

# Aspirants caught off-guard by PM

*Her instructions for election change course of Chhatra League committee formation*

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's firm stance favouring election to form a new BCL committee has caught off-guard many aspirants for the posts of president and general secretary of the pro-AL student body.



Inaugurating the 28th council of Bangladesh Chhatra League in the capital yesterday, Hasina said the new BCL leadership would come through cast-

ing of ballots in transparent ballot boxes. She also advised BCL men to elect meritorious students as their leaders.

The last three BCL committees were formed through voting by BCL councillors from across the country.

Following Hasina's statement, many of the 64 president and 142 general secretary candidates started lobbying afresh to get their names included in the

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panel blessed by a section of influential former BCL and present AL leaders, say BCL sources.

These leaders hold sway over most of the councillors who will elect the BCL president and general secretary, they say.

The Daily Star talked to at least 15 BCL councillors from Chittagong, Jamalpur, Shariatpur and Noakhali. All of them said they didn't know much about the candidates for the top two posts of the student organisation.

The councillors -- 25 each from 111 BCL units and 201 members of the central executive committee -- will cast ballots to elect their new leaders for a two-year term. The last BCL council was held on July 11, 2011.

Though no panel was announced in this council till last night, a few aspirants loyal to the section of influential BCL and AL leaders was wooing the councillors by different means, say BCL sources.

According to them, former BCL president Liaqat Sikder, its incumbent President HM Badiuzzaman Sohag, General Secretary Siddiqui Nazmul Alam and several former BCL leaders would nominate a panel today, the last day of the two-day 28th BCL council.

There is a strong possibility that this panel will get elected in today's voting session.

Some former and present BCL leaders might nominate a panel to counter the candidates loyal to Liaqat, added the sources.

In the last two councils, Liaqat's followers got elected as president and general secretary with the support of a section of influential AL leaders.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, many of the present and former BCL leaders said they didn't have any idea that the party chief would vouch for election in the BCL council.

Hasina's announcement brought joy to the BCL leaders loyal to Liaqat, as it would be easy for them to clinch victory in the election with their strong influence on most of the councillors, said BCL insiders.

However, followers of former BCL president Mahmud Hasan Ripon got frustrated as they don't have strong candidates to compete against the Liaqat-backed panel, they added.

On the allegations of some BCL leaders' influence over the councillors, BCL President Sohag said the current voting process leaves no such scope.

"We will publish a short list of prospective candidates, and the councillors will elect the candidates of their choice."

Today's session would begin at 9:00am and end in the afternoon. The names of the new president and general secretary would be announced

after the session's conclusion, he said.

According to BCL sources, their Environment Affairs Secretary Saifur Rahman Sohag and Assistant Secretary Zakir Hossain -- both loyal to Liaqat -- might be elected president and general secretary from the Liaqat-backed panel.

**QUADER MEETS EX-BCL LEADERS**  
Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader held a meeting with former top BCL leaders to discuss the measures for facilitating smooth holding of the BCL council.

In the last several BCL councils, Quader, also former BCL president, played the role of coordinator on behalf of the party chief.

At yesterday's meeting at the AL chief's Dhanmondi office, some ex-BCL leaders demanded that the age limit of 29 years for contesting the election should be counted till the day this council was announced, said meeting sources.

In response, Quader said it would be counted till yesterday in line with the party chief's directives.

Some AL leaders then alleged that the council date was fixed in such a way that incumbent BCL Joint General Secretary Shamsul Kabir Rahat couldn't contest for the top two BCL posts. He would be 29 and one month if the age limit was counted till yesterday.

They expressed dissatisfaction over the issue, added the sources.