

# 'Article 70' vital to ensure discipline within party

AL, BNP leaders tell BBC Sanglap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two high-profile leaders of Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at a BBC dialogue yesterday said article 70 of the constitution, which is known as the 'Anti-Defection Law', is imperative to "ensure discipline within the party".

Standing committee member of BNP Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and AL president member Matia Chowdhury, also agriculture minister, said the culture of boycotting parliamentary session should come to an end, as it is threat to democracy.

They also called on the political leaders to bring an end to the culture of disbelief

and confrontational as well as revengeful attitude of the parties.

According to the article, "The seat of a parliament member shall vacate if he votes against the party that nominated him as a candidate in the election whereby he became parliament member."

This single provision provides the prime minister with exclusive power over the members of his/her party.

The two leaders said this as the panellists at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap styled 'Democracy' held at South Plaza Complex of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the city.

Two other panellists include former adviser to a caretaker government Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader

and band singer Maqsoodul Haque.

Audience at the programme sharply criticised both the ruling and opposition parties for their mistrust, distance and disrespect to each other that, according to them, "paved the way for military as well as undemocratic rule".

Replying to a question, Matia said: "Article 70 of the constitution is a must in the context of our country where political leaders can be bought or sold using muscle power or money."

The will be no discipline inside the political party once article 70 is amended," she said.

Echoing Matia, her counterpart Mosharraf said, "Our

country and democracy is not in a position to lift article 70."

"But I believe someday will come when article 70 will not be needed and it would be lifted from our constitution."

Quader and Maqsood strongly supported the opinion of the audience, saying that article 70 must be deleted from the constitution for the sake of strong democracy.

On parliament boycott issue, the BNP leader said this culture must be avoided for the sake of democracy.

Culture of boycotting parliament is also a threat to democracy and it is not acceptable in democracy," he said, adding: "We should get rid of this culture. BBC's Mithila Farzana moderated the dialogue."



Syeda Rezwana Hasan speaks at a workshop at Shahbagh in the city yesterday. On her left are Advocate MM Obaidullah, Zillur Rahman, Ataus Samad and Chashi Nazrul Islam.

## Include gender perspective in climate change policies

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for incorporating gender perspective in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies.

They said women and children are disproportionately vulnerable to environmental changes and during the natural disasters which rationalise the need.

The speakers pointed out that natural disaster creates social unrest and increase a number of divorces.

Different forms of violence against women and children also increase. Desperate women and children searching for livelihood migrate to urban areas and they often fall prey to traffickers.

The workshop titled 'Climate change, religion and state: The continuous struggle of women and children' was

organised by Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) with assistance from Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at Shahbagh in the city.

The speakers went on saying that poverty, resulting from natural disasters, increases child marriage, multiplying vulnerability of girl children. They no longer receive formal education and incidents of dowry-related torture increases.

Women are often the last to hear about disaster warnings increasing risk of their own lives and their children, they said, adding that displacement of women and children is also another major factor.

Shahen Anam, executive director of MJF, said the NGOs of the country must set up a watchdog to create pressure on the government to formulate policies.

Climate change is no longer

a theoretical matter. The impacts of climate change are already in sight. Although women are more at risk, there is no adequate planning about it yet, she added.

According to UNFPA and Women's Environment and Development Organisation, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during natural disasters.

The 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh killed 140,000 people -- the mortality rate of women over 40 was 31 percent. More than 70 percent of the dead from the 2004 Asian tsunami were women.

Their report added that an estimated 87 percent of unmarried women and 100 percent of married women lost their main source of income when cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar in 2008.

Syeda Rezwana Hasan, executive director of

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA), on the other hand, stressed representation of Bangladesh in Copenhagen climate summit.

She said, "The Bangladesh government only negotiated on how much donation we can get from the developed nations which was a wrong approach."

Prof Asif Nazrul said there was only pledge from the developed nations to cut carbon emissions. A pledge means nothing unless it is bound by strict legal strings. The government failed to present this issue at the summit.

Former ambassador Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury, journalist Ataus Samad, filmmaker Chashi Nazrul Islam, BSEHR Secretary General Sigma Huda and Vice Chairperson Shirin Sheikh Mainuddin also spoke.



Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon takes out a bicycle procession in the city yesterday with a call to ensure bicycle-friendly environment in the capital.

## Call to ensure bicycle-friendly environment

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday called for ensuring bicycle-friendly environment in the city in order to make the city lively and livable.

Such an initiative would also help protect the environment, improve public health and also boost economy, they added.

The speakers said the mortality rate is increasing day by day due to various diseases, such as diabetes, cardiac ailments and blood pressure. But only 30 minutes of cycling a day can reduce this rate.

The rally was held at the Central Shaheed Minar premises in the city before the start of a bicycle procession jointly organised by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) and WBB Trust. The procession ended at the National Press Club.

The speakers also said pollution of the environment is increasing alarmingly due to a rise in the number of motor vehicles. Emission of carbon from such vehicles is also contributing to the global climate change.

Promoting the use of bicycle can cut the rate of carbon emission, they added.

They also called on the government to reduce high tax on bicycle and launch awareness campaign to encourage the city dwellers to use bicycles.

They demanded that bicycles be distributed among students at a low price and separate lane be introduced in the capital for bicycle riders.

They also called for improving the quality of public transport service.

Astronomical Association President Prof AR Khan, former member of planning commission Dr Anisur Rahman, Bapa leader Prof Nazrul Islam spoke at the rally presided over by Kamrul Ahsan Khan.

## BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

# Execution of verdict may take 2 more months

Says state minister

UNB, Chittagong

It would take one or two months more to execute the verdict of Bangabandhu murder case, State Minister for Law Advocate Qamrul Islam said yesterday.

His remark incidentally comes in rebuff to reports that the process of executing the apex-court verdict upholding the death sentence on a dozen ex-army officers for the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had got underway following the delivery of the copies of the judgment to the condemned

convicts.

The minister said the activities of the court for war criminals' trial would start after the execution of this verdict.

"A place at the old High Court building has already been selected to set up the tribunal for trying war-crime cases in a wide area," he said at a view exchange meeting with lawyers and human rights workers at the circuit house auditorium in the port city.

He further told the meet that the inquiry commission formed to investigate the "torture on people of minor-

ity communities" during the 4-party alliance government's rule will report its findings within two months.

He called upon lawyers, human rights activists and victims of the torture to cooperate with the commission through providing information to the investigators.

The state minister for law assured that the government has taken step to increase the allowances of government lawyers and it will be effective immediately.

He said more judges will be recruited to dispose of the backlog of cases in the courts.

## Zaker Party council today

METRO DESK

The National Council 2009 of Zaker Party will be held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city today, says a press release.

Around 50,000 councillors and delegates, including women delegates, from across the country are expected to attend the council beginning at 10:00am.

Newly re-elected party chairman Pirzada Mostafa Amir Faisal will inaugurate the council by hoisting the national flag and party flag.

At the close-door council session in the afternoon, councillors are expected to approve re-election of the party chairman, discuss amendments, if any, to the party constitution, decide on central office bearers and discuss other organisational matters.

## PAC MEETING JS secretariat's clarification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament secretariat in a clarification said the report on the fourth meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published in the print media and aired by television channels on December 21 was not correct.

The report said that the committee in its meeting on December 20 decided to ask the finance secretary to appear in the next meeting and explain why he did not attend the December 20 meeting.

In its clarification on Thursday, the parliament secretariat said Finance Secretary Dr Muhammad Tareque was not invited to the meeting, as there was no issue relating to the finance department on the meeting agenda.

So, the committee did not discuss the issue of his absence and any decision in this regard, which was published in the media, was not taken in the meeting, the clarification added.

On December 21, different newspapers and television channels published the report on the meeting. The report was based on the briefing by committee chairman KH Rashiduzzaman.

When his attention was drawn to the clarification, Rashiduzzaman denied having made such statements in the briefing.

"I did not actually said that the finance secretary has been asked to appear before the next meeting of the committee and explain reasons of his absence in the December 20 meeting," he told The Daily Star yesterday.



Proshika employees shout slogans during a raid on its office building in the city yesterday.

## Police raid Proshika building

Sticks and pieces of bricks seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police searched the Proshika building in the city yesterday on receiving information that firearms and lethal weapons have been piled up there, but they found only pieces of bricks and sticks.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Proshika Mahbubul Karim, however, said the brick chips and sticks might have been leftover construction materials or they had been thrown into the NGO office building by the hired men of its expelled chief Qazi Faruque Ahmed in an earlier attack in August following a row over the NGO leadership.

He also alleged that Qazi Faruque has been trying to take control of Proshika by misleading the police and the administration and that the raid is the outcome of such an effort.

Witnesses said a team of Pallabi police raided the Proshika building at about 12:00 noon and conducted a search for about four hours.

The police suspended their search around 4:00pm and left the building.

Officer-in-Charge of Pallabi Police Station Iqbal Hossain said the police conducted the raid following intelligence reports that firearms have been piled up there. During the search, they seized broken pieces of bricks and 50 Gajari and bamboo sticks, he added.

He also said they lodged a general diary (GD) before the raid but would not file any case in connection with the seizure.

When asked whether they acted on information from Qazi Faruque, the police officer replied in the negative and said that got information from their own sources.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, Qazi Faruque, however, said the police raided the Proshika office as part of their efforts to ensure his security, as the home ministry recently asked the police to ensure his security following a court directive.

Proshika CEO Mahbubul Karim, however, claimed that Qazi Faruque has misinterpreted the court verdict to gain undue favour from the administration.

## Obituary

BSS, Bogra

Khandakar Manzur Murshed, a leading income tax adviser of the town, passed away due to a massive cardiac arrest at Mohammad Ali Hospital here last night at the age of 51.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at Namaz Garh Anjuman Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at the Chalksutrappur Jame Mosque after Asr prayers yesterday.

## Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 31st death anniversary of Prof Dr MA Quader, a renowned ophthalmologist, says a press release.

He was the head of the ophthalmology department of Mitford Medical College and Hospital.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, his family has organised various programmes, including milad mahfil and feeding of the destitute.