

Major change in policy a must to strengthen local govt

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday recommended a radical policy change including decentralisation of administration and formation of an independent finance commission to strengthen the local government and institutionalise the democracy.

Institute (RTI) of USA.

Termining the local government issue as a national problem, Awami League (AL) lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak said the MPs always want to expose their power to those who elect them.

"Fifty percent of the allocations for village level projects are distributed as per the dictation of the Prime Minister's Office," he noted.

Razzak observed that a national level consensus should be reached on the local government to bring about a real change for strengthening democracy and developing the country.

Prof Mahabbat Khan of Dhaka University said the concept and the role of local government should be made very clear to people.

A radical change ensuring the formation of a finance commission for the local government is needed to make it independent.

Presenting his research on 'Stakeholder Analysis and Institutional Mapping of Local Government' for DLGP-USAID, Dr Habibur Rahman said 77 percent of the respondents want a radical change in the local government.

The research, conducted in nine districts including Dhaka, reveals that overall support for elected local

government has declined from 92 percent to 65 percent, while the interest on the issue among the political leaders, civil society and civil servants declined dramatically.

Dr Rahman, professor of Public Administration at University of South Pacific in Fiji, said the respondents suggested discussions within the political parties, debate in the civil society, lobbying through local government caucus and conducting more research and advocacy for major policy changes.

Durafshan H Chowdhury, senior programme manager of the United Nations Capital Development Fund, and Taleya Rehman of DemocracyWatch also spoke.

Later, Todd M Sorenson officially launched the three-year DLGP-USAID programme that will work in 70 union parishads and 15 municipalities in Northwest and Southwest parts of the country.



A mobile team of the environment directorate measures emission of black smoke from a bus at Tejjaga area in the city yesterday.

Judges defer agitation on assurance

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Judicial Service Association (BJSA) yesterday postponed its next scheduled agitation following an assurance from the law ministry to meet its 11-point demand.

The BJSA led by its President Mohammad Rafiqul Islam and newly elected Secretary General Ataur Rahman met the Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barister Moudud Ahmed at his ministry around 3:00pm and placed their demands.

Following a long discussion, Moudud gave assurance to meet the BJSA's demands. The minister also told them the government would take necessary steps to meet the rest of the demands as the government had earlier met some of their demands, BJSA sources said.

The extended meeting in the Judges Conference Room of Dhaka district court, chaired by the District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, judges from districts across the country put forward their opinions about the next course of action if the government did not meet their 11-point demand.

The judges observed a token protest against the government's delay in meeting their 11-point demand on January 15-17. The judges wore black badges during the court proceedings in those three days and vowed to go for tougher movement if the government failed to meet all their demands by January 29.

The January 29 meeting was postponed considering the Biswa Jhema and the BJSA had rescheduled it for yesterday.

BJSA's demands include providing personal gunmen, tax-free vehicles and firearms for all the judges, guards at judges' residences across the country and compensation of Tk 50 lakh to each of the families of the slain judges in Jhalakati bomb attack on November 14 last year.

The government has met some of their demands but has not taken any steps for meeting the rest, BJSA sources said.

In addition to their 11-point demand, BJSA placed a three-point demand to the prime minister on December 21 at their 55th annual conference. These include appointing assistant judges to the vacant posts, giving the district and sessions judges the status of joint secretary and appointing 50 percent of the High Court judges from the lower courts.

Two killed in city accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were killed in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A speedy passenger bus ran over Matiur Rahman, 35, a commuter, at Saydabad leaving him dead on the spot while he was crossing the road at 2:00pm.

Demra Police sent the body to Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Meanwhile, Momtaz Hossain, 36 a labourer of Kamalapur Internal Container Depot (ICD), was killed as a crane of 40 tonnes hit him.

The accident occurred when Momtaz was standing behind the crane at 3:00 pm. The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Six city hotel staffs shot by extortionists

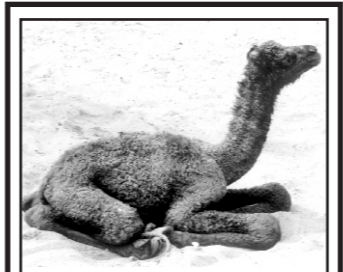
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of extortionists opened fire at a hotel last night for non-payment of toll, injuring six staffs at Kakrail in the city.

Gias Uddin, manager of Kakrail Green Garden Residential Hotel, said seven to eight youths came to the counter of the hotel on the first floor at 7:30pm in search of him.

The extortionists then demanded toll from him, but Gias refused to pay. "All of a sudden, they started firing," he told reporters.

The indiscriminate firing left six hotel staffs injured. The wounded were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



Camel gives birth to calf in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A camel calf was born at a camel farm near Motijheel in the city yesterday.

The newborn male calf has been given the name of 'Shaurav'.

"It is the first case in camel breeding where the mother camel became pregnant in this country," said Syed Mehdi Hasan who looks after the farm.

Earlier, four other camels gave birth to four calves in the same farm named Babe Madina Camel Farm. They were pregnant at the time of importing from India.

Mahbube Khoda, owner of the farm, imported 12 camels in 2004 and their number has now increased to 37, sources said.

Move on to create non-secular state

Says Shantu Larma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous people are still loosing their land because of planned and politically motivated Bengali settlement in the indigenous areas of the country, said Jotirindra Bodhipriya Larma popularly known as Shantu Larma, Chairman, CHT Regional Council, at a book launching ceremony in the city yesterday.

The move to establish one religion, one language and one culture started in Bangladesh with a view to forming a non-secular state in an autocratic manner, he said.

The rights of indigenous people won't be established until a democratic, secular and progressive government runs the country.

He was addressing as a special guest at the launching ceremony of a book titled "The Garos: Struggling to Survive in the Valley of Death" at Planning and Development Academy in the city.

He said 80 per cent Garos have no additional land except their living land and the extinction of Garos has already started in the country.

Sanjib Drong, secretary, Bangladesh Adibashi Forum, said Garos have a country where they don't enjoy any right.

Termining population settlement a serious violation of human rights,

CARTOONS ON PROPHET JS passes censure motion

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday unanimously passed a censure motion with amendment, protesting the cartoons on Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) published in a Danish newspaper and other newspapers in the West.

People, irrespective of religion, cast and creed, have been hurt by the publication of the cartoons, said the motion strongly condemning the act.

It also hoped that the respective countries would take punitive actions against their newspapers for their acts that offended the sentiments of the Muslims.

Alhaj Nurul Islam Moni raised the censure motion in the House. Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta brought an amendment to the proposal.

Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, Sarder Sakhawat Hossain Bakul, Mohammad Nasim, KM Jahangir Hossain, Zahiruddin Swapan, Shahjahan Khan, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharref Hossain Shahjahan, Col (Retd) Faruk Khan, Vice-principal Abdus Shaheed and Delwar Hossain Saidee took part in the discussion on the motion.

100 illegal structures demolished in Chittagong

BSS, Chittagong

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) on the first day of its three-day drive demolished nearly 100 unauthorised structures at Andarkilla, Nowab Sirajuddowla Road and Karpathagola in the city yesterday.

The authority started the drive to expand road from Andarkilla to Karpathagola Crossing up to 60-feet at a cost of Tk 26 crore, the CDA officials said.

The eviction drive began led by CDA Magistrate Tahera Ferdous under the direct supervision of CDA Chairman Eng. Shah Mohammad Aktheruddin.

AL leader Imamuddin passes away

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Language Movement veteran, Awami League advisory committee member and former parliament member Imamuddin Ahmed succumbed to his injuries at the Sikder Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 75.

He had been undergoing treatment at hospital after he suffered severe injuries in his head in an accident in Faridpur on February 8. He was first admitted to Faridpur General Hospital from where he was shifted to the Sikder Medical. He was operated upon at the Sikder Medical.

AL central leaders rushed to the Sikder Medical hearing his death news and expressed their deep condolences. They also consoled the members of bereaved family.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held on the AL central office premises before taking the body to his home district Faridpur.

AL central leaders, including Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed and Obaidul Kader, attended the janaza. They also placed wreaths at the coffin on behalf of the party President Sheikh Hasina.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Hasina expressed her deep shock at the death of Imamuddin.



PHOTO: STAR

CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan presents a bouquet to veteran woman leader Hena Das on her 82nd birthday at the party office in the city yesterday.

'Unite against anti-liberation forces'

82nd birthday of Hena Das celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran woman leader Hena Das yesterday called on all to unite against the anti-liberation forces, who are now part of the ruling alliance, and launch a massive movement to restore the original constitution of 1972.

"The dream of communism, socialism and non-communal politics is yet to be fulfilled for which we fought against the British and Pakistani rule," she said at a programme marking her 82nd birthday.

"After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we have been fighting against military rule and autocracy and now against militancy," she added.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) organised the programme to celebrate the birthday of Hena Das at its office at Purana Pallan in the city.

CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan said Hena Das took part in all progressive movements, including anti-British movement, language movement and the liberation war.

Sultana Kamal of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) said, "Hena Das is a source of inspiration for us and we want to move ahead following her footsteps."

Different organisations including Gono Forum, Committee to Eliminate the Killers and Collaborators of the Liberation War, Chhatra Union, Left Democratic Front, Bangladesh Krishak Samity, Udichi Shilpa Goshthi, Bangladesh Shikhhak Samity, Nijera kori and Steps Towards Development offered floral tributes to Hena Das and wished her a long life.

Prof Muntasir Mamun, Dr Ajoy Roy and MM Akash also extended best wishes to her.

Nepali student loses certificates

A Nepali student lost her educational certificates at a bus counter in the city on Friday, says a press release.

Bina Shrestha, a student of University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC), arrived in Dhaka from Chittagong by a night coach in the early hours of Friday.

When she was waiting at the bus counter at Kalabagan for transport to reach her destination, she lost her suitcase containing some valuable documents.

The documents include citizenship card of Nepal, school leaving certificate, Indian school certificate, MBBS certificates from USTC, and BMDC registration certificate.

A general diary has been filed with Dhanmondi Police Station.

DHAKA TODAY Open discussion, Special talk, Seminar on cinema, Launching ceremony, Stakeholders meeting, Cake festival

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely UNB, Dhaka Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.