

BNP chief

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A no-confidence motion will be rejected if it fails to get support of two-thirds of the councillors," Goyeshwar told The Daily Star yesterday over telephone.

However, the document does not have this provision.

It shows a new provision was brought to the provision on holding any national council meeting. The provision says any demand raised in such meetings will be rejected if it fails to obtain support of two-thirds councillors.

Within moments of deletion and inclusion of the provisions in the council session, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman was elected the party's senior vice-chairman unopposed.

The new provision gave more sweeping power to both the party chief and the senior vice-chairman.

It says the senior vice-chairman will assist the party chief in discharging his or her duties and will perform any responsibility assigned to him by the party chief. The senior vice-chairman will be the acting party chairman in temporary absence of the party chief.

"If the post of chairman falls vacant on any ground, senior vice-chairman will fill the vacuum and discharge the responsibilities of the chairman for the rest of the tenure," the new provision says.

Another new provision empowers the BNP chairman to appoint special assistants, if necessary, to assist him/her to run party activities. The party chairman himself/herself will specify the number of these special assistants and determine their organisational status, it says.

Another provision empowers the party chairman to fill up the vacuum in the party's national standing and executive committees.

Earlier, a provision was included in BNP's constitution to make it compliant with the Representation of the People Order (RPO), empowering the party national council to hold election to the posts of office bearers and members of the two committees.

Another amendment to the party charter empowers the BNP chairman to continue his/her duties as party chief after expiry of tenure until a new chairman is elected and assumes office.

Amending the constitution, the tenure of the chairman was increased to three years from two years. The tenure of the national executive committee was also increased to three years from two years and it will continue functioning until a new committee assumes charges after election.

Regarding taking disciplinary actions against party members, an amendment to the constitution provides more authority to the party chief, saying a party member aggrieved by a disciplinary action can file an appeal with

the chairman against the decision. The party chief will make the final decision, it says.

According to the existing provisions in BNP's charter, the party chief is empowered to take disciplinary actions against party leaders and members on an urgent basis.

In exercise of this authority, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on September 3, 2007 expelled the then secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and joint secretary general Ashraf Hossain who moved to bring reforms in the party to ensure democracy within it. Their reform proposals were also aimed at excluding Khaleda, who has been holding the post since 1983, from the party helm.

For registering with the Election Commission ahead of the ninth parliamentary polls, a provision was included for election to the posts of office bearers and members of the party's national standing and executive committees, literally curtailing the party chief's exercising power to make appointments to those posts.

But, Tuesday's national council, which was held after a gap of 16 years, empowered Khaleda to nominate office bearers and members of the two bodies including party's secretary general as she did in past.

According to the new provision, Khaleda, who was re-elected the chairperson on December 4, Tarique Rahman, who was elected the senior vice-chairman on Tuesday, and the person to be made the secretary general will also be considered as elected members of the committee.

The existing provisions in the BNP charter still empower the BNP chairperson to dissolve the two committees and any other committee nominated by her if she thinks necessary and the party chief does not require consulting with the national council to do so.

As the chief of both the committees, the party chairperson will determine the jurisdiction and functions of the office bearers and members of the two committees.

But changes were made in the party charter regarding the timeframe for holding meetings of the party forums.

The national standing committee will now sit at least once in three months instead of one month while the national executive committee will sit at least once in six months instead of the previous three months.

Instead of holding the council meeting once a year the national council itself will be held once a year, if possible.

The secretary general will convene the meeting of the national council upon the party chief's suggestion in writing, says the amended provision. In the past, the secretary general could do so on consultation with the party chief.

Bangladesh-India

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have returned empty handed each time, to the despair of millions of football lovers around the country. This time though Bangladesh is the team to beat as they play with home advantage. And to justify that billing they have topped their group, winning two of their three matches and drawing the other.

Apart from the match against Pakistan which they drew 0-0, Bangladesh's performance has been commendable, considering the recent turmoil regarding the sacking of their Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido. However, Bangladesh go into the semifinal more confident than at any time before since they are taking on an under-23 India side. This will be a revenge mission and a great opportunity for Bangladesh to set scores straight as the Indians wrested the trophy from Bangladesh in 2005 in Karachi and hold a massive edge on head-to-head record winning 14 matches and losing just three.

Fog, cold hold

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at coastal belts, he added. Meanwhile, Wednesday's lowest temperature was recorded at 11.2 degrees Celsius in Jessore while the highest was at 16.5 degrees Celsius in Dhaka. Met Office sources suspected cold wave might hit different parts of the country in the middle of December.

Sources said all kinds of watercraft including ferries on Mawa route and Daulatdia-Paturia route were stalled from 11:00pm on Wednesday to 9:00am on Thursday. Of the 12 ferries, nine were forced to anchor at midstream on Mawa-Kaorakandi ferry route while two remained stuck on Paturia-Daulatdia route.

The hajj flight, BG0826, was supposed to land at ZIA around 10:20am but the aircraft was forced to land at Kolkata due to thick fog. The flight finally landed at ZIA at 3:00pm, Biman sources said.

Normalcy resumed after 11:00am, said the sources.

[Correspondents from Faridpur, Manikganj, Madaripur and Chandpur contributed to this report.]

Some cops

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the underpass at Karwan Bazar a traffic policeman pulled over the driver of a van for disregarding traffic lane demarcations.

The driver, called Khokon, said that the traffic policeman accepted a Tk 200 fine without providing a receipt.

When this correspondent confronted the policeman, he said that the driver could not afford to pay the DMP's fixed penalty fine of Tk 1,000.

The policeman responded evasively when asked why he did not issue a receipt.

141 killed

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Ansar, one each by BDR, forest guard, coast guard and jail police.

Odhikar presented the report yesterday at a roundtable titled 'extra-judicial killings and rule of law' held at a convention centre in the capital. The rights organisation organised the roundtable jointly with the daily New Age.

The discussants urged the law enforcers to stop extra-judicial killings immediately, saying democracy would be at risk if such killings continue.

They also said respect for law and human rights, equal application of law and change in the political culture are imperative to establish rule of law.

The speakers demanded executive investigation into all killings by an independent commission and trying the people involved.

They also urged all including political parties, media, civil society to raise their voice jointly against the killing.

Presided over by Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age, the roundtable was also addressed by Maj Gen (ret) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, former adviser to the caretaker government Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, former Science and ICT minister Dr Ahmed Ziauddin, Professor of BRAC University Shah Zikrul Ahmed and Shamma Akhter.

Woman speaker

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in the capital, reports UNB. The PM stressed the need for women's political empowerment for enhancing their social dignity and ensuring their contribution to every economic activity.

The government is making relentless effort to implement election pledges made by Bangladesh Awami League for women development, she also said.

Workers end up

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taken any effective steps to discipline the labour recruitment in the oil-rich African nation, which has taken up over \$100 billion development projects and requires around 10 lakh foreign workers in the next five years.

Until October this year, Libya has hired around 16,000 workers.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone, Akber Hossain said the workers who are in trouble fall into three categories. Those who went there with due work visas are facing troubles, as they are not efficient enough to work in construction sector, the main sector where most of the Bangladeshi workers are employed.

"When the employers find workers unfit to work in a job, brokers keep them in rooms in the far-flung areas isolated from localities," he said.

In such cases, labour suppliers should inform the embassy but instead they resort to illegal means and try to come into contract with other companies.

"These suppliers make some quick bucks at the cost of both the workers and employers. The workers are either low-paid or they remain unemployed," Akber said, adding: "It is basically the Bangladeshi manpower brokers who joined hands with Libyan labour suppliers and started the malpractice."

Secondly those who are hired on short tourist visas face the problem. Libya requires invitation from any Libyan company to issue tourist visas to Bangladeshis. But labour suppliers are sending false invitations to the jobseekers from the name-only companies, he said.

Thirdly human traffickers promise workers jobs in Europe but finally dump them in Libya via Sudan or Egypt, Akbar said.

Mosaddek from Sylhet is one of such victims. He went to

Libya six months back through an agency in Malibagh that assured him of a job as a hospital cleaner but after arriving in Tripoli, he was left unemployed.

"As I arrived at the Tripoli Airport, a Libyan received me and handed me over to a Bangladeshi named Wazuliullah in an underground room in the desert. He said he would give me job and took away my passport. One week passed this way and as I wanted my passport back he said I would have to give him \$500," said Mosaddek after returning from Libya recently.

He then asked his family and friends in Bangladesh to send money. Only after payment of the money demanded, Wazuliullah gave him the passport.

"Then I came out of the underground room and contacted people I knew. I wandered from streets to streets asking for a job, but to no avail," he lamented.

Asked what would happen to these workers, Akber Hossain said, "Now we are not allowing wholesale hiring of workers. If any company wants, say 100 workers, we allow 25 or 50. If they work well we approve the rest."

A high level delegation should talk to the Libyan authorities to address the problems, he said.

Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Elias Ahmed, however, said a team led by the minister would go to Libya soon to look into the issues and talk to Libyan authorities.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) President Ghulam Mustafa said the government should immediately check the malpractices.

Bangladesh mission should authenticate each job order before attestation. "I would also ask recruiting agencies to check skills of workers before they are sent to Libya," Mustafa added.

Organisations asked

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marked as a common field in the city's masterplan.

Meanwhile, a High Court (HC) division bench in an order yesterday imposed restriction on any kind of alteration to Dhanmondi playground by any organisations or private companies.

Dhanmondi Club was turned into a limited company and named after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's slain brother Sheikh Jamal on August 20 to turn it into an exclusive club only for the amusement of people from the elite class.

Club's president Manzur Kader in a letter to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) dated October 21 said, "The management of the club has undertaken a massive playground development scheme."

BCB Manager (grounds and facilities) Syed Abdul Baten said, "We are confused about the letter, as we don't know on what authority the letter was issued."

Every year BCB usually arranges some cricket tournaments at the venue. "We will have to face big trouble in case we cannot use it," said Baten.

Bangladesh Football Federation President Kazi Salahuddin said they asked for the venue for practice matches but the club officials informed them the ground was not fit for the purpose and that the club would begin development work.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said a limited company has no authority to write such letters.

When asked on what authority the club has written such letters club president Manzur Kader said they had just requested. He also said the club has the authority over the playground exactly the same way as the Dhanmondi Club had had it for 47 years.

When asked if they had any document of authorisation Kader said, "It does not require any documents."

Replying to a question how Dhanmondi Club had occupied the playground illegally for five decades and rented it out for commercial purposes under the very nose of DCC, Khoka said, "I don't know about it."

Barrister Sheikh Fazle Nur Taposh, a lawmaker of the area, said the playground is a breathing space for the locals and said if locals approached him he would remain in favour of the open space.

Syed Siddiqui Rahman, a trustee named after the late Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust and curator of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, could not say for sure whether the trust had given permission to the club to use the name of Sheikh Jamal.

Taposh said, "As far as I know the club has not obtained the trust's formal permission."

Zillur's speech

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prices of agricultural inputs including fertiliser and diesel, formation of parliamentary standing committees in the first session of the House and combating corruption, militancy and criminal activities.

The cabinet at a special meeting yesterday discussed in detail the president's draft speech, and decided to include in it all successes of the government.

A proposal for raising freedom fighters' allowance to Tk 2,000 each per month from Tk 1,500 was placed at the meeting, sources said.

The four and a half hours meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina discussed the 42-para draft presidential speech but did not approve it.

Several ministers pointed out at the meeting that their ministries' successes were not included in the draft speech. The prime minister asked the ministries concerned to include those in the speech.

She also asked the authorities concerned to place the speech at another cabinet meeting.

Briefing journalists after the meeting, the PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said, "There will be some inclusions and exclusions in the speech, and then it will be finalised."

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior minister said successes and plans of the government would be projected in the 44-page presidential speech. A summary of the speech would be read out by the president.

Obama defends

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and Mandela -- my accomplishments are slight."

The US president, who like other winners received a diploma, a medal and 10 million kronor (1.4 million dollars), dwelled at length on his responsibility fighting conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he has just sent 30,000 extra troops.

"War is sometimes necessary, and war is at some level an expression of human feelings,"

The United States "has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms," he said highlighting conflict in Europe and Asia.

"The service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform has promoted peace and prosperity from Germany to Korea, and enabled democracy to take hold in places like the Balkans."

"Our actions matter, and can bend history in the direction of justice," Obama told the glittering event at Oslo City Hall, warning that diplomacy must be backed by "consequences" to beat repression.

"I am responsible for the deployment of thousands of young Americans to battle in a distant land. Some will kill. Some will be killed," he said.

"And so I come here with an acute sense of the cost of armed conflict -- filled with difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace, and our effort to replace one with the other."

Convocation

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4,349 male and 4,709 female -- will take part in the ceremony and receive certificates while 34 graduates will receive 43 gold medals.

Three eminent professors -- Nobel laureate Professor Yuan T Lee of Genomic Research Centre in Taiwan, former DU student and the inventor of Sono arsenic filter Prof Abul Hussam and historian Professor Ranajit Guha -- will also receive honorary doctorate degrees at the programme.

Prof Yuan will mark the function as the convocation speaker.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique yesterday told the reporters at his office that steps were already taken ahead of the function to ensure security and complete all other preparations.

The first convocation ceremony at DU was held on February 22, 1923.

After the Liberation War in 1971, the first convocation of the university was held on December 18, 1999.

4 killed

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officials said four people died on the spot and 17 others were injured, six critically.

Police blamed the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) -- a rebel group fighting for an independent homeland for Assam's Bodo tribe -- for the attack.

"We strongly suspect the hand of the NDFB in the blast as the area is a stronghold of the outfit," an intelligence official told AFP.

The NDFB was blamed for a series of explosions in 2008, which killed about 100 people and injured hundreds more.

At least 10,000 people have died during a two-decade long insurgency in Assam.

Signal lights

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observed that if the light changes every 15 seconds it will help speed up traffic movement.

According to the proposal, periods between 6:00am to 10:00am and 2:00pm to 8:00pm will be treated as peak hours for traffic movement in place of the present hours between 8:00am to 11:00am and 5:00pm to 8:00pm, DMP sources said.

Joint Commissioner traffic Rahman said indiscriminate pauses by buses and minibuses are also a cause behind nagging jams.

"To check this tendency, we will go tough on the bus drivers responsible for stops outside of the designated stands," he said adding, "We reached a mutual understanding with the DCC that in the first phase they will arrange 43 bus bays across the city for the purpose."

He also mentioned that most of the roads in the capital are narrow for which the DCC will partially narrow down the footpaths to make space for the proposed bus bays.

On the third day of the new traffic rules yesterday the DMP filed 1,191 cases in connection with traffic rule violations and realised Tk 1,27,600 in fines. Some 16 drivers were arrested while driving licences of 43 were suspended for three months and 13 vehicles were detained.

Meanwhile, many drivers were seen maintaining lanes yesterday but a good number

Dhaka

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demanded a time slot to discuss the amendments to the Kyoto Protocol.

Connie Haggard, the president of COP 15 wanted to give them time on next Saturday, the day before the ministerial level talks. But, Tuvalu did not agree saying it would be too late.

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) threatened at a press conference that if their demands were not considered they would walk out of the session.

The session was also adjourned on Wednesday on the same issue and small island states, demanding to save their states, demonstrated at the Bella Centre.

Urging more money to save the small islands, the islanders also said the rise in the global mean temperature should be kept within 1.5 degree Celsius and the carbon emission within 350ppm (particles per million).

On the contrary, industrialised countries demanded for rise in temperature up to two degree and keeping carbon emission within 450ppm.

African Groups demonstrated at the COP centre demanding to keep the temperature rise within less than two degree. Bangladesh as a member of LDCs also echoed the same.

Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), yesterday at a press conference said, so far good progress has been achieved in the discussion on technology.

He urged all to reach an agreement as only two days are left to start the ministerial level talks.

Meanwhile, the G77 and China in a press conference demanded the US and developed nations participate in the negotiations more actively to make successful agreement.

Hawa Bhaban

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to be announced very soon by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia as the national council empowered her to do so.

Party Vice-chairman Tariqul Islam yesterday told reporters that the new committees would be announced within a week.

Party insiders said Khaleda Zia is now busy consulting her colleagues about forming the new committees but party leaders are divided over incumbent Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain's post.

A strong group of leaders is lobbying to keep Delwar as the secretary general while others are trying to convince the chairperson to select somebody new.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of leaders apprehended that some controversial leaders might take control of the party if the chairperson is not cautious in selecting leaders for the new committees.

"I believe madam [Khaleda] will be alert about the controversial people who pushed the party on the verge of disaster and contributed to the causes that brought the 1/11 change-over," a member of the standing committee told The Daily Star yesterday.

These leaders who usually love to introduce themselves as

of them are finding it difficult, as the left lanes remain jammed with vehicles in different intersections.

Around 3:30pm yesterday, private car driver Shaheen was seen unable to make left turn as another car in front was waiting at the signal blocking the lane.

The joint commission traffic said the traffic congestion in the city has improved to some extent and once the commuters get accustomed to the rules the nagging jam would ease.

He said they were to hold a meeting with traffic police personnel last night at DMP headquarters to evaluate the ongoing campaign for observing traffic rules.

The DMP campaign to enforce lane system on selected streets started on Tuesday. As per the new rule, changing lanes and ignoring signal lights would cost a driver Tk 1,000 in fines and three months' suspension of licence.

US praises resettlement of Lankan refugees

AP, Colombo

A US envoy praised the Sri Lankan government Wednesday for making progress in resettling hundreds of thousands of ethnic Tamil civilians detained since the end of the country's civil war.

The comments come on the heels of a US Senate report that said Washington needs to increase engagement with Sri Lanka or risk ruining ties with the island nation.

Robert O Blake, US assistant secretary of state for South Asia, told reporters that he saw evidence of progress when he visited Manik Farm in northern Sri Lanka, where most of the roughly 100,000 remaining displaced civilians live.

The US withdrew military aid to Sri Lanka in the last years of its 25-year civil war because of human rights concerns. It was also among the countries to pressure Colombo after the war ended six months ago to expedite the release of the civilians, whose numbers in the squalid camps peaked at some 300,000.

Rights groups say the detention is an illegal form of collective punishment for the ethnic group. The government has maintained that Tamils must be screened for rebel ties and detainees' villages determined before the camps can be closed.

3 robbers beaten

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On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Injured Tajul Islam, 25, son of Kabir Ahmed of Gobindapur village in Feni district, was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The bodies were sent to CMCH for autopsy. Two cases were filed with the police in this connection.

Nizam Uddin of neighbouring Guman Nardan village filed a robbery case against Tajul Islam and seven others while local UP member Badrul Alam filed another case against unidentified 1,500-2,000 persons for killing the robbers. Duty Officer Sub Inspector Tajul Islam of the police station said.

"men of Tarique Rahman" had gone into hiding after the January 11, 2007 changeover. Some of them were arrested on charges like corruption and crime.

They faced criticism within the party for their activities that resulted in the bad image of Hawa Bhaban.

Now these leaders are calling themselves "dedicated in bad times" and are creating a situation in the party so that the high-ups consider them "pro-Tarique" leaders, said insiders.

A few leaders with better public image, who had played important roles during the emergency period, have also joined those leaders to obtain posts in the two committees, sources added.

Party insiders said following pressure from the "pro-Hawa Bhaban" leaders, BNP standing committee created the post of senior vice-president.

In the meeting of central executive committee with Khaleda Zia in the chair in September 2005, these leaders had raised the demand for bringing Tarique to leadership level.

Even in 2002, these leaders played a key role in ousting former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury from the party and forced him to resign presidency.

Climate fund

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Scores of proposals for the fund's creation have been discussed for the last few years, but nothing concrete has come out of it, said another delegate.

The LDCs at a press conference in Copenhagen demanded 75 percent of the adaptation fund while some Bangladesh high-ups asked for 15 percent of it.

These countries have been demanding 1.5 percent of the GDP of Annex 1 countries (around \$600 billion) annually as compensations that will be higher than the usual Overseas Development Aid (ODA), which had been around 7 percent of the GDP of the developed countries for the last decade.

But the developed countries have so far committed around \$10 billion annually for the LDCs. It might go up from the next year if all parties agree.

The EU estimated that the world will need around \$150 billion a year for adaptation. Of the amount, 20 to 50 percent will come from public finance depending on their pledges.

The other sources proposed are emissions trading, levy from aviation and shipping and co-financing from developing nations.

In 2001, Kyoto Protocol signatories decided to establish the Adaptation Fund, to transfer cash