

QAWAMI MADRASA EDUCATION Govt won't be allowed to exert control

Patrons say they only needed govt recognition, not financial assistance

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Patrons and leaders of Qawami madrasas yesterday said they will not allow any government interference in formulating curriculum or functioning of their madrasas even if the government commits funds for them.

"We won't let the government interfere in formulating syllabus for our madrasas," Chairman of an Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) faction Mufti Fazlul Huq Amine MP told The Daily Star yesterday.

"However, if the government has any suggestions in this regard, we will take those into account," he added.

Aminee is the chairman of one of the four boards tasked with drawing up curriculum and overseeing examinations for the Qawami madrasas.

Echoing the view, Ahmed Abdul Quader of Ishaq faction of IOJ said the Qawami madrasas will operate on their own. "Alems and ulemas

will not tolerate government controls on the madrasa education," he told The Daily Star.

Replying to a query, Amine said they do not want any financial assistance from the government.

Abdul Quader said, "Even if the government provides us with financial aid, we won't budge on our stance. All we [the Qawami madrasas] want from them is a recognition."

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Monday said her government will do everything necessary for the development of Qawami madrasas. She particularly pledged to recognise Dawa degree, which is equivalent to a master's degree in Islamic studies or Arabic literature.

She announced the decision at a function of the Qawami madrasa teachers at the International Conference Centre (ICC). The same day she met the representatives of Qawami madrasas at her office. The meeting discussed ways to implement the government's

decision.

Leaders of the IOJ, a component of the four-party ruling alliance, meanwhile said they have no objection to being part of the proposed committee for carrying out the government's decision.

The committee will frame necessary rules and regulations and lay groundwork for implantation of the government move to recognise Dawa degree.

Currently, the government has no control over Qawami madrasas and neither does it have any say in syllabus formulation. These madrasas run independently with their own curriculum and system of education.

The IOJ leaders, who have been campaigning for the last four years for recognition of the Dawa degree, said they were informed that the education ministry will form the committee in a couple of days.

"We will propose some names to

HuJi leaders appeared after talks with government

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Leaders of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (HuJi), who went into hiding after the government had banned the organisation in October last year, gathered in a rally at Baitul Mukarram mosque last Friday as a consequence of a long negotiation with the government for holding political programmes openly.

The government claimed it had not known the identities of the HuJi leaders who attended the rally.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar said he was not in the capital on Friday and Saturday, and learnt about the rally from newspaper reports. He told journalists that intelligence agencies also had not informed him earlier about the rally.

Sources in the banned organisation however contradicted the government statement saying that they had been holding discussions at different levels of the government for a long time in pursuit of open activities. The rally organisers also said they had even informed the government in advance about Friday's rally, which was held under the banner of Sachetan



Two top founder leaders of HuJi, Abdus Salam, left, and Rahmatullah alias Shaikh Farid.



preferring anonymity.

According to some sources, the government asked the HuJi leaders not to hold any programme openly, saying such a move would give rise to controversies and earn the government pressures from domestic and foreign sources.

"But there was an assurance from the government of not arresting or harassing any of our leaders if we follow the government's instructions," said the HuJi source.

According to HuJi sources, they had been trying to hold programmes openly for over a year but the government asked them to be patient saying that the country's situation is volatile due to the bomb attacks carried out by another banned Islamist organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

HuJi first discussed with Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon (BKA) rehabilitation of its leaders and activists by using the banner of BKA, but backedtrack from that decision thinking that it might give rise to a controversy by casting an aspersion that mainstream Islamic organisations are sheltering

"The main objective of our discussion was to convince the government not to arrest any of us when we start holding political programmes openly under a different banner," a HuJi source said,

Service of 17 additional HC judges confirmed

UNB, Dhaka

The president has confirmed the appointment of 17 additional judges of the High Court division of the Supreme Court.

They are Justice Syed Abu Kawsar Mohammad Dabirushan, Justice Shahidul Islam, Justice Mohammad Abdul Hye, Justice Mohammad Islam Siddiqui, Justice Mohammad Fazlur Rahman,

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Academics decry recognition to Qawami madrasa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Academics and opposition political leaders yesterday said that recognition of Qawami madrasa education system will encourage religious militancy if its syllabus and curriculum are not changed.

They expressed grave concern over the government decision to recognise the Dawa degree of Qawami madrasa as equivalent to master's degree.

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Upset Jamaat talks with BNP today on Ershad inclusion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP decided to include Jatiya Party (Ershad) in the ruling alliance and to take key ally Jamaat-e-Islami into confidence on the matter.

BNP top leaders at the party's standing committee meeting yesterday decided to discuss the matter with Jamaat leaders to 'settle' it, sources said.

Meanwhile, Jamaat also decided to talk to the prime minister (PM) about the matter. A top level delegation of Jamaat led by its Ameer also Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami will meet the PM in her office today.

Jamaat might express its dissatisfaction over the possible inclusion of JP in the ruling alliance during the meeting with the PM, sources said.

The BNP standing committee also decided to clarify the issue to all resentful BNP leaders, who are popular in their constituencies, including Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed, before the next election.

The meeting decided that BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will talk to Oli when the latter returns from abroad, sources said.

"We are not sure about the veracity of what has been published in newspapers about Oli Ahmed. He is abroad now, let him come and we will see what happens," Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters after the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office.

BNP Chairperson also Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting that ran for over an hour from 12:45pm. The BNP standing committee meeting was held after four years of its last meeting on June 22, 2002.

"The prime minister has instructed to settle all internal misunderstandings and directed to appease the rebel leaders of BNP across the country," a member of the committee told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

The standing committee meeting also discussed BNP's national executive committee meeting

scheduled for August 26 as well as the country's political situation.

"We have also discussed issues regarding our preparation for the next election like finalising the manifesto and our organisational activities," Bhuiyan said at the news briefing.

On JP's probable inclusion in the ruling alliance, he said, "Discussions are going on and we will finalise it after consulting our partner parties."

In reply to a question on the initiative for discussion taken by the business community, Mannan Bhuiyan, also LGED minister, said he is ready to sit with Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil if a formal proposal comes from the opposition.

"We want to resolve problems through discussions as we too want free and fair elections," he said.

The BNP secretary general expressed his surprise over the publication of news in different dailies yesterday about his phone call to Abdul Jalil.

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UP POLLS MONITOR Six NGOs accused of misuse of funds

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

At least six non-government organisations (NGO) had allegedly misused funds meant for the task of monitoring Union Parishad (UP) polls in 2003.

The organisations had to return the money to Danida (Danish International Development Agency) after an investigation by the donor agency found proofs of misuse of the funds it had sanctioned for monitoring the UP elections, said sources.

The NGOs said they have taken proper actions following the Danida's complaint. They claimed that some field-level volunteers and local partners had made the 'mistake'.

Ironically, four of these six organisations have been listed for observing the next elections under the auspices of The Asia Foundation and have already received letters of intent.

Massline Media Centre (MMC),

Democracywatch, Bangladesh Manobadhikar Somonnoy Parishad (Bamasop), Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Brotee, and Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) are among the NGOs against whom Danida had raised the allegation.

The Danish development agency discussed the irregularities in their audit report and later put pressure on those NGOs to reimburse the money. Except Bamasop, the others have returned some of the money to Danida.

Taleya Rehman, Executive director of Democracywatch, told The Daily Star on Friday that on verifying the complaint raised by Danida, they have returned Tk 5 to 6 lakh. She said her organisation had received about Tk 40 lakh for the UP election monitoring.

"We have taken proper actions on receipt of the complaint and it [misuse] all happened due to

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PHOTO STAR

Encroachers on Gulshan Lake dump garbage under the cover of night to fill up the lake's eastern bank. Locals fear that the lake might disappear someday if the practice is not checked.

Grabbers bring rubbish by boats to fill Gulshan Lake

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Land grabbers are now filling up the Gulshan Lake with rubbish brought in by country boats by night to the eastern bank of the Gulshan-Karail part of the fast disappearing lake.

Over the last two weeks, residents along the lake on roads-30, 31, 32 tried in vain to stop several boats coming in the darkness of night from across the Karail T&T slum to dump garbage into the lake to make plots.

The land on the western part of the lake belongs to T&T, where one of the largest slums in the city, the Karail T&T Basti, is situated.

Grabbers are eyeing the eastern bank of the lake, where Gulshan residential area is situated.

The nightly lake-filling activities stopped temporarily when a resident of Road 31 filed a general diary with the Gulshan police station on August 17. In the early hours of August 18 Gulshan police seized a country boat red-handed trying to dump earth and rubbish into the lake. The boatman however managed to escape.

Realising that their onslaught on the Gulshan Lake has been detected, the grabbers, two days ago, came with a rickshaw van, laden with earth and ballasts to be dumped into the lake. A resident of road-31 again resisted. The van driver simply ran away leaving behind his three-wheeler. Until 2:00pm yesterday nobody returned

to claim the van, now left on the premises of Mahbubul Haque's lakeside plot.

The empty plot in front of Haque's home, belonging to one Mujibur Rahman Khan clearly extended the boundary wall into the lake area. Fresh earth filling of the lake was a clear indication that the plot owner was trying to extend the boundary. Khan however told The Daily Star that he has all the documents for his plot.

"I own the plot measuring 8.5 katha allocated by Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) in 1998. I have not extended my boundary and I do not know who is filling up the lake," Khan added.

More than half a dozen local

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AUG 21 ATTACK Hasina vows to bring culprits to justice if voted to power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina said the present government will not bring the perpetrators of the August 21 grenade attack to book as it directly backed the attack to eliminate the entire AL leadership.

Hasina vowed to bring the killers and their patrons to justice if her party is voted to power in the next election.

"The government has taken the lives of hundreds of our party leaders and workers, including 24 persons in the grenade attack on our rally on August 21, 2004 that aimed to kill me," Hasina said.

She was addressing about 200 AL party activists injured in the grenade attack at her Dhanmondi office yesterday.

The AL chief alleged that the

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PHOTO STAR

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi office yesterday caresses the son of Awami League leader Abul Kalam Azad who died in the grenade attack on August 21, 2004.

Opposition out to foil polls PM tells rally

UNB, Koshiha, B Baria

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the opposition is out to foil the coming general elections finding no chances of winning after doing arithmetic of vote, but the people want election, development and progress of the country.

She urged people to remain alert and united so that the opposition cannot implement their non-political agenda to create chaos.

The prime minister said they (opposition) will not be able to get away committing such acts as people have "no confidence in

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Hasina asks Jalil to take initiative for reform talks with govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition also Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed the AL general secretary to arrange a meeting of the 14-party opposition coalition today to finalise strategies for a dialogue with the government about electoral reforms.

AL sources said the party chief's instruction came when Abdul Jalil, AL general secretary, went to her Dhanmondi office to talk about the dialogue about the proposed reforms in the system of caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

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170 aboard killed in Russian plane crash

AFP, Moscow

A Russian passenger plane with 170 people aboard crashed yesterday in eastern Ukraine after hitting severe weather and declaring a fire on board, Ukrainian and Russian officials said.

All 170 of the passengers and crew aboard the plane are dead, Interfax news agency quoted the Russian emergency situations ministry as saying.

"Everyone is dead, according to preliminary information," the agency quoted spokeswoman Irina Andrianova as saying.

The plane, a Tupolev-154, was on a flight from the southern Russian Black Sea coastal town of Anapa to the northern city of Saint Petersburg, when it crashed near

the Ukrainian city of Donetsk, officials said.

Aviation officials quoted by Russian news agencies said preliminary information indicated that the crash was linked to stormy weather and severe turbulence that the plane passed through shortly before it went down.

A spokesman for Ukraine's emergency situations ministry quoted by Interfax Ukraine said that a fire broke out aboard the aircraft as it cruised at 10,000 meters (33,000 feet) and that the crew attempted to make an emergency landing.

The spokesman, Igor Krol, said the plane's landing gear failed to deploy normally and the aircraft crashed "on its belly".

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INDO-BANGLA TALKS Home secys meet in Dhaka tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Against the backdrop of clashes between Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) along the border at a few places in recent weeks, home secretaries of India and Bangladesh will meet in Dhaka tomorrow to sort out all issues.

The talks would include the issue of infiltration that lead to tensions between the two countries.

During the two-day talks, India is expected to raise its concern over continued illegal movement of people from Bangladesh and Pakistan-based terrorists alleged use of Bangladesh territory as a route to enter India.

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A disappointing day

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh's hopes of winning their first goal in the 10th South Asian Games suffered a shattering blow here on Tuesday when a high-flying Asif Hossain Khan fired blank.

Asif entered into the Welisara Navy Range to retain his 10m air rifle gold but surprisingly finished fourth. The country's ace shooter

however teamed up with Anjan Kumar Singh and Imam Hossain to win the silver while the latter also clinched the individual bronze in the same event.

The swimmers also looked off-colour at the pool in the afternoon, winning only a few bronze medals. After winning silver in the previous days, they hardly looked competitive at the Sugathadasa Indoor

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