

Sheikh Hasina's cabinet team

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina this time has presented her 31-member cabinet team which is impressive in many ways than her cabinet in 1996. She has demonstrated her ability and skill to select her team that will be responsible to implement the hopes and aspirations of common people.

The landslide victory of the Awami League-led grand alliance has put onerous responsibility to deliver goods which she has promised in AL's manifesto.

Let us examine her team that is characterized by the following:

First, it is a mixture of old and new faces. The cabinet consists of 23 ministers and 8 state ministers. Of them only 7 are old faces and the rest are new. It is one of the most educated cabinet teams in history.

Second, it is the most "clean" team. Those who are appointed have a clean image in the society and have not come with any baggage of the past. The civil society is happy with the selection of the team.

Third, the Prime Minister broke the tradition in a dramatic way in allocating portfolios to her team. Women are given heavy portfolios, such as home and foreign affairs. In the past women members of the cabinet were given charge of women affairs or youth and culture, as if competent women were not able to handle the heavy weight ministries. This is a positive manifestation of gender equality in practice and is most welcome.

Fourth, a female Minister in Bangladesh is a rarity and in the past no one had thought about it. This is a very innovative appointment by the Prime Minister. During the 37 years of Bangladesh, foreign ministers were lawyers, former military officers and only one was a foreign-service officer. Some of them were very young. The Foreign Minister of the first elected government was only 35 years old. None of them except one had past experience in international relations.

Fifth, the Prime Minister's selection of female home and foreign ministers is consistent with examples in many European countries. In Asia, Japan, Philippines and Nepal had female foreign ministers. Israel's current foreign Minister is a female. In Europe, in the US, in Latin America and in Africa, there were many females who held the post of Foreign Minister and many are currently holding it. The current Prime Minister Brown appointed a female Secretary of Home Affairs (Home Minister) in Britain to tackle terrorism.

Sixth, she has picked up more women this time than that of previous time. Three females are full Ministers and one is a state Minister. All of them have been elected to the parliament defeating male candidates hands down in their constituencies. Their victory in election is a testimony to their ability and competence in handling people and media.

Furthermore the members of her team are open-minded individuals who are only persuaded only by hard facts. Some of them are also admired professionals and are people with experience of practical creativity.

It seems that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has selected individuals who are committed to a common national purpose with credibility and competence.

Sheikh Hasina 's team needs to address primarily some burning issues issues: (a) how poverty can be reduced in the country, (b) how the spiral of prices in basic commodities would be reduced, (c) how the law and order situation can be improved (d) how Bangladesh can face a multi-polar world with confidence and competence and (c) how Bangladesh can address regional terrorism and adverse effects of climate change.

All these issues confront the team and we hope they will be successful in their responsibilities in the years ahead.

