

Nagrik Shakti

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open letter for the countrymen, also from the ZIA, to elicit their opinion as to whether he should enter the domain of politics.

In his declaration about floating party, he said, "We want to advance the country with the slogan 'Advance Bangladesh'. Our politics will be the politics of materialising the ideals of the Liberation War."

But he didn't mention anything clearly about the aims and objectives of his political party. "I will say about those later on," he said, adding: "Those will be fixed after the formation of the party."

He said the politics of this party will be to unite the people to achieve goals in the future, "not to create division among the people."

Prof Yunus mentioned that the workers in the villages would be the main source of his political party's main force.

"Those who violate laws must not be in the leadership of the party," he said about his plan for starting off with a clean slate.

He also thanked people who advised him not to venture into the arena of politics.

The local committees will nominate the candidates for the elections, including the national elections. They will do that after examining whether a candidate is honest and eligible.

He urged the people to form 'primary preparation team' with 20 people each and set up the office for the political party and communications center.

Yunus put emphasis on the womenfolk participating in the formation of preparation teams, as they constitute half the total population.

"This is time the women came forward bypassing all odds, fears and shyness," said the Grameen Bank founder whose creditors are mostly poor women.

He said the first work of this team will be to find honest and eligible

persons for the next general elections.

For the youths, Yunus said, "You are the biggest power of this country, you will construct this country's prestigious future. You have to come forward with enthusiasm and innovative ideas."

He told reporters it is his assumption that those who want to create a new political arena should join his new-generation party. "I believe the people are looking for a new way to move away from the destructive activities of the past."

He noted that people are not getting the scope for exploiting the full potential held by Bangladesh for them to build a prosperous life.

About his party's vision, he said the implementation of that vision is not tough.

The Nobel laureate noted that he would reduce his involvement with the Grameen Bank and no executives or members of the bank would get involved with his new political party.

"Bank is purely a separate kind of business while politics is other kind," he said.

Prof Yunus evidently holds a different view from that of the old parties about the timeframe for the stalled polls, as he said there should not be any hurry in holding election. Rather, he said, election should be held after completion of the due works.

He urged the people to work with his new party, saying that if the people want to see an honest representative in parliament, they should support his "Shakti".

He, however, ducked some questions asked by reporters as to which form of government he wants--presidential or parliamentary system, and whether he will allow anyone who wants to join his party from the two major political parties.

ACC gets ready

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wealth statement expires Sunday evening.

Sources said the government will initiate the process from Monday to seize, attach or freeze moveable and immovable properties of those who will fail to submit their wealth statements by seeking permission from magistrates.

Babul and Bakir submitted their statements in person and both were arrested while leaving the ACC.

But following Bakir's arrest in public, his whereabouts became lost in mystery with the law enforcement authorities claiming that Bakir was not with them and some saying he had fled.

Meanwhile, the ACC could not learn about the arrest status of Giasuddin Al Mamun.

As of yesterday, Mamun remained officially arrested while his whereabouts remained undisclosed.

The ACC yesterday confirmed that Mamun's wife had received on Tuesday night the ACC notice for submitting his wealth statement.

Chowdhury Alam, whose name is also on the ACC list, meanwhile sought time for submitting his wealth statement, saying it will take time to gather the information as the joint forces seized various documents from his house.

The ACC officials, however, said they do not have the authority to allow someone extra time.

Representatives of AL leaders and former lawmakers Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Mokbul Hossain and Aktheruzzaman Chowdhury Babu visited the ACC and said they can submit the wealth statements on behalf of the leaders who are abroad, or else it has to wait until the leaders come back.

ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain told reporters that the commission will later take decision about those who are abroad at present.

STATEMENTS OF BABUL AND BAKIR

According to Nurul Islam Babu's statement, the total value of the properties of his family stands at Tk 170.77 crore.

Babul himself has shown assets worth Tk 73.88 crore, majority of which comes from business investments. His wife owns assets worth Tk 44.88 crore, with majority coming from company shares and investments. His son Shamim Islam possesses assets worth Tk 43 crore and his daughters the rest.

BM Bakir Hossain and his wife's statements put the total value of their combined wealth at Tk 120.20 crore.

Sources said both the statements are highly confusing and erroneous.

Babir showed a 3 katha land at Dakhin Khan valued at Tk 53,000, savings certificate worth Tk 5 lakh, DPS of Tk 2.70 lakh, Alico premium deposit of Tk 1.29 lakh, and various household items. He also showed his family maintenance and other expenses at Tk 9.76 lakh on the column for assets.

Bakir's statement mentions a "source of fund" from where he received Tk 49.41 lakh as foreign remittance from a relative. Again he states that he has paid back the remitter Tk 30 lakh and paid one Shaikh Nasir Uddin another Tk 15 lakh. He also has a house-building loan of Tk 17 lakh from a bank.

The Sonali Bank CBA leader also declared that the joint forces raided his house on February 3 night and

ACC chief

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and status of the new ACC chairman will be equivalent to a minister and each of the two commissioners' equivalent to a judge of the High Court, according to a government notification.

With the new appointments, the government reconstituted and strengthened the ACC in combatting corruption, which is on its agenda, before it holds the next general elections.

The ACC sources said the newly appointed chairman and commissioners would join the office next Sunday.

The former ACC chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan and two commissioners--Prof Maniruzzaman Miah and Maniruddin Ahmed--resigned from their posts in the second week of February.

The immediate past government had constituted the ACC with the three in November 21, 2004 but they failed to keep the anti-graft watchdog functional.

The government formed a seven-member committee led by Adviser Mainul Hosein, which, in the first week of this month, recommended reconstitution of the ACC to make it a functional body.

Although the immediate past BNP-led alliance government established the ACC as part of their election pledges, it is widely believed by the critics that the then government was never sincere in making the commission functional to fight pervasive corruption.

The BB investigation found that SA Kabir owned 10,461 shares amounting to 2.01 percent of the total shares, Asaduzzaman owned 11,071 shares or 2.13 percent, Syed Tariqul Islam 1,585 shares or 0.31 percent, Biplob Kumar Saha, 2,777 shares or 0.53 percent, Mohammad Salauddin 2,000 or 0.39 percent, H Ahsan Khan 3,216 shares or 0.62 percent, IPCO Securities Ltd 31,269 shares or 6.02 percent, Oceania Securities Ltd 13,618 shares or 2.62 percent, QED Securities Ltd 4,633 shares or 0.89 percent, Quantum Securities Ltd 4,555 shares or 0.88 percent and Abul Karim Litu himself owned 385 shares or 0.07 percent of the total.

The probe report said Abul Karim Litu showed the shares in different names and companies to avoid legal limitations. He took loans from Prime Finance and Investment Ltd against the ACC to make it a functional body.

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Oriental Bank scam

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proper management of Oriental Bank Ltd.

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The BB yesterday also asked different banks to submit by February 28 detailed information on financial transactions of Obaidul Karim, Koyes Sami and 22 other present and former

officials of Oriental Bank for embezzling Tk 596.44 crore. The banks will have to submit reports on the accounts, if those were found closed.

BB sources said the directive has been given in response to a request from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which has been investigating the Oriental Bank scam case.

Apart from Karim and Koyes, the accused now working with the bank are senior assistant vice president (SAVP) Mohammad Yameen, assistant vice presidents (AVPs) Mohammad Fazlur Rahman and Abul Hossain Chokder, executive officer (EO) Mohammad Emdad Hossain Bhuiyan and senior officers Touhiduzzaman Khandaker and Mohammad Firoz Kabir.

The former officials are senior vice president (SVP) SM Harun, AQM Mahmud Ullah, SAVP, Tariqul Alam, EO, Manjurul Alim, SAVP, AVPs Alamgir Kabir, Mohiuddin Ahmed and Syed Mahmud Hasan, executive vice president (EVP) Quamrul Islam, Iftaq Ahmed Chowdhury, former EVP Mustaq Ahmed, who is now working as deputy managing director of Trust Bank Ltd, former AVP and now manager of One Bank Ltd Syed Sarfaraj Shah, former AVP and now working in State Bank of India, Dhaka, AZM Saleh, former VP and now manager of One Bank Khandaker Shahrukh Ahmed, former AVP and now working in IFIC Bank Arifur Rahman, former EO and now working in One Bank ANM Asifur Rahman, former SAVP of Oriental Bank and now absconding and Saiful Aziz Pavel, former AEO.

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BNP, AL

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holding an election," BNP spokesman and Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan told the journalists after the meeting between BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Steve Chabot at Hawa Bhaban.

Steve Chabot after the meeting said, "We would like to see election in Bangladesh sooner rather than later. ... But the time of election is up to the people of Bangladesh."

Terming corruption as an obstacle to investment in Bangladesh, the US congressman praised the interim government for its ongoing efforts against corruption. "We would encourage the efforts which is taken by the government to reduce corruption here in Bangladesh," he said.

Nazrul Islam Khan said if the interim government stays for too long, a few problems might arise and even the caretaker government system might be questioned. "BNP already asked for an election within the quickest possible time."

Some problems have already surfaced such as price hike of essentials and deterioration of the law and order, Nazrul observed.

He said since the US congressman identified corruption as an obstacle to investment in Bangladesh, BNP assured him of taking necessary measures to curb corruption if the party is voted to power.

During the discussion, the BNP high command told the congressman that they do not oppose any arrest on specific allegations, but arrests without specific allegations are against the rule of law, Nazrul added.

Former foreign minister Moshed Khan, former foreign affairs adviser Riaz Rahman and Nazrul Islam Khan accompanied Khaleda Zia during the meeting while US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis and a few other US officials were present with the congressman.

MEETING WITH HASINA

"We are trying to have an election here as soon as possible, sooner rather than later. It's important to have elections because Bangladesh has a democracy, a very important democracy and the matter is also important for our country," said US Congressman Steve Chabot after an hour-long meeting with AL president Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan in the city.

The US envoy, however, said it is ultimately up to the Bangladeshi to decide when the elections would take place, not up to the UN or US.

"We talked about corruption and how devastating it is to a country. We also talked about US investment in Bangladesh and we would like to see increased investment," said the US congressman.

"It seems that your organisation is directly or indirectly engaged with anti-government activities," read an NGO Affairs Bureau letter on February 4, in response to a letter of Proshika to release the donors' request to release their fund.

The letter said the donors have warned to shift the grants to any other country if the fund clearance is held up for an indefinite period.

The project that started in 1999, serving lakhs of poor people to change their fate, is lying in an uncertain condition as the then BNP government stopped releasing grants in spite of donors' repeated request to release their fund.

"We would like to note that the funds provided to Proshika have been duly audited by a reputed international audit firm (PriceWaterhouse Coopers) commissioned by donors for the year 2001-2002 which gave the opinion that Proshika's was in conformity with all Bangladesh and international accounting standards," the letter read.

The letter signed by Pranab Kumar Saha, an assignment officer of NGO Affairs Bureau, also states that Proshika seems to be involved in activities that hurt religious sentiment of Bangladesh is up to the people of this country, not the US.

"These funds cannot be held indefinitely and will have to be forfeited if fund clearance is not given," read the letter of Canadian High Commission.

The letter said from the reports published in different newspapers and from different discussions they (NGO Affairs Bureau) made those observations against Proshika.

Meanwhile, the donors have warned to shift the grants to any other country if the fund clearance is held up for an indefinite period.

"We got Tk 173 crore from the donors in two years after the project started in 1999. The project is about to lapse, as we are not allowed to receive any money from the donors since 2001-2002 fiscal year," said Proshika President Kazi Faruque Ahmed.

The immediate past government did not release any grant to Proshika for the last five years on the pretext of different allegations.

The government also tried to suppress the organisation by arresting its president and hundreds of field level staff on various occasions.

Sabers said they want the election to be held as soon as possible. "As the Election Commission has been reconstituted, we hope that they will start discussion with the political parties and take opinion from us so that we all can move towards holding the election."

Sabers, who is also AL organising secretary, said, "We have told that we support a fully independent Anti-Corruption Commission with its own financial resources to curb corruption."

He said they also talked about Bangladesh's power structure that is now centralised. "Corruption will be automatically reduced if the local government is strengthened," Saber said adding that strict adherence to rules and the use of ICT will help to reduce corruption.

About the arrest of political leaders, the AL leader said the party would not take the responsibility of any party leaders and workers if there is any specific evidence of corruption or criminal activities against them.

"But no innocent leaders and workers should be harassed. And there should be specific information on the arrestees," Saber said.

SSF security

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Expressing deep concern at the SSF withdrawal, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil then demanded withdrawal of the SSF also from Khaleda Zia's house.

The AL termed it a conspiracy and abuse of power by the previous coalition government.

The SSF and President's Guard Regiment then took charge of Sudha Sadan security on October 30 morning.

Nuruzzaman

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JCD men, allegedly on orders of Naser.