



Slogans against rape continued to reverberate across the Dhaka University campus yesterday, as students from different batches and departments joined hands, demanding justice for their peer who was raped in the capital's Kurmitola on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

PM's SPEECH It offered no solution: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising the prime minister's Tuesday's speech to the nation, BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the premier's address did not offer any solution to the ongoing crises.

The BNP leader also claimed that the nation was frustrated and aggrieved by her speech.

"People were expecting solutions... that she will give indication of holding a fresh election by dissolving the parliament and arrange talks. But she did not," Fakhrul said while talking to journalists at Jatiya Press Club.

On Tuesday, the prime minister addressed the nation -- marking the first anniversary of formation of her government.

Alleging that the PM was not being truthful in her speech, Fakhrul claimed, "Famine took place in the country due to the misrule of Awami League in 1975."

He also claimed that change started taking place under the leadership of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman.

Fakhrul further said the prime minister blamed BNP for criminalisation.

"But Awami League enforced hartal for a total of 173 days when BNP was in power. Eleven people were burnt alive in a moving bus, demanding introduction of a caretaker government system. This culture of killing is still prevailing in the country," he alleged.

Referring to the PM's statement of asking people to keep faith in her, Fakhrul said, "The banking sector has collapsed, economy is in a sorry state and people are suffering -- how can they keep faith in her?"

The BNP leader said the ruling party have become alienated from people.

LABOUR DEAL WITH MALAYSIA

KL hints at zero-cost recruitment policy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Kuala Lumpur has indicated a "zero-cost recruitment" agreement for migrant workers from Bangladesh as part of the effort to avoid risking US trade sanctions.

The terms of the new agreement, now in the final stages of bilateral discussions with Bangladesh, "will be similar" to an agreement reached with Nepal, reports Malaysian online news portal, Malaysiakini.

"When we signed a memorandum of understanding with Nepal, we said that one of the conditions is, when their workers come here, there should be no payment involved. [There should be] zero cost for the workers," said M Kulasegaran, Malaysian minister for human resources.

"So that means plane tickets and all other expenses have to be borne by employers," Kulasegaran said at a press conference on Tuesday.

"Why are we saying this? Because the US State Department has placed Malaysia on the Tier 2 watch list again, in its latest Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report last year... if you're on the Tier 2 watch list consistently for 3 years... there will be sanctions if we continue after that," he explained.

Malaysia, which is home to some eight lakh Bangladeshis, suspended labour recruitment from Bangladesh in September 2018 following allegations that a syndicate of 10 Bangladeshi agents -- with support from Malaysia -- controlled labour recruitment during 2016 and 2018, when recruitment cost went up to Tk 4 lakh.

Malaysia's previous government had insisted on a selection of the 10 Bangladeshi agents in the recruitment job, but the Mahathir-led government suspended it and began a crackdown against undocumented migrants -- a campaign that drew huge criticism from rights bodies who said most migrants became irregular because of employers' violation of laws.

The new Malaysian government formed a committee to reform foreign workers' recruitment and management, but it is not known exactly which reforms were made so far. However, last year Malaysia signed a labour

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Discord in Baira executive committee

Suspended members allege president misused trade body's funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of recruiting agents yesterday alleged that their suspension from Baira executive committee happened for protesting the "whims" of its current president, and was in violation of the organisation's rules.

They claimed they are legitimate members of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), the country's apex trade body for human resource export.

However, they faced obstacles in accessing its office, they alleged at a press conference at Baira premises in the capital.

The suspended Baira members are: Monsur Ahamad Kalam, Shawkat Hossain Shikdar and SM Nazmul Haque.

They were serving as vice president-1, finance secretary, and sports, recreation and cultural secretary, according to a statement provided to media.

The posts are now being occupied by three other members, according to Baira website.

Alongside the three suspended members, the statement is also signed by 10 serving executive committee members.

Reading out the statement, Monsur said following a writ petition, a High Court bench recently issued a stay order on the Baira decision.

Besides, the HC also issued a stay order on the appointments of the three new executive committee members, he said.

However, the Baira president has taken steps for further court proceedings, Monsur said, adding that they were suspended about six months ago.

He alleged that the current Baira president spent money from the organisation's fund for his personal interest.

The Baira president played an instrumental role in sending a letter to the Malaysian government, bypassing the ministry concerned and violating diplomatic norms, which diminished the government's image, he said.

"We protested this at Baira executive committee. As a result, we were suspended," he said, adding that Baira is a friendly organisation for 1,700 members.

Monsur alleged that the Baira president's whims caused a stalemate in its activities and posed threat to the migrant workers' recruitment sector.

Contacted, Baira President Benjir Ahmed denied the allegations against him.

Baira is in a better position and its discipline has also improved, he told this newspaper over phone.

Benjir refused to make direct comment on the HC order, saying it's a "sub-judice matter".

Special security measures taken for Biswa Ijtema

First phase begins tomorrow

BSS, Gazipur

The government has taken all-out security measures to hold the first phase of three-day Biswa Ijtema, which will begin tomorrow on the bank of river Turag.

"We have taken fool-proof security measures for devotees in and around the ijtema ground," Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) of Gazipur Metropolitan Police KM Ariful Haque said yesterday.

On the occasion of Akheri Munajat (final prayers) on Sunday, vehicular movement on roads connecting to ijtema grounds will be restricted from 4am to 2pm, the deputy commissioner said.

He said the road from Tongi Bridge to Bogura, Tongi Station Road intersection to Mirer Bazar and Munnu Gate to Kamarpara will be closed during the time.

Earlier, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal also assured of strict security measures centring one of the largest congregations of Muslims, attended by devotees from home and abroad.

He said law enforcers will be deployed on the ground and entry points.

The second phase of Biswa Ijtema will begin on January 17. This religious event has been taking place every year on the bank of Turag in Tongi since 1967.

Atiqul denies violating code of conduct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Atiqul Islam, the Awami League-backed mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), yesterday said he did not violate any electoral code of conduct.

The returning office of DNCC polls on Sunday served Atiqul a show-cause notice, saying he violated electoral code of conduct by opening an election camp along with a lawmaker [Sahara Khatun] on Saturday.

The office asked Atiqul to come up with a written answer within two working days.

In yesterday's letter, Atiqul informed the office that on that day, he attended a special prayer session organised by Uttara unit AL, and did not breach the electoral code of conduct.

He said since filing the nomination form he has not violated code of conduct and promised that he would not violate any such rule in the future.

"We have just received Atiqul's letter. We will

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Ministers, MPs can't take part in election activities

EC Mahbub Talukdar says about Dhaka city polls, after AL formed committees led by lawmakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar yesterday said ministers and lawmakers would not be able to take part in any election-related activities of Dhaka North City Corporation and Dhaka South City Corporation elections.

"There is law with provisions that very important persons like minister and members of parliament cannot participate in any election activities and campaigns. They can only cast their votes. It is not possible to go beyond the law," he told reporters after a meeting with a delegation of ruling Awami League.

He made the comments as Awami League formed two committees to coordinate election activities of DNCC and DSCC on January 3. Elections to the city corporations will take place on January 30.

AL advisory committee members Tofail Ahmed and Amir Hossain Amu will lead the committees for DNCC and DSCC respectively. Both Tofail and Amu are AL lawmakers.

AL lawmakers -- party presidium member Faruk Khan and party joint general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif -- are also members of the DNCC committee, along with others. Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque is member of the DSCC committee.

AL DNCC mayoral candidate Atiqul Islam opened his election office in Uttara on January 5, which was inaugurated by lawmaker Sahara Khatun. DNCC returning

officer later show-caused Atiqul for breaching the electoral code of conduct.

According to the code of conduct, no one will be allowed to carry out formal campaigning before allotment of electoral symbols on January 10.

Mahbub Talukdar yesterday also said that the commission cannot go beyond the existing law.

He said that AL delegation had discussion with them regarding the important persons taking part in the campaign. "But the delegation did not demand for allowing MPs or ministers to take part in the electioneering," he said.

Mahbub Taluldar sought cooperation from all political parties to have a good voter turnout on election day. "EVM will be used for the first time at all centres; if the turnout remains lower in comparison to the previous election, it will not be good for us [the commission]," he said.

BNP AT AN ADVANTAGE: HT IMAM

Earlier in the day, the AL delegation led by prime minister's adviser HT Imam claimed that BNP was at an advantage over Awami League in terms of election campaigning.

"All BNP leaders can take part in election campaign, but our mouths are shut," he said after a meeting with Mahbub Talukdar, the acting Chief Election Commissioner. Three other election commissioners were also present at the meeting.

"In terms of equal opportunities for all, BNP is above us," he added.

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GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

OSD for over 150 days illegal: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared illegal keeping government employees as "officer on special duty" (OSD) for more than 150 days, as the government circular issued in 1991 does not permit that.

Delivering verdict on a writ petition, the court ordered the government to take the officials who have been kept as OSD for more than 150 days back to their original posts immediately after receiving its copy.

The HC also directed the public administration secretary to form a committee headed by a senior

secretary to determine the legal fate of such officials and submit a report to this court through its registrar in 90 days after receiving the copy.

Petitioner's lawyer Barrister Aneek R Haque told The Daily Star that the government will promote the OSD officials who will deserve promotion under the committee's recommendation and will take appropriate legal action against those found guilty.

He said the government submitted a report to the HC in April last year saying that a total of 964 government employees have been kept as OSD.

The lawyer, however, could not give

details about the tenures of their OSD status.

Meanwhile, Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta told this correspondent that the then ministry of establishment (now public administration) issued the circular on October 3, 1991 saying that a government employee can be kept OSD for maximum 150 days.

The HC delivered the verdict yesterday in line with the circular, he added.

The bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Sashanka Shekhar Sarkar came

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