

Corruption disqualifies Bangladesh for MCA funding

Says US State Department official

UNB, Dhaka

A senior US official yesterday said corruption has prevented Bangladesh from qualifying for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) funding...

He particularly recommended strengthening the regulatory regime, addressing transparency in government conduct of public affairs, and improving business laws.

"Bangladesh should benchmark its performance in recent years vis-a-vis the MCA methodology and track its progress in the near future," David Luna, Director for Anti-Corruption and Governance Initiatives, US State Department...

He said assuming strong political will in the government to work through these issues, and improving MCA scores in weak areas, Bangladesh should be in a more competitive position to qualify for the MCA funds.

In reply to a question about the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) in Bangladesh to combat the menace, he said the ACC needs to be truly independent to be most effective.

Quoting Bangladesh newspa-

per reports, Luna said he understood that the absence of rules and organogram was cited as the main reason for its slow start.

"To truly succeed, however, the ACC must have the enforcement 'teeth', independence, and trust of the people that it can be impartial," he said, adding, "Checks and balances are perhaps the most effective approach to tackling the vested interests in the country."

In reply to another question, he said UNCAC has become an important tool and focal point for the international community in the collective fight against corruption.

"I am not sure why Bangladesh has not signed the UNCAC," the US official said and urged the Bangladesh government to take prompt action to join the international community's commitment on this important instrument.

In reply to a question, Luna said Bangladesh government will have to take concrete action to implement key reforms and empower those who investigate corruption to prosecute at all levels of society in implementing the national integrity strategy.

He said in many places around the world people are fed-up with corruption and are holding government officials accountable.

Asked about the urgency of separation of the judiciary from other branches for good governance and making the government accountable, Luna said checks and balances are critical to ensure the integrity of the overall system.

"An independent judiciary helps safeguard Bangladesh' public trust that no one is above the law."

Asked about effective combat of corruption, the US official said fighting corruption entails a comprehensive approach, including a combination of prevention, detection, and sanctions.

A key area of prevention includes developing ethics, laws and requirements such as the practice in some countries to file publicly financial disclosure reports that detail investments, gifts from outside sources, and information and other incomes and assets.

To a question, Luna said the US and other G8 countries have taken a strong position in the fight against 'kleptocracy', including aggressively denying safe haven to corrupt officials, to those who corrupt them, their illicitly-acquired assets, and prosecuting those engaged in bribery, including in international business transactions.

Asked about US role in helping Bangladesh establish good governance, Luna said the State Department's role relates to fighting corruption internationally that includes cooperation to unite governments to work cooperatively on these issues, help them meet or exceed those commitments, mobilise popular will and support civil society.

I was not abducted Jahanara's daughter tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

An 18-year-old girl yesterday told a Dhaka court that she was not kidnapped by the arrestees against whom her mother filed an abduction case.

Shama Ahmad Douy, daughter of Jahanara Begum, adviser to the Prime Minister for primary and mass education affairs, told the Metropolitan Magistrate Selina Akhter that she went with Masum of her own accord and they entered into a contract of marriage.

She also told the magistrate that she had an affair with Masum for over two years.

The charges brought against her husband and her friend Jahana Begum were false, fabricated and concocted, she added.

On Monday, her mother Jahanara Begum filed an abduction case against Masum and Jahana Begum with Motijheel Police Station. In the first information report (FIR), Jahanara alleged that Masum and Jahana kidnapped her daughter Douy from Malibagh Bazar Road at about 2:00pm on Monday when her daughter was going to Jahana's residence at Maghbazar.

Following the case, police arrested Masum and Jahana from Hujurpara at Kamrangirchar area and rescued the victim.

The investigation officer produced the three before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday and prayed for recording statements of the victim.

After recording the statement, the court sent the victim to safe custody while the two arrestees were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

DAB lottery programme launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (DAB) launched its 2006 lottery programme yesterday. The lottery tickets will be available from today.

The objective of this lottery programme is to involve common people in providing health care service, said DAB Secretary General Prof AK Azad Khan at a press conference in the city yesterday.

At present, about 50 lakh people are suffering from diabetes in the country, he said.

The lottery offers a total of 746 prizes worth Tk 40 lakh. The first prize carries Tk 25 lakh, the second prize Tk 5 lakh and the third prize Tk 1 lakh.

The money collected through lottery will be used in expanding the diabetic hospital, said Prof Azad.

There are also plans to set up nine more diabetic hospitals in different areas of the capital in one year, he added.

Md Sayef Uddin, joint secretary of DAB, Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, coordinator, countryside affiliated centres of DAB, and Farid Kabir, deputy director of DAB, were also present at the press conference.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran journalist and litterateur Saifur Rahman passed away at the Holy Family Hospital yesterday morning at the age of 74.

He was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur in the city.

Saifur, who worked for the Daily Azad and Dainik Bangla, left behind his six sons, Kamal Ahmed, Sports Editor of the Daily Naya Diganta.

Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association condole the death of Saifur and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Death anniversary

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Begum Aziran Nesa, mother of former director general of Export Promotion Bureau

Mohammad Akmal Hossain and Major General (Retd) Mohammad Anwar Hossion, says a press release.

On the occasion a doa mahfil will be held at her village home at Khokhsa in Kushtia after Zohr prayers today.

Shailabala Chowdhury

The second death anniversary of Shailabala Chowdhury, mother of Prof ML Chowdhury, will be observed today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a religious programme will be held at her village home at Paharpur (Barabari) in Madan Upazila, Netrakona. Prof ML Chowdhury has also arranged a similar programme at Siddheswari Kali Mandir in Dhaka.

Capital-based movement not enough to conserve environment

Speakers tell Bapa meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Capital-based movement by the members of the civil society through Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) is not enough to conserve the environment, said the speakers at a view exchange meeting in the city yesterday.

They said all village-level environmental groups will have to be coordinated to create awareness among the people at grassroots level to save natural resources.

The speakers also suggested lobbying with major political parties so that they are forced to include the environmental issues in their election manifestos.

They said apart from national efforts, regional and international co-operation among the different environmental groups is also essential to maintain a healthy environment.

Bapa organised the meeting to have an exchange of views with the editors and senior journalists at the National Press Club in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said Bapa has been working on different environmental issues for long with the active support of press and electronic media.

Due to Bapa's strong agitation, the government banned the plying of 20-year-old buses in the city and the use of polythene bag in the country, he said, but it is a matter of pity that the banned buses are again running on the roads and the polythene bags have returned to markets in other forms.

Lack of proper monitoring is the main cause of their return, he added.

Prof Muzaffer said there is very little knowledge about bio-diversity among the government and the mass people.

"We don't know the exact quan-



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a meeting at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is AMA Muhiit and on his left is Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

ty of gas, coal and other natural resources of our country and how we can use them," he said, adding, "We shall have to go for renewable energy but so far there is no initiative in this regard."

Prof Muzaffer said the proposed Tipaimukh Dam would destroy the ecology and biodiversity of the northeastern region of the country.

Acting editor of the Ittefaq Rahat Khan said, "Our rivers, forests and hills are being destroyed very quickly. If we do not take any immediate measures to conserve them our existence will be at stake."

Only Bapa's agitation cannot protect the environment and natural resources of the country if the government does not take bold steps in this regard, he added.

Bapa founding president Abul Mal Abdul Muhiit said, "We hope that we will be able to keep our population within 20 crore and we have to protect our environment for their better living."

Bapa Vice-president Prof

Abdullah Abu Sayeed sought the help of media and lawyers on different environmental issues.

Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said continued efforts, legal measures and mass awareness can forge ahead the environmental movement.

Former advisor of the caretaker government ASM Shahjahan, General Secretary of the National Press Club Shaukat Mahmood, Amardesh Editor Amanullah Kabir, Deshbangla Editor Dr Ferdous Ahmed Quoreshi and its News Editor Abu Taher, The New Nation Editor Mostafa Kamal Majumder, Associate Editor of Jugantar Sohrab Hossain, Prothom Alo News Editor Sanaulah, Joint Editor Abdul Qayum, and Chief Reporter Pranab Saha, and Bapa General Secretary Mohidul Haque Khan were also part in the discussion.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, an eminent economist, was also present at the meeting.

Some BCL men keep Liaqat, Babu confined to Madhu's Canteen

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of BCL activists yesterday kept its president and general secretary confined to Madhu's Canteen on the Dhaka University campus for about an hour yesterday and demanded that they declare the date of BCL council immediately.

At the instigation of some senior leaders, the agitated Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) workers, mostly outsiders, also misbehaved with and hurled abusive words at BCL President Liaqat Sikder and General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu.

They compelled the two leaders to keep sitting at the tables inside the canteen for about an hour from 11:30am to 12:30pm.

The agitated workers also damaged at least three chairs.

Later, a group of senior leaders brought the situation under control and forced the workers to leave the canteen.

Talking to The Daily Star, BCL President Liaqat Sikder and General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu condemned the incident, saying that such act would tarnish the image of the organisation.

IMMUNITY TO WB Agitation begins today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The alliance of various private organisations will observe different programmes on February 8-16 at district and national levels to create public opinion against the World Bank (WB) Immunity Bill placed in the parliament.

Convener of the anti-WB Immunity Bill Golam Rasul announced a series of programmes at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium in the city yesterday.

Leaders of the alliance Mizanur Rahman Apple, Mostafa Monwar and Ahmed Swapan Mahmud were present at the conference.

The programmes include submission of memorandum through fax to the Speaker, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on February 8 and 9, press conferences at all districts and submission of memorandum to the PM, Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Law Minister through the deputy commissioners on February 13, demonstrations at Shahbagh intersection at 3:00pm and in all districts on February 14, processions and rallies at different points in the capital along with different allied organisations and march towards the Jatya Sangsad and human chain programme on February 16.

Protect child rights Child workers urge lawmakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child workers narrated their plight and conditions at a view exchange meeting with the lawmakers in the city yesterday, urging them to take effective steps to protect child rights in the country.

The children said they were mostly engaged in hard and hazardous jobs but are low paid. Even they are sometimes not paid at all.

The hard and hazardous work has taken a heavy toll on their health and as a result, they are suffering from various complications, they told the lawmakers.

Such works are also impairing the growth of children, causing the nation to be deprived of healthy and educated generation, the children said.

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), an NGO working to protect child rights, organised the meeting in association with TDH Netherlands at the IDB Bhaban in

the city.

About 20 child workers took part in the meeting and exchanged views with the lawmakers Mostafizur Rahman, Advocate Promod Mankin, Alhaj Dr Mohammad Ali, Md Shahiduzzaman, Md Mosharraf Hossain and Dr Md Abdur Razzak.

The lawmakers said poverty is a main factor which forces children to be engaged in hazardous job.

Lack of awareness among the parents is also responsible for prevalence of child labour, they observed.

They called for strict enforcement of the existing laws to check child labour.

Advocate Roksana Khandaker, chairperson of the BSAF, moderated the programme while AYM Mosharraf Hossain, director of BSAF, and Abdus Shahid Mahmud, project coordinator of BSAF, also spoke.

Discuss our problem with Pak PM

Stranded Pakistanis urge Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stranded Pakistanis yesterday urged Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to discuss their issue with Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and President Pervez Musharraf during her Pakistan visit on February 12 so that two and half lakh stranded Pakistanis in 66 refuge camps of the country can return to Pakistan.

"We hope that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will discuss our issue with the Pakistan Prime Minister and President for reaching an agreement to settle our repatriation as we are being deprived of all kinds of facilities here," said Abdul Jabbar Khan, president of the Stranded Pakistani General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) while addressing a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

Leaders of SPGRC said that they would go for tougher movement if the governments of both countries do not take effective measures for the return of all stranded Pakistanis to Pakistan by March 23, the independence day of Pakistan.

The problem of Stranded Pakistanis can only be resolved through tripartite meeting involving SPGRC and governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan, they also said.

They also call on the government to withdraw all cases against 2000 Pakistanis. The cases were filed with Mohammadpur Police Station after the clash between stranded Pakistanis and police on February 2 that left around one hundred people

including 25 police.

SPGRC General Secretary M Shoukat Ali blamed police for erupting the clash and said police fired shotguns and shed teargas shells on them while they were attempting to march towards the Pakistan High Commission at Gulshan from the Geneva Camp at Mohammadpur for submitting a memorandum.

UGC signs MoU with Monash varsity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh and Monash University of Australia on February 6 at the UGC Bhaban in the city, says a press release.

Under the MoU, Bangladeshi students will get opportunities to study M. Phil and Ph.D. in Monash University.

The MoU is also intended to facilitate and promote cooperation between the two institutions in the area of education, training, research, development, instruction, and student and staff exchange.

UGC Chairman Prof M Asaduzzaman and Vice-chancellor of Monash University Prof Richard Larkins signed the memorandum on behalf of their respective institutions.

Foundation stone of Comilla University laid

UNB, Comilla

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government will keep up its efforts to ensure the facilities of higher education available and improve its standard.

"Our objective is to make the opportunities of higher education available for the students in the country and maintain the world standard in education and science," she told a function marking the laying of foundation stone of Comilla University.

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the Comilla University to be constructed on 50 acres of land at Lalmai Bihar, Moynamati.

She said the government has already started implementing various programmes for expanding the facilities of quality education and research in the public universities.

Under the guidance of the University Grants Commission (UGC), a high-profile committee with personalities and educationists, has formulated a 20-year 'strategic plan' for ensuring standard higher education and its expansion, she said.

Addressing a public meeting here on December 24, 2003, Khaleda announced to set up a full-fledged public university in Comilla.

The Education Minister announced that the university would be inaugurated by September this year while classes will start in January 2007.

Earlier, Khaleda unveiled the foundation stone of 'Anirban-Z' at Comilla Cantonment.

The Z-force, the 1st regular brigade, was formed during the Liberation War while its head office was set up in Comilla in 1972. The name 'Z-force' was given after the name of late President Ziaur Rahman.

Later, the PM also unveiled the memorial plaque of Comilla Sadar Dakkhin upazila.

24-hr transport strike in Mymensingh

BDNEWS, Mymensingh

Transport owners and workers began a 24-hour wildcat strike in greater Mymensingh district at 6:00am yesterday to press home their demands, including withdrawal of the bus service of the state-owned BRTC, which is comparatively cheaper.

No buses left the terminals of the district town. Although buses from the capital reached Mymensingh in the morning, the operators later suspended the bus services, causing untold suffering to the passengers who did not know about the strike call.

The owners and workers are also demanding implementation of the agreements signed by Communications Minister Nazmul Huda on May 19, 2005 and Whip Jahed Ali Chowdhury on May 28, 2005 as well as stopping commercial use of vehicles having private registrations.

Japan festival begins in city

BSS, Dhaka

Japan festival began in the city today under the joint auspices of the Embassy of Japan and National Museum.

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam opened the 10-day long exhibition on the premises of the National Museum.

Ambassador of Japan Matsushiro Horiguchi and Director General of National Museum Professor Mahmudul Haque also addressed the function, which was attended among others, by diplomats of different countries.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Minister said the festival is a combination of cultural programmes representing important dimension of rich Japanese culture. He described the festival as a symbol of excellent relation between Dhaka and Tokyo.

Termining the relations between Dhaka and Tokyo as multi-dimensional, the information minister said cultural exchange are its fascinating part. The more we will have cultural exchanges, the greater will be our mutual understanding, he said.

Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi said like Bangladesh much of his country's well being involve human resource development. In this context, he said despite ups and downs in his country's economy, the number of recipients of Japanese scholarships from Bangladesh have grown over the years. He said many Bangladeshis who studied in Japan are now playing important roles in Bangladesh.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina consoles family members of slain Ruhitpur Union Jubo League President Anwar Hossain at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday. The Jubo League leader was killed in an attack allegedly by the ruling party cadres on February 1.

14-party's nationwide agitation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition combine will stage demonstration across the country today in protest against blanket arrest, oppression, attacks and obstruction ahead of the long march on February 5.

The combine will also demand immediate release of their leaders, workers and supporters arrested during the long march.

As part of the programme, opposition line-up will bring out a procession and hold a rally at Mukhtangan.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina announced the agitation programme at a post-long march rally in the city on February 5.

SC BAR ELECTION Barrister Amir president candidate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammilito Ainjibi Samannoy Parishad, a forum of opposition-backed lawyers, yesterday nominated its Convener barrister M Amir UI Islam to contest for the post of president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

A meeting of the forum held at the Bar Council building with barrister Safiq Ahmed in the chair took the decision.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Abdul Baset Majumder, Ozair Farooq and Mahbubey Alam were present, among others.

Community pry teachers continue fast unto death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Community primary schoolteachers continued their fast unto death programme yesterday for the second consecutive day at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city to press for their demands including hundred percent salary of the national pay scale.

Wearing shrouds, dozens of teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers' Association from different areas of the country are taking part in programme.

The association leaders said

with firmness that they would not backtrack from their fast unto death programme until their longstanding demands are fulfilled.

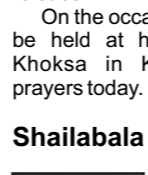
"By no means, the government can now set aside the community primary schoolteachers' demands as it had promised in this regard before the last parliament election," Association Secretary General Hafizur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The government is cheating with 10000 teachers of 3778 community primary schools by not fulfilling their demand for hundred percent salary of the national pay scale, he viewed.

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely UNB, Dhaka. Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Light fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said, predicting slight rise in night temperature over the country. Highest temperature 33.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 11.5 degree Celsius at Srirongal. The sun sets in the capital at 5:49pm today and rises at 6:35am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:



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