

FEUD OVER COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY AL MP assaults party leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over formation of the governing body of a college, a ruling party lawmaker from Jhenaidah allegedly assaulted a party leader on Monday.

Azad Iqbal Shilon Mridha, organising secretary of the proposed Kaliganj Upazila AL Unit, wrote to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and district AL President Abdul Hyee seeking proper investigation and justice in the matter.

This newspaper has obtained a copy of the letter.

In his letter, Shilon said that he has been discharging his duties as the president of the governing body of Barabazar Degree College for the last six years.

But MP Anwarul Azim, "handed over" the governing body's post of president to one Rabiu Islam, a BNP

supporter, on May 30 through a DO (demol-official) letter, he wrote.

Following a writ petition he filed, the High Court stayed the previous order and on Monday he went to Kaliganj UNO office to discuss the matter.

After his meeting with the UNO, when he went to Upazila Education Office to discuss the subject further, MP Azad appeared.

"Suddenly, the MP became agitated saying 'let me speak against me' and started to severely physically torture me," he wrote.

"I have sought justice from my party and will accept whatever decision the party takes," Shilon told The Daily Star over phone.

Contacted, Azad, a lawmaker from Jhenaidah-4, said a man must have

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Trucks loaded with sacks of stolen rice in Chittagong yesterday. A team of Rapid Action Battalion-7 seized eight trucks, carrying about 170 tonnes of rice stolen from a government silo in Halishahar. Story on page 16

PHOTO
COLLECTED

'It was not abduction' Detectives show 'evidence' as they quiz Farhad Mazhar, Farida

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday interrogated poet and columnist Farhad Mazhar in their probe and presented their evidence nullifying his claim that he was abducted on July 3.

The writer, on the other hand, told the officials that he had given his version in his judicial statement before a magistrate.

He requested detectives to investigate further, if needed, officials said.

Farhad and his wife Farida Akhter arrived at the DB office on Minto Road around 11:00am in response to a letter from investigators on Monday.

The couple were interrogated for around an hour before leaving the office on their rashed 1:15pm.

Golam Mostofa Rasheed, additional deputy commissioner of Detective Branch, said they called the couple -- the victim and plaintiff of the case -- for the sake of investigation.

"We called them there to continue the interrogations between their version and our findings," he said.

An official who was present during the interrogation told The Daily Star: "Presenting our evidence, which included CCTV footage, we told him that you are lying. He neither ignored nor accepted it. He just told police to look into it further."

Farhad referred to his judicial statement in response to most of the questions asked by the officials, he said.

Talking to this correspondent about the interrogation, Farida said, "They [police] are trying to prove that

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Who's to blame for failure?

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In September last year, for example, he said Rajuk designed a 20-year master plan for the capital without consulting his office.

But the mayor's outery has made no difference even as the city people continue to suffer from perennial problems such as traffic jam and waterlogging. Latest on the list is the outbreak of chikungunya, an Aedes mosquito-borne disease.

The two mayors and governance experts have blamed the city's poor governance for the present situation. They said that in the matter of governance, the city corporations have little to do.

About four dozen government organisations provide various services to the city people. These single-purpose organisations, such as Wasa and Rajuk, function under various ministries and the city corporations have no control over them.

Also, a lack of coordination among them leaves the city's development and maintenance in a mess.

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to hold them accountable for their failure," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that there was no alternative but to improve the city governance system to reduce people's sufferings. He also blamed the lax enforcement of law for the worsening situation, particularly in traffic management.

Prof Tofail Ahmed echoed Prof Nizam's view.

"Taxpayers are not getting service due to poor governance in the city," he told this paper yesterday.

METROPOLITAN GOVT: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Tofail, a local government expert, is in favour of the long-standing demand for introduction of a metropolitan government to overcome the present crisis.

The idea of such a government to bring major civic service providers under one authority was first floated by Mohammad Hanif, Dhaka's first elected mayor, in 1994.

His son, Sayeed Khokon, raised the same demand a few months after taking office.

Almost around the same time, Annisul spoke for a coordinated system like a city government to handle the problems.

Sadek Hossain Khoka, a senior BNP leader who was mayor of a senior BNP unit, said the DCC from 2002 to 2011, also supported the idea of a metropolitan government.

And yet, whenever the city goes under water, it is the mayors who take the heat of public criticism.

According to Prof Nizam Ahmed of the public administration department at Chittagong University, city people are suffering because of governance failure. There are many service-providing organisations, but none of them take responsibility for failing to serve people.

Both Prof Tofail and Prof Nizam think the government should now consider the introduction of a metropolitan government without delay to

serve people.

"We should specify who are responsible for the city governance and need

improve city governance.

Many cities around the world have such governments led by mayors.

Tofail prefers the metacorporate model for city governance in the country.

Mayor is the head of the city government in Kolkata, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC).

A councillor who commands the support of the majority of councillors is elected mayor like the election of the prime minister in the parliamentary form of the government.

He appoints and leads a council, called mayor-in-council, resembling the council of ministers in the parliamentary form of government. Every member holds portfolios of various functional departments and is responsible to the corporation for their functions.

The corporation performs both obligatory and discretionary functions. The obligatory functions include providing civic services like water supply, sewerage and drainage, solid waste management, town planning and development, local construction and maintenance of streets.

It performs some discretionary functions such as establishment of primary schools, setting up theatres and cinemas for public entertainment and hospitals, dispensaries and clinics for healthcare.

Prof Nizam and Prof Tofail also suggested amending the laws to vest the executive powers of the city corporation in the council led by the mayor.

Currently, they said, the mayor holds all the executive powers. Councillors do not have any specific functions and jurisdiction. The current system does not go in line with the parliamentary form of government. Rather, it is fit for the presidential form of government.

ALTERNATIVE EFFORTS

Efforts taken by successive govern-

ments, however, suggest that they were aware of the crisis. But they had tried to do something in difference.

For example, the Ershad government promulgated the Dhaka City Corporation Ordinance 1983 making chief of the service organisations Rajuk, Wasa, Desa and DPHE -- ex-officio ward commissioners of the city corporation. The purpose was to bring better coordination among the core service providers.

But the move fizzled out as most of the senior officials who headed those organisations never turned up in the coordination meetings. Some point at bureaucratic vanity or departmental jealousy behind this failure.

When mayor Hanif raised the demand for Hanif's demand, the Al-government formed a coordination committee for Dhaka city in 1996 with the then minister for LGRD as chairman and the then mayor as the co-chairman.

Chiefs of various civic service providers and MPs elected from the city were made members of the committee. Its goal was to ensure better management of services.

The committee held about a dozen meetings until October 1998 and "some progress" in waterlogged areas and mosquito control were the only outcomes, says an authoritative book: "Megacity Governance in South Asia: A comparative Study" by Kamal Siddiqui and others.

That move failed, according to the book, as the minister was too busy. He was there to exercise his control and not out of any genuine commitment to solve the problems of Dhaka city.

"So, you will have to train your people in democracy," the book says.

Pial Islam, managing partner of Dhaka-based pi Strategy Ltd, said there would be major changes in the nature of jobs in the next 20-30 years.

He recommended bringing changes to the education system in the light of the prospective changes in the future job industry.

He also underscored the need for practising ethics and collaborative efforts to produce productive outputs.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said Bangladesh could gain from demographic dividend as the population was young.

"But unless this young population is employed, they are likely to become disillusioned, which then leads to all sorts of anti-social activities," he added.

Nabeel Uddaulah, managing director of DIRD Group, said education should provide knowledge and training to people on some basic skill sets before they joined an organisation.

Asif Zahir, managing director of Zero Gravity Ventures Ltd, said many young people venture job market looked for an organisation with a purpose. "They want to make a difference in the society."

Ejaz Ahmad, president of BYLC, said there is a lack of critical thinking and problem-solving in the academic curriculums.

"As a result, young generation come to the job market with inadequate critical thinking and problem-solving skills," he noted.

The minister-led committee ceased to exist after BNP leader Sadek Hossain Khoka was elected mayor in April 2002.

Khoka's successor, Khoka too did not get any support from his own BNP-led government from 2001 to 2006 for his plan to introduce a metropolitan government to improve civic facilities.

The then BNP-led government formed Dhaka Good Governance Committee headed by the principal secretary to the then prime minister. That committee could not make any breakthrough.

In 2011, the AL-led government divided the DCC into two -- DNCC and DSCC -- without any other reforms to strengthen the city corporations.

Both the city corporations were run by administrators, who were administrative officers, until two mayors were elected in 2015.

Around five years after splitting the DCC, the government has come up with a new formula to ensure coordination among the works of the city corporations.

In June last year, the Prime Minister's Office issued a circular asking the chiefs of all utility service providers in Dhaka to attend general meetings of the two city corporations and implement meeting decisions to improve civic amenities.

It is nothing new, as according to section 49 (15) of the city corporation law, at least the chiefs of utility service providers, including water, gas, electricity suppliers, are supposed to attend the meetings of the city corporations.

The present situation in the city suggests that no previous efforts made by the successive governments worked to serve people better by improving the city governance.

Life term

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The judge observed, "It is a case of offence of causing an illegal confinement of a person and attempting to cause death to a child by torturing her physically and mentally, by keeping her footless or hand-free and throwing the victim into the dustbin."

Terming it an unusual case, she said the incident touched the human consciousness, dignity and honour. "The fact of the case as revealed by the prosecution shocked the judicial conscience."

The judge said the accused Nawin gave a confessional statement before a magistrate, where she said she lived with her mother because of her troubled relationship with her husband. "She was always mentally depressed. With her mental depression, she used an old super jackpot automatic iron and an old iron khuni for torturing her in different ways."

In her statement before a court, Aduri described how she was tortured brutally and thrown into a dustbin.

Aduri was found unconscious in a severely malnourished state, riddled with injuries and scars near a dustbin in the capital's DOHS Baridhara on September 23, 2013. Two women rescued the victim from the dustbin and handed her over to police.

The incident created huge sensation and outcry among the people.

Three days later, a case was filed with Pallabi Police Station, accusing Nawin and her mother of torturing Aduri.

Seeing her report, Aduri relatives came to know that the girl was in Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

Now a student of a madrasa, Aduri still bears the torture marks. "I can't forget the incident. I can't sleep well even though she told our Patuakhali correspondent Monday."

Youths need to be properly equipped



PHOTO: STAR

Participants at a roundtable titled "Skills for middle-income Bangladesh: Preparing today's youth for tomorrow's challenges" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center organised the discussion in association with The Daily Star, Aga Khan Foundation (Bangladesh) and Rizwan Adita Foundation.

CGPA. They concentrate on what grades students are getting instead of skill development, career mapping," he said.

He added that students had to be interested in their field of study.

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"There is shortage of fashion designers, technicians, dyeing specialists, washing and drying experts and industrial technologists. The positions are not far being filled up by foreign experts."

The skill gap in mid-level management positions is also significant in terms of communications and managerial skills, Farukh said.

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She said the economy would have to become inward-looking in the future to share the export market. "So, we need to do a lot of work in the area of research and development."

Tamirul Haider Chaudhury, CEO of Kazi Food Industries Ltd, said the young generation was passionate and would want to connect with something that emotionally resonates with it.

Farzana Chowdhury, CEO of Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd, said her company always faced skill shortage as people didn't want to join the industry.

They don't see it as an attractive sector for lack of critical thinking, he added.

The curriculums of educational institutions should be modified in order to bridge the gap between the institutions and the practicalities, she observed.

She also stressed the need for investing in women, who make up half of the