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NBR plunges into turmoil

Revenue officials launch fresh wave of protests demanding removal of NBR chairman, repeal of reform ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The crisis at the National Board of Revenue is deepening as disgruntled employees have launched a fresh five-day protest, demanding the chairman's removal and the repeal of a new ordinance that splits the tax authority. The protest

days before the failed negotiations, exacerbating concerns over the NBR's ability to meet its fiscal year targets amid already sluggish revenue growth.

In a press briefing at the NBR headquarters yesterday, the NBR Reform Unity Council vowed not to cooperate with NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman

Protesters' principal grievance lies in a clause of the ordinance splitting NBR that allows general administration cadre officers to lead the two new divisions, sidelining experienced revenue cadre officers.

threatens to disrupt tax collection, delay trade and further strain the country's revenue targets.

The demonstrations resumed yesterday after a one day pause for negotiations between interim government advisers and the aggrieved officials, who argue that the new ordinance undermines their benefits.

Customs clearance and business operations have been hampered due to the protests that continued for five

Khan at work.

"From the outset, it was clear to us that the NBR chairman failed to provide accurate information to the government's policymakers about the scope and rationale of our lawful movement. Instead, he concealed the truth, leading to the current situation," said Shahadat Jamil, a protest leader and deputy commissioner of NBR.

MORE ON BI

NCP won't run in any polls under current EC

Says it'll force 3 govt advisers to quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the National Citizen Party yesterday said they would not take part in any polls under the current Election Commission.

Accusing the EC of bias and terming it a "party office" of the BNP, they demanded its reconstitution.

Addressing a rally, NCP's Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari stated that the party would stage protests to force the resignations of Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud, and Law Adviser Asif Nazrul.

He alleged that their mismanagement was causing the downfall of the finance, law, and other ministries.

The NCP leader was speaking at the rally in front of EC on the demands, including reconstructing the commission and holding local government polls.

Before the rally, the NCP leaders and activists held a sit-in for two hours.

Patwari said the current EC is illegal as it was formed under the law enacted by the Awami League regime, which was rejected by all anti-fascist political parties and groups during the mass uprising.

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Robbers take over bus again, 'assault' female passengers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just months after a robbery on a moving bus, in which female passengers were allegedly sexually assaulted, a similar incident occurred on the Dhaka-Tangail highway on Tuesday night.

The incident came to light yesterday after a passenger, Minu Miah from Piroganj in Rangpur, filed a case with the Tangail Sadar Police Station.

According to the case statement, a group of robbers allegedly took control of a passenger bus, looted valuables, and sexually assaulted female passengers.

On February 17, robbers similarly looted a bus and assaulted female passengers on the same highway, triggering nationwide outrage and calls for improved safety on the roads.

In his statement, Minu Miah said he boarded a Rangpur-bound Al Imran Paribahan bus from Dhaka's Abdullaahpur at 7:00pm. The journey

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Supporters of Ishraque Hossain demonstrating in the capital's Kakrail yesterday, demanding that the BNP leader be sworn-in as the mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation following a court order. Inset, Ishraque addresses the demonstrators in the evening.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Polls should be held by December

Says army chief in Officers' Address, touches on corridor, port and other issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman yesterday said the national election should be held by December this year, according to three sources with direct knowledge of his remarks made at a high-level gathering in Dhaka Cantonment.

"Bangladesh needs political stability. This is only possible through an elected government, not by unelected decision-makers," one source quoted the army chief as saying in an Officers' Address.

All three sources spoke on condition of anonymity, citing official protocol.

Gen Waker warned that keeping the army deployed for civil duties for long may compromise defence preparedness.

"The army is meant for defending the nation, not for policing ... We must return to barracks after elections," he was quoted as telling the event at Senaprangon, where he delivered a 30-minute speech followed by an hour of question-answer session.

Officers from across the country and UN missions abroad joined in physically and virtually -- all in full combat uniform, signalling unity and readiness, the sources said.

Earlier in September last year, Waker told Reuters that the army was ready to support the interim government to help it complete key reforms so the elections can be held within 18 months.

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DIPAN NANDY

The ongoing movement demanding Ishraque Hossain's immediate swearing-in as mayor of Dhaka South spread across several key locations in the capital yesterday, including Matsya Bhaban, Kakrail, and the Jatiya Press Club.

The demonstrations, which began at the Nagar Bhaban, continued till the filing of this report at 12:30am near Kakrail Mosque, in line with Ishraque's instruction to his supporters to remain on the streets "for as long as necessary".

Around 7:30pm yesterday -- the seventh day of protests -- BNP leader Ishraque himself joined the protests near Kakrail Mosque and demanded the resignations of LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain and Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam.

He said, "These two advisers are working for a new political party while still in government."

"We have come with rightful demands as per the court's verdict. This movement is not to install any individual in the mayor's office. It is a movement to ensure a fair upcoming election. The court has thoroughly analysed the entire case,

and the Election Commission has done a detailed review before giving their opinion. It is the responsibility of the local government [ministry] to administer the oath. Yet, the adviser of that ministry is giving personal opinions. This goes

This movement is not merely about securing an individual position, but rather about determining whether a free and fair election will take place by December.

BNP leader ISHRAQUE HOSSAIN

against our fundamental rights."

The BNP leader, who was present at Kakrail till the filing of this report, added, "We demand an immediate announcement of a roadmap for the national election. At the same time, we

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Bumper-to-bumper traffic on both sides of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at Paribagh yesterday. City dwellers suffered immensely in jams caused by sporadic heavy rains and demonstrations.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Ishraque joins in as protests swell

Calls for resignation of two advisers; supporters vow to stay on streets

Talks only on sending aid to Rakhine, not corridor Khalilur says he is not citizen of any other country

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman has said the government has not discussed with anyone about humanitarian corridor through Bangladesh into Myanmar and will not do so in future.

"The UN only asked if Bangladesh could assist in sending humanitarian aid near the border, to be delivered to the Rakhine state by UN partners. We said we can consider," he told a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

The issue of humanitarian corridor is a rumour and is being spread by the media of a neighbouring country, he said.

Khalilur explained that a corridor is typically meant

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2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Tribute to Al-Hajj Mohammad Shahjahan Khan, former President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Bangladesh Thai Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Barishal Zila Samity; former Managing Director of S.S. Shipping & Trading Ltd., S.S. Shipping & Chartering Ltd. and Fatema Real Estate & Developers Ltd.; and former Chairman of S.S. Builders & Developers Ltd. and prominent social worker.



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Tribute from Family Members and All the officers and employees of his organisations