newton, general secretary of Bangladesh Ju-Jitsu Association, in connection with a rape case.

They were arrested in Mirpur and Shah Ali areas of Dhaka, Commander Arafat Islam, director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing, told The Daily Star.

A team of Rab-12 along with Rab Headquarters Intelligence wing arrested Rafiqul after a female player of the association filed a case against Newton under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, and Pornography Control Act.

Addressing the media later in the evening at the Rab media centre, Arafat said Rafiqul, also a trainer, used to rape and abuse female trainees.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



The buildings with blue rooftops below the MRT line occupy the Anwara Park in Farmgate. The metro authorities plan to turn the space into a station plaza. Inset, locals and concerned citizens held a human chain yesterday demanding that the place be restored to its original form.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'Return Anwara Park to us' Dhaka residents demand at human chain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesters have given an ultimatum to the Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd to return Anwara Park in the capital's Farmgate area to the public within the next 30 days.

A group of rights activists, environmentalists, and teachers have warned that if the park is not handed back to the people within a month, they will launch a tougher movement.

"Legal action against the DMTCL will be taken if our demand is not met," said Aminul Rajib, coordinator of the park protection committee that organised yesterday's event.

"The metro rail authorities are occupying the park illegally. We are certain they will not be able to show any legal documents," he added.

The Public Works Department owns the park, while the Dhaka North City Corporation maintains it. Since 2018, a section of the park has been used by DMTCL as a project office and storage for metro rail construction materials. DMTCL reportedly aims to construct a commercial plaza on the park grounds now.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, criticised the proposed plaza plan, calling it a "breach of trust".

Shireen Huq, founding member of Naripokkho, said, "Both the DNCC mayor and home minister had promised to save the park last year but no action has been taken yet."

At least 30 organisations including Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, Dhoritri Rokkhaiy Amra and Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi expressed solidarity with the protest.

Approve urban policy soon

Urge speakers, stress decentralisation, proper management for liveable cities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Approving the draft National Urban Policy is urgent to keep cities liveable, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

National Urban Policy, first drafted in 2011 and later updated in 2024, stresses decentralisation and powerful urban management, said Professor Emeritus Nazrul Islam, president of Centre for Urban Studies, at the inaugural session of a day-long conference.

However, the policy is still awaiting the approval of the LGRD ministry, he added.

CUS organised the conference to celebrate its 52nd founding anniversary.

"Experts agree that decentralising the economic and social strengths of a megacity is reasonable and commendable. However, it's also crucial to address urban management and good governance issues," said Prof Nazrul.

He said according to 2022 BBS data, 38.46 percent of the country's urban population lives in greater Dhaka (Rajuk area), with 19.62 percent residing in central Dhaka (two city corporation areas).

Primate (largest) cities and other medium or small cities are now in unliveable condition due to a lack of proper management and excessive population, he said.

Iqbal Habib, vice president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, highlighted the government's failure to approve the National Urban Policy over the past 13 years, despite repeated efforts from experts. He believes that compact housing and food security are connected to decentralisation.

Speaking as chief guest, LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam promised

to focus on approving the policy as soon as possible. He said the current government is committed to sustainable urbanisation with proper civic amenities.

Dr Israt Islam from Buet emphasised the importance of ensuring proper implementation once the National Urban Policy is approved, noting that the lack of political will has hindered the implementation of Detailed Area Plan.

National Urban Policy, first drafted in 2011 and later updated in 2024, stresses decentralisation and powerful urban management. However, the policy is still awaiting the approval of the LGRD ministry.

Highlighting the importance of relocating industries and factories to economic zone areas to preserve farmlands, open spaces, and water bodies, Dr Adil Mohammad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, stated that the government must compel owners to relocate their establishments to the designated areas.

President of Institute for Planning and Development Dr Akter Mahmud said ensuring three elements are crucial for decentralisation – employment, education and Medicare facilities.

Dr Mohammad Abul Kalam of Jahangirnagar University also spoke at the event.

Debt crisis threatens progress

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The unprecedented level of debt threatens to derail hopes for sustainability following Bangladesh's graduation to a middle-income country, said speakers at an event yesterday.

EquityBD, along with several civil society organisations, organised the event at Topkhana road.

Omour Faruk Bhuiya from BDCSO Process stated that the FY 2024-25 budget will amount to 8.05 trillion taka, with Tk 2.75 trillion attributed to debt. The current per capita debt stands at \$580, and the repayment

of this debt will significantly affect people's livelihoods.

Ferdous Ara Rumea, secretary general of International Rural Women's Day Observation Committee, said, "Ninety one percent of people are employed in the informal sector, with 95 percent being women. We must assess women's progress through the annual gender budget reporting system."

Mustafa Kamal Akanda of the COAST Foundation said the budget for roads and highways is Tk 875 billion, yet there is no allocation for road safety. In 2023, road accidents resulted in 8,505 deaths.

Mir Mohammad Ali, assistant professor at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, said fisheries and aquaculture employ nearly 1.4 million people, but the budget neglects the survival needs of poor fishers during the three to four annual fishing ban periods.

Abul Hasan of EquityBD said internal climate-induced migration remains a significant challenge for Bangladesh. Despite the development of a migration strategy paper five years ago, insufficient investment has been allocated to this area. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, chief moderator of EquityBD, chaired the event.

THE PRIME RETAIL JUNCTION

@ ROAD 27, DHANMONDI

- ▶ Multiple Global Brands Under One Roof
- ▶ Food Hall
- ▶ Nearly 100 Parking
- ▶ Strategic Location, Infinite Convenience

AVAILABLE FOR RENT & SALE

READY SPACE

AVENUE 27

RENTAL OFFICE

HIGH SPEED LIFT

BOOK YOURS NOW ☎ 16677

AVENUE 27 ROAD 27, DHANMONDI

BANGLADESH BANK: TO ENTER OR NOT TO ENTER

No barrier for journos to enter central bank

Says deputy governor

STAR REPORT

There is no barrier for journalists to enter Bangladesh Bank, said its Deputy Government Khurshid Alam yesterday, asking them not to pay heed to any propaganda.

He made the remarks at an event organised by Financial Integrity and Customer Services Department on the occasion of "Customer Awareness Week 2024" in Rangpur, held at the conference room of Panchagarh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"If you need information, you must go to Bangladesh Bank. Three officials have been appointed to provide information to the journalists," he said while addressing the inaugural session.

"If you're not satisfied with the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Why do journos need to enter BB?: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday questioned journalists' need to enter Bangladesh Bank while all the necessary information is available on their website.

"Which country allows such free entry to their central bank? Is anyone allowed unrestricted entry to India's Federal Bank? The information is available on their website. Why do you need unrestricted entry?" asked Quader during a press conference held at AL's party office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Asked whether the government is concerned about the drop in foreign exchange reserves from US \$48 billion to US\$ 13 billion, Quader, also the general secretary of the ruling party, inquired,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh seeks UK support for vaccine centre

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Dr Samanta Lal Sen has sought support from the Oxford Vaccine Group at the University of Oxford to establish a vaccine centre in Bangladesh.

During a visit to the UK, he met with the Director of the Oxford Vaccine Group, Prof Sir Andrew Pollard F MedSci, on May 14 and discussed opportunities for establishing cooperation to create a National Vaccine Project in Bangladesh for producing vaccines in the country, according to a statement of the Bangladesh High Commission in London.

AstraZeneca vaccine was developed during the Coronavirus pandemic by the University of Oxford.