

Hasina hopes to build 2nd nuke power plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will begin seeking bids for its second nuclear power plant project as soon as next year to expand and diversify the country's power supply amid its prolonged economic boom, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said.

As for the proposed second plant, the government is still searching for land, she told Nikkei Asian Review, a Japanese financial newspaper, in an exclusive interview published yesterday.

Hasina said she hopes to build the second nuclear power plant in the south, one of the country's poorest regions. Bangladesh will consider inviting proposals after the election, once the land is secured.

Quoting local media as saying, Nikkei reports that China, which has stepped up involvement in Bangladesh

in recent years under its flagship Belt and Road Initiative, has expressed interest in building the plant.

According to the Bangladesh Power Development Board, natural gas accounts for 58 percent of Bangladesh's 17,340 megawatts of installed power generation capacity. But with domestic gas production declining, the country plans to significantly increase imports of liquefied natural gas as well as employ nuclear power and renewable energy to meet demand, which is growing by an estimated 10% annually.

Hasina has embarked on an ambitious infrastructure programme since taking office in early 2009 -- she was also prime minister from 1996 to 2001. The number of power plants has grown to 121 from 27, while access to electricity has risen to 93 percent of the

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PHOTO: STAR

Supporters of Awami League leader Sahidul Islam Bakul block railway tracks in Bagatipara's Malanchi area, demanding the party pick him as the candidate for Natore-1 in the December 30 polls. In the photo taken around noon yesterday, policemen are also seen requesting the protesters to leave.

Supporters

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Authorities fined one of the agitators, Sanaul Islam, Tk 10,000 for violating electoral code, said Nasrin Akter Banu, Bagatipara upazila nirbahi officer and assistant returning officer for Natore-1.

In the afternoon, Bakul's supporters held two separate rallies at Kadanchilan on Natore-Pabna highway and in Gopalpur Bazar area of the district's Lalpur upazila with the same demand.

However, Bakul denied knowing anything about the agitation and the fine when contacted around 7:00pm.

Shahidul Islam Bakul is one of the two aspirants initially nominated by the AL for this constituency. The other nominee is Ramjan Ali Sarkar, a local AL leader.

However, the party is yet to finalise their candidate for this seat.

Mystery remains

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to confirm whether it caused his death," he said.

Police recovered the shroud-wrapped body of Safayet after a six-hour standoff with his father at their home on Wednesday. Safayet's four-year-old brother Surayat was recovered unharmed.

Their father Nuruzzaman Kajol was immediately taken into police custody.

Law enforcers went to the home after being told that "drug addict" Kajol allegedly killed his younger son and was wandering in their home clutching a knife, with Surayat in his grasp.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed Kajol on a three-day remand in the murder case filed by the victim's mother Maliha Akhter Priya with Shabbagh Police Station.

Metropolitan Magistrate Dhiman Chandra Mondol passed the order after investigation officer of the case Champak Chakravarty placed Kajol before the court with a 10-day remand prayer.

Lawyer Abdus Sattar moved against the petition on behalf of Kajol.

During the hearing, Sattar said Maliha left Kajol following a fight. Kajol requested Maliha to take one of their children but she did not listen.

Kajol was disturbed following the incident but he did not kill his son, said Sattar.

"Kajol's son died of illness," the defence lawyers said.

Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Shabbagh Police Station, said Kajol provided police with multiple causes for his son's death.

He once said Safayet died of electric shock and then changed the story and said his son died of illness, the OC said.

Kajol admitted that he had slapped his son when he was crying, the OC added.

"We will be able to confirm the matter after investigation," he said.

Viqarunnisa

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The other demands include the prevention of mental and physical torture on students, stopping threats of expulsion, the introduction of student counseling at the school and a public apology from the school authorities to Arity's parents for "humiliating" them.

Chaos prevailed during the protest when some students and teachers tried to get the protestors off the street. Some current and former students, in favour of the arrested teacher, gathered inside the campus and told the demonstrating students that they should protest for Hasna Hena while also protesting for Arity.

The protestors responded by saying their demonstrations had nothing to do with Hasna Hena's arrest.

"The arrest was made following the case filed by Arity's father and the investigation by the education ministry. In our six-point demand, we wanted the acting principal to be brought to justice for instigating suicide," a protesting student representative said.

Around 3:00pm, 25 student representatives held a two hour-long meeting with the school authorities. After the discussion, the students announced that they will postpone the agitations and said would attend the ongoing final examinations from today.

They also said the school authorities would soon issue a written statement regarding the demands they can meet.

About the resignation of the acting principal and the governing body, the students sought intervention from the education ministry. A team of student representatives also submitted a letter to the education ministry in this regard, which was received by the ministry.

TEACHER LANDED IN JAIL

After detectives arrested her on Wednesday night, Hasna Hena was produced before a Dhaka Court yesterday.

When Hasna's hearing began, she was inside the court prison. The hearing turned chaotic as arguments between lawyers heated up. Some teachers who had gone to observe the hearing were barred from entering by police, who said only lawyers and journalists were allowed inside the court room.

GOVERNING BODY APOLOGISED

The president of VNSC's governing body Golam Ashraf Talukdar, at a press briefing, yesterday apologised over Arity's suicide and said they were shocked over the incident.

When asked about their resignation, Golam said that he would bring up the issue in their next meeting and, if necessary, members of the governing body will resign for the sake of the institution and its students.

Arity was found dead at their house in the capital's Shantinagar on Monday hours after she and her parents were allegedly insulted by some teachers of the school.

The next day, Arity's father Dilip Adhikary filed a case with Paltan Police Station accusing the acting principal Nazneen Ferdous, morning shift in-charge Zinat Akhtar, and class teacher Hasna Hena for provoking the suicide.

The teachers were suspended following an education ministry order and with the students' protest gaining momentum.

The death and the subsequent agitation, joined by parents, rocked the 66-year-old institute and prompted the education ministry and the school authorities to form two probe committees.

The probe body by the education ministry found the three teachers responsible. It was apparent that she [Arity] had to choose the path of suicide after not being able to tolerate her parents' humiliation, according to the probe body. The investigation also unearthed many other irregularities at the school.

Healed partly

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If this principle is applied in disposing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's appeals with the EC, her participation in the December 30 polls will remain uncertain.

She filed nomination papers to contest from Bogura-6, 7 and Feni-1. The ROs concerned rejected all three nomination papers.

Khaleda filed appeals with the EC, challenging the ROs' decision. Her appeals are likely to be heard tomorrow, the last day of hearing.

If the EC rejects her appeals, the party high command may move to the High Court and challenge the commission's decision on the grounds that Khaleda's conviction has yet to reach finality.

The BNP chief landed in jail on February 8 after being convicted and sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. On October 30, she lost an appeal at the HC that enhanced her jail term to 10 years.

On October 29, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison in another case -- Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said, "We hope that

our party chief's appeals will be accepted if the Election Commission works neutrally."

Aggrieved appellants will be able to appeal to the HC with certified EC orders.

As many as 3,065 nomination papers were submitted, and the ROs rejected 786 of those during scrutiny on December 2.

As a party, the BNP saw rejection of the highest number of nomination papers -- 141. The number was only three for the Awami League and 38 for the Jatiya Party. Besides, nomination papers of 384 independent aspirants were rejected.

Conviction in cases, defaulting on loans, and non-payment of utility bills were among the reasons for rejection.

A total of 543 appeals were filed against ROs' rejection of nomination papers.

Hearing of 160 appeals was held at the EC secretariat yesterday. Of those, 80 were accepted and 76 rejected. Decision on four others is pending.

Of the 80 successful appellants, 37 are BNP leaders and 43 are leaders of the JP and several other parties, and independent aspirants.

Ill but can't go abroad

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President Park residence in his sport utility vehicle (SUV), he talked to party leaders and activists for a few minutes. He told them that he had anemia and was going to take food at the house, the sources added.

The JP chief's comments on his health contradict newly appointed party Secretary General Mashiur Rahman Ranga's recent statements that Ershad was 100 percent well and he was at the CMH as he was feeling lonely.

On Saturday, Ranga's predecessor Ruhul Amin Hawlader also said Ershad was fine and that he did not need to go abroad for check-up.

However, Foyzal Chisty, a presidium member of the party and a close aide of Ershad, had earlier told this newspaper that the JP boss was scheduled to go to Singapore on November 30 for treatment.

AL-JP SEAT-SHARING

Amid such contradictory statements on Ershad's health, insiders in the Jatiya Party and the ruling Awami League told The Daily Star that the AL might backtrack on its decision to give 40 to 45 parliamentary seats to the JP.

On several occasions in the past, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said his party would leave 65 to 70 seats for its partners in the 14-party

and grand alliances.

Yesterday, a number of AL leaders, however, said the party was now thinking about setting aside 50 to 55 seats for the partners.

Wishing anonymity, an AL presidium member said the JP might get 30 to 35 seats for contesting the December 30 polls.

"However, it is Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who will make the final decision in this regard," the leader said.

Contacted, a JP presidium member said they heard about the possible development.

Another JP leader said Ranga, state minister for LGRD, was believed to have good ties with AL high-ups and Ershad made him the secretary general for a better bargain over seat-sharing.

In the last three days, Ranga held several discussions with top AL leaders to secure 45 to 50 seats for his party. In reply, the leaders told Ranga that the Jatiya Party did not have "popular leaders" to get so many seats, said JP sources.

Currently, the JP has 36 MPs in parliament.

In the 2008 national election, AL gave 29 seats to JP, 4 to Workers Party and 3 to Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

In the 2014 election boycotted by

The BNP saw 21 appeals of its leaders rejected by the EC. Besides, the commission turned down 55 appeals from other parties and independent aspirants.

The remaining 383 appeals will be heard today and tomorrow.

Within half an hour of yesterday's appeal hearing, the BNP got good news that some of its candidates won appeals.

At that time, the party got back candidates for four constituencies -- Bogura-7, Jamalpur-4, Dhaka-1 and Manikganj-2 -- where nominations of all BNP aspirants were rejected by the ROs concerned.

Of the four contenders, nomination papers of three -- all upazila chairmen -- were rejected during scrutiny on the grounds that their resignation from the posts was not accepted by the local government ministry.

In Manikganj-2, the nomination papers of the BNP candidates were rejected because of mismatch of signatures of the party's secretary general in the nomination letters.

Hearing of the appeals of the BNP candidates in the other two constituencies -- Rangpur-5 and Shariatpur-1 - remains pending.

most political parties, including the BNP-led opposition, the AL gave 60 seats to its alliance partners.

"But the 2018 national election is totally different as all the political parties are participating in it. The election will be competitive and we can't offer our partners any seat where they may lose," said an AL presidium member.

He hinted that the number of seats earlier offered to Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB), both factions of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Tarikat Federation, could also come down as the Jatiya Oikyafront may join the polls and put up a tough fight.

According to earlier decisions, WPB would be given 5 seats, JDS (Inu) 3, JSD (Ambia) 2 and Tarikat 2 seats.

On November 26, Obaidul Quader had said the list of the parliamentary aspirants would be made public after Sunday -- the last day for withdrawing nomination -- for "strategic reasons".

Talking to reporters at the AL office on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday, the AL general secretary said the party had already started taking the final decision over its candidates yesterday and that the entire process would be over by today.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, claimed that they had

During the hearing of the appeal of convicted BNP leader Mir Nasir around noon, his lawyer argued that an appeal against his conviction is pending, and that he is eligible to contest the polls.

The CEC and other commission members then took a lunch break, keeping their decision pending. After the break, they rejected the appeal.

Later, Mir Nasir said he would challenge the EC decision at the HC.

"They [the CEC and other commission members] are all puppets of the government," he said before leaving the EC.

During the argument on the appeal by BNP leader Dulu, who was also convicted in a graft case, his lawyer mentioned that the nomination papers of AL leader Haji Selim and BNP leader Naser Rahman were accepted though they were convicted in corruption cases.

The EC took no time to reject the appeal.

Later, Dulu told reporters that he would move to the HC.

"The Election Commission is rejecting appeals of those BNP leaders, who will emerge victorious in the upcoming election," he said.

already reached a consensus over seat-sharing with the alliance partners.

He warned that a terrible situation would surface in the country if the AL faced a defeat in the election. "We all must remain united to avoid that situation," he added.

HELP RANGA: ERSHAD

JP leaders said before leaving for his home yesterday, Ershad said, "I liked the previous secretary general of the party [Hawlader]. You should like the new secretary general [Ranga]. He is new, help him."

Before yesterday, Ershad was last seen in public on November 20 when he addressed nomination seekers from the party at a convention centre in the capital.

Since then, Ershad was admitted at least thrice to Dhaka CMH. During all these days, he communicated only with a few party leaders and activists.

The JP chief had refused to take part in the January 5 polls at the last moment terming it an one-sided election. At that time, he was also taken to the CMH. He contested the polls staying at the hospital and won in a seat in Rangpur.

Later, he was made a special envoy to the prime minister. He is still holding the post with the status of a minister.

AL, BNP likely to unveil lists today

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Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, yesterday urged the components of AL-led grand alliance to accept the final nominations for the sake of greater interest.

He claimed that the AL has already reached a consensus with its alliance partners over the seat sharing issue.

The BNP, however, is not prepared to disclose the names of its nominees in all 300 seats as it wants to pick some contenders after the disposal of appeals filed with the Election Commission by many of its leaders. The nomination papers of those candidates were rejected by returning officers during scrutiny.

The EC will complete disposal of appeals tomorrow, a day before the expiry of the deadline for with-

drawal of candidature.

The BNP may announce the list of final candidates in 200 seats as it has left around 50 seats for its partners in two alliances -- the 20-party combine and the Jatiya Oikyafront.

"We will try to unveil a partial list of the candidates tomorrow [Friday]," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told this newspaper last night.

He said some party nominees got back their candidature by winning appeals at the EC. Some more leaders might win the appeals, he added.

"We need to accommodate them. Therefore, we cannot finalise the full list right now."

The BNP will finalise candidates for around 50 seats after the EC completes hearing the appeals. It has

almost completed seat sharing negotiations with its partners in the 20-party alliance and the Jatiya Oikyafront, party insiders said.

It has fielded Jamaat-e-Islami leaders in 20 constituencies, the highest number of seats obtained by any partner of the alliances.

In the Oikyafront, the BNP gave seven seats to the Gonoforum, two to Nagorik Oikya, four to Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab) and one to Krishak Sramik Janata League.

Some senior BNP leaders held a series of meetings with the leaders of 20-party alliance and Jatiya Oikyafront to reach a consensus over seat sharing.

MANIFESTOES

The Oikyafront, the alliance consisting of the BNP and several other opposition parties, would unveil its

election manifesto at a press conference on December 17, BNP leader Fakhrul told reporters after a meeting of the alliance's election steering committee at its office in the capital yesterday.

Earlier in the day, the Oikyafront announced that it would hold a rally on December 10 in the city. But it postponed the programme in the evening. Fakhrul said the rally was cancelled on political grounds.

"We will hold the rally in the capital at the fag-end of the election campaign in favour of our alliance candidates," he said.

Meanwhile, the AL may come up with its electoral manifesto on December 12. Sheikh Hasina, president of the AL, would unveil the manifesto at a press conference, party insiders said.

Country's first

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cost. Vehicles will have to pay toll to use the four-lane highway -- Joydevpur-Debogram-Bhulta-Madanpur (commonly known as Dhaka Bypass Road).

The road connects the Joydevpur-Tangail National Highway (N-4), Dhaka- Chattogram National Highway (N-1), Dhaka-Sylhet National Highway (N-2), Dhaka-Mymensingh National Highway (N-3) along with some regional highways and district roads.

Buses, trucks and other vehicles will be able to easily travel from northern and western parts of the country to eastern and southern parts without entering Dhaka city.

The contract was inked between the RHD and a consortium of three companies at a hotel in the capital. The companies are Sichuan Road and Bridge (Group) Corporation Ltd of China, and Shamim Enterprise (Pvt) Ltd and UDC Corporation Ltd of Bangladesh.

RHD Chief Engineer Ebne Alam Hasan on behalf of the government, and Zhao Fang for Sichuan, Aminul Haque for Shamim Enterprise, and Kalam Hossain for UDC signed the deal.

The project includes designing, building, financing, operating, and maintaining the road by the private partner for a concession period of 25 years.

The highway will have modern equipment such as central control and command centre, variable message signs, full length CCTV coverage and intelligent cameras for traffic count and classifications installed.

Nazrul Islam, secretary of the road transport and highways division, said upgrading a road to an expressway was very expensive. It was not possible for the government alone to do that job. So, private investment under the PPP was very important.

Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for sustainable development goals affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, said this was the biggest ever project under the PPP and asked the consortium to maintain timeframe and quality strictly.

Nojibur Rahman, principal secretary to the prime minister, said the project was very important for the country.

Syed Afsor H Uddin, chief executive officer of the PPP Authority, and representatives of the companies also spoke at the signing ceremony.