

Alliance debacle ‘major setback’ for Jamaat

Says analyst as Islami Andolan continues to allege ‘mistrust’

RASHIDUL HASAN

The split in the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance of mostly Islamist parties is likely to have a major impact on the electoral equation, analysts say, after Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) announced it would quit the coalition and contest the polls independently.

The alliance was formed ahead of the 13th parliamentary election primarily to counter the BNP-led bloc. Jamaat, a long-time BNP ally, was among its key architects, arguing that a united front of Islamist parties could project a stronger Islamic ideological alternative to BNP's nationalist narrative.

"IAB's exit is a major setback," said political analyst Mohiuddin Ahmad. "The alliance's core objective was to counter the BNP. In the present situation, I don't think the Jamaat-led bloc will perform well. The split will divide votes and ultimately give mileage to the BNP."

IAB Secretary General Yunus Ahmed said the party had been the chief proponent of the "one ballot box" strategy – bringing all Islamist forces under one umbrella and fielding single candidates in each constituency. Initially, five Islamist parties formed the alliance. Jomiat-e-Ulmae Islam later left to join the BNP, while Jamaat and six others subsequently joined,

expanding it into an 11 party coalition.

"But Jamaat did injustice to us," Yunus said. "They acted like a big brother, taking decisions without even consulting us."

An adviser to IAB Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the BNP had offered IAB a place in its alliance, which the party declined "for the sake of our alliance." He blamed the breakup on "divisions and mistrust," holding Jamaat responsible.

IAB Joint Secretary General and spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman said Jamaat unilaterally included three new parties and began allocating seats without discussion. "They were distributing seats as if they owned all 300 constituencies," he said, calling the behaviour humiliating and authoritarian. "We tried our best to stay, but there was no environment left for us."

Asked about the rupture, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and head of its central publicity department Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said such developments "can happen in politics."

Jamaat-e-Islami was banned along with other religion-based parties after independence in 1972, but returned to electoral politics in 1986 after the ban was lifted. Its best performance came in 1991, when it won 18 seats with 12.13 percent of the

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Confiscated battery-run rickshaws kept on the side of the road as authorities continue drives against the vehicles to ensure road safety and curb traffic congestion in Dhaka. The photo was taken in the capital's Shyamoli area yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Khaleda's legacy central to our democratic future

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leader, and a symbol of resilience whose legacy will continue to shape the nation's political and social course.

The meeting was held at the South Plaza of the National Parliament complex on Manik Mia Avenue and was attended by top political leaders, diplomats, journalists, development workers, academics, researchers, editors, and business leaders. The programme began around 3:00pm with recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by a condolence message.

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, his wife Zubaidda Rahman, their daughter Zaima Rahman, and family members including Shamila Rahman, wife of Khaleda Zia's younger son late Arafat Rahman Koko, were present.

Presiding over the event, former chief justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain said Khaleda Zia was an inseparable part of Bangladesh's history.

Even in the most difficult times, she displayed patience and personal dignity, enduring long imprisonment in what he described as retaliatory cases. On behalf of civil society, he urged the government to confer the highest honour upon her.

Professor Dr FM Siddiqui, a member of the medical board that oversaw her treatment after her release from prison, called for a high-level investigation committee to examine possible negligence when she was in jail.

"It is unbelievable but true that even after Madam's [Khaleda] liver function test showed problems, the government-appointed doctors did not even run an ultrasonogram and did not stop MTX3 [a medication]," he said.

"Many people ask whether Madam was slowly poisoned. My answer is, Methotrexate [MTX] was the drug that accelerated her fatty liver disease to cirrhosis of the liver. In that context, it [MTX] acted like slow poison for her liver.

"This was wilful negligence. It is an unforgivable crime, and it needs to be examined whether this was part of a long-term plan to kill her," he said.

Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age and president of the Editors' Council, said Khaleda Zia played a crucial role in Bangladesh's struggle against military and civilian autocracy.

"Through her death, she clearly



proved that she was not only a leader of a nationalist party, but truly became a leader of the country. This has been proven by the participation of millions of people in her janaza," he said.

Despite immense suffering, she had never publicly expressed pain, anger, or resentment – a quality that drew people to her and should be practised in today's Bangladesh, Kabir said.

He also expressed hope that the future leadership of the BNP would uphold her democratic ideals.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said Khaleda Zia was unjustly convicted in what he termed the most disgraceful and farcical trial in the country's history, describing the Zia Orphanage Trust case as a "sham and disgraceful judgment."

He recalled a time when hardly anyone dared to speak in her defence, saying only four individuals at home and abroad could be persuaded to protest the verdict.

Bangladesh would prosper, he said, only if the country were envisioned as Khaleda Zia had envisioned it.

"Now the biggest concern is what Bangladesh will look like in the days ahead. If we want a better Bangladesh, we must uphold Khaleda Zia, follow her ideals, and run the country in that spirit."

Economist Debapriya Bhattacharya said she passed away at a critical juncture, when her presence and

guidance were perhaps needed most. He noted her rare patience in listening to technical advice.

"She knew how to ask questions," he said. "She did not ask questions for rhetorical purposes; she asked them to test the robustness of logic and to identify any flaws."

He added that she assessed technical advice through the lens of national reality, necessity, and the global context.

Prof Dr Mahbub Ullah, the chief organiser of the event, said people would remember Khaleda Zia for her patriotism, courage, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, and ability to endure oppression.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh, said Khaleda Zia emerged as an indomitable leader at a time when restoring democracy after autocratic rule and advancing the private sector posed enormous challenges.

He said her two tenures saw key economic and infrastructure developments, alongside major social initiatives such as Food for Education, expansion of primary education, and support for girls' education.

Writer Mohiuddin Ahmed said Khaleda's life had three phases – from 1982 to 1990, her years in power or opposition, and the period after 2007. She would be remembered both as

an uncompromising leader and later as a victim, he said.

"The country's politics needs her elegance to make politics a gentleman's profession," he said. "She was refined, commanded respect, and possessed a magnetic quality rarely found in politics."

Referring to her last speech on August 7, he recalled her call to move away from vengeance-driven politics, urging a "politics of reconciliation."

"We have spent decades with an eye for an eye, a life for a life," he said, warning that abusive politics would ultimately hand power to thugs.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, recalled that the newspaper's founding coincided with Khaleda Zia's rise to the premiership.

He said she deeply respected independent journalism and earned admiration for her tolerance of diverse views and acceptance of criticism.

Despite humiliation and repression, after her release on August 7 she spoke against destruction, resistance, vengeance, and revenge.

"She could have said she did not want revenge but wanted justice for what had been done to her," Anam said. "She did not even say that."

Calling this restraint extraordinary, he said such values, if internalised, could transform politics.

One of her last messages to the nation, he added, was the need to build a knowledge-based society. "We need a knowledge-based society with competence and skills."

Simeen Rahman, CEO of Transcom Group, said Khaleda Zia believed business must be ethical and development value-based.

"I learned through my father, the late Latifur Rahman, founder chairman of the Transcom Group, that Khaleda Zia always encouraged businesspeople to do business ethically and in the right way," she said.

She described Khaleda Zia as uncompromising, strong, and deeply dignified, noting her far-reaching contribution to economic development.

"In the 1990s, Khaleda Zia's market-oriented policies helped speed up growth in the private sector, trade, and investment," she said, citing VAT policy, financial sector reforms, the

Khaleda Zia is an inseparable part of Bangladesh's history. Even during very difficult times, she showed patience and dignity. The government should award her the highest honour.
Syed JR Mudassir Husain
Former chief justice

Through her sense of responsibility, determination, and leadership, Khaleda Zia established herself as an indomitable and powerful leader. During her two tenures in office, important developments were achieved in the economy.
Mahbubur Rahman
President of ICCB

Khaleda Zia had a significant role in Bangladesh's struggle against military and civilian autocracy. The future leadership of BNP should uphold her democratic ideals.
Nurul Kabir
Editor of New Age

Due to the 1994 drug pricing policy, there was quality development, research, and increased investment in the pharmaceutical industry. As a result, Bangladesh today is almost 100 percent self-reliant in medicine.
Simeen Rahman
Transcom's Group CEO

Privatisation Board, and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

She highlighted her role in strengthening remittances, exports, the RMG sector, and the pharmaceutical industry following the 1994 drug pricing policy, which helped make Bangladesh nearly self-reliant in medicine.

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, professor of Development Studies at Dhaka University, said Khaleda Zia was the silent architect of Bangladesh's economic modernisation, noting that during her tenure two crore people rose out of poverty and remittance earnings crossed the billion dollar mark.

Daily Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman said that in the past century, only five leaders in the region reached the height of popularity, two from the same family – Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and Begum Khaleda Zia.

"It is rare in world history that a husband and wife from the same household remained at the height of popularity throughout their political lives," he said.

Addressing Tarique Rahman, he said it was both a source of pride and anxiety to be the son of such leaders. "Being equal to them is extremely difficult, and being their son makes it even harder."

Researcher Faham Abdus Salam said, "Great sacrifice makes a great leader. If we look at the life of Begum Khaleda Zia, it was full of sacrifice."

Veteran editor Shafik Rehman, Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad President Basudev Dhar, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Dr SMA Faiz, diplomat Anwar Hashim, Disabled Peoples' International President Abdus Sattar Dulal, and Raja of the Chakma Circle Barrister Devasish Roy, also spoke at the event. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Standing Committee members, and other senior leaders were also present.

On both sides of the stage, large billboards displayed two of Khaleda Zia's most famous quotes, while several monitors were placed around the venue to broadcast the programme so that everyone could follow it clearly.

She saved others but could not save herself

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with grief. He and his brother Hares's family lived in two flats on the same floor.

"They ran for the roof; we ran for the balcony," he said, breaking down as he recalled the terrifying moments inside.

"Rodela woke me up first, then she woke everyone else." The family, desperate to escape, split into two groups, Shahidul said.

"My brother Hares, his son Rahab, and my daughter Rodela opened the main door to try to reach the roof by stairs. But as soon as they opened it, thick black smoke rushed in. We couldn't see anything. They got lost right there."

Meanwhile, Shahidul, his wife, and their younger son took shelter on the balcony. "We screamed for help from the balcony. Firefighters rescued us about an hour later."

During evacuation, Shahidul saw the lifeless bodies of his brother, nephew, and daughter lying in the living room.

Authorities said the victims were likely overwhelmed by heavy smoke after opening the door, causing them to lose consciousness and later die of asphyxiation.

The death of Rodela's cousin



PHOTO: STAR

Rodela's grieving father, centre, comforted by relatives yesterday.

Rahab added to the tragedy, as he was not supposed to be at the apartment that night.

Rifat Naznin, a cousin of Hares's wife, said there had been a family event at her father's house in Mirpur-10 on Thursday. Hares's two sons attended the event.

Afterward, Rahab was sent to the

Uttara residence to drop off food for the family. "Rahab was only supposed to drop off the food. He didn't return to his grandfather's house and stayed the night at his own home. Coming to deliver that food ended up costing him his life," Naznin said, holding back tears.

Hares's wife, Rina, who was at her father's home in Mirpur, remained unaware of the loss of her husband and son until the afternoon, as relatives struggled to break the news to her.

Funeral prayers for the deceased were held around 3:30pm yesterday.

Besides Rodela, Hares, and Rahab, the blaze also killed Kazi Fazle Rabbi, 38, his wife Afroza Akter Suborna, 37, and their two-year-old son Kazi Faiyaz Rishan.

Afroza's cousin Abu Sayed said Rabbi's village home is in Nanuya Dighirpar, Cumilla Sadar upazila. He worked at Eskayef Pharmaceuticals, while Afroza was a senior executive at Square Pharmaceuticals.

They had two sons, Faiyaz and Rafsan. Family members said Rafsan, who was staying at his grandmother's house, was spared from the tragedy.

Afroza's sister, Afrin Jahan, said Afroza was declared dead upon arrival at the National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute, while the bodies of Rabbi and his son were taken to Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital.

Doctors confirmed all three died from asphyxiation, with no burn injuries found.

Partial rollout of new pay scale

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the non-development budget has been increased by Tk 28,000 crore – mainly for the implementation of the new pay structure.

In the original budget for this fiscal year, Tk 84,114 crore was allocated for salaries and allowances. In the revised budget, the allocation is set to exceed Tk 100,000 crore.

At present, the number of government officials and employees stands at about 15 lakh.

In addition, the new pay structure will also apply to employees of various autonomous bodies and state-owned banks, although their salaries are not paid directly from the government budget.

The National Pay Commission may recommend a separate pay scale for the Bangladesh Bank and state-owned banks, distinct from the government pay structure. The move is aimed at making state-owned banks more competitive with the private sector by allowing greater flexibility in compensation.

Separate pay structures are also expected for the judiciary and the armed forces, officials said.

The government formed the Ninth Pay Commission in July last year with former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan as its chairman. The commission was asked to submit its

report within six months.

The last national pay scale was implemented in 2015, meaning nearly a decade has passed since the most recent revision.

The commission is considering the cumulative impact of inflation over the past decade while making its recommendations. The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

The aim is to ensure the real wages under the new structure do not fall below the 2015 level.

At the same time, the government has advised the commission to frame its recommendations in line with the country's revenue collection capacity and the prevailing cost-of-living pressure.

The 2015 pay scale was implemented in two phases: the revised basic salary took effect from July 1, 2015, while revised allowances came into force a year later.

In fiscal 2014-15, the allocation for salaries and allowances stood at Tk 28,709 crore. Following the implementation of the new pay scale and allowances, the allocation rose sharply to Tk 50,775 crore the following year.

This fiscal year, Tk 35,657 crore has been earmarked for pensions and gratuities for retired government employees.