

AUSTRALIA ELECTION 'First' Bangladesh origin woman to run for parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sabrin Farooqui is probably the first female of Bangladeshi origin to run for a parliamentary seat in Australia in the upcoming election due on March 23.

As a candidate for Australian Labor Party (ALP), she will contest a seat on New South Wales (NSW) Legislative Council, according to an Australian news portal. The NSW Council, often referred to as the upper house, is one of the two chambers in the New South Wales state parliament in Australia.

Born and brought up in Bangladesh, Sabrin studied in the University of Dhaka before flying to Sydney as an international student in 2004. She completed her Masters from the University of New South Wales and PhD from the Faculty of Education from the University of Sydney.

Sabrin received "Best Research Student Award" from Sydney University for her work on assessment and pedagogy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. As part of her research works, she highlighted various issues and solutions for the educational system in Bangladesh.

She worked as an academic in Sydney University before joining Australian Public Service. She worked for Australian Bureau of Statistics and Fair Work Commission. As an activist of Labor for Refugees, she advocates for an unequivocal policy for people seeking asylum and refuge. Sabrin believes that the settlement of refugees is a significant national and global issue.

As a catalyst for social change, Sabrin voluntarily works on women's development, empowerment and domestic/ family violence intervention, prevention and awareness, the news outlet said. Her vision is to facilitate a harmonious, multicultural Australia where all immigrants can be recognised as valuable contributors to the community and the economy and as integral part of the social fabric in Australia.

Dhaka turns

FROM PAGE 1
Non-cooperation Movement at the programme.

He said payment of taxes would be suspended until the government reprieves stopped and hartal would be observed every day from 6:00am to 2:00pm.

"Come to Race Course on March 17, I shall announce the next course of action," he said.

All offices, courts, factories, schools, colleges, transport services remained closed.

To quell the rebellion, the Pakistan government imposed curfew on Dhaka, Rangpur and Sylhet.

Called by Bangabandhu, hartal was observed all over Bangladesh for the first day and in the capital for the second consecutive day.

During the strike, Pakistani military opened fire on spontaneous processions brought out by general people, killing many of them.

In Rangpur, as clashes broke out between Pakistani army men and civilians, a 24-hour curfew was imposed from 2:30pm.

In Sylhet, curfew was imposed from 7:30am to 7:30pm. In Dhaka, curfew time was from 10:30pm to 6:00am.

President Yahya Khan announced that a meeting would be arranged on March 10 between political leaders.

The announcement came from the President Bhawan in Rawalpindi where it was also said that after the conference, within two weeks, the national parliamentary/committee assembly would be held.

Bangabandhu instantly rejected the invitation.

"If you do not want a democratically elected government, then you can form your own government. We will form the government/constitution of Bangladesh," he said.

The day which was to have been the day for the sitting of the National Assembly was observed as a day of national mourning. Bangabandhu demanded at a meeting: "withdraw forces, hand over power".

Angered by the decision to postpone the Assembly session, mob burned the Pakistani flag.

Yahya continued to posture for negotiations while non-Bengali regiments of soldiers were surreptitiously flown in Dhaka from West Pakistan.

[Sources: Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh Genocide Archive]

They stand their ground

FROM PAGE 1
Friday night for his reluctance to pull out of the election.

The BCL men forced him to write an application to the hall proctor on withdrawing his candidature. As he informed the proctor about the incident, the latter tore apart the application and asked him to file a written complaint against the Chhatra League men, Mahbubur told The Daily Star.

Wishing anonymity, several students of the hall said a BCL faction had been putting pressure on Mahbubur to withdraw his candidature since he collected the nomination form last week.

Around 9:00am on Friday, some BCL men met Mahbubur on the Ekushey Book Fair premises and forcibly took him to room no-111 of SM hall.

They confined Mahbubur to the room and assaulted him. He was freed around 10:00am yesterday only after he assured the BCL activists of withdrawing his nomination.

Contacted, Zulias Cizar, the BCL's general secretary candidate at SM hall, said an incident occurred over Mahbubur's candidacy. "If any incident like what happened to Mahbubur occurs on March 11 [polling day], I will work for him."

Farid Hasan, independent candidate for GS of SM hall students' union, alleged that he was roughed up by some Chhatra League men at the dormitory on Friday.

At least three independent candidates of Mohsin hall told The Daily Star that BCL President Rezwanaul Haque Chowdhury on Friday night threatened them with dire consequences if they did not quit the polls race.

Rezwanaul had called the independent candidates to his dormitory room (332) and asked them to withdraw nominations by noon yesterday. Mohsin hall BCL President Sarker Zahir Raihan, General Secretary Mehedi Hasan Sunny and its VP and GS candidates Touhidul Haque Shishir and Mehedi Hasan Mizan were also present, said the independent contestants.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not reach Rezwanaul for comments as he didn't pick up the phone.

Touhidul told this correspondent that they asked the independent candidates involved with BCL to withdraw their nominations.

At least five other independent candidates at as many dormitories told this newspaper that they were intimidated by Chhatra League men for contesting the election.

On Thursday night, a group of BCL activists at Zia hall asked an independent candidate to pull out of the race. They also allegedly threatened to drive him away from the dormitory if he did not comply.

An independent candidate at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman hall came under pressure from some BCL activists to quit the polls race.

Shahab Uddin, GS nominee from a joint panel of leftist students' platforms at Zahurul Haque hall, alleged that he was compelled to withdraw his nomination yesterday.

Talking to this newspaper, another independent GS candidate, also a Chhatra League activist, said several top leaders of the student body held a closed-door meeting with him at Zahurul Haque hall on Thursday, and asked him to pull out of the election. They also phoned his parents to press them on the matter.

According to section 9 (Ga) of the electoral code of conduct of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu), any candidate or any person on behalf of him cannot intimidate or use force on any other contender or voter and bar them from casting votes.

Anyone violating the code of conduct may face a fine of maximum Tk 10,000, cancellation of candidature, expulsion from the university or a punishment as per relevant laws of the university or the state, reads section 15 (Kha) of the code of conduct.

Meanwhile, ARM Asifur Rahman, independent GS contender in the Ducsu polls, yesterday submitted a memorandum to the DU vice-chancellor, protesting putting pressure on independent candidates.

"As a regular student of the university, each student has the right to take part in the polls. But putting pressure on them or assaulting them over nominations is a clear violation of the code of conduct. They are being threatened so that they cannot form an alliance with any student organisation," he added.

The final list of candidates for the Ducsu and hall union polls will be published today and the supplementary voter list will be made public on Tuesday.

A total of 18 DU halls will go to polls on March 11, which would be the first election at the university in 28 years. Each of the hall unions has 13 posts.

There are an estimated 43,000 voters at the DU.

5 years on, MH370 families seek closure

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Five years ago, their loved ones boarded a plane and vanished.

The group of Malaysians meet about once a month - usually at a coffee shop or a home in Kuala Lumpur - to support each other and try to keep missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 in the public eye.

Their relatives were among the 239 people onboard the Boeing 777 when it vanished enroute from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014 and became the world's greatest aviation mystery.

Scraps of aircraft debris have washed up on the east African coastline, but two underwater searches in the southern Indian Ocean proved fruitless, leaving few clues as to what happened.

Starved for information and struggling to resume their lives, the families have come to lean on each other for support, said Jacquita Gonzales, whose husband Patrick Gomes was MH370's inflight supervisor.

"It goes beyond a group waiting for answers," said Gonzales, a 57-year-old kindergarten teacher who often hosts the group at her home on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur.

"It has become a family as well, an extended family," she told Reuters.

For five years the group has campaigned to keep public attention on MH370 and help each other cope with their grief and try to live normal lives by returning to work, raising children and, in Gonzales' case, battle illness.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016 for the second time in her life, but it has since gone into remission.

"When I first had cancer, I had my husband for support," she said.

"This second time, no. But I had a lot of family members around, my friends, my children, and now my MH370 families... so that kept us going."

In her living room hangs a painting of a blue-and-yellow field - a gift from Calvin Shim, another MH370 next-of-kin, to help her stay calm while recovering from surgery.

Shim, a father of two, said the group helped him to adjust to life as a single parent. His wife, Christine Tan, was a member of the MH370 crew.

"The other families know exactly how each of us feel," he said during a meeting at Gonzales' home.

"Emotionally, that's been a good support and help to us, especially since the plane has not been found," he added.

Into the world

FROM PAGE 16
The other arrestees are Ridoy Hossain Badsha, 19, Rasel, 27, Sohel Mia alias Kala Sohel, 22, Mahabub Hossain alias Sumon, 26, Javed Robi, 27, Mohorom alias Sharif, 21, Shamim, 24, Sharif Hossain, 25, and Parvez Hossain, 26.

The arrestees told police that they had been stealing cash for the last one and a half years from shops in Hazaribagh and Uttara in the capital and Cumilla, Feni, Tongi, Savar and Chattogram.

Except Shamim, who is from Narsingdi, the rest of the arrestees are from Cumilla.

Officers learnt that Abdullah had been arrested several times before for stealing shoes or carrying drugs. He met two of the gang members Sumon and Javed in prison a couple of years ago.

After being freed, they formed the gang that includes locksmiths and other individuals who come in handy for the heists.

Members of the group closely observed shops in popular market-places and selected which shop to rob.

Once the target was fixed, they kept an eye on the shop and observes when the shop opened and closed.

Abdullah told police that he was the coordinator of the group, said Mashiur Rahman, adding, "They are capable of breaking any shutter gates or locks without making any loud noise. It takes them less than two minutes to complete a job."

They never robbed shops twice in a single area, the officer added.

The gang members mainly targeted shops that closed minutes before other shops in a shopping centre.

They gathered in the market and bought bed sheets or long fabrics and went in front of their targeted shop, said investigators.

They then showed the fabric to each other in front of the shop creating a temporary veil. The locksmiths meanwhile broke into the shop and took the cash. It all happened in a couple of minutes, the officer said.

The gang members could not mention how many heists they had done so far.

"We have learnt that four such organised burglars are active now." Mashiur added that detectives would be looking for them.

Traders fume

FROM PAGE 1
Bakshibazar around 11:00am.

They first disconnected utility lines of three buildings for illegally storing plastic raw materials.

But trouble ensued when they attempted to disconnect utility lines of another building housing a plastic factory and several warehouses.

Some 30 to 40 traders along with their staff started chanting slogans against the drive and alleged that they did not get enough time to shift their warehouses and factories.

Abu Motaleb, director of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, who seemed to be leading the protest, said the taskforce was taking action against the factories and warehouses which do not store 29 "dangerous chemicals" listed by the authorities.

He tried to raise the same issue during Thursday's drive in Islambagh.

"As a member of the taskforce, I am supposed to know about the drive but I was not informed," said Motaleb.

This newspaper could not verify the claim.

Ali Ahmed, senior vice president of Bangladesh Plastic Babosayee Samity, said the drive against warehouses of raw materials for producing plastic is not acceptable as "those are not flammable".

"If government wants to shift all warehouses and small factories from Old Dhaka, we need time and land," he said.

But Easmin Akhter, assistant director of Department of Environment, said those raw materials are flammable and help spread the fire.

She said none of the warehouses and factories has taken any approval from DoE and such establishments in residential areas are totally unacceptable.

In the face of protest, the taskforce, however, left the spot around 12:30pm and returned to the Nagar Bhaban.

MAYOR INTERVENES

Talking to journalists at Nagar Bhaban around 1:30pm, Khokon admitted that a section of traders were opposing the drive and said he would go to the spot to understand the situation.

"Our drive will continue. I will be present at the scene while the drive will be conducted," he said.

"The city authorities will ensure safety of its dwellers at any cost. We will follow a zero tolerance policy in this regard," he added.

"I will go there [Bakshibazar] and if any warehouses, illegal factories and existence of chemicals are found, action would be taken as per the law. We won't budge an inch from our position."

Replying to a question, he said the traders were given nine years after the Nimtoli fire. "Isn't nine years enough?"

Khokon said he and his predecessors on several occasions conducted drives against chemical warehouses and factories in Old Dhaka.

The mayor said they were not destroying or confiscating any goods, they were only disconnecting utility lines considering those building risky.

The traders will get time to move those, he added.

"If they think everything will calm down after two months and they will continue their businesses as usual, we won't let that happen," he added.

Khokon reached Bakshibazar area around 2:20pm with additional forces and disconnected the utility lines of the building in question.

There are some misconceptions among locals and businessmen here, the mayor said, adding, "Our drive is only against illegal goods and warehouses. No other industries or households will be affected."

2 Gonoforum

FROM PAGE 1
the party's decision.

Just around a month before the national election, the BNP, the Gonoforum and some other political parties had formed Jatiya Oikyafront.

Oikyafront leaders, including Dr Kamal Hossain, boycotted the polls results and called for a new election.

The BNP won only six seats against 289 by the ruling Awami League-led Grand Alliance.

All the six MPs-elect of BNP decided not to join the Jatiya Sangsad.

Talking to this newspaper, Sultan Monsur yesterday said Dr Kamal knew about their oath.

Mostafa Mohsin Montu, general secretary of Gonoforum, said the two leaders would violate the party's decision if they took oath.

"Our party has decided not to send the two MPs to parliament. We will take all necessary actions if they take oath."

Montu also said the duo was misleading people by giving false statements.

If they took oath violating the party's decision, the Gonoforum would write to the Speaker to cancel their memberships for floor-crossing, he said.

Former Awami League leader Sultan Mansur, also an ex vice-president of Ducsu, was elected MP from Moulvibazar-2 and Mokabbir from Sylhet-2.

Soon after the December 30 election, the duo said Kamal was positive about their joining parliament.



The taskforce, however, did not conduct drive to any new building.

After the chemical-fed fire in Nimtoli claimed 124 lives in 2010, the government took up four projects to relocate four types of industries - chemical, plastic, printing and light electronics -- from this part of the capital.

Around nine years down the line, the implementation of those projects still remains at the preliminary stage mainly due to problems associated with land acquisition and bureaucratic tangles, say officials.

Against this backdrop, the industries ministry selected two temporary sites in the capital and Tongi to relocate chemical warehouses and factories from Old Dhaka.

Industries Secretary Abdul Halim on Wednesday said they would start relocation within the next 15 days.

There are some 4,000 chemical warehouse and factories in the old town, posing serious fire risk to people of the heavily congested area with narrow roads and lanes.

REALITY OF BAKSHIBAZAR
Many buildings in Bakshibazar are used for commercial purposes, violating environmental laws and putting the residences of the area under huge risk, locals said.

"We are living here as the rent of houses in the area is comparatively low," Shahin Sarkar, a resident of Joy Chandra Nag Road said.

The taskforce raided their house but found the warehouse in the building empty.

Shahin said his wife was a teacher of a nearby college and that's why they had to live in this area.

Appreciating the drive, he said, "We have seen flame of the Chawkbazar fire from our house We are in continuous fear of fire."

Sumaiya Aktar, another resident of the area, whose building's utility lines were disconnected for housing plastic raw materials, said they are also aware of fire risk but they have hardly any choice.

"It is hard to find a building in the old town without a warehouse or factory," she said.

DRIVE AT SHAHEEDNAGAR

A taskforce led by Subarna Shirin, assistant commissioner and executive magistrate of the Office of Dhaka Deputy Commissioner, disconnected utility lines of eight buildings in Shaheednagar area yesterday.

"Those buildings were mainly storing plastic raw materials and shoe factories without any approval," Shirin told The Daily Star last night.

They had no environment or fire clearance and some of them were shoe factories taking electricity lines from residential buildings, she added.

She, however, said they did not face any problem in carrying out the drive and it will resume today.

Tigers' misery

FROM PAGE 16
television sets today if the Tigers keep battling the way they have so far in the game.

After New Zealand declared the first innings on 715 for six -- their highest-ever total in a Test innings courtesy of captain Kane Williamson's unbeaten 200 -- Bangladesh ended the third day on 174, trailing by 307 runs with six wickets remaining at the Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

Bangladesh has struggled throughout the Test, surrendering meekly for 234 runs in the first innings. And they are on the brink of another batting collapse in the second innings. The Tigers' only hope to get something out of this seemingly lost cause would be if the two overnight batsmen -- Soumya Sarkar (39) and stand-in skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (15) -- play sensibly for as long as they can to restore some pride, the only likely takeaway from the game. Should the two fall, the tail would be exposed with only two recognised batsmen in the lineup -- Liton Das and Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- remaining.

There were a number of records made yesterday but almost all of those milestones just added to Bangladesh's woes. The fact that the Kiwis registered their highest-ever Test total is probably what hurt the Tigers most as a team. However, all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz secured an individual record he most likely would have liked to avoid. Mehedi conceded 246 runs for two wickets in 49 overs with an economy rate of 5.02, the worst by any bowler bowling for 45 overs or more in the longest format of the game.

Bangladesh will begin day four with a mountain to climb and to make matters worse, if the pitch assists bowlers more on the last two days, as predicted by the ground's head curator Karl Johnson, then chances are that the Tigers will not see day five.