

SAD activists admit assaulting businessman

Claim it was a financial dispute, not extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group from Students Against Discrimination (SAD) has admitted to assaulting a businessman after bringing him to their office, searching his phone, and demanding money.

However, the group claimed it was not extortion but a personal financial dispute over unpaid dues involving a relative of one of its members.

At a press briefing at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, the platform's suspended Dhaka City unit Joint Convener Refatul Haque Shawon said Parvez, a member of the group, had sought help recovering nearly Tk 2 crore that his grandfather, Amzad, was allegedly owed by a contractor named Amirul Islam.

The dues were related to a 2023 road construction project in Rajbari that Amirul allegedly completed under a subcontract but failed to pay for, he claimed.

"For two years, Amirul used his political connections to avoid payment. Parvez's grandfather, who had taken loans to complete the work, was under pressure," Refatul said, reading from a press release. He claimed that they intervened as a personal favour, not on behalf of SAD.

Signed by joint conveners Sadman Sanjid and Refatul, the statement said both parties were invited to the SAD office for discussion. During the meeting, the group learned that Amirul was a distant relative of Jamil Taj, SAD's Pallabi unit convener. They advised both sides to settle the matter privately.

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A three-day National Fruit Fair began in Dhaka yesterday, aiming to raise public interest in local fruits over imported ones. Located at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh premises in Khamarbari, the event featured a wide range of local fruits such as mango, jackfruit, litchi, dates, guava, star fruit, custard apple, pineapple, Burmese grape, wood apple, and dragon fruit, just to name a few.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CONTEMPT CASE ICT appoints defence counsel for Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 (ICT) yesterday appointed Senior Advocate Md Aminul Gani (Titto) as defence counsel for ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina in a contempt of court case filed against her.

The tribunal also appointed senior High Court lawyer AY Masihuzzaman as amicus curiae (friend of the court) in the same case.

The tribunal passed the order, as yesterday was scheduled for a hearing on the prosecution's petition seeking contempt proceedings against Hasina over remarks made in a leaked phone conversation with a party leader.

At the hearing, the prosecution updated the court on the case, after which the tribunal asked about the appointment of an amicus curiae.

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Adviser Khalilur discusses tariff issue with US officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman on Wednesday met with US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau at the State Department in Washington, DC.

They discussed the Rohingya issue, ongoing tariff negotiations between Bangladesh and the US, developments in South Asia, and the democratic transition in Bangladesh, according to a statement from the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

The US Deputy Secretary of State lauded the leadership of Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at a critical juncture for Bangladesh and reiterated continued US support for Bangladesh.

Khalilur Rahman separately met Assistant US Trade Representative Brendan Lynch and had fruitful discussions on the agreement between the two countries on reciprocal tariffs.

Former state minister Shamsul Alam arrested: DB

STAR REPORT

The Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) on Wednesday arrested former state minister for planning Professor Shamsul Alam from the capital's Mohammadpur area.

Mohammad Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP's Media and Public Relations Division, confirmed the arrest.

Further details regarding the arrest will be disclosed in due course, he said.



Govt caps lifetime of buses at 20 years, trucks at 25

70,000 outdated vehicles to be phased out from July 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has fixed the economic life of buses and minibuses at 20 years, and goods-laden vehicles such as trucks and covered vans at 25 years.

The Roads Transport and Highways Division issued a circular in this regard yesterday. The order will come into effect on July 1.

The move comes nearly two years after the previous Awami League government put on hold a similar directive.

Over 70,000 outdated vehicles will come under this action starting July 1, a top official of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority told The Daily Star last night.

Experts say old and unfit vehicles are a major cause of road accidents. In addition, older vehicles tend to emit more toxic gases due to incomplete fuel combustion, contributing significantly to air pollution.

The older the vehicle, the more pollution it causes, they said.

In 2010, the BRTA banned buses over 20 years old and trucks over 25 years old from operating in the capital. However, many of these old vehicles shifted to inter-district highways instead.

A special committee formed by the National Road Safety Council in March 2019 recommended setting a maximum usable life for commercial vehicles to reduce road crashes and bring discipline to the transport sector.

Thousands of unfit and rundown vehicles continue to operate across the country, raising concerns over frequent accidents and deaths.

In May 2023, the then government fixed the economic life of buses and minibuses at 20 years and trucks and covered vans at 25 years. But following pressure from transport associations, the then government backtracked from its decision and put the order on hold, allowing outdated vehicles to remain on the roads.

After the political changeover in August last year, the environment ministry, on October 6, requested the BRTA to remove buses and minibuses older than 20 years and trucks and covered vans older than 25 years from the roads.

As of October last year, 28,761 registered buses and minibuses were over 20 years old, while 46,481 registered trucks, lorries, and other heavy vehicles had exceeded the 25-year limit, according to BRTA.



Experts say old and unfit vehicles are a major cause of road accidents. In addition, older vehicles tend to emit more toxic gases due to incomplete fuel combustion, contributing significantly to air pollution. The older the vehicle, the more pollution it causes.

Following a meeting on October 24, the government gave a six-month deadline – until May 2024 – to remove all such outdated vehicles from Dhaka. However, no visible action was taken after the deadline passed.

"They avoided taking action during the Eid-ul-Azha travel rush. But enforcement will begin on July 1," said the BRTA official, requesting anonymity.

Asad Alam Siam new foreign secretary

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Asad Alam Siam has been appointed the new foreign secretary.

The ministry of foreign affairs issued a circular toward this end yesterday.

"Asad Alam Siam will join the office on Friday," a foreign ministry official said.

On May 22, Jashim Uddin stepped down from the post of foreign secretary following a social media campaign against him, which had created a sense of unease within the ministry, with some officials reportedly also aggrieved by him, ministry sources said.

Jashim, who has been on a 45-day leave, is likely to be appointed an ambassador to a North American country, said sources but could not confirm the country.

Meanwhile, Ruhul Alam Siddique, former ambassador to Pakistan, was made acting foreign secretary.

He goes on retirement today after handing over responsibility to Asad Alam Siam, foreign ministry sources said.

Asad Alam, who was appointed ambassador to the US on December 5, 2024, served as ambassador to Austria.



Secretariat staffers threaten to besiege finance ministry

Issue 48hr ultimatum to scrap Public Service Ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretariat employees have threatened to lay siege to the Ministry of Finance on Sunday if the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 is not scrapped within the next 48 hours.

The announcement came during a brief rally in front of Building-4 at the Secretariat yesterday, where leaders of the Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Unity Forum addressed protesters.

Badiul Kabir, co-chairman of the forum, declared the protest programme. Forum co-chairman Nurul Islam and co-general secretary Nazrul Islam were also present, along with other leaders and protesters.

"We will not accept any amendment to this ordinance. This is a black law and it must be repealed," Badiul Kabir said, warning that employees would stage a sit-in in front of the Finance Ministry on Sunday.

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Dhaka ignored early warning on Rohingya influx

Former envoy tells seminar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh had prior information about the Rohingya influx in 2017 as the Bangladesh embassy to Myanmar had written a letter to Dhaka, recommending strengthening border.

However, there was no national consensus achieved and the government made no firm decision regarding that, said Sufiur Rahman, the then Bangladesh ambassador to Myanmar.

He shared the information at a seminar titled "Rohingya, Rakhine, and the Context of Myanmar: Bangladesh's Risks", organised by the Neeti

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On a scorching day, two children joyfully bathe in the cool waters of the Sholmari River in Batiaghata of Khulna -- their only escape from the sweltering heat. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

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