

Changes in cabinet

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expansion was made to ease the council of ministers' tremendous workload, and to implement her government's first national budget which will finance the implementation of the party's charter for change'.

Hasina earlier also appointed seven advisers with status of cabinet ministers to assist her in running the government.

Political analysts observed that the latest inclusion in the council of ministers suggests that Hasina, also the AL chief, stuck to her plan of building two separate set ups -- one for running the government and another for her party.

With the appointment of Shirin Sharmin as the state minister for women and children affairs, the number of women in the ministers' council rose to six. The premier herself had been looking after the ministry until yesterday's appointment, as any ministry without a minister or a state minister automatically becomes the responsibility of the premier.

Talking to reporters in Bangabhaban yesterday, Hasina said all new members of the council of ministers are quite competent. "Let's see how they perform," she added.

The premier on May 4 warned her ministers and state ministers of being dropped from the council unless they show satisfactory performance within the next couple of months.

None however was dropped in yesterday's reshuffle, unlike the veteran AL leaders dropped from AL's central working committee announced on Thursday.

Yesterday's expansion of the ministers' council proved wrong the rumour that two or three veteran AL leaders, who were dropped from the party's central committee, would be made ministers.

Ruling party insiders however said two ex-presidium members -- Abdur Razzaq and Tofail Ahmed, newly made presidium member Obaidul Quader, and also a Jatiya Party leader might still be inducted into the cabinet in the future.

With yesterday's expansion of the ministers' council, the country now has the second highest number of ministers and advisers to assist the premier, since the last BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government.

On winning a two-third majority in the 2001 parliamentary election, the BNP-Jamaat alliance formed its government with a 60-member council of ministers, the largest in the country's history, and also drew a lot of flak for that.

Former premier Khaleda Zia, also the BNP chief, formed her first government in 1991 with a 33-member council of ministers, after her party won a simple majority in a parliamentary election.

In the December 29, 2008 national election, AL-led grand alliance won a whopping 262 seats in the parliament. Hasina's party alone-bagged 230, a number which is much higher than that of BNP's in the 2001 election.

Hasina however formed a medium-sized council on January 6 this year with 23 ministers and eight state ministers. She added six more state ministers on January 24.

In 1996, Hasina had only 19 ministers to assist her in running the erstwhile government at the beginning, which she formed after winning a simple majority in the parliament. Few members were later added to that council of ministers as well.

PORTFOLIOS
Immediately after inducing the new minister and state ministers, the premier distributed portfolios among them reshuffling the council.

Newly inducted Shajahan Khan was made the shipping minister while his predecessor Afasul Amin was transferred to the primary and mass education ministry where Motahar

Hossain is the state minister.

State Minister Shamsul Haque Tuku was made the deputy of Home Minister Sahara Khatun. The post had been vacant since former state minister for home Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj's resignation on May 3.

Newly inducted Enamul Haque was put in Tuku's former position as the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources.

Hasan Mahmud, who had been performing as the state minister for foreign affairs since January 6, was made the state minister for forest and environment, leaving Dipu Moni alone to take care of the foreign ministry. Sources in the cabinet said Hasan was 'not feeling comfortable' with Dipu.

Hasan's predecessor in the forest and environment ministry, state minister Mustafizur Rahman Fizar, was made the deputy of Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira.

Promod Mankin, who had been the chief of the parliamentary standing committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, was made the state minister for cultural affairs.

Mujibur Rahman Fakir was made the state minister for water resources under Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen.

CLEANER IMAGES OF STATE MINISTERS

The five new state ministers maintain clean image, keeping themselves free from being accused in criminal charges, according to the affidavits they submitted along with their applications to the Election Commission for seeking candidacy in the last parliamentary election.

However, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan has so far faced five criminal charges in his long political career.

The new state ministers Muhibur Rahman Fakir, Mahbubur Rahman, Promod Mankin, Enamul Haque and Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury declared in their affidavits that they never faced criminal charges in their lives.

Mujib, a physician, was elected MP on Awami League's (AL) nomination from Mymensingh-3 parliamentary constituency. He was also elected lawmaker from that constituency in 2001 election.

Promod Mankin was given the charge of the cultural affairs ministry. He was elected MP on AL's ticket from Mymensingh-1 constituency in the December 29 polls. He also became MP from the same constituency in 2001.

Mahbubur, a part time businessman, was elected on AL's nomination from Patuakhali-4 constituency in the last parliamentary election. He was also elected lawmaker from the same constituency in 2001.

Wishing anonymity, a presidium member told The Daily Star that the presidium yesterday empowered both the party chief and the general secretary to finalise the names of 26 members.

The AL general secretary said the members of the central working committee would be drawn from different regions with inclusion of both new and old faces.

He said the presidium decided to hold council of all unit committees.

Ashraf said the party's central working committee would make the final decision on the matter soon. AL has over 46,000 grassroots committees across the country, he added.

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PORTFOLIOS

State Minister for Land

Mustafizur Rahman (Fizar)

State Minister for Cultural Affairs

Promod Mankin

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare

Mujibur Rahman Fakir

State Minister for Water Resources

Mahbubur Rahman

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources

Enamul Haque

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs

Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury

AL on path

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secretary were not announced yet.

Awami League announced its 73-member new central committee on Thursday leaving veteran politicians Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzaq, Tofail Ahmed and Suranji Sengupta who were members of the Presidium, and bringing in many fresh faces.

Talking to the press after the oath-taking ceremony of new minister and five state ministers at Bangabhaban, Sheikh Hasina said they had to make path for the future leadership.

She said, "Awami League is 60 years old and we are aging too. So we have to create new leadership for the future. We have done what is acceptable to our grassroots level leaders and party councillors."

Those who have been made new leaders are well tested, she said, adding, "I think they will perform their duties properly."

Briefing the reporters at Jamuna AL General Secretary Ashraf also the LGRD and cooperatives minister, said after announcing the names of the working committee members the full-fledged central committee would sit and start collecting primary party members.

The meeting also finalised party programmes for August 15, national mourning day, and August 21, the day of barbaric grenade attack on AL rally that killed 25 party leaders and workers in 2004.

The new presidium members exchanged greetings with the AL chief at the meeting.

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Free ride

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Sabujbag zone of DMP was seen intercepting microbuses and buses near Malibagh level crossing to check necessary documents of the vehicles while non-motorised vehicles were passing by.

When asked, he said his team does not bar rickshaws and vans from plying the road as those are not creating any problem at off-peak hours around 12:00 noon. However, they prevent rickshaws from plying the road during peak hours, he added.

Road users observe that accidents occur in many cases on city streets as the slow moving rickshaws and rickshaw vans often fail to notice the vehicles coming from behind. The non-motorised vehicles often turn without noticing the vehicles rushing from behind and cause accidents, they added.

Joint Commissioner (traffic) Manjur Kader Khan said, "With the inadequate manpower we can hardly cope with the traffic problems. The government takes decision to make a road off-limits to non-motorised vehicles and we only enforce the decision and our enforcement reflects the government's desire."

He added that rickshaw pullers cater for the transport need of the city dwellers substantially and the government has to think about them also.

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque said around five lakh rickshaws ply the city roads involving around 10 lakh rickshaw pullers.

"The party has to single out those who dragged the party into crisis through their misdeeds and persuaded the chairperson to take some wrong decisions that led to the 1/11 changeover," said a former state minister, preferring anonymity.

If the changeover was a result of a conspiracy, the party must find out whether any BNP leader was involved in it and if found guilty, actions should be taken against the person, he said.

The pro-reform leaders have failed to prove their commitment to the party, the BNP leader added.

Earlier, a number of BNP leaders including Joint Secretary General Mirza Abbas on several occasions urged Khaleda not to consider for party leadership those who sided with party's expelled leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan after the 1/11 changeover.

Party insiders however think that it would be tough to run the party smoothly if all pro-reform leaders are dropped from party committees. Taking the matter into consideration, the party chairperson has already engaged a number of reformist leaders in party activities.

They said the BNP chief has held talks with a few pro-reform leaders including Lt Gen (retd)

Int'l help in probe

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"There is international experience in trying war criminals across the globe. In dealing with such a huge issue you need to be very pragmatic; you need to coordinate and organise the evidence," said Constance Oehlrich.

Oehlrich, who is visiting Bangladesh currently to attend the "2nd international conference on genocide, truth and justice," expressed the view while explaining several features of Cambodian model for trial of war criminals with The Daily Star.

EU Parliament Member Helmut Scholz on Thursday said, "A legal analysis similar to the Cambodian model combined with international support is highly recommended for Bangladesh."

Explaining the Cambodian model of court she said the Cambodian trial was backed by the United Nations. She mentioned that the Cambodian court was a mixed court involving judges from both national and international communities.

She mentioned that there was both national and international funding in Cambodian court.

"We have two prosecutors -- one is national and the other is international. We have both national judges and international judges. In case of taking decision both the national and international judges have to take decision unanimously," she said.

She said that the trial of war criminals in Cambodia is divided into three parts -- pre-trial and Supreme Court trial.

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ARCF supplied

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from Mansur on the suppliers of grenades used in the August 21 attack," said a top detective on the understanding of anonymity.

The grisly attack on

Hasina's rally on

Bangabandhu Avenue killed

23 AL leaders and workers and

maimed over 300 others.

The investigators say both ARCF and LeT have close links to the leaders of Harkatul Jihad al Islam (Huji) Bangladesh chapter and work together in the country.

Mansur, who was living in Bangladesh for around 17 years with fake identity and serving as a madrasa teacher, also said most of the grenade throwers at the AL rally were Afghan war veterans having expertise in handling explosives, the sources add.

Quoting Mansur, DB sources say the grenades were smuggled into the country through Sathkhira border.

The other detained LeT leader Mufti Obaidullah was also

hiding in Bangladesh for 14 years

assuming false identity and was

serving as a madrasa teacher.

DB Assistant Commissioner Sanwar Hossain, who arrested the two Indian militants, told

them to leave the country

within 10 days after the Jan. 16 vote.

Then, under a timeline set

by President Barack Obama, all

combat troops will withdraw

from Iraq by August 2010.

Nigerian forces kill

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Borno state, killing some 200

followers of the sect, including

its deputy leader.

The leader of the Taliban

had been captured by the

military who raided a house

where he was hiding, close to

his former residence that was

destroyed," an army officer told reporters.

Calm returned to the city

after the assault and residents

began emerging from their homes on Friday.

Maiduguri had seen the

worst of the unrest in northern

Nigeria after the uprising