

Review body

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phrase "women's equal rights to earned movable and immovable properties" and follow Islamic provisions on inheritance if the earned properties include inherited properties.

Suggesting inclusion of guidelines "in the light of the Quran and Sunnah" while taking any decision regarding women's rights, the ulema recommended abolishing the section that suggests steps to implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Asking the government to withdraw Bangladesh from the convention, they said many sections in it go against the belief, spirits and culture of the Muslim ummah.

The ulema committee also opposed and asked the government to eliminate the provision for keeping reserved seats for women in parliament and local governments bodies and direct elections to those.

"This policy has strongly hurt the pious Muslims of the country since many sections of it clash with the Quran and Sunnah... It does not go with Bangladesh's constitution, religious traditions and culture," the report concludes.

Adviser Hassan Arif expressed hopes that the recommendations will remove the "language or interpretation gap" created surrounding the Women Development Policy.

The committee members did not support the attempts by a section of opportunists to create chaos by taking advantage of the situation, he told reporters.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS
The committee said 15 sections of the National Women Development Policy are against Islam and should be revised or corrected while six sections should be eliminated.

The Islamic scholars said not only is it impossible to establish equal rights for men and women in the country, but in some cases, giving women equality would deprive them of their rights in many sectors.

They proposed replacing the phrase "equality, equal rights and affirmative action" with "just rights".

The committee also said the ambition of eradicating "existing disparities between women and men" is unclear and should be replaced by the phrase "existing disparities between women and men in light of the Quran and the Sunnah".

On the section that asks for giving women equal human and fundamental rights such as political, economic, social and cultural, they said "just rights" should be ensured for men and women in light of the Quran and the Sunnah.

They said the government must ensure participation of ulema and mufit alongside women's law experts while drawing up or eliminating or amending any "existing discriminatory" law.

They proposed inclusion of religion experts in a committee to resolve any inconsistency regarding women's interest arising from misinterpretations of provisions of their religions.

They also opposed the provision of a child's being identified by both the mother and father, saying it "encourages sexual abuse" and pre-marital cohabitation. They recommended identifying a child by "legally married" parents.

The committee observed that the policy's proposed penalty for child marriages is not in line with Islamic policy as the legal marriage.

BSMMU

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activities on Sunday. It will work to find out how much money has been lost at BSMMU due to institutional corruption," ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal said.

The judge observed that being a professor of a public university (Mymensingh Agricultural University), and holding constitutional post like membership in PSC previously, Mahfuzur should have faced the trial.

As he did not do that despite being a respectable citizen, exemplary punishment is delivered upon him, the judge added.

"This is for the first time a PSC member is convicted for graft since the country's independence," advocate Khurshid Alam Khan, the public prosecutor, said.

ACC Assistant Director Helal Uddin Sharif filed the case against Mahfuzur with Kafrul Police Station on September 23, 2007 accusing him of accumulating wealth of Tk 4.5 crore beyond his sources of income.

Depositions of 49 witnesses were taken in the case.

ACC Assistant Director Nasir Uddin Ahmed submitted the charge sheet on February 12 this year and the charge framing against Mahfuzur took place on March 3.

In his wealth statement, Mahfuzur showed that he owns Tk 99.20 lakh while the ACC investigation revealed that he owns wealth worth Tk 5.42 crore.

Father kills

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riage age of 18 should not apply here because Islam states that a girl can be married as soon as she has "come of age".

It recommended replacing the phrase "child marriage" of the section concerned with "discourage underage marriage".

The committee opposed inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions, saying it would make women insecure and it could tarnish Bangladesh's image. The ulema proposed cancelling the provision.

They also opposed the provision that women "must be given equal opportunities and participation in wealth, employment, market and business", saying it clashes with the Quran's teachings. They proposed giving women equal opportunities and participation in these sectors in light of religious dictums.

The committee specifically said one's inheritance rights should be determined by their own religions.

The ulema asked the government to cancel the initiative to reserve one-third parliamentary seats for women to increase women's participation in parliament and its application in local government.

A few Islamist parties started staging demonstrations immediately after the chief adviser announced the National Women Development Policy 2008 on March 8.

On March 11, the law adviser told the ulema that the caretaker government had not passed any law regarding inheritance and there is nothing that contradicts the Quran and Sunnah.

The next day, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Choudhury asked people to refrain from unnecessary criticism of a progressive document like the policy without going into the next general election.

Tofail criticised the caretaker government for not observing the historic Mujibnagar Day at state level.

Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta alleged that the government arrested Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a bid to send politics and politicians into exile.

The two top leaders were not arrested on corruption and power-misuse allegations; rather they were arrested to implement the government's plan to remove politics from the country, he said.

Presidium member Motia Chowdhury said the AL cannot compromise on party demands just to make the government's dialogue with political parties a success.

AL leaders Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan and Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Jubo League leaders Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, Faruq Hossain, Abdus Sattar Masud, Ataur Rahman Ata, Ismail Hossain and Mohiuddin Mohi, among others, spoke at the discussion.

DU teachers
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Talking to The Daily Star a teacher said, "As the state of emergency is an obstruction to holding elections to different democratic bodies in the country, we want its immediate withdrawal so that democratic activities of different democratic bodies could be restored by holding their sense of duty."

Prof Mahfuz
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The punishments were handed down under section 26 (2) and 27 (1) of ACC Act and the two jail terms would be carried out consecutively.

There are numerous allegations against Mahfuzur, including taking bribes and conducting irregularities in 27th BCS examination when he was a PSC member.

The judge observed that being a professor of a public university (Mymensingh Agricultural University), and holding constitutional post like membership in PSC previously, Mahfuzur should have faced the trial.

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Unite within 72hrs

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to see the BNP reunite for the sake of a meaningful parliamentary election.

"It's not in our constitutional jurisdiction, but still we have taken the initiative since we don't want to see division in a major political party like BNP," a Saifur-led BNP leader quoted the poll chief as saying.

They also said remorse and guilt for not being able to provide for the family might be behind Bablu's actions.

Asela, Bablu's wife, said he looked distressed in the past few months back. As the injury rendered him incapable of supporting his family -- wife, a son and two daughters, he had been staying at his mother-in-law's house at Dasmaria, said his relatives and locals. The living child, Shahid, 10, is a student of local Brac School, they added.

Leaders of pro-Khaleda faction blasted the EC for sending an invitation to its rival and for not addressing Delwar properly in the letter sent to him Wednesday.

The CEC first met leaders of Saifur-led BNP at his office. Attended also by election commissioners Muhammed Sohul Hussain and Brig Gen (retd) Md Sakkhat Hussain, the meeting began at 10:30am and lasted about an hour.

The other meeting, between the EC and a 15-member delegation of Delwar-led BNP, started at half past noon at the EC Secretariat's conference room.

During two-hour long discussions, pro-Khaleda leaders headed by BNP Standing Committee Member Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui argued that as per their party constitution Delwar is the lawful secretary general of BNP. They urged the EC to send him a "properly addressed" invitation for electoral reforms talk.

Coming out of the meetings, leaders of both the factions however said the BNP would contest the next general election.

Sources in the EC yesterday said they would wait for the next three days to see whether the BNP factions could resolve the differences. "If the issue is not resolved within the time limit, the commission will take its next step next week," said one of them.

Govt to take
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violent demonstrations against the policy in Dhaka and Chittagong by Islamists.

Additional police forces will be deployed today at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, a place that saw violent demonstrations on April 10 and 11 when Islamists clashed with law enforcers leaving 200 hurt.

After a rumour had spread that an imam was killed in the clashes on April 11, madrasa students stormed Hathazari Police Station in Chittagong the same day.

Talking to newsmen yesterday, the home adviser expressed hope that no violence or demonstration will take place today as the government is actively considering the recommendations of a committee of ulema (Islamic scholars) regarding the women development policy.

"BNP has preparations to contest the next parliamentary election united," he said referring to the meeting with the EC.

Nazrul Islam Khan, another leader of pro-Khaleda faction, said at first they spoke of their objection to the way the commission had addressed Delwar in its invitation letter.

He said they have suggested that the EC ask the government to release detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. "Her presence is crucial for taking any important decision. Besides, she has no charge framed against her."

They also demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency to create an environment conducive to holding a free and fair election.

About the much-talked about October 29 standing committee meeting that appointed M Saifur Rahman and Major (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed as acting chairman and acting secretary general, Nazrul, joint secretary general of BNP, said it was not a standing committee's meeting at all.

He said they have suggested that the EC ask the government to release detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. "Her presence is crucial for taking any important decision. Besides, she has no charge framed against her."

Asked if the government would put the policy on hold in the wake of demonstrations against it, the home adviser said, "There is no question of any activity on part of the government regarding implementation of the policy. This is not a law and the government has no desire to enact any."

He said he believes that a vested quarter is banking on the issue to generate violence and urged all to refrain from such activities.

On measures to prevent further incidents at Baitul Mukarram, Matin said, "We have ordered for announcement on loudspeakers asking devotees to leave the place after the prayers. Besides, there will be security personnel there."

The adviser held an emergency meeting with officials of law enforcement agencies at his office in the evening to work out a plan to stop violence breaking out near the National Mosque today.

Khaleda
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meeting at Delwar's Nam flat to discuss the matter.

Emerging from the meeting at around 8:30pm, Delwar told reporters that they had received positive signal from the party chief about joining the discussions with the government.

"We received some positive directives from our chairperson and our senior leaders are now discussing the matter," he said hoping that the outcome of their discussions would be positive.

Among others, BNP standing committee member Dr RA Gani, chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, vice presidents MK Anwar and Sarwar Rahman, joint secretaries general Nazrul Islam Khan, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Selima Rahman and MA Mannan attended the meeting that started at 6:30pm.

Delwar said he had spoken with several advisers over the phone during their meeting and told them that they did not have any objection in joining them in the proposed dialogue since BNP is a pro-election party.

After investigation, sub-inspector Zahidul Islam, the then officer-in-charge of Pabna police station, lodged a sedition case with a magistrate court on September 4, 2005 and pressed charges against them on February 6, 2006.

Delivering the judgement the court said, prosecution allegations that the militants were engaged in anti-state activities and that they had been receiving 'exclusive combat training on arms, ammunition and detonators' with ulterior motives against the state was proved without any doubt.

The court examined a total of eight prosecution witnesses in the case and evidence recovered from the possession of the accused.

One of the sentenced militants, Mozammel, hurled abuses at the police and journalists after the sentence was read out.

Two lawyers

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sub-jail around 3:00pm Saturday.

In the petition, the lawyers said the jail authorities did not produce Khaleda Zia before the court, even though there is a provision to produce an accused on scheduled dates. They said their client was not brought to the court even for a single day in this case.

They said the investigation officer (IO) may submit a police report implicating their client in the case before the court but they were not able to meet Khaleda Zia and talk about the Niko graft case.

After the hearing, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani gave permission to two lawyers to meet their client at the sub-jail.

On December 30 last year, Khaleda Zia, BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed and AKM Mosharraf Hossain were shown arrested in the case following a petition by the IO.

Mahbubul Alam, an assistant director of the ACC, filed the case on December 9 with Tejgaon Police Station against Khaleda Zia and four others.

The case statement said Khaleda Zia, despite being the custodian of the country's wealth as a prime minister, violated her oath and abused power to award Niko the opportunity to extract Tk 10,000 crore worth of gas.

Two other accused in the case are Khandaker Shahidul Islam, former acting energy secretary, and Kashem Sharif, vice president (South Asia) of Niko Research Bangladesh Ltd.

On January 11, former Dhaka Club president Selim Bhuiyan was arrested in connection with the case and later he gave a confession statement to a magistrate saying that all the dealings between Bangladesh Government and the Canadian energy company were made through him.

Following Selim's confession statement, controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun was shown arrested in the case and interrogated at the jail gate.

Khaleda was arrested on September 2 last year after a graft case was filed against her.

Pabna jail super
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