

New ministers warn against corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Minister Nurul Islam and State Minister Tarana Halim yesterday warned ministry staff about corruption and indiscipline.

Another new State Minister Nuruzzaman pledged to make his ministry more dynamic and successful.

The three were talking to newsmen at their ministries in the capital. They joined office yesterday, two days after they were inducted into Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's cabinet.

Expatriates Welfare Minister Nurul Islam said, "Human trafficking by sea is a big problem. We need coordinated action to address the issue. My first challenge will be to put an end to it."

He warned the ministry staff about misleading him over ministry activities and asked them to be punctual. "You [staff] have to discharge your duties putting aside your personal interest."

State Minister for Post,

Telecommunications and Information Technology Tarana Halim said she will show zero tolerance on corruption to make the ministry graft-free.

She said she neither bribes anyone nor receives bribes from anybody. "So, please inform me if anyone tries to take advantage of my name and hand him over to police."

She asked all not to enter the ministry with any gift, except for flowers. "People related to the government can come to my home with flowers only."

State Minister for Food Nuruzzaman faced some questions from newsmen on the import of Brazilian wheat. But he only said he would comment on the issue at the "right time".

He urged the ministry staff to work hard to make the ministry more dynamic and successful.

According to media reports, the Directorate General of Food early this year purchased 2 lakh tonnes of substandard Brazilian wheat.

KIDS AT BARISAL SHISHU PORIBAR Eid won't change anything for them

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The girls cook for themselves, do the dishes, clean their rooms and wash their clothes.

From dawn to ask, they are made to do the chores while those who are paid by the government to do these often do not even care to come to work.

This is how the girls of Barisal Shishu Poribar, a government-run orphanage, live their everyday life.

They are not spared of these even on the Eid days.

"We will help our seniors in cooking by cutting vegetables and chopping meats," said Sumaiya when asked how she'd spend the Eid day, likely to be observed tomorrow or on Saturday.

"We will sweep the floors, clean the orphanage premises and rooms and prepare food like we do every day," said the nine-year-old, who had come there a year ago.

While saying this, she was wearing a smile on her face as if all these were very usual for her.

Then there was Falguni, also 9. She was happy that the Eid was just around the corner.

"They usually give us plain rice, lentil, fish curry and, sometimes, vegetables around the year ... But on the Eid day, we get pilau, beef gravy and vermicelli dishes," said Falguni, beaming with joy. She had been at the orphanage since both her parents died two years ago.

"But who will prepare all these?"

asked this correspondent.

Falguni went silent. Her smile disappeared.

"We will," she murmured.

Though the orphanage has a designated cook, it's the children who are made to do the cooking, said advocate Munira Begum, divisional secretary of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, while visiting the orphanage on Wednesday.

She found three of the 15 orphanage staff absent on the day.

Sometimes, the girls are forced to work at the residences of orphanage officials and staff, Munira said.

The orphanage has 100 girls and about 60 of them are aged between 8 and 12.

Sumaiya, 18, is the eldest of the orphans there. She was worried about six fellow orphans who had chickenpox.

"The Eid won't be joyful without them," she said.

According to Munira Begum, the six girls were quarantined but were not receiving any treatment, an allegation rejected by orphanage-in-charge Ismat Ara Khanam.

Ismat allegedly condoned the merciless beating of two minor girls by a health assistant named Md Dulal on July 4. A video of the cruelty was posted online, sparking widespread outrage on the social media. Dulal, now absconding, has been suspended and a probe body formed following this.

A test of patience

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households that watch foreign channels throughout the year watch Bangladeshi channels during this time ... It is the best time for both makers and channels to showcase themselves."

He, however, termed the big chunks of advertisements an "annoying experience" and commented that unless TV channels realise and act upon it soon, they would lose viewers.

Veteran actor-director Tariq Anam Khan, also the General Secretary of TV Programme Producers' Association, said Eid programmes on TV can still draw audience because better productions are rolled out on the occasion, but "the long stretch of ads makes it impossible to concentrate on the programmes".

He said an alternative to the situation has to be sought, otherwise the industry would suffer.

Mamunur Rashid, another seasoned actor-director, echoed the thoughts, and added that because of the sheer number of TV dramas, serials and telefilms, it could be difficult for the audience to find the quality ones.

TV channel authorities, meanwhile, are trying to find a workaround.

Mustafa Kamal Syed, head of programmes at the NTV, said: "We're the first channel to introduce break-less and single-break dramas and telefilms, and now other channels are following suit."

The channels are somewhat helpless because advertisements are their sole revenue source, he said.

However, some dramas are getting title or single sponsors, which gives them a scope to show advertisements for brief periods.

"It's a good strategy for advertisers ... because those dramas are viewed more," Mustafa added.

Shamim Shahed, head of programmes at Banglavision, meanwhile said the only source of revenue for Bangladeshi TV channels is advertisements, which is not the case "in any other country".

"Even when Bangladeshi audiences watch Indian channels, the channels get revenue for it."

He admitted that the duration of advertisements has to be reduced and rates must be increased.

"If the satellite channels in Bangladesh can switch to DTH [Direct-to-home] or IP [Internet Protocol] transmission technology, then we can generate revenue directly from viewership, and dependency on advertisements will decrease greatly," he observed.

At the other end, how do the ad-bookings agencies think?

Saif Tuhin, associate director of Asiatic Mindshare, said they generally avoid channels that take too many ad spots. Companies that dominate the market also strategise to break the clutter.

"For example, Unilever has bought out the title sponsorships of all the Eid programmes on NTV and Channel i, and thus ensure that their products get the mileage."

He also said while single-branding a programme can help reduce advertisement, "it cannot be overdone because that will wipe out small companies who do not have such a big budget."

While the problem of advertisements is affecting viewers' Eid entertainment on the 'idiot box', the solution is not simple and one-dimensional, and it appears, encouragingly, that all involved parties have accepted it as a problem and are trying their best to find a balance.

With combined efforts, the scenario will get better in coming days; or at least



Inhabitants at Gotamari enclave in Lalmonirhat after they registered themselves with a joint survey team to become Indian nationals yesterday, the last day for registration.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Most opt to remain where they are

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enclaves in Kurigram and two persons from four enclaves in Nilphamari have opted to go with Indian nationality.

However, two persons in Nilphamari and 18 others in Panchagarh have changed their earlier decision choice to go with mainland India. Both now want to be citizens of Bangladesh.

Joint survey officials have not yet taken any decision regarding these 20 applicants, but are expected to accept their applications, report our correspondents.

According to the officials of the joint survey, the total population of 162 enclaves was 51,549 in July 2011 headcount, but the population might have increased around 3,000 in the last four years with babies born and people getting married.

As per the July 2011 census, the population in 111 Indian enclaves was 37,334 on an area of 24,270.65 acres of land.

The population in 51 Bangladeshi enclaves inside Indian territory was 14,215 on 7,110 acres of land. So, the total population was 51,549.

Officials said the exact figure of total population, number of people willing to change their citizenship, newborns,

newly married, deaths could be confirmed and available after the Eid vacation.

Citing example, they said the total population in 36 Indian enclaves located inside Panchagarh district now stands at 20,155 whereas it was 19,043 in July 2011 survey.

In the latest headcount, some 1582 fresh names have been included and most of them are children born in between July 2011 to July 16, 2015. Besides, at least 279 names were excluded from the list for the cause of death.

In the four Nilphamari enclaves, the total population now stands at 545, up from 506 in July 2011.

Whereas the population in 59 Indian enclaves in Lalmonirhat district was 9,670 in July 2011 but it decreased to 9,437 because the remaining 233 people, who left for job in mainland India and Bangladesh, have not returned till yesterday.

Diplomatic sources said some 75 joint teams comprising by the officials of India and Bangladesh began final survey on July 6 and it was completed yesterday. The formal exchange of enclaves will begin from July 31 midnight, ending nearly seven-decade sufferings of the residents.

The governments of India and Bangladesh agreed to ensure "orderly, safe and secure" passage to residents of enclaves along with their "personal belongings and moveable property" to the mainland of India or Bangladesh, if they wanted.

"Of the 75 teams, 25 worked in the Bangladeshi enclaves that will merge with Indian territory while 50 worked in the Indian enclaves which will come under Bangladesh territory," said a foreign ministry official.

During the joint survey, the officials asked the residents basic questions like their names, age, parents' names, current citizenship and citizenship they wish to acquire with effect from midnight July 31, which has been chosen as the "Appointed Day".

The joint survey was aimed at collecting data and photographs to issue necessary documents to an enclave resident to facilitate his or her travel to the mainland.

As per the decision of the two governments, residents included in the joint headcount of population of enclaves in July 2011 and their children born later have the rights to choose their nationality and citizenship.

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The option of moving from an

enclave to the mainland of Bangladesh or India will take place by November 30, 2015 through the entry/exit points of Haldiri, Burimari and Banglabandha along the Bangladesh-India border.

But the residents have to inform the district administrations before the Appointed Day about the records and specifications of immovable properties.

Both the governments will ensure the "safe custody and integrity" of land records and other immovable properties of enclave residents till the date of transfer.

The district administrations of the two governments will put these records in the public domain prior to their moving to avoid "misuse or usurpation" of such property and to enable sale by the owner.

The existing mechanism of India-Bangladesh Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG) will finalise all further details.

Launching the exchange of 111 Indian and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves, the two countries will start implementing the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), which the Indian parliament ratified earlier May, 2015.

said there would be no change in that position.

"The post of general secretary of the party is a very important one," Muhith told reporters at his secretariat office.

During the 2007-08 tenure of the last caretaker government, Ashraf served as acting general secretary of the AL and played a key role in holding the party together in the absence of party chief Hasina and the then general secretary Abdul Jalil. Both Hasina and Jalil were in jail at that time.

Ashraf was made LGRD minister when the AL formed the government after the 2008 parliamentary polls. He was elected AL general secretary in the party council in 2009, and was again elected to the same post in 2013.

As the AL retained power through last year's January 5 polls, Ashraf was again made LGRD minister.

He also served as state minister for civil aviation and tourism during the 1996-2001 tenure of the AL government.

Ashraf now public admin minister

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Chowdhury met him at his official residence on Bailey Road and greeted him with bouquets.

Ashraf told them that he would join office on Monday, the first working day after Eid vacation, a close aide to Ashraf told The Daily Star.

AL sources said Hasina held talks with her second-in-command in the party to normalise things, as his sudden removal caused a strong reaction inside the party and left the government with a sense of unease.

Many central leaders expressed resentment over his removal in off-the-record conversations with The Daily Star.

A section of AL leaders believes that it was not right to remove someone like Ashraf who is revered for his clean image.

Seeking anonymity, a senior AL leader said it became clear after Ashraf's removal that he has a huge following. "The government might not have realised it before."

Hasina held three closed-door meetings with Ashraf and convinced him to take a new portfolio.

Ashraf, scheduled to leave Dhaka for the UK on Wednesday morning to celebrate the Eid with his family, postponed the visit at the PM's request.

Party sources said Hasina asked him not to leave the country, thinking that his departure might complicate the situation.

Some central AL leaders close to Ashraf believe he at first didn't agree to take the new responsibility. The PM made him agree to take charge of the public administration ministry.

In their view, Ashraf's new portfolio is less important compared to the LGRD and cooperatives portfolio.

Some AL leaders said the PM asked Finance Minister AMA Muhith to persuade Ashraf to take the new job. Muhith visited him at his residence on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters yesterday,

Muhith said a big side to Syed Ashraf is that he is a very popular leader; this is because he is well-behaved.

Contacted, AL International Affairs Secretary Faruk Khan said the PM considered giving Ashraf the new responsibility to put to good use his skills and experience.

The PM held the public administration portfolio since the present cabinet's formation in January last year. With Ashraf's appointment yesterday, the ministry got its first full minister after 1990.

Over the last two days, there were rumours that Ashraf might be made deputy prime minister through an amendment to the constitution.

When reporters asked Muhith about it, he said, "I know nothing about it."

Ashraf's removal from the LGRD ministry also led to speculation that he might not continue as AL general secretary.

Asked about it, Muhith yesterday

Home-goers face less trouble

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people leave the capital, most of them in the four days before Eid.

Every day about 5 lakh were travelling on inter-district buses, 3 lakh on launches, nearly 1 lakh on trains and around 2 lakh on other mode of transport like local buses, cars and trucks, said transport operators.

At the bus terminals, the Kamalapur Railway Station and Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday, thousands were seen desperately trying to leave the city.

Many had tickets while some were rushing from a ticket counter to another to get tickets.

"I have bought my tickets around a week