

9 BNP men lands in jail on charges of sabotage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police produced 18 BNP leaders and activists before a court in Tangail yesterday.

Of them, nine were sent to jail on sabotage charges whereas nine others secured bail.

A day earlier, they were picked up after a memorial gathering of a slain BNP leader.

Eight of them were shown arrested in a case filed by the Tangail Sadar Police on November 21 under Section 15 (3) of the Special Powers Act on charges of sabotage.

The law enforcers have also prayed for a seven-day remand for each of them for quizzing, Tangail Court Inspector Tanveer Ahmed told The Daily Star.

The court of Tangail Senior Judicial Magistrate Rupan Kumar Das fixed the date for hearing the remand prayer on December 28 and ordered the eight accused to be sent to jail.

The BNP leaders sent to jail are Ashraf Alam, joint convener of Sadar unit BNP; its member Ashraf Ali, Golam Sarwar; General Secretary of Baghil union unit BNP; Jahirul Islam Iran, former general secretary of ward-15 BNP, Rashedul Islam, general secretary of ward-8 BNP, Belayet Hussain Khan, president of ward-6 BNP, Omar Ali, a member of the unit, and Lutfar Rahman, convener of Katulee union Jubo Dal.

Meanwhile, Maruf Sarwar, president of ward-3 unit BNP, was also produced before the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Sajib Chowdhury's court seeking seven days' remand after showing him arrested in another case filed with Delduar Police station.

The court also sent him to jail after fixing Thursday for a hearing of his remand prayer.

On the other hand, nine other leaders and activists of BNP and its associate organisations, including Rakib Hossain, a joint secretary of the district unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, were shown arrested under section 34 of the Police Act as vagrants, and the court granted them bail following their application.

Farhad also said that as part of the plan to foil BNP's December 24 mass procession programme, police in direction of the illegal government arrested their workers on false charges and sent them to jail.



Teenage boys having a bit of fun pushing a boat into the shallow Shari river in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila yesterday. Due to a lack of dredging, the river is now only knee-deep, hampering the movement of vessels.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Afghan women barred from entering univs

UN chief 'deeply alarmed' by Taliban ban; OIC, US condemn it

AFP, Kabul

Hundreds of young women were stopped by armed guards yesterday from entering Afghan university campuses, a day after the nation's Taliban rulers banned them from higher education in another assault on human rights.

Despite promising a softer rule when they seized power last year, the hardline Islamists have ratcheted up restrictions on all aspects of women's lives, ignoring international outrage.

A team of AFP journalists saw groups of students gathered outside universities in the capital, Kabul, barred from entering by armed guards and shuttered gates.

"The Taliban are scared of women's progress. We can raise educated children in society and they are scared of that," said 19-year Wajihah Kazimi, who survived an attack on an education centre in the capital earlier this year.

The Taliban authorities wanted to "suppress" women, said Setara Farahmand, 21, who was studying German literature at Kabul University.

"They only want women to stay at home and give birth to children. That's it, they don't want anything more for them."

Male students also expressed shock at

the latest edict, with some in the eastern city of Jalalabad boycotting their exams in protest.

"It really expresses their illiteracy and low knowledge of Islam and human rights," said one male university student, asking not to be named.

At least two male university lecturers in Kabul announced they were quitting in protest.

Most private and government universities are closed for a few weeks over winter, although campuses generally remain open to students and staff.

"We are doomed. We have lost everything," said one Kabul student, who asked not to be identified.

The decision to bar women from universities came late Tuesday in a terse announcement from Neda Mohammad Nadeem, the minister for higher education.

"You all are informed to immediately implement the mentioned order of suspending education of females until further notice," he said.

Washington condemned the decision "in the strongest terms", while United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed", his spokesman said.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also denounced the

ban, saying it was "seriously denting the credibility of the government".

"Just think of all the female doctors, lawyers and teachers who have been, and who will be, lost to the development of the country," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in a statement.

Muslim nation Qatar -- which has played a key role in facilitating talks between the West and the Taliban -- said everyone deserves the right to education and urged Afghanistan's rulers to review the decision "in line with the teachings of the Islamic religion".

Germany meanwhile said it would put the ban on the agenda of the G7 club of wealthy nations, of which it currently holds the presidency.

It comes less than three months after thousands of girls and women were allowed to sit for university entrance exams across the country, with many aspiring for teaching and medicine as future careers.

After the Taliban takeover in August last year, universities were forced to implement new rules including gender-segregated classrooms and entrances, while women were only permitted to be taught by professors of the same sex, or old men.

