

BNP's council session

Happy reunion of leaders, workers

By Staff Correspondent

Inclement weather failed to disrupt the happy reunion of the leaders and workers of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on the occasion of their national council yesterday after long four years.

Braving incessant downpour, thousands of party workers converged at the Manik Miah Avenue in front of the Jatiya Sangsad in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, since morning to attend the opening of the fourth council.

The area acquired a festive look on the occasion which coincided with the 15th founding anniversary of the party founded by late President Ziaur Rahman.

A huge canopy was erected covering almost a quarter of the broad Manik Miah Avenue to accommodate some 50,000 delegates, more than 2,000 councillors, members of Parliament, foreign invitees, representatives of the foreign missions and thousands of party workers.

But the huge canopy failed to cover the milling crowd, a large number of whom were standing outside the tent under pouring rain which continued incessantly until 9:30 am and

intermittently until 11:30 am. The organisers had to delay the grand opening by an hour because of bad weather although thousands of party workers and guests had reached the venue by 9 am.

Slogan-chanting supporters carried banners, festoons, placards, national and party flags. Several groups wore T-shirts and red fillets while some others carried portraits of late Zia and party chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia.

Several hundred party volunteers garbed in half-sleeved red and blue vests, ushered the guests to their respective seats. Some of the enthusiastic party workers made their way to the security area besides the dais but many others had to witness the function standing under the open sky.

Talking to The Daily Star after the opening, a number of councillors said the council will boost their morale and strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level.

"It is an organisational boost as well as a happy reunion between the leaders and workers of the party," Shahiba Ahmed Shaheen, a councillor from Jhalakathi, said.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia offering Fateha at the mazar of BNP founder Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the city yesterday, the 15th founding anniversary of the party. Also seen in the picture are Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and ASM Mostafizur Rahman on her left and Mirza Golam Hafiz and M Majid ul-Huq on her right.

BNP national council begins

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Begum Zia also criticised some political parties for their past and present activities.

There are those whose dream of gaining power have been shattered due to the electoral triumph of the BNP. They, along with their political associates, are now spreading canards against the party," she said in an oblique reference to the Awami League.

When all are supposed to work unitedly for giving an institutional shape to democracy, she added, these people are constantly creating obstacles. She alleged that these political forces themselves provide shelter to terrorists while speaking eloquently against terrorism.

There are others who terrorise in the name of religion and forcibly occupy educational institutions," she said, hinting at the Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

"They are the killers of democracy and usurpers of people's rights and yet they want to teach the BNP the art of democracy," she said derisively.

They speak of the anti-autocratic movement, yet they maintain ties with the fallen forces of autocracy," they accuse the government of slow national growth rate," Begum Zia noted, "and yet provide patronage to activities directed against production."

Forgetting their own record of imposing one-party rule and hated autocracy, they conspire to divide the nation in the name of implementing the spirit of the Liberation War," she pointed out.

The BNP chairperson, to deafening cheers, declared: "We want to forcefully assert that the BNP, founded and personally organised by the proclaimer of independence Shaheed Zia, is a truly nationalistic, democratic political organisation and is the genuine torch-bearer of the real spirit of our Liberation War."

She said stringent measures had already been taken to improve the law and order situation which had deteriorated during years of autocratic rule. "I seek cooperation of the countrymen, irrespective of opinion and party affiliation, in our efforts to further improve the situation," she said.

At the outset of her address, the Prime Minister paid homage to all national leaders including Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. She also paid tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War, the Language Movement and the democratic struggle.

The colourful function, under a several thousand square metre canopy, was also addressed by Deputy Leader of the House and party vice chairman Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Choudhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiky and a number of the foreign dignitaries invited to the BNP council.

"We must prove that BNP is the foremost champion of independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh and the true

champion of democracy and the cause of the people," he said while addressing the party councillors and delegates attending the 2-day national council.

"Let us vow to stop politics of grabbing power by underhand and undemocratic means, politics of coup and killing, demolishing people's property, obstructing production, tricking and confusing our people."

Dr Chowdhury expressed the hope that councillors must formulate future programmes for the people and to update the party constitution compatible to the practical factors of the country as well as the world.

The founder secretary general of BNP, Dr Chowdhury called upon them to take part in the government programme for alleviating poverty.

"We must have revolutionary success in our mass education, preventive health programme and ensure clothes for everybody," said the reputed physician.

Wearing an off-white printed chiffon saree, Begum Zia, in her 71-minute speech, also highlighted her government's achievements during the past two-and-a-half years and outlined the future areas of priorities.

She said the rate of inflation in the country today is at a historical low of below three per cent while it was 61.4 per cent in 1974-75 and 9.3 per cent in 1989-90. In 1989-90, she noted, the industrial growth rate stood at 7.2 per cent while it has currently increased to 11.5 per cent.

Spending on poverty alleviation programmes, she added, increased to Taka 14,810 million compared to Taka 530 million in 1974-75 and Taka 1,600 million in 1989-90.

Similarly, Begum Zia said, the country's foreign exchange reserves also showed a remarkable improvement in recent years and the Taka is being made fully convertible from October next.

Saying that the country was a 'bottomless basket' under the Awami League, she added "Our government has been able to make conditions congenial to make its currency fully convertible in 2 years and 6 months. This attests to the economic and development policies of our government and its success in the area of monetary and fiscal management."

She also pointed to the increased internal resource mobilisation, surplus revenue budget and increased private investment, which jumped from Taka 37.35 billion in 1990-91 to Taka 61.80 billion in 1992-93.

"We are happy at the progress made so far, but we are not fully satisfied. We have to work harder to achieve further progress," Begum Zia said. She also noted the progress made in the communications, energy, telecommunications, education and other sectors during the past two years.

Outlining the future objectives, she said, "We will be satisfied when our poverty alleviation programmes will succeed not only to ensure 'dal-bhat' for everybody but also to guarantee a healthy and better life for all."

Begum Zia identified the pri-

ority areas as strengthening democracy, providing basic education and primary health care, keeping the population under control, building total transparency and accountability in all government activities, providing adequate nutritional food to the poor, striking a balance between import and export, attaining a minimum of five per cent annual growth rate and reviving the private sector among other areas.

The huge gathering was attended by some 2,100 councillors, 50,000 delegates and about 10,000 invited guests. Thousands of others crowded the venue to hear the speeches over loudspeakers.

After the conclusion of the inaugural session a colourful procession was brought out by the leaders, delegates and workers of the party and its front organisations which paraded city streets before dispersing near Mouchak.

Asghar Khan

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never forget," he said while addressing the inaugural session of the national council of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

It was also addressed by invitees from China, Germany, India, Iran, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Japan and a representative from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Earlier, BNP's secretary general and Minister for LGED and Cooperatives Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder introduced the dignitaries of 11 foreign countries before the audience.

They are: Li Chengren, member of the Communist Party of China, Makoto Taneda MP, of the ruling Social Democratic Party of Japan, Jacques Denis of the French Communist Party and also a member of the European Parliament, Dr Bernadette Brown of Germany's Free Democratic Party, Ali Reza Nowai of Iran, Zia Isphahani of PPP (Benazir), Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Asghar Khan of Tahrik-e-Istiqbal Party and Sartaz Aziz of Pakistan Muslim League (Newaz) from Pakistan, Mrs Mohsina Kidwai of Congress and Shankar Dayal Singh of Janata Dal (VP Singh) from India, Sirisena Cooray of the United National Party and the Minister for Housing and Construction and Kingsley T. Wickremaratne of Sri Lanka Freedom Party from Sri Lanka, Basudev Risel, joint secretary of the ruling Nepalese Congress and Madav Kumar of the Communist Party of Nepal and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament from Nepal, Ismail Hasan Metacum, Chairman of the Opposition Development Party of Indonesia and the PLO representative Zamil Khorani.

Addressing the session, Indian politician Shankar Dayal Singh, a Janata Dal member of the Rajya Saba, stole the show when he spoke in his Hindi-accented Bangla and said: "Apar Sonar Bangla amar antonye gatha aches (your golden Bengal is grieved in my heart)."

He was greeted with a loud round of applause from the crowd.

Osmany's birth anniversary observed

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Alhaj Abdus Samad Azad yesterday called for proper and full practice of democracy in the country to take the nation towards its desired destination, reports BSS.

Paying homage to Bangabir General MAG Osmany on his 75th birth anniversary at a memorial meeting here Azad said, establishment of unfettered democracy would be the best way to show respect to the Supreme Commander of the Liberation War.

Held at the National Book Centre auditorium, under the auspices of the Jatiya Janata Party (JJP), the function was also addressed by eminent lawyer Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed, Rashed Khan Menon, MP and Advocate Gazul Haq.

Sheikh Asad, president of the JJP was in the chair.

AL memo

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central leaders of the party have been given responsibilities to organise demonstrations at the district and thana headquarters on the day. AL chief Hasina announced the programme from a rally in the city on August 20.

During the five-hour meeting of the AL's central working body yesterday, the resignation issue of Dr. Kamal Hossain who floated a new party Thursday also came up for discussion. The committee members reached a consensus that Dr. Kamal's resignation should be accepted today. The meeting was adjourned at 8 pm to resume at 10:30 this morning.

Mohammad Nasim, MP, organising secretary of the party, while raising the issue, suggested the AL's door be 'closed' for Kamal Hossain for good, an influential leader of the party told The Daily Star adding, "Nasim hinted at expulsion of Dr. Kamal from the party."

According to meeting sources, Tofael Ahmed felt that since the party had not taken any disciplinary actions against him earlier, the party should also abstain from taking any such decision now, especially after he had floated the party. Expulsion of Dr. Kamal would tarnish the image of the AL, Tofael argued.

Shamsur Rahman, a member of the central working committee, however observed that the party should accept the resignation with a note that Kamal had betrayed the party.

However, most of the members present thought it would be better to simply accept the resignation.

According to the decision of the meeting, the AL will formally accept the resignation today. Heads of some sub-committees of the party central body reported about their activities in the meeting.

Tribute to Mujib

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It was for the first time that Khaleda Zia, chief of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), officially showed respect to Mujib from a party platform.

Khaleda Zia, while delivering her inaugural speech to the councillors and delegates, leaders of different political parties and foreign guests, said: "I also take this opportunity to recall with deep respect the great contributions of our departed national leaders — Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

The name of Ziaur Rahman, the late President and founder chairman of the BNP, was mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech after those of the four national leaders.

The BNP activists appreciated this unusual gesture of the Prime Minister.

People awaiting

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events led to the opening of the Tin Bigha corridor for the people of Bangladesh and the establishment of sovereignty in Dahagram and Angapota.

Bangladesh had contributed to the peace-keeping efforts in Cambodia, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Mozambique, she said, adding that a proposal to send an army battalion to Bosnia-Herzegovina was under consideration.

"We protested against the aggression and oppression carried out in the occupied Arab lands and denounce the atrocities and heinous oppression on the Bosnian Muslims," she said.

At the same time Bangladesh conveyed total support to the Palestinian cause, she added.

She made her long speech in the presence of dignitaries from 10 countries including China, France, Germany, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the PLO.

A large number of diplomats from embassies and High Commissions in Dhaka also attended the function which started in the morning and lasted until 1:30 pm.

The Midnight File

Talks on Palestinian self-rule resume

WASHINGTON, Sept 1: Israeli and Arab negotiators resumed peace talks today with a Palestinian self-rule plan ready for signing and Israel-PLO recognition apparently close at hand. The talks in Washington continued for a second day just hours after the conclusion of secret meetings in Oslo between representatives of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, reports Reuter.

Iraq urges UN to lift sanctions

GENEVA, Sept 1: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz today called on the UN Security Council to lift its sweeping economic sanctions against Iraq. Aziz, who held 75-minute talks with UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, told reporters they had discussed UN Security Council resolutions which would allow a partial lifting of an oil embargo against Iraq, but he disclosed no details, reports Reuter.

Libya won't bow to West

TRIPOLI, Sept 1: Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi today said discussions with the West to resolve a dispute over the Lockerbie bombing had been suspended and that Libya would not bow to western threats. Libya, which is refusing to hand over suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, "will not be threatened into changing its position on the Lockerbie affair," Colonel Gaddafi said.

Miladunnabi

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were decorated with miniature national flags and flags inscribed with 'Eid-E-Miladunnabi' slogans. Arches with the same slogans were erected at different streets in the metropolis. Traffic islands were decorated with colourful fashions.

Hundreds of Muslim devotees joined a massive bus-and-truck procession on the occasion defying inclement weather. Organised by Anjumane Rahmania Maecina Majibhandari, it began from Mirpur and terminated in front of the Supreme Court after parading different streets.

Other religious organisations also brought out similar processions in the capital to observe the day.

2 MPs

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Akbar Hossain personally handed over the letter of invitation to the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina had reportedly informed Col Akbar that she had been suffering from fever and cold and if she felt better she would attend the opening ceremony.

Hasina, however, did not turn up nor did any of her party colleagues at the function.

UNB adds: When contacted, Awami League Assistant Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan said Hasina refrained from attending the council following a last-minute change in the decision of BNP policy-makers.

BNP leader Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain went to 29 Minto Road a few days ago as an emissary from the ruling party to formally invite Hasina with a request to deliver her welcome address at the inaugural session.

Mannan said the 'Awami League president had accepted the invitation and asked Col Akbar to let her know about the timing of her goodwill speech.

The opposition leader also prepared her speech accordingly. But she changed her mind when Col Akbar visited her official residence Tuesday night to regret that it would not be possible for them to make time for her speech, Mannan said.

Our Correspondent adds: When asked why the BNP could not agree to Hasina's demand for delivering a speech on the occasion, a top ranking BNP leader told The Daily Star late last night, on the condition of anonymity: "A guest should not dictate the terms of an invitation."

The government has already been advised by the WB that it will come forward to support new capital investment in the power sector only if the Energy Ministry succeeds in bringing about significantly higher performance level for the PDB by commercialising it and making it face competition from the private sector.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh National Board of Revenue Dhaka

Notice

The date for advance income tax payment for the 1st quarter of the current financial year is September 15, 1993.

The advance income tax payable by the concerned taxpayer is to be paid through IT Form No. IT 31(B) (amended) challan.

The taxpayers should pay the advance tax filling in the said challan form as usual by replacing the figure "74(1)" with the figure "64" in as many places as it occurs in the form.

It may be mentioned that the financial limit of total income for payment of advance income tax for all classes of assessee is now Taka 1,00,000/=.

All assessee concerned are requested to pay their advance income tax for the 1st quarter of the current financial year relevant to the assessment year 1994-95 under this system by September 15, 1993. Simple interest @ 12% per annum will be leviable if the advance income tax is not paid or paid at a lesser amount than due.

DPP (C) 1346-29/8 G-1133 National Board of Revenue



Singapore Airlines, Dhaka recently concluded its TV Commercial Quiz Programme for July 1993. The winner of the Quiz Competition, Mrs Kashafa Ahmed is seen receiving a free return ticket from the General Manager of Singapore Airlines, Bangladesh, Mr Thia Hui Juat. A simple handover ceremony was arranged at Singapore Airlines Head Office in Dhaka. A similar quiz competition programme will be organised in September 1993.

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A part of the BNP procession in the city yesterday.

— Star photo