

JP moves to curtail party chairman's special powers

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Jatiya Party is considering curtailing the special powers of its chairman mentioned in the party charter.

The charter says the chairman can form, reconstitute, and scrap any committee at any level even if the action goes against the other parts of the JP constitution.

"We yesterday decided to amend section 20/1/Ka of the party's constitution that empowers its chairman to make any decision unilaterally," JP Secretary General Moshir Rahman Ranga told reporters after the meeting of Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party (JPPP).

The party council slated for November 30 will make the final decision about the amendment, he said after the meeting at the office of Raushan Ershad, deputy leader of the opposition in parliament.

Ranga added that the section would be made more democratic through the amendment. But he did not elaborate further in this regard.

The JPPP also decided that Raushan would be the leader of the opposition in parliament and GM Quader would remain the chairman, he added.

Hours after the meeting, Quader wrote to Speaker Shirin Sharmin

Chaudhury, urging her to make Raushan the leader of the opposition. The post fell vacant after former JP chairman HM Ershad died on July 14.

The Speaker later told journalists that she would take measures accordingly.

Twenty-four JP lawmakers out of 25 were present at the JPPP meeting, Ranga said.

Talking to reporters, he claimed there is no more conflict in the JP now.

He added that the party would nominate Ershad's son Saad Ershad to contest the by-polls to Rangpur-3, which became vacant after the death of Ershad.

Earlier at a press conference at the JP chairman's Banani office, Ranga said the two feuding groups of the party finally reached an understanding to keep the party united, accepting Quader as its chairman and Raushan the leader of the opposition in parliament.

Amid conflict over the posts of party chairman and leader of the opposition, the leaders loyal to Quader and Raushan had a meeting at a city hotel on Saturday night and made some decisions to avoid a split in the party.

"We had a controversy over the post of our party chairman, and we resolved it yesterday [Saturday]. GM

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Man killed in 'gunfight'

Cops say they never detained him; family says victim was picked up on Thursday

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Mymensingh Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The dead Sajal Mia, 24, was a drug peddler and had six cases against him, including four related to drugs, claimed police.

Family of the dead, however, alleged that Sajal and his brother Harun Mia, 25, were picked up by plainclothes men on Thursday night and kept in police custody until yesterday.

Sajal's mother Safia Khatun said, "I met my sons at the office of Detective Branch [of police] on Friday morning. I also gave them clothes there. But they [police officials] have denied to share my sons' whereabouts since Friday afternoon."

"I went back to the office [police station] on Saturday morning and stayed there until night. I kept begging to them [police officials] so that they allow me to meet my sons. But they did not," the wailing mother said.

Asked, Shah Kamal Akanda, officer-

in-charge of Mymensingh DB police, denied the allegations and said Safia went to the police station and police permitted her to visit their lockup but she could not find her sons there.

A police team yesterday conducted a raid in Nizamnagar area on information that a group of criminals were peddling drugs. As soon as the law enforcers reached the area, the criminals opened fire, forcing them to retreat, the OC claimed.

At one point of the "gunfight", Sajal sustained bullet injuries and his cohorts fled the scene. Police then rushed him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he added.

The body was sent to Mymensingh Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Meanwhile, Sajal's brother Harun was produced before a court in the district on charges of peddling drugs.

OC Kamal said they arrested Harun in the town's Islambagh Beribadh area early yesterday along with three others and produced them before a court with a five-day remand plea.

A house

FROM PAGE 1

Visiting the house in Panchgaon recently, this correspondent found the tall-roofed brick-walled bungalow in a bad condition.

Abdul Munim Chowdhury, son of Alauddin, said his family has been "living" here since 1965, after his father leased the property from the then Pakistan government.

They also built a house on the land. "My father Alauddin Chowdhury leased the house for 45 years from the district administration," he claimed, adding that his father, who died in 2013, had also applied for permanent lease.

Munim also claimed that the original dwellers of the house had migrated to India from the then East Pakistan during the 1947 Partition.

Afterwards, the house was turned into a union parishad office, he added. Mahmudur Rahman Mamun, assistant commissioner of land in Rajnagar upazila, said Alauddin had leased the property in 1967 from the then Moulvibazar sub-divisional officer (SDO).

"In 1979, Alauddin again obtained lease from the then SDO. Because he did not pay any lease money, the government tried to evict him from that property," Mahmudur told the Daily Star recently.

In 1988, Alauddin filed a lawsuit to establish his ownership over the land and the house but that was dismissed by the Moulvibazar court. The court again dismissed his appeal in 1990.

In 2000, Alauddin filed an appeal with the High Court. Since then, the government pleader of Moulvibazar district has been enquired twice about the progress of the case -- first by the HC in 2009 and again by the Deputy Commissioner's Office in 2017 but nothing has happened yet, Mahmudur said.

Alauddin's lawyer Khaled Ahmed told The Daily Star that on June 26, 2000, the High Court issued a rule asking why the judgments by the district court should not be dismissed.

Five hearings followed and during the last one on November 27, 2012, an injunction application was made to the High Court to ensure that the homestead is left as it is until the case is resolved, Khaled recounted.

The case has been pending since his client passed away in 2013, he added.

Contacted, Rajnagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ferdousi Akhter said the government could not renovate the house or construct a memorial at Leela's ancestral property because of the legal issues.

"Once it is released from the High Court, some sort of establishment can be built by the upazila parishad," she added.

THE COLLABORATOR
Alauddin collaborated with the Pakistan army in the massacre of 59 Hindus on May 7, 1971, said Sajal Kumar Chakraborty, commander of upazila Muktiyoddha unit command in Rajnagar, also a witness at the trial over the genocide.

Tapan Palit, assistant professor of history in Jagannath University and researcher of Panchgaon Gonohatya published by 1971: Genocide - Torture Archive and Museum in Khulna, said Alauddin first brought the Pakistan army to Panchgaon village in 1971.

Alauddin was a member of Panchgaon Union Peace Committee, formed to oppose the liberation of Bangladesh, said Hari Debnath, who investigated the Panchgaon genocide.

He was the number one accused in the case filed over the Panchgaon genocide in 1972 under Collaborator Order-1972.

He fled the area and later returned following the political changeover after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975.

Alauddin was also involved in abduction, confinement, torture, murder, looting and arson committed at Paschimbag village in Rajnagar upazila, he added.

"We have found evidence of his involvement in the crimes but did not mention his name in the charges as he died before the start of the investigation [in October 2014]."

The International Crimes Tribunal in July 2018 found involvement of four persons in the Panchgaon genocide and handed them death penalty. The four were given jail until death for the offence committed in Paschimbag village.

[Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary contributed to this report]



Since a bus broke through the iron bar at the Khilgaon level crossing several months ago, the authorities have been using bamboo to stop traffic. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

18 hurt in Gazipur restaurant blast

Cause of explosion yet to be known

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least 18 people were injured after an explosion caused a section of ceiling and walls of a restaurant to collapse on them in Gazipur's Boardbazar area early yesterday.

The explosion at Tripty Hotel and Restaurant, housed on the ground floor of Monsur Super Market, rocked the area around 2:30am when the staffers were preparing to close, said Ershad Hossain, official of local Fire Service and Civil Defence.

On information, four fire engines rushed to the spot and rescued the injured, he said.

Firefighters are yet to determine the exact cause of the blast.

Of the injured, 16 were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while two were admitted to a local hospital.

Radhuni Hotel and Restaurant, another restaurant adjacent to Tripty, was also damaged by the explosion.

Rezaul Karim and Habibur Rahman, owners of the Tripty and Radhuni restaurants respectively, said



Two intact CNG cylinders on a rickshaw-van lie in the debris of the Tripty Hotel in Gazipur.

PHOTO: ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE

they were sure that the explosion was not caused by gas cylinder as two cylinders of the restaurant were found intact.

Zakaria Khan, station officer of Gazipur Fire Service, said the gas cylinders were placed about 20 feet away from the restaurant and they were connected with the oven at

kitchen through a long pipeline.

"Primarily we think there was a leakage in the pipeline and the explosion was caused by the gas trapped inside the restaurant," he said.

Meanwhile, a five-member probe body headed by an additional magistrate has been formed to investigate the incident.

A big opportunity

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh -- through maritime routes.

"We should try to talk to China so that the corridor is extended up to Chattogram via Rakhine," Muniruzzaman told this correspondent on the sidelines of the conference.

Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the concept of the BRI in 2013 in the light of the ancient Silk Route to connect Asia with Africa and Europe through land and maritime networks.

Bangladesh is one of the 129 countries that have already joined the initiative. Some of the big powers, including the US and India, are yet to become part of it. India, however, is involved in some other initiatives that partly overlap the BRI.

Muniruzzaman said that though the BRI has been termed a trade project, it has significant political and strategic ramifications.

"We must carefully analyse these aspects as we move towards implementing the projects under the initiative," he said.

According to the CPD, Bangladesh, located in a sub-region that includes economic powerhouses India and China, is a gateway to the Maritime Silk Route that passes through the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh has a unique opportunity to emerge in the region as an important economic hub of the century.

While engaging itself with the BRI, Bangladesh will have to take into consideration its relationship with its big neighbour India, said the thinktank.

"Thus, an effective balance of relationship with two big regional neighbours will also be a major task to be taken into consideration by the policymakers of Bangladesh," said the CPD in a paper presented at the conference.

The BRI is likely to have implications for the interests and engagement of extra-regional powers, such as the USA and the EU, in Asia. It is of interest to observe the role of the proposed Maritime Silk Route in ensuring security in the Indian Ocean, it pointed out.

"In this respect, there is possibly a need to have an effective multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the interests and concerns regarding the BRI in South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh.

"It is important to have an objective analysis focusing on both economic and political aspects of this ambitious initiative. This will help the government adopt informed policies to reap the fullest benefits of the BRI and mitigate the risks associated with it," the CPD said.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya said the BRI should have clear norms such as openness, transparency, no corruption and no conflict of interest in commercial deals.

The BRI also should have multilateral framework for all stakeholders that will have equal footing in the decision-making process, he said.

"We need to understand what keeps India away, and how Indo-Pacific strategy affects the BRI."

"Rohingya experience taught us geo-political realities... We need to see how we can really exploit our advantages, how we can prepare better, and how we can manage our relationship in certain ways that we can optimise not only in the long run but also in the short run," Debapriya added.

Dr Kalyan Raj Sharma, president of Nepal-China Friendship Forum, said a lack of trust among countries in South Asia is a major problem that's hindering regional growth. And India's role is crucial in implementing the BRI.

For example, if there is a rail link from China to Nepal, it won't be of much benefit unless it links India or Bangladesh, he said.

"Division creates poverty, unity creates wealth," he said, stressing the need for unity among the South Asian nations.

Former ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, said the BRI is flexible because each country can have its own projects, maintaining the common principles of the initiative.

If India has any objection to any component of the BRI, it can raise that and eventually join the initiative. "If not, it will create a lot of hindrances," he said.

Another former ambassador M Humayun Kabir, acting president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, said India and several other countries have security concerns that may discourage them from joining the initiative.

But if there is an open environment

for trade governance, things could move forward, he added.

Economic relations between China and India are transforming. "I hope India would find some form of modus operandi. On the other hand, the BRI may also have to change, and those opposing it may find space to join it," he said.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former state minister for foreign affairs, said China and India are large trading partners in the region, and they should work together for regional development.

The conference was also addressed by Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the CPD; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; Lailafur Yasmin, professor of international relations at Dhaka University; and Guo Suiyan and Dr Lin Yanming, both associate professors at Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming of China.

Two die, 13 critical after Sri Lanka faith healing

AFP, Colombo

Two people died from heat exhaustion after attending a mass open air faith healing session in northeast Sri Lanka which left 13 others fighting for their lives, police said yesterday.

Around 10,000 people, some of whom were seriously ill, had gathered at a school to listen to a man who claimed he could use "powers of the gods and the Buddha" to cure the sick.

Police in the town of Horowupotana, 260 kilometres (162 miles) north-east of Colombo said 18 people were taken to hospital, with 13 in a critical condition.

Officials at the local hospital said the two who died suffered heat exhaustion while others were treated for dehydration. Temperatures have soared to about 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in the area this weekend.

The faith healer, Deegoda Kumara, used his YouTube channel to deny he had caused the deaths and accused local media of causing unrest by spreading mistrust about his work.

No decision

FROM PAGE 1

President Sheikh Hasina strongly criticised the incumbent leadership of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and ordered the dissolution of its central committee.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said the prime minister expressed dissatisfaction over some activities of the top leaders.

When asked about the prospect of dissolving the committee, he said, "It would not be proper for me to comment on this until the process of implementation starts."

Meanwhile, the meeting sources said Sheikh Hasina got furious when several AL leaders in attendance pointed out various controversial activities of BCL President Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon and General Secretary Golam Rabbani.

After BCL's failure to elect the new leadership through a council, Sheikh Hasina herself nominated Shovon and Rabbani as president and general secretary on July 31 last year.

Nearly one year later, they announced the 301-member central committee, but those who were excluded started criticising and protesting the new committee.

Allegations ran rife that the new committee included a few married people, non-students, extortionists, expelled BCL men, drug dealers and addicts, and former leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir, excluding some dedicated BCL leaders, according to insiders.

Amid continuous protest by a section of BCL leaders, the student body dropped 19 of its members from the committee on May 29, but their names were not made public yet.

During the first half of their two-year tenure, they even failed to announce the committees of Jagannath University and Eden Mohila College although the councils of these units were held two months ago.

At Jagannath University, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal had to wait for nearly three hours to inaugurate the council as Shovon and Rabbani reached the venue two and a half hours after the scheduled time. Separately, they came to a BCL programme after the chief guest, Education Minister Dipu Moni, was already there.

This year, a concert to celebrate Pahela Baishakh and Chaitra Sankranti on Dhaka University campus was postponed after a BCL faction allegedly set fire to equipment and vandalised the stage over sharing money from the sponsor company.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, BCL's former committee member Tanbir Hasan Shaikat said they have become a victim of an inefficient leadership. "We want Apa [Sheikh Hasina] to intervene and protect Chhatra League's glory."

Shaikat was elected a member of Dhaka University Central Student Union (Ducusu) from BCL's panel.

Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

or bat throughout the day.

Resuming the day at 237 for eight, Afghanistan added just 23 runs to the total before folding for 260 in 90.1 overs. Wicketkeeper-batsman Afsar Zazai backed up his 41 in the first innings with a gritty 48 to power his side to a huge 397-run lead. Shakib scalped three wickets while Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Tajul Islam and Nayeem Hasan bagged two each.

Bangladesh made a decent start to their second innings, going into lunch at 30 for no loss before the opposition's spinners took control in the final two sessions of play. Bangladesh's surprising move of changing the batting order for a right-left combination did not make much sense at all and, for the most part, they meekly surrendered aside from a good effort from opener Shadman Islam, who made a team-high 41 runs.