

COMMUNITY-BASED LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Move to raise ADP block grant for UP

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government has taken initiative to implement a community-based Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) with fund from the World Bank (WB) to raise ADP block grant for Union Parishads (UP) and ensure accountability.

Under the project regular ward meetings, open budgeting and performance assessment will be held to ensure local government's accountability, WB officials in Dhaka said yesterday.

"Government is now drafting a project document, which will be shared with the WB and other interested donors at the end of January," a WB statement said.

It also said the WB is likely to plan a pre-appraisal mission in the first week of February and accordingly, will assist the government in the finalisation of the LGSP.

The government has started the process of strengthening local governments, particularly UPs, the lowest tier of administration, to achieve the goals of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP).

The WB said local government in Bangladesh is weak, especially in rural areas.

"The UPs have limited

resources, little revenue raising authority, and almost no influence on how the central government uses its resources in their areas," it said.

The development objective of the LGSP is to strengthen inclusive and accountable institutions of local governance, through empowering communities to make choices on their development priorities and basic local services needs, and empowering local governments to respond to community priorities.

These objectives are expected to be pursued through four components: (i) provision of fiscal transfers and incentive grants to local governments; (ii) institutionalising local accountability; (iii) capacity building and institutional support to strengthen formal and informal local institutions; and (iv) policy evaluation.

The Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C) has piloted a number of initiatives on local government reform, with active participation of citizens.

WB said in the successful Sirajganj Local Government Development (SLGD) Project, for example, grants are provided to

UPs to implement development plans and provide essential services such as access roads, clean drinking water, culverts, drainage, schools, health facilities, market structures and passenger sheds.

These are resulting in improved access to neighbouring villages, local markets and other public facilities, decreased travel time and transport costs, improved health conditions, lower school drop out rates and enhanced security, the Bank said.

Construction of SLGD infrastructure takes two to six months and construction costs are estimated to be 25-30% cheaper than normal construction costs for the same infrastructure through national government agencies and private contractors.

Following the principles of this fiscal system, the GoB is now developing the nationwide LGSP to strengthen the capacity of local governments to manage service delivery, with active citizen engagement.

To design and oversee the preparation of this programme, the GoB has constituted a group in the LGD, led by the Director General, Monitoring, Evaluation and Inspection (MEI) Wing of the Local Government Division.

Work with spirit of sacrifice

Iajuddin, Khaleda, Hasina urge people on Eid

UNB, Dhaka

Greeting the countrymen on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina called upon all to work with the spirit of sacrifice to build a welfare society free from exploitation and deprivation.

In a message on the eve of the great Muslim festival, Iajuddin said, "Eid-ul-Azha is one of main religious festivals of the Muslims. To sacrifice the most 'favourite thing' in greater interest, development of the country and nation constitute the greatness of this Eid and a great teaching of Islam."

Wishing the people welfare and peace he expressed the hope that being imbued with the ideal and spirit of Islam all from their respective position would contribute to consolidating unity, solidarity and brotherhood.

In a separate message, Khaleda said, "This Eid of Qurbani is glorious with the greatness of forgiveness and sacrifice. The lesson for eliminating all evil instincts, giving sin, jealousy and enmity, gives this Eid an extra significance."

"Qurbani inspires us to establish a society sans exploitation, deprivation and based on justice, and work altogether for the uplift of people's destiny."

She also prayed for continued development and progress of the people of the country and Islamic ummah at large.

In a separate message, Hasina called upon the people to stand beside the oppressed humanity with the spirit of sacrifice of Eid-ul-Azha.

"We have to stand by the oppressed humanity with the spirit of sacrifice. Only then the immortal episode of Eid-ul-Azha will be meaningful," said Hasina.

Congratulating the countrymen and the Muslims of the world on the occasion,

Hasina, also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said the essence of Qurbani is the fiesta of sacrifice and its joy really constitutes only in sacrifice, not in hedonism.

"But the country's prevailing scenario has marked the fiesta questionable as people are now puzzled due to price hike of essentials, including gas, water and electricity charges, deterioration of law and order, terrorism, political persecution, disarray in the administration and educational campus," Hasina said.

EC envoy lauds successes in social sectors

Meets PM

BSS, Dhaka

Head of Mission of European Commission (EC) in Bangladesh Ambassador Stefan Frowein yesterday appreciated the successes of Bangladesh in social sectors including poverty alleviation, education and health.

His commendation came when he made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office.

Describing the government programmes on poverty alleviation in Bangladesh as "impressive," Frowein remarked that the programmes have provided opportunity to the people to become owners of some assets, an important aspect of human life.

The Prime Minister expressed her optimism that the existing relationship between Bangladesh and the EC will be strengthened further in future. She urged the EC envoy to convey her good wishes to the President of the EC.

The EC envoy said the EC is involved in different sectors of Bangladesh including poverty alleviation, education, health and food security. He termed the government programmes in education sector as the biggest in Asia.

He said the involvement of EC together with its 25 other member countries in trade-related technical cooperation training is the biggest in Bangladesh.

Frowein said Bangladesh's exports to EC member countries stood at 54 percent.

He congratulated Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for successfully holding the Saarc summit in Dhaka and also for becoming the Chairperson of this regional body.

Frowein expressed the hope that the Saarc will be able to reach a new height under her able leadership.

Assuring EC's all cooperation to Saarc in its institution-building efforts, he hoped that the regional forum will be able to solve the problems of people and ensure their progress.

CONSULTATION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE

All bombers to be brought to book soon: Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said those who are abstaining from joining the national dialogue and cooperating in the ongoing national-level operation against "bomb terrorists" will be isolated from people.

"They will be isolated from people like the bombers," she observed apparently in an oblique reference to the main opposition Awami League.

She said people are extending cooperation in the government-sponsored drive against "bomb terrorists" and all the bombers will be caught and brought to the

justice shortly. "It's a matter of time."

The prime minister made the observations during consultation with a delegation of Bangladesh Muslim League (BML) as part of the ongoing national dialogue to find ways to eliminate "bomb terrorism".

She lamented that when political parties, professional bodies, freedom fighters, alem-ulema took part in the dialogue and people's unity was built against bomb terrorism, some quarters are commenting against the dialogue.

A 22-member BML delegation led by its President ANM Yusuf and

Secretary General Mohammad Nuruzzaman Munna took part in the dialogue at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

After the meeting, the Muslim League secretary general told reporters that they supported the government action against bomb terrorists.

"A foreign power is working behind the bombing carnage," he said and proposed that the government should unearth that external force.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan

Bhuiyan and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury were present.

Millions leave for village homes to celebrate Eid tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow, millions of city dwellers are leaving for their village homes to celebrate the second greatest religious festival of the Muslims with their near and dear ones, giving the bustling capital a different look.

A three-day public holiday on the occasion of Eid beginning today will be followed a two-day weekly holiday, virtually making it a five-day Eid holiday.

Life in the capital is unlikely to get back its usual pace until mid-January.

In the last several days, over three million have already left the city while more than a million would leave today, unofficial estimates said.

A virtually unending stream of people -- men, women and children -- crowded the city's inter-district bus terminals, Kamalapur railway station and Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday as on the previous few days.

They were braving a lot of troubles and even risking their lives with many of them travelling in unfit launches and buses to reach home before the Eid.

As the rush of home-goers climaxed yesterday, thousands suffered due to scarcity of bus, train and launch tickets at counters, scapling of tickets at exorbitantly high rates, shortage of fit vehicles, nagging traffic jams and also mugging and security problems.

Many of them however said they would forget all their sufferings once they reached home.

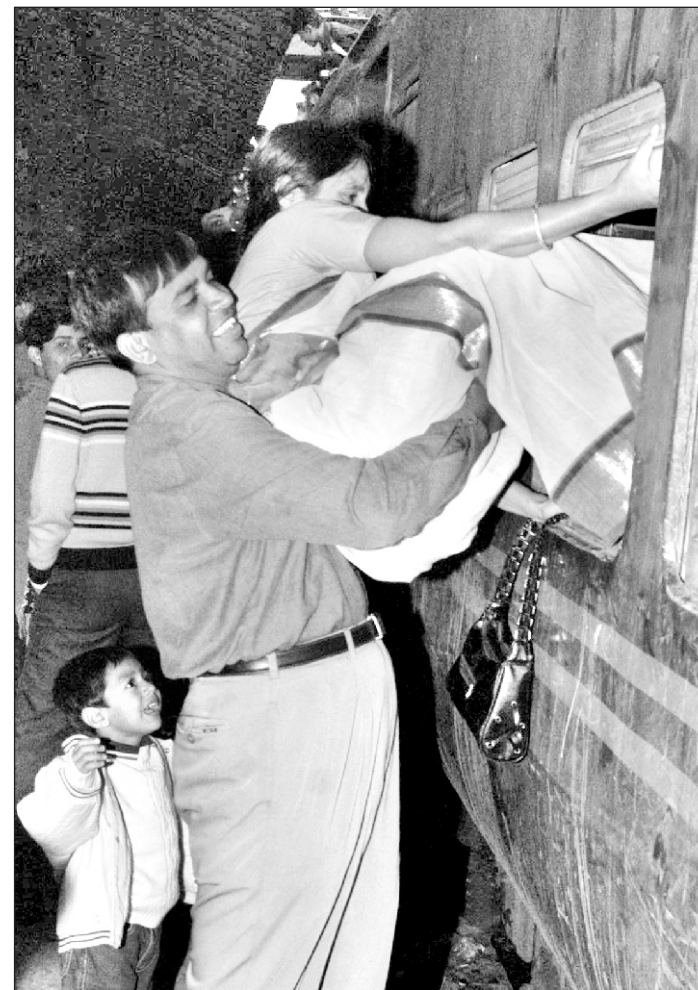
It is feared that over two lakh people may not be able to go home before the Eid as a large number of transports could not ply as dense fog blanketed vast areas in the country yesterday. Movement of ferries in Paturia-Doulatdia and Kazirhat routes on the Jamuna river was badly disrupted due to poor visibility caused by fog.

All launches that departed Dhaka for Patuakhali on Sunday night reached their destinations around eight hours late. Long-distance buses in different routes from the capital also faced similar problems, fog.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the unusual rush of passengers, many unfit launches and buses were pressed into service.

Sadarghat Launch Terminal
About 300-350 launches, including many unfit ones, left Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday, carrying passengers far beyond their capacity. Normally around 100 launches ply from Sadarghat everyday, terminal sources said.

Despite the authorities' strong warning against overloading and operation of vessels in poor condition, around 200 unfit launches are carrying Eid passengers in the name



DESPERATE TO GO HOME ON EID: A man helps his wife get on a train through a window to avoid crowd at the door while their little boy looks on. The photo was taken at the Airport Railway Station in the city yesterday.

of special service under the law enforcers' nose.

Unusual traffic jam added to miseries of the home-goers. They took to three hours to reach the Launch terminal from Gulistan.

No cabin tickets were available at ticket counters but brokers in connivance with launch staffs were selling those at three to four times the normal fare.

Many brokers illegally occupy space in the vessels before they anchor at the terminal and charge Tk 50 to Tk 80 from each passenger to allow them to sit there. But mobile courts were yet to take any steps to stop such illegal practices.

Kamalapur Railway Station
No tickets for trains are available now except that for standing in the compartments, railway officials said.

Normally 30 trains leave the station a day but 38 trains left yesterday. Extra compartments were also added to cope with the rush, they mentioned.

Two to 12 extra compartments were added with each train yesterday and the same will be done today," said

Nitendra Saha, station master at Kamalapur.

Bus Terminals
A large number of passengers, who failed to procure advance tickets, left the capital by unfit buses yesterday with the law enforcers rearing silent spectators to this.

Our Chittagong correspondent adds: Lakhs of people left the port city yesterday and on the previous few days to celebrate the Eid-ul-Azha at their village homes in different upazilas of Chittagong and other districts.

The number of home-goers from the port city however vary widely in case of the Eid-ul-Fitr and the Eid-ul-Azha. About 6 to 8 lakh city dwellers out of 38 lakh go home before the Eid-ul-Azha and 10 to 12 lakh before the Eid-ul-Fitr, sources said.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) authorities have stepped up security to ensure law and order in the city, especially the cattle markets and bus and rail stations, on the eve of the Eid.

Forge united movement to topple alliance govt, says AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders yesterday called on the countrymen to take a vow once again to root out militancy and fundamentalism in order to build a prosperous and democratic Bangladesh as dream of by Bangabandhu.

They also called for forging a united movement to topple the BNP-Jamaat alliance government to save the nation from its misrule.

Those who opposed the War of Liberation in 1971 are in power now, they said at a discussion marking Bangabandhu's Home Coming Day.

The AL leaders said the country's sovereignty is now at stake as the coalition government has destroyed democracy and the spirit of the liberation war.

The collaborators of the Pakistani army are now trying to destroy the secular nature of the country, said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil. "Today we have to make a vow again to defeat the anti-liberation forces to build a secular, democratic country," he added.

AL presidium member Zillur Rahman said the alliance government has been conspiring against the country and its democracy since they took over.

Both the country and its people are not safe in the hand of coalition government, he said, adding that thousands of innocent people have been killed during the four-year tenure of the alliance government.

Lack of security, price hike of essentials, killings, torture and repression put the people's life in danger, he said.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Sayeda Johra Tajuddin, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Obaidul Quader, Shahara Khatun, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Mozammel Babu, Prof Abu Sayeed, Dr Abdur Razzak, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Asim Kumar Ukil also spoke at the discussion held at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in Dhanmondi.

UP member murdered in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Miscreants slaughtered a UP member and local BNP leader in Noakhali on Sunday night over rift with rehabilitation of the landless people.

The victim was identified as Lutfor Rahman Renu, 45, a Union Parishad (UP) member of Subarnachar upazila and president of Charabata Union unit BNP.

The murder took place when Renu was returning home by a rickshaw. As he reached Shantir hat area, roughly 10 to 12 criminals appeared and dragged him to a nearby pond and brutally killed him with sharp weapons and left the scene firing blank bullets, witnesses said.

Abdul Quaiyum, brother of slain Renu and former UP member, filed a murder case with Charzabbar Police Station.

Police arrested four people for their alleged involvement in the murder while another suspect Jamal Uddin Gazi Member remains absconding.

The murder might have taken place as a consequence of establishing supremacy on rehabilitation of the landless people in the area, the locals said.

Local MP Mohammad Shahjahan along with Noakhali Police Super AKM Shahidur Rahman visited the place.

Death anniversary

The 3rd death anniversary of former minister M Mansur Ali will be held on Friday, says a press release yesterday.

M Mansur Ali died in 2003 at the age of 75.

He was a minister in charge of textiles in the cabinet of President Zia.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his house in Satkhira.

M Nurul Islam

Today is the 5th death anniversary of M Nurul Islam, a professor of political science, says a press release.

Prof Islam received a master degree from Punjab University and a master of law degree from Hiroshima University. He taught at many renowned colleges and universities home and abroad.

On the occasion, Prof Nurul Islam Foundation will arrange milad mahfil and distribute food on January 12 at his village in Patuakhali.



Students of Buet and DU and Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon form a human chain at the main gate of Buet in the city yesterday demanding cancellation of a decision to fell trees.

Bapa protests Buet decision to fell trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday protested the decision of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) authorities to cut down nearly 50 old trees on its campus.

At a human chain organised by Bapa on the Buet campus, representatives of different environmental organisations said they have been protesting felling of rain trees since the authorities took the decision three months back.

"A group of students under the shelter of the ruling party has threatened to cut down the trees during the Eid-ul-Azha vacation," said Bapa Joint Secretary Mihir Biswas.

Though everybody speaks against felling trees, the green is vanishing from the capital leaving it as a jungle of concrete, he added.

The speakers at the human chain demanded conserving all the old trees, which are the abode of different kinds of birds on Buet and Dhaka University campus.

They also demanded of the government as well as of the university authorities to plant more trees on educational campuses in a planned way.

Bapa also announced a plan to submit a memorandum to the university authorities after the Eid festival.

Dr Nuruddin of Sheba, Feroz Ahmed of Jubo Nagorik Odhikar Jote, Rashed Rabbi of Green Voice and President of Dhaka University Student Front Zonardan Dutta also spoke.

US Mission closed on Eid

BDNEWS, Dhaka

US Embassy offices in Dhaka, including The American Centre, Archer K Blood American Centre Library and Students Advising Centre will be closed on January 11 and 12 and January 15 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

BDB-JSD DIALOGUE

Resignation of CEC demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) yesterday demanded resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC) to hold the next general election in a free and fair manner.

At a political dialogue, they said the CEC is preparing the voter list by ignoring the order of the High Court. It is tantamount to contempt of court, they added.

BDB Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP and JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu jointly put forward the demand for CEC's resignation at the dialogue held at KC Memorial Clinic office of BDB at Baridhara in the capital.

JSD Executive President Moinuddin Khan Badal said if 14-party opposition combine voted to power they will not take law in hand.

Instead, they will work for the separation of judiciary including an independent Election Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), he added.

Moinuddin said the 23-point demand of the opposition combine has been formulated to bring a meaningful change in the society.

BDB President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said people's faith in politicians has declined enormously as no government in the past followed democratic norms properly.

Student Centre's working hours extended

UNB, Dhaka

The Student Advising Centre at the American Centre has extended its working hours in Wednesdays on a trial basis to provide students with better service.

A special release of the American Centre said, as of January 18, the Student Advising Centre will be open from 10:00am to 6:30pm on Wednesdays. Interested students are welcome to the Centre and get authentic information on US higher education.

Housewife donates

Tk 10 lakh to cancer hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suraiya Begum, a housewife and resident of New Eskaton in the city, has donated Tk 10 lakh to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) yesterday.

She handed over the cheque to Kazi Rafiqul Alam, president of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (Dam) at its head office in Dhanmondi in presence of her husband Dr QASM Neyamatullah and other officials of Dam.

As per the Donor Recognition Plan of Dam, Suraiya Begum will be enlisted as one of the sponsors of the hospital.

Thanking Suraiya, Rafiqul Alam reiterated that all donations to AMCH are tax-free and called upon the benevolent and well off people of the country to come forward to help construct a 500-bed world-class cancer hospital in Dhaka.