city

Same old formula

FROM PAGE 1

was supposed to elect the entire central committee.

The national council's outcome raises a question whether voting rights of councillors can be delegated to others.

Contacted last evening over telephone, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said voting rights can be delegated to others in a private company where the largest shareholder has the controlling authority.

"Similarly, our political parties seem to function as privately owned companies where the top leaders exercise the power of owner-

Hence, it is not surprising that a councillor delegates his/her voting rights to the "absolute owner of the party", he added.

AL leader advocate Rahmat Ali, who was the chief election commissioner at the council, also acknowledged that voting rights cannot be delegated. When his attention was

drawn to the council's decision, he said the councillors exercised their voting rights by empowering Sheikh Hasina and Syed Ashraf to choose other leaders of the central committee.

Rahmat Ali also claimed the way he conducted the election session in the council contradicted neither the party charter nor the RPO.

before being re-elected, Syed Ashraf, also the LGRD minister, in the inaugural session said the country will be run as per the constitution and the party as per its charter. The last council in July

2009, too, elected Hasina and Ashraf as the top-most leaders and gave them authority to pick other

the party would honour its own charter and the RPO by

holding elections to all the posts in a new beginning of the intra-party democracy.

The AL's 2008 electoral manifesto "the charter for change" had also pledged steps to establish democratic principles within the party.

The main opposition BNP in its national council on December 8, 2009, followed the path taken by AL. It re-elected Khaleda Zia

chairperson and authorised her to pick other office bearers and members for the national executive and standing committees, ignoring the party charter that stipulates election to the posts.

Yesterday, after the inauguration of AL national council at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan in the morning, the council session to elect new leadership began in the afternoon at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

began after Sheikh Hasina directives. Nobody could had dissolved the central committee she had been heading since the 2009 council.

Hasina's cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, a presidium member of the just dissolved central committee, proposed her name for the president post and Syed Ashraf supported.

And she was elected unopposed to lead the agesold political party for the next three years. This is the seventh time in a row she becomes the party chief.

"I sought to know if there is any alternative proposal. I found no response. Then I declared her elected," Rahmat Ali told The Daily

The process was same for electing the general secre-

Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Jahangir Kabir Nanok, two joint general secretaries of outgoing central committee, respectively proposed and supported Ashraf's name for general secretary.

Rahmat then moved to hold polls to other posts.

"I asked councillors how you will like to hold the elections to other posts. In response, the councillors proposed the newly elected president and general secretary be empowered to choose leaders to complete the formation of the central committee," he said.

"And I went by the councillors' decision. I did everything as per the party's constitution."

The entire procedure annoyed many councillors who expected that elections would be held to other posts.

Talking to The Daily Star after the election session, many of them alleged that the proposal to empower Hasina-Ashraf was made and supported in line with The election procedures the party high-command oppose it.

Immediately, after his reelection, Syed Ashraf said the president and general secretary were elected unopposed as councillors have confidence in them.

"It's a landmark decision. I think Awami League has taken the right decision; it never takes any wrong decision.

From now on, he said the party will start prepar ing for the next parliamentary polls.

Sheikh Hasina at the election session declared that she would consult the general secretary and other senior leaders to complete the formation of the central committee, he said. "I don't think any major

verged since the attack to change will come in the new demand improved women's central body," Ashraf said, adding that some new faces Despite efforts to cordon will be included while some off the city centre, more than from the immediate-past 1,000 people gathered at two committee will be dropped. locations. Some protesters shouted for justice, others for

> rapists. Political leaders vowed steps to correct "shameful social attitudes" towards women in the world's biggest

the death penalty for the

democracy. "The need of the hour is a dispassionate debate and inquiry into the critical changes that are required in societal attitudes," Prime

BSF kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Indian Border Security

Force (BSF) gunned down a

Bangladeshi cattle trader at

Kushumpur frontier in

West Bengal along the

border in Jhenidah early

The dead is Anarul Islam,

Anarul along with nine

cattle traders entered

Haripur area in North 24

Parganas of West Bengal

around 3:00am, said

subedar Sher-e-Alam of

members of BSF

Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

35, of Pipulbaria village in

Moheshpur upazila of the

Jhenidah

yesterday.

district.

New Delhi and other cities

Victim dies

across the country to keep

the pressure on Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh's

government to get tougher on

crimes against women. That

was in contrast to the pitched

battles protesters fought with

connection with the attack on

the student on a New Delhi

bus were charged with mur-

der following her death, police

said. The maximum penalty

the reaction to the news of her

death, deployed thousands of

policemen, closed 10 metro

stations and banned vehicles

from some main roads in the

heart of New Delhi, where

demonstrators have con-

Authorities, worried about

The six suspects held in

police last weekend.

for murder is death.

FROM PAGE 1

"I hope that the entire political class and civil society will set aside narrow sectional interests and agenda to help us all reach the end that we all desire - making India a demonstrably better and safer place for women to live in."

The woman, beaten, raped and thrown out of a moving bus, had been flown to Singapore in a critical condi-

a statement announcing her death from multiple organ failure.

tered an aircraft to fly the student's body back to India, along with members of her family, TCA Raghavan, the Indian high commissioner to Singapore, told reporters.

the hospital to a Hindu undertaker in Singapore and hours later, lying in a gold and yellow coffin selected by Indian

DETERMINATION

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Lucknow. In Hyderabad, a group of Minister Manmohan Singh women marched to demand

in the cities of Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai. "For some reason, and I don't really know why, she got

through to us," well-known

rapists. Protests were also held

columnist Nilanjana Roy wrote in a blog yesterday. "Our words shrivelled in the face of what she'd been subjected to by the six men travelling on that bus, who

up her male friend." Sonia Gandhi, the powerparty, directly addressed the protesters in a rare broadcast that as a mother and a woman she understood their

"Your voice has been women with such impunity."

from the cinema, media reports say, six men on their bus beat them with metal rods and repeatedly raped the woman. Media said a rod was used in the rape, causing internal injuries. Both were thrown from the bus. The male friend survived.

The attack has put gender

politics. Issues such as rape, dowry-related deaths and

female infanticide have rarely

entered mainstream political

discourse.

Analysts say the death of the woman dubbed 'Amanat", an Urdu word meaning "treasure," by some Indian media could change that, although it is too early to say whether the protesters calling for government action to better safeguard women can sustain their momentum through to national

elections due in 2014. The outcry over the attack caught the government offguard and it was slow to react It took a week for Singh to make a statement on the attack, infuriating many protesters who saw it as a sign of a government insensitive to the plight of women.

The prime minister, a stiff 80-year-old technocrat who speaks in a low monotone, has struggled to channel the popular outrage in his public statements and convince critics that his eight-year-old government will now take concrete steps to improve the safety of women.

"The Congress managers were ham-handed in their handling of the situation that arose after the brutal assault on the girl. The crowd management was poor," a lawmaker from the Congress party said on condition of anonymity.

The DoE started penalising major offenders on "polluters

ministry a good name.

Among some outstanding achievements of his dutifulness was recovery of 150-acre high-value public land worth Tk 1,500 crore from illegal

In Bogra, he as an additional deputy commissioner of revenue took up a crusade against corruption in the land

ical interference.

ing to official sources. He disbursed Tk 31 crore as land acquisition compensation among the affected land owners without harassment

Md Shahjahan, director general in-charge of DoE, said

any instruction yet. The DoE might request the environment ministry for

added.

FROM PAGE 20 penalised for committing river pollution with untreated chemicals and also for river grabbing. The rest were also penalised for environmental offences like polluting water bodies, destroying wetlands and croplands, cutting hills, noise pollution, illegal housing, building illegal highrise and grabbing government land. But the enforcement drives

Anti-pollution

have all on a sudden come to a halt since mid-December following transfer of a dedicated official. A serious question is brewing in the public mind as to why Mohammad Munir

serving as a director at DoE, is transferred to the commerce ministry before completion of his normal three-year tenure. Environmentalists view the transfer as a move to

weaken the vigorous drives carried out over the past two Sveda Rizwana Hasan, severe punishment for the issues centre stage in Indian | chief executive of Bangladesh

Environmental Lawyers Association, has linked the withdrawal of the official with non-continuation of the ongoing enforcement "Withdrawal of a proven officer effectively dedicated to environmental protection

without an appropriate alternative appears to be aimed at stalling environmental drives against powerful polluters," she said.

innocent move.' The drives conducted by

Munir as a DoE director since August 2010 created a stir in the public domain with a feeling for the first time that there is a department to defend the country's environment against lethal onslaught of powerful polluters, said Rizwana.

Abu Naser Khan, chairman of environmentalist group Poribesh Bachao Andolan, said they had written to the environment minister, secretary, DG of DoE and senior secretary of the public administration ministry requesting them to make sure the ongoing enforcement drives continued

The revenue income of DoEwasTk31 crore until 2009 that dramatically soared to Tk 109 crore by the end of 2012. It happened as both the number of DoE clearance holders after paying fees and realisation of fines went up during

this period.

pay principle" and realised fines in significant amounts since August 2010. The move earned the environment Munir was transferred to

Bogra from Chittagong Port in a similar manner in December 2007 as he went tough as a magistrate of the sea port against corruption by powerful ministers and

occupancy during his ser-

administration defying polit-

During his two and a half years in service there, he raised the collection of land revenue to Tk 16 crore against the previous record of Tk 2.16 crore a year earlier, accord-

tion cases without bribery.

he heard of the government order but did not yet release Munir, as he did not receive

Official sources say the

A lesson for Bangladesh Mukherjee expressed "deep harassment by the rapists or

women in the neighbouring country. The rape raised a unanimous demand that actions be taken to strengthen laws against

action on the protesters, "Incidents like rape and political parties demanded a statement from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. In response, Manmohan vowed to take action against this "monstrous crime". The incident was regrettable, BNWLA Executive

Director Salma said, but the way all Indians, especially politicians of both the ruling party and the opposition, responded to that could be a lesson for Bangladesh.

Such protests could force the authorities to be accountable for their actions against assaults on women, she said.

As many as 760 women and children were raped between January and November this year: 188 of them were gangraped while 69 were killed after rape, according to Odhikar, a rights organisation. The number of rapes was 711 in 2011, 559 in 2010, 456 in 2009 one else was made victim of and 454 in 2008.

In many incidents, Salma After the incident, Indian said, victims did not file any President Pranab case in fear of further rapevictim.

asked for swift and immediby influential people.

Rape cases should be Condemning police tried under the speedy trial should formulate separate tims and witnesses to

> Bangladesh Mahila expressed deep shock at the death of the 23-year-old

at Daulatdia terminals till

8:00am yesterday. Our Gaibandha correspondent reports Mohiruddin, 80, of the district's Gobindapur village died of severe cold

Since Friday evening, bound to anchor mid-river around 35 children have been admitted to different hospitals in Gaibandha with cold-related illnesses, according to the district civil surgeon's office.

on Friday night.

The district administration distributed 13,228 blankets among the poor and the destitute.

Dhaka-based Chapainawabganj Samity yesterday distributed 1,000 blankets among the coldhit poor in the district, our Chapainawabganj correspondent reports.

were forced to withdraw cases in the face of threats

ensure justice, she said.

"Moreover, a political commitment is mandatory to stop such heinous

outcome of conservative society existing in entire

Rape incidents happen in Bangladesh as well but Indian politicians, as opposed to those here, expressed solidarity with common people in condemning the crime, she

In separate statements, Parishad and Samajik Protirodh Committee, a platform of 67 women human rights and development organisations

an autopsy. Mamata plans

FROM PAGE 20

That campaign will start in the capital Delhi, where a 23-year-old student was brutally gang-raped on a bus on December 16, sparking nationwide protests.

cers has been widely blamed for the failures of some police forces to thoroughly investigate allegations of sex crimes. Women currently account for less than one in five Indian police officers.

Indian protesters hold candles during a rally in New Delhi late yesterday, after the death of a gang-rape victim.

tion by the Indian government on Thursday. "She was courageous in fighting for her life for so long against the odds but the trauma to her body was too severe for her to overcome," Kelvin Loh, chief executive officer of the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore said in

The government has char-

The body was taken from diplomats, the body was driven in a hearse to the air-

permitted level through

different depots just before

the government announced

a fuel price hike. The sale of

diesel caused the government to lose Tk 13.97 crore. According to the BPC instructions, the depots were not allowed to sell diesel 10 percent more than the amount sold in the

ous year. As the news of possible hike in oil prices were published in the media in May the BPC received Tk 140.20 2008, there were tendencrore in VAT from Padma cies among dealers and Oil, Tk 100.81 crore from agents to withdraw oil at abnormal rates. The BPC at that time reminded the

managing directors of the marketing companies about its instructions. In June the same year, six depots of Jamuna Oil -- the main depot in Chittagong and depots in Fatulla, Parbatipur, Baghabari, Srimangal and Sylhet -- sold 95.59 lakh litres of diesel, Petroleum Company depots which was between 22.08 in Doulatpur and Jhalakathi percent and 144.84 percent between April 2010 and higher than the sales in June the previous year.

agents.

The OCAG first informed the secretary of the energy ministry about the irregularities in December 2010 and again wrote to the secretary in management is aware of February last year, as he did not respond. In April, another letter

but it did not take meawas sent to the secretary. Later, the ministry asked the BPC to deposit with the state coffer the collected VAT mentioned in the audit report and send it a copy of the money receipt. But the auditors found that the BPC did not comply with the

The irregularities did not stop there.

In 2007-08 and 2008-09, Jamuna Oil, Chittagong defied BPC's instructions

spent an hour torturing and raping her, savagely beating

ful leader of the Congress on state television, saying grievances.

heard," Gandhi said. "It deepens our determination to battle the pervasive and the shameful social attitudes that allow men to rape and molest The victim and her male friend were returning home

The six suspects have all been arrested and are in cus-

nation to lose Tk 9.25 crore and sold diesel beyond the

in revenues.

The BPC sold 69.89 lakh litres of duty-free jet fuel at \$0.97 per litre at Dhaka international airport and \$0.96 a litre at Chittagong airport between May and June, 2008, but the price should have been \$1.16 a

The report says the BPC same period of the previsold the fuel at a loss though there was no scope for it to do so.

litre at that time.

The figures mentioned here are part of the total amount of Tk 730.33 crore that the state exchequer lost due to irregularities in the BPC and its subsidiaries.

Tahrir activists

FROM PAGE 20 At one stage, Rab personnel joined with police and rounded up the activists.

A banner and some leaflets

were seized from the detain-

ees, said Shahbagh police. Contacted, Lt Col MM Anisur Rahman, commanding officer of Rab-3, said the Tahrir men usually show up on Fridays, but they gathered

yesterday to carry out subver-

sive activities at an Awami

League rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan. The Hizb ut-Tahrir was banned on October 22 in 2009 and since then, over 700 of its leaders and activists have been arrested by the law enforcers.

sales of diesel to dealers and BNP, allies Jamuna Oil told the

Khaleda's Gulshan office.

that hartal will be enforced if the government hikes the prices of electricity, gas and water. Khaleda on December 26

on the international market at that time. It caused the up.

against the powerful polluters

Chowdhury, who has been

drives.

"It is also to frustrate the government's legal mandate to bring the environmental wrongdoers to book," she said, adding, "The transfer order does not seem to be an

uninterrupted

lawmakers.

and settled 55,000 land muta-

review of the transfer order, he

environment ministry may keep on with the official if it desires so for the sake of public interest.

(traffic) of Bangladesh Khan. Railway. Ferry services in queued at Paturia and 380

Interestingly, hours

office bearers. But it was expected that

FROM PAGE 1

sexual violence. gangrape are frequent in our country too," said Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA). Except for some individuals and women rights activists, no one protests such crimes

and discrimination against women in Bangladesh, she A significant change was necessary in the perspective of the man-dominated society to ensure women's safety, a number of women rights activists told The

Daily Star vesterday.

Tougher legal measures

Thousands of Indians

joined protests yesterday in

a mass outpouring of grief

and anger after the victim

died in Singapore.

should also be taken.

Protesters marched in central Delhi and other major cities, demanding that no

Biting cold grips country

such barbarism.

between Dhaka and different coastal areas has come down to around half the usual, said Badiuzzaman Badal, senior vicepresident of Bangladesh Inland Waterways Association.

Many buses were stranded for hours at ferry terminals. Buses on Sylhet-Chittagong route took three to four hours more than normal travel time, said Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan. Most trains ran three to

four hours behind sched-

ule due to poor visibility

caused by thick fog, said quoting BIWTC Manager Syed Jahirul Islam, director

pended from 10:00pm Friday to 4:30am yesterday, said Sirajul Haq, manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Mawa. Six ferries carrying around 100 vehicles were

> due to poor visibility. Over 500 vehicles had to wait at Mawa and Kawrakandi ferry terminals until yesterday morning.

Munshigani were sus-

The authorities suspended ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route for six hours from 2:00am yesterday, reports our

Manikganj correspondent

(Commerce) Ashraf Ullah As many as 530 vehicles

distress" while Congress President Sonia Gandhi

> act and the government laws for protection of vic-

Ayesha Khanam, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said the incident in Delhi was nothing but an

South Asia, which regards women as inferior to men.

the spot. The other traders managed to take Anarul's body into Bangladesh territory and fled the scene, added Sher-e-Alam.

> Later, BGB members recovered the body around 7:30am and sent it to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for

launched a drive to recruit more female officers as a confidence-building mea-

The lack of women offi-

Anomalies cost state Tk 730cr

FROM PAGE 1 the BPC general manager (accounts and finance) always asks for VAT on the prices of oil sold through invoices from the state-run marketing companies. And the marketing companies

The audit team found that Jamuna Oil, Meghna Petroleum and Padma Oil deposited with the BPC the VAT collected from dealers and agents. In 2007-08 and 2008-09,

by cheque.

deposit the VAT with the BPC

Jadavpur camp of Border Meghna Petroleum and Tk 89.08 crore from Jamuna Noticing the intrusion from across the border, The anomalies were found after the OCAG Kushumpur camp opened opened audits into the BPC fire, leaving Anarul dead on and Eastern Lubricants Blenders in Chittagong, Jamuna Oil Company in Chittagong and its depots at Doulatpur in Khulna, and Barisal, and Meghna

February 2011.

ministry's instructions.

lower prices for international flights in 2008-09, though fuel prices went up

give its response later, but the reply never came, says the audit report. The team also found that the BPC sold jet fuel at

The audit report says it

It says the Jamuna Oil

was done for profiteering

by building up stocks ille-

the sales and stocks at the

depots on a particular day,

sures to stop abnormal

audit team that it would

The committee reiterated

FROM PAGE 20

had declared that her party will enforce shutdown and blockade if energy prices go