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TREE FELLING FOR EXPRESSWAY

Protests ongoing, no solution even after eleven days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists continued their sit-in protest at Panthakunja Park for the eleventh day yesterday, demanding an end to the destruction caused by the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project.

The protest escalated when demonstrators blocked Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan's car for nearly ten minutes after discussions failed to resolve the issue.

"We will not end our protest until our demands are fulfilled," said Amirul Rajiv, convener of the Bangladesh Tree Protection Movement. The group is calling for an immediate halt to tree cutting and destruction in the park and restoration of its environment and biodiversity.

Earlier, Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan reportedly left discussions in anger, prompting protesters to prevent his car from leaving. The situation was defused by Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Industries Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, who urged protesters to remain calm.

Rizwana Hasan assured them of further dialogue, saying, "We will discuss ways to increase greenery in the park and hold another meeting on Thursday to seek a resolution."

Despite the assurances, Rajiv expressed frustration over the lack of progress. "Even after eleven days, no viable solution has been proposed, nor have the advisers provided answers about alternative green spaces nearby," he told The Daily Star.

Protesters are demanding an immediate halt to tree cutting and the restoration of Panthakunja Park,

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Advisers express solidarity with environmentalists during their sit-in protest at Panthakunja Park, which entered its eleventh day yesterday. The protesters demand an end to tree felling and environmental destruction caused by the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project.

World Bank to continue support for key reforms

Outgoing country director tells CA

BSS, *Dhaka*

Outgoing World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, Abdoulaye Seck, yesterday reaffirmed the WB's support for key reform initiatives of the interim government.

Seck made the commitment during a farewell call on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka.

Yunus thanked Seck, who will retire in January, for his contributions to World Bank-supported projects in critical sectors. Seck said, on December 19, the WB approved nearly $1.2 billion in financing to help Bangladesh strengthen climate resilience and environmental sustainability, as well as improve health, nutrition, and water and sanitation services in Chattogram.

BDR carnage to be probed again

Commission formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a seven-member commission to re-investigate the 2009 BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) massacre.

Adviser to Home Affairs Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury announced the formation after attending the BGB medal-award ceremony at Pilkhana Headquarters.

Former BGB Director General Maj Gen ALM Fazlur Rahman will lead the commission, which includes two members from the armed forces, one civil servant, one Dhaka University teacher, one Jagannath University teacher, and one police officer. The chief adviser approved the commission on Sunday.

Earlier, on December 17, the adviser said a re-investigation committee would be formed within five working days to examine the killings during the BDR massacre.

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TK 2,384.7 CRORE ILLEGAL WEALTH

ACC sues former ministers, lawmakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed cases against nine individuals, including two former cabinet members of the Awami League government, two lawmakers, and a former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, over illegal wealth amounting to Tk 2,384.70 crore.

ACC Director General (Prevention) Akhtar Hossain confirmed the developments during a press briefing at the ACC headquarters.

Former Food Minister Qamrul Islam has been accused of owning Tk 6.29 crore in assets beyond his known income. Additionally, Tk 21.18 crore in suspicious transactions were conducted through 15 bank accounts linked to him and his companies. His wife, Tayeba Islam, son Dr Tanzir Islam, and daughter Shegufta Islam have been asked to submit their asset statements.

Two cases have been filed against former State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Mahibbur Rahman and his wife, Fatema Akter. Mahibbur is accused of amassing Tk 7.64 crore in illegal assets and laundering Tk 23.72 crore through 23 bank accounts. Fatema allegedly acquired Tk 3.92 crore illegally and laundered Tk 15.51 crore through 11 accounts.

Former lawmaker Showkat Hasanur Rahman Rimon has been accused of possessing illegal assets worth Tk 35.98 crore, while his legal income stands at just Tk 1.11 crore. His wife, Rawnak Rahman, has also been charged with holding Tk 2.52 crore in illegal assets and has been asked to submit her asset declaration.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FORMER MINISTERS/LAWMAKERS

- Qamrul Islam: Illegal assets worth Tk 6.29 crore; Tk 21.18 crore in suspicious transactions
- Mahibbur Rahman: Tk 7.64 crore in illegal assets; Tk 23.72 crore laundered
- Showkat Hasanur Rahman Rimon: Illegal assets worth Tk 35.98 crore
- Jannat Ara Henry: Tk 57.13 crore in illegal assets; Tk 2,002.66 crore and USD 13.78 crore in suspicious transactions

Cases were filed against Jannat Ara Henry, former lawmaker, and her husband, Sirajganj District Council Chairman Shamim Talukder. Henry is accused of acquiring Tk 57.13 crore in illegal assets and conducting suspicious transactions worth Tk 2,002.66 crore and USD 13.78 crore through 35 bank accounts. Shamim allegedly possesses illegal assets worth Tk 20.47 crore.

Need a year for judiciary reforms

Asif Nazrul says at CGS dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government can complete the necessary reforms in the judiciary within a year, law adviser Asif Nazrul said yesterday.

He revealed plans to enact a law regarding the appointment of High Court judges this month, establish a judiciary secretariat within three months, and set up a permanent prosecution service within six months. "If we are given at least a year, we will complete these tasks," he said.

Reforms must be protected by strong consensus to prevent future repeal by any government, he added.

He was speaking at a dialogue titled "Democratic Reconstitution: On Judiciary", organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at the CIRDAP auditorium.

> **Reforms must be protected by strong consensus to prevent future repeal by any government.**
>
> ASIF NAZRUL
> Law adviser

The High Court has the power to adjudicate any matter it desires, but this immense power has been used during Sheikh Hasina's fascist regime to consolidate power, Asif Nazrul added.

Referring to the case of Jagannath University student Khadijatul Kubra under the Digital Security Act, he pointed to a concerning example of judicial delay. "Despite the High Court granting bail, the Appellate Division has indefinitely delayed her bail application, leaving her imprisoned without cause," he said.

Asif also linked the judiciary's role in human rights violations to the lack of free and fair elections. "If free elections were held, the judiciary would not have become so ruthless and oppressive. When elections do not exist, arbitrary oppression becomes the norm," he added. He emphasised the need to prioritise electoral reform to combat such issues.

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JULY UPRISING

A step towards equality, justice

Says Sultana Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The July Mass Uprising was not an isolated event but a step towards realising the nation's vision of equality, social justice, and human dignity, said former caretaker government adviser Sultana Kamal yesterday.

She was speaking at a programme titled "Student Forum for Strengthening Women's Rights and Inclusive Governance," organised by NETZ Bangladesh in association with DASCOH Foundation and Manob Kallyan Parishad at the Liberation War Museum auditorium in the capital.

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IJTEMA CLASH

Saad followers demand peaceful environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Followers of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi have demanded a peaceful environment ending the ongoing conflict between the two factions of Tabligh Jamaat.

They claimed that Hefazat leader Mamunul Haque is exacerbating the conflict between the factions instead of helping to resolve it.

The followers of Saad were holding a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday,

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Sonargaon hotel embraces the holiday spirit with festive decorations -- including a gingerbread house and a Santa Claus figure -- ahead of Christmas to be celebrated tomorrow. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"Those who are in the grave Allah shall raise to life"
-Al Quran 22.5-7
On eternal journey : 24th December 2019
Rukhsana Samad
... ...So go on Ma, On your eternal journey... ...
We will wait, We will live, We shall breathe until our time is over and We shall meet... ... Love you forever
Children : Faisal (Son) Denebe Raveen Tanzia (Daughter)
Father : Syed Zillur Rahman
Husband : Towhid Samad