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প্রিয়জনের প্রয়োজনে...

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Students and citizens from all over the country took to the streets yesterday to protest the rising cases of rape and sexual violence. Clockwise from left, a scuffle between protesters and police took place near the Secretariat as demonstrators dismantled police barricades and tried to march forward. Earlier the protesters gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar under the banner "Bangladesh Against Rape and Oppression", demanding urgent reforms to address rising cases of sexual violence. Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College also held protests with similar demands in front of their campus on Bailey Road.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, ANISUR RAHMAN

Prioritise women's safety

Rights groups urge govt; express concern over worsening law and order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights groups have expressed deep concern over the worsening law and order situation in Bangladesh, citing a rise in gender-based violence, harassment, and restrictions on women's mobility.

They questioned the effectiveness of law enforcement and urged immediate and decisive action.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) expressed solidarity with university students protesting sexual violence, rape, and attacks on women and children.

The organisation condemned the alarming increase in such crimes and called on authorities to prioritise women's safety.

In a press release yesterday, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam criticised the government's inaction, stating, "Every day, we read reports of rape, gang rape, and other forms of violence against women and girls. Even children are not spared. The recent rape on a Dhaka-Rajshahi bus has heightened concerns about women's safety and underscores the urgent need for secure public spaces."

"For months, we have urged the interim government

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Anti-rape protests flare across country

Demonstrators demand home adviser's resignation

STAR REPORT

Students and citizens across the country took to the streets yesterday, demanding urgent action to tackle the worsening law and order situation and the rise in rape, sexual violence, and mugging.

In several areas, demonstrators called for the immediate resignation of the home adviser, holding him responsible for failing to ensure public safety.

A scuffle broke out between protesters and police near the Secretariat in Dhaka as demonstrators attempted to march forward, demanding the adviser's resignation over his failure to ensure women's safety. The clash occurred around 3:00pm when protesters dismantled police barricades and tried to move past them. Law enforcers pushed them back, forcing the demonstrators to stage a sit-in near Shikha Bhaban.

Earlier, protesters had gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar under the banner "Bangladesh Against Rape and Oppression", demanding urgent reforms to address rising

cases of sexual violence.

Their nine-point demand included immediate and thorough trials for all rape cases, legal reforms to strengthen laws on sexual violence prevention, and a redefinition

DEMANDS AT A GLANCE

- Immediate, thorough trials for all rape cases
- Reforms to strengthen laws on sexual violence prevention
- Redefinition of rape under Women, Children Repression Prevention Act
- Ensuring justice for all survivors
- Legally prohibiting rapists from marrying victims
- Anti-sexual harassment cells in edn institutions, workplaces

of rape under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. They insisted that justice be ensured for all survivors, regardless of gender, sexuality, religion, race, nationality, disability, or age.

At Dhaka University, female students held demonstrations on campus in the evening, demanding security for women and the highest punishment for rapists.

"Why are we told not to go outside after evening? We have to work, go for tuition. Why should we have to fear for our safety?" a student asked during a protest rally in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture.

At Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, students demonstrated in front of the main gate on Bailey Road from noon, demanding justice for rape victims.

"The rapists are getting away, but the police are doing nothing," said Snea Moni, a first-year HSC student. "If the government does not act, our movement will continue."

Another protester, who travelled from Narayanganj, said, "My parents are worried whenever I go out. This is the reality for all female students like me. We want to return home safely. The administration must ensure our security."

At Jahangirnagar University, students blocked the Dhaka-Aricha

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NAGAR PARIBAHAN BUS SERVICE

Govt shifts to one route due to owners' resistance

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is set to relaunch Dhaka Nagar Paribahan today on a single route, deviating from its earlier plan, reportedly due to opposition from transport owners.

Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Fouzil Kabir Khan will inaugurate the service at a programme in the Asad Gate area.

The specialised bus service will initially operate on the Gabtoli-Chasara (Narayanganj) route with 35 AC buses, with 15 more to be added later.

This move follows the failure of a pilot project aimed at operating all city buses under specific companies along rationalised routes.

The long-delayed initiative gained momentum after the interim government took charge in August last year but is now being implemented allegedly without proper preparation.

Transport experts see bus route rationalisation and a franchise-based system as potential solutions to bring order to Dhaka's public transport.

A franchise system would prevent

unhealthy competition among bus drivers for passengers, a major cause of accidents and congestion.

Under this system, buses in a particular zone would operate under a single company, with revenue shared among all companies.

Although discussions on bus route rationalisation have been ongoing for years, the initiative gained momentum when former Dhaka North City Mayor Annisul Huq took steps in this regard. However, it lost momentum again after his death in November 2017.

In June 2019, the High Court directed the authorities to bring all metropolitan bus services under the franchise system. Authorities initially planned for 22 companies to operate on 42 routes.

But the franchise system was not introduced until December 2021, when a pilot project was launched on the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur route under the name "Dhaka Nagar Paribahan."

The service was later expanded to two more routes but failed due to a lack

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Dancers perform at Nazrul Utsav which kicked off yesterday. The event celebrates the life and works of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. The two-day festival, organised by the Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha at the Chhayanaut premises, will also run from 5:00pm to 9:30pm today and feature performances by over 100 artists from Bangladesh.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED

Parties resist reforms that go against them

Prof Asif Nazrul tells discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties do not implement reforms that go against their interests, said Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul yesterday.

Speaking on the proportionate electoral system, he said, "If a party is expected to win 250 seats under the existing system, it will not secure as many under the proportionate electoral system. That is why parties resist such changes."

He made these remarks as the chief guest at the unveiling of a study titled "Students' Perspectives and Expectations on State Reforms 2024" at Dhaka University. The Centre on Budget and Policy at DU organised the event.

Prof Nazrul said Bangladesh has many good laws, but legal reforms alone will not solve all problems. He stressed the importance of implementing achievable, immediate reforms to assure the public.

"These reforms may seem small, but they have a significant impact," he said, adding that the Consensus Commission is working on reform initiatives.

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'Do not push country towards destruction'

Fakhrul warns parties demanding local polls before nat'l elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Holding local government elections before the national polls could lead to chaos and violence, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam yesterday.

"A new game has started. Some parties and individuals are now insisting that local government elections must be held before the national polls. We have experience. If peace and law and order do not prevail, it will be impossible to control local elections," Fakhrul said at a rally in Dhamrai.

"Candidates will kill each other, fights will break out, fires will be set, and anarchy will spread. I don't know if this government is deliberately trying to create chaos or move towards civil war," he added.

Fakhrul urged the interim government to prevent such instability.

"To the parties calling for local elections first, I request you not to push the country towards destruction," he said.

While welcoming the formation of new political parties, Fakhrul warned against parties created by those in power.



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