



Will women have a voice in Jatiya Nagorik Party leadership?



Top five leadership positions have reportedly been allocated to men. Some say lack of female leadership contradicts inclusive ideals of July uprising.

Women played a crucial role in the student-led July uprising, which led to the ousting of the country's longest-serving prime minister, Sheikh Hasina. Now, in its aftermath, a new Bangladesh is emerging where the students who played pivotal roles in the movement are forming a new political party, called the Jatiya Nagorik Party, aimed at leading the country through the upcoming general election.

Although the July uprising was a mass movement that transcended gender or class, a critical question has now arisen: where do women stand in this new political party? Nahid to lead party. The name of the new political party is set to be Jatiya Nagorik Party, according to media reports, and it will officially debut on Friday. Former adviser Md Nahid Islam will be its convener, while Akhtar Hossain has been appointed as member secretary. Speaking to Dhaka Tribune, Sarwar Tusher, joint convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said: "Women make up 23% of the central members of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, and when the new party is formed, they will also hold key positions."

"While specific names cannot be mentioned yet, many women who were active in the movement and provided leadership will be in top positions." Umama Fatema, spokesperson for the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said: "We have ensured that women will be included based on their qualifications. If female representation is merely symbolic, true equality cannot be achieved. During the July uprising, we did not join the movement as men or women – we took to the streets as citizens. Samantha also addressed concerns about why women in post-uprising organizations were often given the role of "spokesperson" – which appears to be a symbolic title rather than a position with decision-making power.

"A spokesperson's role does not necessarily grant decision-making authority. That is why people perceive it as a mere presentational position. However, any role can be significant, depending on the individual holding it. "Still, when this pattern is repeated across multiple organizations, it raises concerns. If the positions assigned to women lack real influence, how can they participate in decision-making? It would be disappointing if women were only given such roles for the sake of an appearance of inclusivity," she continued. However, Samantha further clarified that in the new political party, individuals would not be chosen based on gender, ethnicity or group identity, but rather on their qualifications and contributions. Female voters would eventually question their commitment to equality, she stressed.

In that case, the party would lose the support of women like her who had played crucial roles in the movement and who were concerned about the representation of women in national politics, said Nazifa. "After the mass uprising, we had high hopes that Bangladesh would enter a new era of fairness and inclusivity. But so far, the reality has not matched our expectations."