

Quota protests heat up as govt mulls hard line

STAR REPORT

Ignoring police warnings and ministers' calls to step back, anti quota protesters yesterday broke barricades on roads and went ahead with their "Bangla Blockade", leading to a face-off with the law enforcers.

Sporadic incidents of clashes and chases were reported in two districts during the four-hour-long blockade that left at least 20 students injured in Cumilla and Chattogram.

The students said they would continue their demonstrations until parliament enacts a law to reform the quota system, keeping five percent quota for underprivileged communities.

They would bring out processions and hold rallies in all educational institutions across the country at 4:00pm today, said Nahid Islam, a key organiser of the anti-quota campaign.

Students of public universities and colleges along with jobseekers have been demonstrating against the quota system in government jobs for the last 11 days. They occupied key city intersections, major highways, and rail lines.

There were no obstructions from law enforcement agencies during

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Students break through a police barricade in the capital's Shahbagh around 5:30pm yesterday during a demonstration demanding reforms of the quota system in government jobs. Students from different public universities and colleges have been staging protests across the country since July 1.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PUBLIC JOBS

Govt free to alter, reduce or increase quota: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government can change, reduce or increase the ratio or percentage of the quotas in public jobs if it feels it is necessary, the High Court has said in a portion of its judgement on the quota system.

It also said the authorities concerned are at liberty to fill the vacant posts from the general merit list of the jobseekers if any quota in government recruitment is not fulfilled.

The HC declared illegal the circular issued by the public administration ministry on October 4, 2018 that cancelled the quota system in recruitments for government jobs as it was issued without lawful authority.

The circular said that in the case of direct

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PM'S CHINA VISIT

Dhaka now has to play its cards right Say int'l relations experts

PORIMOL PALMA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's China visit has laid the foundation for a forward-looking and expansive relationship and Dhaka now needs to play its due role to make the most of it, according to international relations analysts.

Following their meeting on July 10, Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the elevation of the bilateral relationship to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation" (CSPC) from the "Strategic Partnership of Cooperation" established in 2016.

The elevation of the bilateral relationship to CSPC means the cooperation will deepen in all the sectors possible keeping in mind Bangladesh's vision for 2041, said M Humayun Kabir, a former diplomat.

Xi and Hasina agreed to "foster greater synergy between development strategies of the two countries", according to the joint statement issued on the conclusion of Hasina's three-day tour.

The Asian giant has huge capabilities in funding, technology, clean energy, healthcare, infrastructure and so on, according to Kabir.

"The question is if Bangladesh will be able to take

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NBFIs' bad loans surge to a record Tk 23,208 crore

MD MEHEDI HASAN

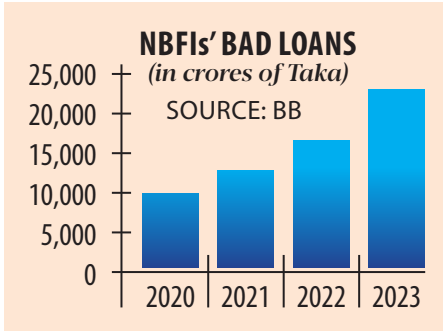
Defaulted loans at non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) soared 38 percent to a record Tk 23,208.7 crore at the end of 2023, raising concerns over the sector's deteriorating health.

The toxic assets accounted for a record 32 percent of the total disbursed loans of Tk 73,560.5 crore in the sector, up from 31.55 percent a year earlier, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The data on 35 NBFIs' bad loans comes when economists have raised concerns over vulnerabilities in Bangladesh's financial sector due to rising defaulted loans and a lack of corporate governance.

Industry insiders said the central bank is largely responsible for the state of the NBFI sector as its supervision was not strict.

The toxic assets are legacy loans from the large scams and irregularities seen in the sector a few years ago, said Kanti Kumar Saha, chief executive officer of Alliance Finance.



For instance, PK Halder, former managing director of NRB Global Bank, which was later renamed Global Islami Bank, swindled at least Tk 3,500 crore from four NBFIs: People's Leasing, International Leasing, FAS Finance and BIFC, according to a BB probe report.

As a result, the four NBFIs have become ailing institutions with more than 90 percent of their loans going bad.

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PSC QUESTION LEAKS

Names of some big fish come up in probe

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The syndicate of PSC officials and employees that leaked the questions of cadre and non-cadre exams was involved in leaking questions of other recruitment tests as well, investigators have found.

The investigators have also listed at least 24 names that came up during the confessions of those arrested in this connection, said sources involved in the ongoing probe.

They added that those named are currently working in different government departments, including the cadre service, and some are high officials.

Coordinated by Sayed Abed Ali, a former driver of Public Service Commission chairman, the syndicate spread its tentacles throughout the country.

It has so far leaked question papers of at least 30 government exams, including those for the recruitment of health cadres, polytechnic institute instructors, deputy assistant engineers of the public works ministry, upazila assistant education officers, auditors, and nurses.

Intelligence sources said the syndicate was even

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Court's door always open to students Says chief justice



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan yesterday said the court is always open to anti-quota protesters.

He suggested that the protesters present their demands through legal channels instead of addressing the executive branch.

"Why do they [students] address the executive branch? Any decision by

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