

'Two accused' in top two posts

PM on Khaleda, Tarique in BNP leadership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the BNP elected "two accused" in its highest posts and termed the re-election of Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman as the party's chairperson and senior vice-chairman "a drama".

"The BNP has staged a good drama over election of its leaders. Whom has the BNP elected? They have elected two accused. One [Khaleda] is accused of misappropriating orphans' money and another [Tarique] of the August 21 grenade attack, money laundering and corruption."

"His [Tarique's] name is also on Interpol's wanted list. These are the leaders of BNP. What can this party deliver to the people?" she said.

Hasina, also the prime minister, was addressing a rally at Suhrawardi Udyan with Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair.

The ruling AL organised the rally marking the historic March 7 of 1971, commemorating the historic speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A large contingent of law enforcers cordoned off the venue and frisked everyone at the entrance. Ruling party leaders, activists and supporters started flocking to the ground around 12:30pm.

Earlier on Sunday, Khaleda Zia was re-elected as the BNP chairperson, while her son Tarique Rahman was re-elected as the party's senior vice-chairman unopposed ahead of the party's sixth national council slated for March 19.

The premier came down heavily on her political arch-rival Khaleda for her movement in 2014 and 2015 saying she would have to answer for this and face trial on charge of burning people.

"The BNP does politics by killing and burning people. But people did not surrender to arson terrorists; rather they resisted them and compelled them to withdraw the blockade," she said.

Hasina alleged that Khaleda had carried out destructive movement with an ill motive to destroy the spirit of the Liberation War and foil the country's economic development as she [Khaleda Zia] could not tolerate the progress of the country.

The premier suggested that Khaleda leave Bangladesh for Pakistan to relieve the people of Bangladesh. Khaleda was born in India, but her soul remains in Pakistan, she claimed.

"The BNP has polluted the country's politics," Hasina said, adding, the party has nothing to serve the people as it was formed by a person, who assumed state power in a way declared illegal by the court.

The AL chief also sought public support to build Bangladesh as a developed country in accordance with the spirit of the Liberation War.

"We want to celebrate the golden jubilee of our independence in 2021 by turning the country into a hunger- and poverty-free middle-income nation."

AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohammad Nasim, Syed Ashraf Islam, Engineer Mosharrar Hossain, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Dipu Moni and Jahangir Kabir Nanak, among others, spoke at the rally.

Earlier in the morning, Hasina along with her party and cabinet colleagues paid rich tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses a huge rally in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. The rally was organised to commemorate the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

PHOTO: BSS

Comments on CJ embarrassed govt

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Hasina said the way the two ministers spoke sounded like the government was affiliated with the organisation (Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee), which organised Saturday's discussion where Qamrul and Mozammel first criticised the CJ, according to the minister, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The PM added it was not right for them to comment on every matter at public programmes.

Earlier in the morning, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed told journalists that no one should comment on sub judge matters.

The developments come as the Supreme Court is set to deliver its verdict in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Mir Quasem Ali, sentenced to death by a war crimes tribunal, against which he appealed.

On Sunday, Qamrul alleged that the chief justice was openly speaking in the language used by the BNP, the Jamaat-e-

Islami and their lobbyists in their efforts to undermine the war crimes trial. Going even further, Mozammel said the CJ should not be delivering the verdict in Quasem's case.

A day before, the food minister said that the appeal in Quasem's case should be reheard by a reconstituted Appellate Division bench, keeping the chief justice out of it. He also demanded that Attorney General Mahbubey Alam should be excluded from the hearing.

At the same programme, the Liberation War minister said if the CJ had indeed made such comments, he must as well know the remedy.

Earlier on February 23, during the hearing of Quasem's appeal the chief justice expressed dissatisfaction over the poor performance of the prosecutors and investigators in dealing with the war crimes cases.

On Sunday, the AG said the two ministers' comments were unconstitutional and uncalled for, and urged

all not to make any undesirable comment about the chief justice. "Such comments by the ministers have damaged the judiciary and these remarks against the judiciary are unprecedented."

Meanwhile, a Supreme Court lawyer yesterday served a legal notice on Qamrul and Mozammel, requesting them to explain why their comments should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional, and considered an offence tantamount to contempt of court.

CABINET APPROVAL
The cabinet also approved in principle the draft of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Act-2016, under which six dedicated fast-moving bus lanes will be built for the improvement of the capital's transport system.

BRT Line 3 would be the first of such six routes stretching 42.5km from Shibirri in Gazipur to Jhilmil in Keraniganj via Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Initially, construction of the 22km route from

Gazipur to Airport will be done by 2018.

The proposed law will regulate the BRT system which would be able to transport 40,000 passengers per hour on the Gazipur-Airport-Jhilmil route, Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shafiq Alam told reporters after the cabinet meeting at the secretariat.

The proposed law has a provision for highest 10-year jail term or fine of up to Tk 50 lakh or both for violating the law.

In the designated routes, BRT buses will run between stations every three minutes, the secretary said.

The government plans to implement BRT services in Dhaka, Gazipur, Narasingdi, Narayanganj, Manikganj and Munshiganj.

The cabinet also approved the draft of the Supreme Court Judges (Remuneration and Privileges) Amendment Act-2016 and the draft agreement between Bangladesh and India on cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.



Speakers at a roundtable discussion on Facing Challenges Together in Bangladesh Today organised jointly by The Daily Star and Jaago Foundation at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Women deserve

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the discussion on "Facing challenges together in Bangladesh today" at the Daily Star Centre.

People, who believe in honouring and respecting women, sometimes make decisions which perhaps sub-consciously imply sexism and racism, said Rubaba Dowla Matin, chief service officer of Airtel Bangladesh.

Everybody should equally respect women, said Group Chief People Officer Ajeyo Rohitashwo Al Quazi of aamra companies. "The issue still remains the foremost social challenge..."

Syed Md Saikh Imtiaz, chairman of women and gender studies department at Dhaka University, said women themselves do not always respect women.

The overall social mindset of not

respecting women would not change overnight, he observed.

Wives are not respected as women the same as mothers, pointed out Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd.

She stressed the need for parental and family support to ensure women's equal rights and respect. She suggested that men should be sensitised for standing by women.

She expressed concern that security of women at work and on streets is getting worse day by day.

Christine Hunter, country representative of UN Women, said it is extremely essential for women's equal rights that men stand with women hand in hand.

"We also need to look into what respect to women really means," she

added.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said women deal with multifaceted challenges and struggles and sometimes they fall victim to discrimination even due to parental love and affection and family's concern for security.

The Daily Star is fully committed to women empowerment and gender equality, he noted.

Luna Shamsuddoha, president of Bangladesh Women in Technology, and Rumana Rahman, head of human resource of British American Tobacco Bangladesh, also spoke, among others.

Jaago Foundation Chairman Korvi Rakshand along with Elita Karim, editor of Star Weekend, a weekly publication of The Daily Star, moderated the discussion.

Wait for leading role

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driver of Bangladesh's consistent and steady economic growth.

There are 56 banks and 33 non-bank financial institutions operating in Bangladesh and none of them are led by a woman. Two women work as deputy managing directors in two banks and there is another female additional deputy managing director.

Of the 77 insurance companies here, only two are led by women.

There are several thousand garment and textile factories, where majority of the workers are women, but it is hard to find a woman in the chief executive position unless the responsibility was inherited or imposed on them by their husbands or fathers.

It is even hard to find a woman in a managerial position in these companies and factories.

Sayeema Haque Bidisha, associate professor of economics at Dhaka University, referred to the National Labour Force Survey 2013 conducted by the Bureau of Statistics. The survey showed that women hold only 12 percent of the high-ranking jobs in industrial and service sectors.

Bidisha said many women were also engaged in self-employed work, often working without pay for their fathers' or husbands' businesses. In fact women exceed men in contributing as family helper, according to the survey.

Out of the total 10.55 million such workers, 80 percent are women.

So, why do women lag behind compared to their male counterparts? Why are they not in the leadership role in the growing economic activities?

The Daily Star talked to a number of women top executives, experts, and male chief executives to understand why women cannot build their careers on an equal footing with men.

Despite promising starts, marriage and having babies hold women back from taking up senior-level positions, according to Farzana Chowdhury, managing director and chief executive

of Green Delta Insurance.

"Breaks in their [women] careers occur when they become pregnant. Later, they have to sacrifice their jobs to rear their children," said Farzana, who became the first woman CEO in the insurance sector.

Often, women do not get adequate support from their families and surroundings for building their careers, she said.

Mohammudi Khanam, chief executive officer of Prime Insurance, said women cannot take leadership roles in the corporate sector of Bangladesh after taking care of their children and families. "Conservative mindset of families and society hold women back," she said.

Citing her own experience, she said it was not so easy to go up to the top level as a woman. "I had to fight at every level," she said, adding that women need motivation and have to have strong will power to build their careers.

Adiba Rahman, additional managing director of Delta Life Insurance, said family becomes a woman's first priority, no matter how brilliant she is.

Helena Jahangir, who runs a number of factories, including garments, said the nature of the work in the garment sector doesn't allow a woman to hold managerial jobs.

There are issues like dealing with buyers and suppliers, which is tough for a woman to carry out, she said.

Her factories have 4,000 employees, most of them are women. But there is no woman in any managerial posts.

Mafizuddin Sarker, chairman of an association of non-bank financial institutions and managing director of BD Finance, said women were coming forward and doing extremely well in the sector.

"Presently, 10 to 15 percent women work at the mid-level of banks and financial institutions. The number is increasing gradually with the expansion of economic activities," he said.

Bitopi Das Chowdhury, country

head of corporate affairs of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, said while qualification and work experience matter the most, women need to give more effort to reach the top than their male counterparts.

Mentioning it was not so easy for women to travel for work or commute at night, she said, "In the context of Bangladesh, security and social responsibility is an issue for women."

"We do get a lot of talented women employees, but many leave their jobs midway of their careers because of social, familial, or situational factors."

"Our male colleagues can spend more time at work without worrying too much about home, but for women colleagues, the responsibilities at home are often more."

She said it was her determination of not giving up that brought her to the position she now holds.

Bitopi opined that the government could play a role in supporting women by enforcing the labour law that require day-care centres and nurseries in establishments with at least 50 women employees.

"A law to increase the paternity leave to about 2 months should also be enacted to help couples handle the initial responsibility of having a baby," she said.

Tania Haque, associate professor of Women and Gender Studies at Dhaka University, raised the question as to why day-care centres should only serve female employees.

"While it is true that babies need their mothers at a very young age, once they grow up a little, the fathers can look after them too," she said, suggesting that the "50 women employees" clause should be removed from the law.

Talking about the garment sector, Tania said, "We are using the cheap labour of women but have not built the infrastructure or had created the conducive work environment to help her climb the professional ladder."

2 KIDS' MURDER DB tasked with probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives were given the responsibility yesterday of investigating the February 29 murder of two children at Banasree in the capital.

On receiving the case documents from Rampura police, the Detective Branch of police will appoint an investigation officer, said Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He added that DB would probe to find out whether anyone else was involved in the killing and if there were other reasons behind it.

Two days after the murder, the Rapid Action Battalion picked up the parents from their village home in Jamalpur. The following day, Rab at a

briefing said the children's mother Mahfuza Malek Jasmine confessed that she had killed her children out of concern about their future.

Relatives and experts on social behaviour, however, said the Rab's version was hard to believe and that there might be some other motives.

Jasmine, meanwhile, has been remanded for five days.

Rab initially picked up eight people, including the parents, but later released all except the mother.

Nusrat Aman Aroni, 14, and her six-year-old brother Alvi Aman were found unconscious at their apartment in the afternoon of February 29. They were declared dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) that evening.

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Father, son diagnosed with rare skin disease

MEHEDY HASAN, Rangpur

A father and his son in Rangpur have been found with wart roots developing on their hands and feet -- a rare skin disease similar to that of Abul Bajandar.

Abul Bajandar, 26, is believed to be the world's fourth man suffering from a disease caused by human papillomaviruses (HPVs), and is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital after he was brought in from Khulna in late January.

The first case of the HPVs, also known as tree-man disease, was diagnosed in Romania and the second one in Indonesia in 2007. The last reported case also occurred in Indonesia in 2009.

Tajul Islam, 48, and his son Ruhul Amin, 10, of

Abullapur-Kalsardara village in Rangpur's Pirganj seem to be the next victims of the disease.

Tajul said his father Afaz Munshi had told him that nails on his hands and feet began to grow at an accelerated rate when he was just two months' old.

He claimed that his father died of the same disease. His elder brother Baset Ali too had warts like things on his legs and doctors had cut off both of his legs a few days ago.

Gradually, Tajul's nails turned into something like roots of trees.

His youngest son Ruhul Amin was born with big nails both in his hands and feet. Ruhul's nails are also rapidly turning into things like roots of trees, he added.



Tajul Islam and his son Ruhul Amin of Rangpur with wart roots developing on their hands and feet -- a rare skin disease. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: MEHEDY HASAN

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