



We don't believe in dividing the nation over faith Says Jamaat ameer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said that his party does not support dividing the nation based on religion.



"According to the latest census, 90.8 percent of the country's population is Muslim, while the rest are Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. But we're not in favour of dividing the nation along religious lines. We want to see a united nation."

Jamaat chief made the remarks while addressing a conference organised by the party's central Ulama Committee at Al-Falah Auditorium in the capital's Moghbazar yesterday.

Shafiqur said people are free to choose their faith. He, however, urged Islamic preachers to invite people to follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"In Bangladesh, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians have been

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Reckless dumping of garbage, mostly plastic, has completely filled parts of a low-lying wetland along the Dhaka-Aricha highway at Baliarpur in Savar. In the distant background, several brick kilns, a major source of air pollution, line the horizon. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Jamaat backing forces trying to disrupt election

Says BNP leader Salahuddin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday accused Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami of siding with a vested quarter trying to create political unrest and obstruct the next national election.

"We are suspecting that this political party [Jamaat] is working in support of forces trying to make the political situation volatile, create instability and delay or even derail the next parliamentary election," he said at an event marking the 36th founding anniversary of the National Democratic Party.

The Islamist party has taken to the streets with unjustified demands, including the introduction of the proportional representation (PR) system in the next election.

"One of the political parties pushing for the PR system took part in the one-sided election -- they are now promoting the activities of the Awami League."

If the election is held under the PR system, governments would change so often that people's expectations would never be fulfilled, and no party would be able to carry out its political pledges.



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Egypt opens one of Valley of the Kings' tombs to public

AFP, Luxor

The tomb of Pharaoh Amenhotep III, one of the largest in southern Egypt's Valley of the Kings and Queens, was officially opened to the public yesterday, after years of restoration.

Egypt's tourism and antiquities minister, Sherif Fathy, unveiled to reporters the newly refurbished tomb, which dates back more than 3,000 years.

It was first documented in 1799 during the brief Napoleonic conquest of Egypt. After a long history of excavation, looting and heavy damage, it was restored with support from the Japanese



government and UNESCO.

Carved into the hillside on the west bank of the Nile River opposite the city of Luxor, the tomb is "decorated with wall paintings that are among the most exquisite of those surviving in the royal tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty," according to Japan's UNESCO mission.

Decades of deterioration had left the structure at risk of collapse.

Amenhotep III ascended the throne as a teenager and ruled for around four decades of prosperity, stability and artistic grandeur before dying in 1349 BC at the age of 50.

Hazera Begum's home of hope

42 children of sex workers find shelter, education away from the streets

TANGILA TASNIM

In a narrow Dhaka neighbourhood where children of sex workers once drifted between hunger and the streets, a different rhythm now fills the days. Forty-two children wake for lessons, sit for exams, and dream of becoming doctors or officers.

At the centre of this quiet transformation is Hazera Begum, who survived six years in a brothel before founding the shelter "Shishuder Jonno Amra" in Mohammadpur in 2012, with the support of Jahangirnagar University students.

With no government grant or permanent funding, Hazera has stood firm in her promise to these children. What began with 25 in a rented room has since returned dozens to classrooms. Two are now in tertiary education -- one at Jahangirnagar University and another at a women's college in Mohammadpur -- while several have completed SSC and HSC. One student, Chaiti, recently passed her SSC exams with a GPA of 4.6.

"If an ordinary child can excel with education, so can a child from the streets or a sex worker's family, if we give them a fair chance," Hazera told this correspondent.

"Without care, their futures are bleak -- girls risk being pushed into sex work, boys into street gangs."

The shelter took shape after the Durjoy Nari Songho Childcare Centre, which had been serving children since 2003, shut its doors in 2010. Many drifted back to the brothels or the streets. A small group of JU graduates then stepped in, pooling their savings and labour to help Hazera start the initiative.

Hazera says her dream is that these children be known not by the stigma of their parents' work or the streets they grew up on, but by their own achievements -- as doctors, engineers, teachers or civil servants.

"An early supporter of the cause donated about Tk 6.5 lakh for rent, learning materials and food," Hazera recalled.

Though registered with the social welfare ministry in 2012, the founders insist it is not an NGO but a social organisation, surviving on community goodwill. With no state or foreign funding, the home depends on local philanthropy.

Milk, food, uniforms and stationery come from a patchwork of small

foundations and individual donors, while volunteers contribute clothes, shoes and ad hoc support.

Despite irregular aid and tight budgets, the shelter endures -- sustained by former volunteers, friends and local donors who refuse to let it fail the children.

Currently, 42 children attend on a rolling schedule -- some arriving at 7:00am, others at 9:00am or later -- to adjust to their guardians' work patterns. Students range from primary to higher-secondary level. A few have married or taken jobs; some alumni are now abroad for work.

"I don't have enough money to keep them here for long," Hazera admitted. "Every day many girls and children come to my home, but I cannot take responsibility for them all. If I had proper support, maybe I could."

"Some of those who once lived here try to help whenever they can, sometimes contributing whatever money they have. They do their best, but we need larger donations. Without that, things are becoming more difficult day by day."

Two university students, both alumni of the shelter, now return regularly to tutor the younger ones. "Without their dedication, many of the younger ones might not have access to proper guidance in their studies," she said.

Other former residents now live abroad

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Finding good MDs for banks difficult Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday said it has become difficult to find good managing directors in the country's banking sector.

"Although there are various training institutions for bankers, the most effective training is on the job. But the reality is that we do not have the capacity to make the kind of major investment needed in training and human capital development in the banking sector," he said.

He made the remark at the 15th anniversary programme of Financial Excellence Ltd at The Westin Dhaka.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed was also present at the event as the chief guest.

He also focused on overall capacity building in financial management, including public financial management, emphasising engaging cross-border trainers.

Governor Mansur said building efficient bank management is a big challenge. "It has become difficult to find good managing directors in the country now," he added.

He said most of the core banking systems of the country's banks are from India, and that we need to increase our own capacity.

Mansur identified political influence as a major obstacle to good

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FIRED, MADE OSD Islami Bank officials block highway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Disgruntled Islami Bank employees yesterday staged a blockade on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway to press home their six-point demand, including reinstatement of their jobs.

The demands include the reinstatement of all terminated employees, the immediate withdrawal of the officers on special duty (OSD) status imposed on thousands of staff members, the cessation of conditional assessment tests, an end to "punishment transfers" and a fair working environment.

The blockade started in the Faujdarhat area under Sitakunda upazila in Chattogram at 11:00am. Family members and well-wishers of the affected employees, many of whom were made OSD, also joined the demonstration. As a result, hundreds of vehicles remained stuck on both sides of the road, creating a long tailback.

To press home their demands, the bank employees announced in

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A man and a woman harvest ripe paddy from a field on the Chimbuk hill of Bandarban. Jhum farmers are preparing for the Nabanna Utsob, which will follow give-away on Probarona Purnima, the Buddhist festival of renewal and thanksgiving. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

Takaichi set to be Japan's first woman PM

AFP, Tokyo

Conservative Sanae Takaichi hailed a "new era" yesterday after becoming head of Japan's ruling party, putting her on course to become the country's first woman prime minister.

The 64-year-old, whose hero is Margaret Thatcher, said that a "mountain of work" lay ahead to restore the fortunes of her ailing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The LDP has governed Japan almost uninterrupted for decades but it has been haemorrhaging support as backing grows for smaller parties, including the anti-immigration Sanseito.

Takaichi, a heavy metal drummer as a student, will almost certainly be approved by parliament later this month as Japan's fifth prime minister in as many years.

She is set to face a host of complex issues including an ageing population, geopolitical upheaval, a faltering economy and growing unease about immigration.

