

Blast at Ahmadiyya

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They said the laxity encouraged the zealots to carry out repeated attacks on the Ahmadiyyas in Brahmanbaria, country's first Ahmadiyya base 80 kilometres off Dhaka.

Members of the anti-Ahmadiyya group are carrying out a hate campaign for long to drive out the minor Islamic sect members from the eastern district.

Brahmanbaria police arrested Hosena's two neighbours -- Khokon, 25, and Hossain, 32, -- after the explosion occurred at about 6:00am. The two were found roaming around the house about four hours before the blast.

Hosena, now being treated at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, had survived another attack when the anti-Ahmadiyya neighbours set fire to her house on October 29 last year.

"It was around 6:00am. Mother (Hosena) called me to say the Fazr prayers and I heard her screaming as a big bang rocked the whole area," Poly, Hosena's daughter and an HSC student of Brahmanbaria Government College, told The Daily Star.

"Rushing out of my room, I saw my mother groaning, lying in front of our toilet, with her wrist blown off. I saw the blown off fingers scattered around her," Poly said, with her eyes filled with tears.

Hosena's family rushed her to the Sadar Hospital and admitted her there. The right side of her face was burnt in the explosion. "We had to cut a few inches [of her wrist] to prevent gangrene," said Dr Rana Nurus Shams at the hospital.

During a visit, The Daily Star correspondents found bloodstains on the walls and the yard of the house, now kept cordoned off by the police.

The attackers dug holes and planted the three bombs made with torchlight cover, with batteries attached to them. One was planted in front of the toilet, another in the middle of the yard of the three-room house and another just in front of the main gate.

One of the bombs exploded when Hosena attempted to pick it up mistaking it for a torchlight. "The bombs were planted in a planned way so that those go off when anyone hits the bamboo tab coming out of those," said a local police officer.

The victim's relatives said Khokon and Hossain, who live a few yards off their house, were among Khatme Nabuwat men who attacked their house on October 29 to oust them from the area for their belief in Ahmadiyyat.

Local police said they interdicted Khokon and Hossain when they were roaming around Hosena's house at 2:00am yesterday. Asked about their motive of roaming in the dead of night, they told police they were searching for their missing hens.

Police arrested them from the area later in the day. Asked by the police, Hosena's son Jasim identified the two as their neighbours.

Local Ahmadiyyas said the police usually patrol the area until 5:30am. The questioned how the bombs were planted despite the police patrol.

Asked about the motive of the

Father-in-law

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student of Shaghata Girls' High School, with the false identity of a lecturer at Lathiganj Collage in Gabtali upazila, Bogra.

The whereabouts of Bangla Bhai, his wife and their two-month-old son Saad could not be known despite strict observation, said Shaghata police.

Rab raids places

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As per the information extracted from the criminal during the interrogation, Rab made several raids in different areas of the city and the district, particularly in Anowara and Patiya, to nab the accomplices of Shahid, sources said.

Rab members brought Shahid to the Patiya Magistrate's Court housed in Chittagong Court Building where the concerned Investigating Officer (IO) Sub-Inspector Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan of Rab-7 made a prayer for a 10-day remand of the accused in the arms case.

Magistrate Umme Rehana sanctioned 5-day remand of Shahid Chairman.

When Shahid was produced before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Monwarul Islam, CID Inspector Anowar Hossain, the IO of the Jamal Uddin abduction case, made a prayer for 10-day remand of the criminal.

Defense lawyers - advocate Ranaga Bikash Chowdhury and advocate Prodeep Bhattacharya - strongly protested the remand prayer and said, "Another suspect in the same case, Amar Das, died mysteriously on the same night he was placed on remand under the custody of Detective Branch of police."

"If Shahid Chairman is placed on remand in the same case, same accident might happen once again," they added.

They mentioned that Sobhan, driver of the microbus used in the abduction, named Shahid Chairman as an accused in his confessional statement under Section 164, but later retracted the confessional statement.

The court sanctioned 5-day remand for Shahid Chairman in the abduction case filed under Section 364.

The accused was taken on the 5-day remand under Rab custody.

attack, ATM Tareq, Brahmanbaria Superintendent of Police (SP), told The Daily Star: "It is too early to comment, but there is strong possibility that the same group which carried out the June 24 attack are behind this one."

"The cocktails [bombs] used in June 24 incidents were a bit more sophisticated than the two recovered today, but the nature of the attack suggests the group behind both the incidents may be the same," he said.

Asked whether the explosions have any link to the bomb attack at Kharampur shrine in Akhaura in the district last Friday, the SP said: "We are probing it."

The SP expressed hope to arrest the group soon, saying, "We are determined to find the root of the attacks. We have significant information about the masterminds."

Local police officials and central Ahmadiyya leaders visited the panicked Ahmadiyyas in Bhadughar yesterday. Six policemen have been deployed at Hosena's house.

US embassy

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topsy-turvy, reopened the wounds.

However, Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan said those who were in charge of the foreign ministry are in state power at that time should know who were involved in the killing.

"Because, Awami League was replaced by Awami League. The speaker was there, the cabinet was there; fortunately, BNP was not there, BNP was not born at that time," he told diplomatic correspondents when they sought his comments.

Asked about the killing of the country's first president, he said, "All killings are heinous--we don't support any killing."

About opposition allegation that the alliance government is patronising the killers of Bangabandhu, Moshed said, "Opposition is entitled to make any opinion; we believe in democracy, we believe in freedom of press."

Asked about the previous Awami League government's initiative to sign an extradition treaty with the US government to bring back some absconding convicts of the Bangabandhu murder case, who are believed to be hiding in America, he said, "We've not abandoned any initiative."

"They have tried for five years...We're a successive government, but not a revolutionary government. This question has to be addressed to the nation," the foreign minister replied when a correspondent asked if being a successive government, they are pursuing the initiative for extradition treaty.

Panic

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the urs of Hazrat Shah Syed Ahmad Gechu Daraj alias Shah Pir Kolla Shahid shrine, said he had heard a huge bang and seen smoke rising slowly into the air, 250 metres off the shrine.

Mazar committee members and locals say the bomb might have been planted with the bombs that went off on Friday but somehow did not explode. A series of blasts on Friday killed one and injured more than 50 in the shrine.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Nabinagar) said, "We are informed that locals had heard a loud bang but we did not find any evidence while inspecting the spot."

Meanwhile, the weekendlong urs ended with the final prayer being held at midnight Sunday, but the fair would continue for the month.

Jamal Uddin, Shahid Chairman took shelter of a "friend" who rented the whole of a two-story building just behind the Cox's Market at Nazirpore of Pathantuli adjoining to the city centre of Agrabad, sources said.

After staying there for about six months, Shahid Chairman returned to Anowara and had been staying alternately at three houses at Boalgang, Dumuria and Junglekhine in Patiya.

During this time he got out of house only to change his staying place and only in the night when he used CNG-run auto-rickshaw, they said, adding that he came out of his hiding only one week back, sources said.

"I was stunned to know that Shahid accused me of having links with the abductors," Saifuzzaman said in a press statement.

"Such an untrue, fake and baseless statement aims not only at tarnishing the image of me and my family but also saving actual masterminds and culprits involved in the abduction," he said, adding that the statement of Jamal Uddin's family revealed the names of the masterminds and other culprits.

His family had a warm relation with Jamal Uddin's family for long and any sort of rivalry between them was beyond question, he added.

He demanded proper investigation and exemplary punishment of the culprits involved in the abduction.

Trader killed

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he was abducted, but police could not rescue Mithu in the last seven days, he said.

Locals found Mithu's body in Alu Kabali area near the Meghna at 11:00am and informed the police, who later recovered the body.

Shahid's wife goes into hiding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Following the arrest of Shahid Chairman, the prime suspect in the sensational abduction of businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Shahid's wife went into hiding with two minor daughters to escape "police harassment" and media attention.

Shahid's wife Selina Akhtar, a teacher of Okonyara Delwar Hossain Khan Primary School at village Okonyara of Barolia union under Paliya upazila, went to the school at around 11:30am on Sunday, took leave from the headmaster and then left the school without taking any classes.

Since then, she has not been seen and nobody could give any information about her whereabouts as this correspondent visited her husband's village home in Anwara and paternal home in Paliya yesterday afternoon.

"Selina came in the morning and left quickly leaving an application. We don't have any idea about where she might go. I found her a bit worried, asked her about this but she didn't say anything," said the school Headmaster Abu Taher.

"She might have gone into hiding fearing police harassment and media queries," he added.

Selina, who passed HSC in 1990, joined the school as a teacher on November 11, 1990, he said.

"Selina, who comes from a good family, had no idea about the background of Shahid Chairman, who studied up to only class four," the headmaster said.

Selina's father Amir Hossain Master was not found at his village home in Paliya yesterday afternoon.

Jamal's family

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the abduction, made before the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and journalists after his arrest, terming it 'confusing' and 'misleading'.

Shahid said Jamal Uddin was killed about a month after his abduction on July 24, 2003 and gave some more information.

Jamal Uddin's eldest son, Chowdhury Forman Reza Liton, and wife, Nazma Akhtar, telephoned the state minister at around 1:00pm yesterday from their Chandgaon residence and talked with him for about half an hour.

"We told the minister that prime suspect Shahid disclosed the names of lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam and his brother Maruf Nizam as masterminds behind our father's kidnapping but the minister disagreed on this," Liton told journalists after the telephone conversation.

He went on, "The minister said Awami League leader Akhtuzzaman Chowdhury Babu's name came up in Shahid's statement. But we strongly objected to this and told him we didn't have any enmity or feud with the AL leader and that any indication involving him is intended to divert attention from the case."

Nazma Akhtar said, "We sought his (state minister) help to find out the culprits and told him that we won't get justice unless he takes up the matter sincerely. The minister assured us of proper investigation and justice."

Earlier on Sunday night, Liton and his mother talked over the phone with Haris Chowdhury about the latest development in the case.

"He (Haris) also assured us that we would get justice, and the culprits would be given exemplary punishment," Liton told journalists.

Liton, his mother Nazma Akhtar and grandmother Almas Khatun, who brushed aside Shahid Chairman's statement about Jamal Uddin's 'killing', demanded that his body be produced if he was murdered.

"Most of Shahid Chairman's remarks are misleading and devoid of truth. And we suspect that he (Shahid) made the statement as part of a plot to save the lawmaker (Sarwar) and his brother," Liton said.

WB chief

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This is his first visit to Bangladesh after being elected president of the WB in last June.

During his visit he will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman. Besides, he may meet with the civil society organisations.

WB sources said he is coming to the country to gather experiences about World Bank's activities in Bangladesh.

Wolfowitz is now in Pakistan and will flow into India before his Bangladesh visit.

500mw

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The first unit of 210 mw Raozan power plant is generating 150 mw of power, instead of 210 mw, due to a technical glitch.

Similarly, technical problems have reduced power production at the Haripur 100 mw plant down to a mere 27 mw.

"These shutdowns and technical problems are inevitable because these plants are running without any respite. Our power generation capacity, if all plants are running, is now 4100 mw which is close to the demand. We need more power plants to avoid this kind of load shedding," says a PDB official.

But there is no power plant project in the pipeline that is set to go online within the next one year.

In the last four years, the BNP government so far added only the Tongi 80 mw plant, built by Chinese company Harbin. That too is malfunctioning most of the time due to the flawed design of the plant, PDB sources say.

Cloud over economy

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Corporation (BPC). The BPC owes Tk 1,800 crore to Sonali alone. The corporation is now at a staggering loss of Tk 2,700 crore incurred last year.

Sonali has been paying around \$200 million a month for petroleum imports, which was around \$150 million before the oil run. It is now buying dollar from the Bangladesh Bank to meet the import bills.

The BPC annually imports 3.7 million tonnes of petroleum products -- 2.3 million tonnes in diesel. Its overall annual import bills has jumped to around \$2 billion from the earlier \$1.5 billion.

There is now a market perception that taka will get even weaker and both remitters and exporters are waiting to see how the situation evolves. As a result a chunk of the funds is not flowing in.

With the situation turning grave, the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) in a statement yesterday said the increasing global prices of petroleum pose a serious challenge to the country's economy.

"The rising import bills for petroleum and shrinking demand for exports not only threaten the balance of payment, but are also due to dislocate the overall economic development programmes," the BEF stated. "The threat underlines the need for drastic measures. At the same time, the government along with the people in all strata of the society need to promote austerity measures."

As the first step, the BEF suggested week-end holidays might be observed for two days in the government Secretariat as well as in all government offices at the district levels except those offices which are connected with infrastructures and other services needed by trade and industry on a continuous basis. Banks, insurance and other offices should also remain outside of such extended holidays.

Former finance minister M Syeduzzaman also stressed the

need for austerity measures.

"We don't find any sign of reducing fuel consumption," said M Syeduzzaman. "Roadside lights are on and billboards blinking. The government should immediately lead some austerity measures for the private sector to follow."

While supporting price hike of petroleum products, he said sudden price adjustment is a politically difficult option, rather gradual adjustment is more realistic.

"In that case, the government has to be ready to subsidise the price and the money has to come by slashing non-essential public expenditure," Syeduzzaman said.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the government is still not recognising as a whole the problems posed by the oil price spiral.

"We haven't developed any energy conservation plan," he pointed out. "We need to line up oil on more concessionary finances, we have to put a brake on fuel use too."

Debapriya named a number of measures that need to be taken immediately -- saving day light by either reversing the clock or advancing office hours, switching off billboards at night and augmenting gas supply to substitute fuel. In a critical situation, filling stations can ration fuel.

He also said the 'anti-poor' energy pricing policy has to be changed by making octane costlier.

On the other hand, the macro-economic issues such as exchange rate, interest rate, inflation, import regulation and public expenditures have to be realigned.

"There is a sense of denial of the reality and the emerging problem by the policymakers," Debapriya said. "There is no contingency plan. The government has to give a transparent signal so that the market actors can get confidence."

Peaceful hartal

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execution of the verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case passed off peacefully yesterday.

Reinstatement of public holiday on August 15, the day father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were assassinated, was another issue of the shutdown.

The BNP-led coalition government after coming to power in 2001 cancelled the status of the day decreed by the previous AL government.

During yesterday's hartal hours, educational institutions, shopping malls and roadside shops remained closed. Instead of picketing, AL activists were seen busy more in organising programmes to observe the day as a national mourning day.

All modes of vehicles except rickshaws and some CNG-run three-wheelers and buses stayed off the streets.

Contingents of police and members of other law enforcement agencies were on hand to maintain peace and order at different key points in the capital.

Police put up barricades in front of the AL offices on Bangabandhu Avenue, Russell Square, Dhanmondi-3, Sudha Sadan and other areas.

The AL and its front organisations took out processions in different parts of the capital. A procession led by Matia Chowdhury, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Haji Selim came under police action at Muktangan.

Frontline organisations of the AL brought out processions around

Bangabandhu Museum on Dhanmondi Road No. 32 where Bangabandhu was assassinated in 1975.

A procession of the AL Parliamentary Party led by Mohammad Nasim, Abdus Shahid and Mirza Azam came to Russell Square from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan in the morning.

Former home minister Mohammed Nasim along with other AL leaders held a protest rally at Russell Square at around 10:15am.

About an hour earlier, police intercepted a procession of the Awami Swachhchasebak League there.

A large number of law enforcers were deployed around Russell Square where the main programmes of the 'national mourning day' were held.

Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of the AL, demonstrated on the Dhaka University campus during the hartal hours.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: Hartal was observed peacefully in the city and other parts of the district.

Picketing was lax during the hartal hours and local industrial units at BSCIC and Rupatali industrial area worked smoothly.

However, services of long distance passenger coaches were cancelled during the hartal.

Shops except the showrooms of different companies and shopping malls were open in the city. Academic activities at different non-government educational institutions were suspended.

Nation mourns

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Soon after the half-day hartal enforced by the Awami League (AL), mourners went to the residence of Bangabandhu, now turned into a museum, where he was assassinated along with most of his family members 30 years ago.

The visitors in long queues placed floral wreaths and bouquets at the foot of the portrait of the leader of the country's independence.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed on this day in 1975 in a military coup orchestrated by some army officials. The latest reports of the brutal killing showed that some foreign countries were involved in the coup.

Meanwhile, BNP men attacked on AL leaders and workers at different parts of the country to foil programmes marking the National Mourning Day.

In the capital, Opposition Leader and AL President Sheikh Hasina placed wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu at 12:15pm. Hasina, one of the two surviving daughters of Bangabandhu, stood in solemn silence for some time in front of her father's portrait. Senior party leaders accompanied her at the time.

Senior leaders of AL, its front organisations, different political, social and cultural organisations also laid wreaths at the portrait.

Leaders of other parties who placed floral wreaths at the portrait included Pankaj Bhattacharjee and Saifuddin Ahmed Manik of Gono Forum, Hasanul Haq Inu, Mainuddin Khan Badal and Syed Zafar Sajjad of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Sheikh Shahidul Islam of Jatiya Party (Manju) and Nurul Islam of Gonetantrik Party.

People from all walks of life, including children and women, who came to pay their respect to Bangabandhu, carried black banners inscribed with demand to execute the killers of Bangabandhu.

The Awami Shechchhasebak League organised a blood-donation

400 hurt

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The police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

The situation of the local officer-in-charge (OC) along with three other cops, AL leaders Asaduzzaman Noor, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan, Asim Kumar Ukil and Mahbubur Rahman were stated to be critical.

In protest of the BNP attack, angry people set ablaze four motor vehicles of the UNO and the police and damaged several public vehicles.

During the incidents, local MP and Communication Minister Nazmul Huda was present at Dohar to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

"No najat [salvation] day can be observed on the birthday of the prime minister," Huda said while addressing a public gathering.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: The National Mourning Day yesterday was observed at Hizla in Barisal and Dumki in Patuakhali amid attacks and obstacles created by ruling BNP activists.

The Barisal local administration yesterday imposed Section 144 on the Upazila Complex premises as the AL announced a programme to observe the death anniversary of Bangabandhu and the BNP declared another to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the same venue.

Following the imposition of Section 144, the mourning programme was shifted from the Upazila Complex to Harinathpur. But at Harinathpur also the programme came under a series of attacks by BNP cadres led by Ali Qari, upazila member-secretary of BNP, and Manir Dewan, upazila secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

The attackers ransacked and looted the upazila AL office, four houses and four business enterprises of AL leaders, and foiled different AL programmes like destitute feeding, milad mahfil and mourning rallies at Harinathpur, Mermania, Moulvibazar, Kalkipur, Kawria and other places of the upazila.

BNP cadres also dispersed, chased and beat the participants of the programmes, and burnt AL flags, posters and other valuables at different places.

More than fifty persons were injured in these incidents, including upazila AL President Daliluddin Sikder, Secretary Abdur Razzak Khan, Vice President Abdur Razzak Sikder, Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Belayet Dhal, UP member Abdul Hanif and leaders of AL and its front organisations.

In Mehendiganj upazila, the AL leaders and activists could not attend the mourning day programmes as the BNP cadres created terror by blasting crackers, chasing them and holding show-downs.

In Barisal city, the police raided the houses of opposition leaders and activists and detained Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) workers Mithu and Anik.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed in Pirojpur district town as two factions of AL led by district unit Secretary AKM Awal and municipal Convenor Mustafa Sikder observed the day through separate programmes.

Our Patuakhali correspondent informs: BNP cadres looted the items collected for destitute feeding and foiled the mourning day programmes by continuous showdown in Dumki upazila.

The police dispersed the mourning rally of AL reportedly at the order of higher authority at Dashedina upazila of the district in the morning.

BD News adds: BNP-backed armed cadres attacked on an AL rally in Lakshmipur town leaving over 50 people, including some policemen, injured.

In Fulgazi upazila, five activists of AL were injured in the attack of BNP cadres.

BNP cadres attacked the mourning day programme in Keraniganj and broke about 50 arches erected over the Dhaka-Mawa road.

In another incident at Jainpur and Talerpur under Kolatia Union Parishad, over 50 cadres of Jatiyatabadi Matsyaji Dal, led by its president Chan Mia, attacked the AL programme leaving four people injured.

The cadres of JCD attacked a BCL procession at Thakurgaon Government College leaving over 20 injured.

The cadres of local MP Manjurul Ahsan Munshi foiled the mourning day programme of AL at Debidwar, Comilla. The local AL leaders blamed the police for helping the BNP cadres during the incident.

The BNP cadres foiled a mourning day programme at Chondani union in Rajbari. The attackers also stabbed Juba League activist Akram, 25, who was admitted to Rajbari Sadar Hospital.

The mourning day programmes of the AL also came under the attacks of BNP men at Munshiganj, Jhinedah, Jamalpur, Bagerhat, Chandpur, Bhola and Noakhali.

Tough laws

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proper regulatory authority. The Regulatory Authority will ensure that the builders and building owners use safe and appropriate materials.

After the meeting, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas told journalists, "Under the amended code, violators will be punished with jail and fine to various degrees."

Various housing specialists from within the government and Buet (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) and other agencies worked out this amendment, he added.

Saifur Rahman said, "The new code will address a wide spectrum of issues. For instance, many builders do not leave adequate space for access roads. Some construct 10-storey buildings without approval whereas the ceiling is six-storey. Many use residential buildings for commercial purpose."

A better-planned city can be made if these violations can be stopped, he added.

Citing the example of the collapse of the Spectrum Garments Factory building in which over 76 people were killed, Abbas said, "The pitfalls of bad constructions are too bad. These must be stopped. There are many poorly designed and constructed buildings in the city -- only God knows what will happen if an earthquake takes place here."

BNP aspirants find

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The proceeds from the nomination process would add at least Tk 1.5 crore to the BNP coffers.

Referring to the elections to women's reserved seats in 1991, a former lawmaker, who was elected to women's seat in 1991, said the then ruling BNP did not ask them to donate any money to the party coffers. The cost of seeking nomination was Tk 12,000 while now it is Tk 30,000, an aspirant candidate told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

One has to pay Tk 5,000 to have an application form and Tk 25,000 more while submitting to enter the race for 30 women seats allocated in favour of BNP.

"I will raise the issue in parliament to protest such discrimination if I am granted the party ticket," said an aspiring candidate, in an anger-choked voice.

Referring to making pledge to donate Tk 3 lakh to party funds [if selected], BNP Vice-President Sarwari Begum said it is not that everyone can afford to pay the amount, though their dedication to the party may be undisputed.

Loyalty and contribution to the organisation should be taken into account while giving nomination, she observed. The former state minister was talking to the journalists at the BNP office after collecting the application form Sunday.

Supreme Court lawyer Nurjahan Begum told The Daily Star, "If I'm given the nomination, I'll sell my lands in village home and arrange the donation money."