

Form integrated body to address city problems Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of political commitment and consciousness among the citizens about their civil rights have created havoc in the administration of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), said the speakers at a discussion yesterday. They said due to non-coordination between different service sectors and their non-accountability to public, the DCC officials cut the roads whimsically whenever they want, especially during the rainy season causing massive sufferings to city people. The discussion on 'Citizen's initiative to establish good governance in Dhaka city's management' was organised by Resource Integration Centre (RIC) and supported by Manusher Jono, an NGO, at Cirdap auditorium in the city. The speakers suggested formation of an integrated body comprising government, local government, private sectors, civil society and donor agencies and strengthening of ward commissions to address the problem of the mega city where around 1.40 crore people live. Speaking as chief guest DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka MP said mere blaming each other will not solve the problem, it needs participation of people from all walks of life.

He said due to politicisation, civil society members can't take part in local government to address its problems. On road cutting in rainy season, the mayor said, "As donors give money for different development projects, we have to cut the road, otherwise money will be withdrawn." On traffic congestion, he said a city needs 25 percent of its total area for roads but Dhaka has only six percent, so the traffic problem will not be solved overnight. "If adequate resources are given to us, we can build the city like Singapore," the mayor added. He said his organisation will think about launching birth certificate card from ward commissioner's office. Prof Mozaffer Ahmed, treasurer and a trustee of Transparency International Bangladesh, stressed the need for increasing the number of ward commissioners. He said if every citizen is aware of his or her civil rights, one can't do whatever one wants to do on one's own land when it disturbs others. Prof Nazrul Islam of Dhaka University said with such a huge population in the city and inflow of many more everyday from different parts of the country, it will be hard to address problems facing the DCC. He suggested not to establish any new offices and schools in the city and shift them to the outskirts of the city.

Team Leader of Manusher Jono Shaheen Anam said despite running the wheel of the mega city by working hard all daylong, there is very little space and no comfort for the poor in the city. She urged DCC authorities to ensure water, sanitation and education for them. Criticising DCC's haphazard development project, she said once it makes separate lane for rickshaw and some days later it cancels the project wasting public money. She stressed the need for an integrated project to minimise the sufferings of the city people. Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra, Advocate Sultana Kamal said sometimes people themselves create problems in the city by parking cars in non-parking zones and piling up construction materials along the roadsides. She urged city dwellers to be aware of their civil rights and change their mentality. Representatives of different NGOs, service sectors and ward commissioners spoke at the discussion with Abul Hasib Khan, director of RIC, in the chair.



A discussion titled 'Citizen's initiative to establish good governance in Dhaka city's management' was held at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Advocate Sultana Kamal, Team Leader of Manusher Jono Shaheen Anam, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Prof Mozaffer Ahmed and Prof Nazrul Islam.

APRIL 19 SIT-IN Opposition threatens tougher movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition alliance will move to tougher anti-government movements if the ruling four-party coalition creates obstacles to the opposition's sit-in programme at Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on April 19. "The sit-in programme is our final agitation. The country will witness a Kansat like situation if the government tries to prevent the programme from succeeding," AL Acting General Secretary Abaidul Quader told The Daily Star. Speaking at a meeting at AL's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue he said, "The country will not be under the control of four-party alliance government if barricades are set up on that day. People will take to the streets to bring down the regime," he added.

Maya yesterday the combine leaders decided to hold a meeting with the leaders of different districts adjacent to Dhaka today. They also decided to hold meetings with the transport owners and workers on April 12 and its different front organisations on April 13 and a view exchange meeting with the Peshajibi Samonnay Parishad on April 15. It will also hold meetings with its different thana and ward level leaders separately. "If the government tries to foil the sit-in, we will obviously declare tougher programmes," said a senior opposition leader. "We will force the four-party alliance government to realise the opposition's proposed reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) through the demonstration on April 19," Quader told The Daily Star after the meeting.

He apprehended nothing tangible would come from dialogue with the ruling parties when the prime minister is saying there is no need for reforms as the caretaker government and the EC are neutral bodies. Talking to The Daily Star Maya, also general secretary of the city unit AL, said they would take all out measures to make the programme successful. "We will observe our sit-in programme peacefully, and if the government tries to foil the programme, tougher movements would be declared soon after the programme," Maya added. Fourteen-party leaders including Bimal Biswas, Dilip Barua, Syed Zafor Sazzad, MA Gani, Quamrul Ahsan, Mostafa Mohsin Montu, Hazi Mohammad Selim attended the meeting.

The opposition has taken measures to make the sit-in successful. They are organising rallies at eight constituencies of the capital, meetings with leaders of different districts adjacent to Dhaka and city wards to mobilise around two lakh people. They will also exchange views in meetings with the Peshajibi Samonnay Parishad (a combine of different professional bodies), transport owners and workers and its different front organisations in a bid to gather people for a large shutdown around the PMO on April 19. At a meeting presided over by the city 14-party co-ordinator Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury

WEATHER TODAY Thundershowers likely UNB, Dhaka. Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Noakhali and Comilla in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country. Highest temperature 35.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Majidce Court and lowest 20.2 degree Celsius at Sylhet. The sun sets in the capital at 6:18pm today and rises at 5:41am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.0	25.7	76	60
Chittagong	33.0	25.5	72	74
Rajshahi	34.5	21.2	92	--
Khulna	32.5	26.5	77	64
Barisal	33.0	25.6	81	73
Sylhet	28.0	20.2	68	76
Cox's Bazar	33.2	25.3	77	69

President summons JS session on April 27

BSS, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed has summoned the 21st session of the 8th parliament on April 27 at 5:00pm at Sangsad Bhaban here, a parliament secretariat press release said yesterday.

Five killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed in separate road accidents in Munshiganj, Jamalpur, Comilla and Jhalakati yesterday. BDNEWS from Munshiganj reports: A teenage boy was killed in a road accident at Mawa Ferry Ghat under Louhajong upazila in Munshiganj yesterday. The dead was identified as Tariqul Islam, 14, son of Rabgul Islam of Bobeda village in Jhenidah. Police said the accident occurred when a goods laden truck while boarding the ferry crushed the boy at about 8:00am. Police seized the truck. The driver, however, managed to escape. Meanwhile, one person was killed and two others were injured in a road accident near the Comilla Cantonment on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday. The identity of the deceased could not be known immediately. Sources said the accident occurred when a passenger bus hit a rickshaw carrying passengers in Comilla Cantonment area leaving one person dead and two others injured. UNB from Jamalpur adds: Two passengers of a rickshaw were killed and its puller suffered fatal injuries in an accident at Beltia on Jamalpur-Tangail highway early yesterday. Police said the accident took place at about 1:00am in the municipal area when a speedy truck hit the rickshaw, injuring its passengers Mokbul Hossain, 45, and Abdul Haque, 40, and rickshaw-puller Akhter. Mokbul and Abdul succumbed to their injuries at General Hospital in the morning. Condition of Akhter was said to be critical. Another report from Jhalakati adds: A rickshaw-puller was killed when a passenger bus rammes his rickshaw at Srirampur on Jhalakati-Bansail highway at about 6:30am. The deceased was identified as Jamal Hossain Kha, 37, of Zianagar in Barisal.

FAST DEPLETING GROUNDWATER TABLE

Use of surface water stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policy-makers and experts at a seminar yesterday attached top-most priority to harnessing surface water to save the fast depleting groundwater table in the country for sustainable agricultural growth. Presenting the first-ever groundwater zoning map at the seminar at the Sech (irrigation) Bhavan in the city, its main architect Md Eftekharul Alam of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) said groundwater table has gone down below the suction limit of shallow tube wells (STWs), beyond 7.6 metre underneath, in as many as 150 upazilas of 31 districts during March-April. "Sometimes water level in the underground aquifer goes further down and remains between 7.6 metre to 11.3 metre. In this situation, farmers have to dig pit and place irrigation equipment in it for water. Water from the surrounding irrigated land is collected in the pit through seepage. In muddy or watered land it is difficult to operate diesel or electric set STW," said engineer Eftekharul Alam who has developed the map over the last 15 months using the last 35 years' aquifer data. BADC kept uninterrupted records of as many as 3,700 STWs across the country at an interval of every 15 days for this period. On the occasion of official launching of the map, BADC yesterday organised the seminar on 'Ground Water Zoning Map and Its Application.' Agriculture Minister MK Anwar was present as chief guest. State Minister for Finance and Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder and

Agriculture Secretary Kazi Abul Kashem attended it as special guests. Experts, including academics from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Dhaka University, cautioned against 'groundwater mining' and called for political commitment to harness surface water and stop silting up and grabbing water bodies. "During the last 13 years, number of STWs has increased 2.90 times but irrigated area per STW has decreased by 22 percent. There are several reasons for the reduction in the STW irrigated area, but groundwater table lowering is the main cause of this reduction," said Eftekharul Alam, Assistant Chief Engineer of BADC. As many as 11.29 lakh STWs are in operation now in the country with an overwhelming share of 68 percent of irrigated cropland under their coverage. Buet Prof Dr Md Mujibur Rahman said water mining is not sustainable and "we're extracting 51 percent of our available groundwater whereas extraction over 40 percent is considered stressful internationally." Dr Mujibur felt pity at the dismal scenario of surface water management in the country reminding the fact to all that after Amazon and Congo, the Padma-Jamuna river system is the third largest discharger of fresh water flow to ocean in the world. MK Anwar noted that as long as the water extracted from the underground is replenished daily there was no point of worry. He, however, agreed on the issue of harnessing surface water.

Emphasising on increasing irrigation efficiency in Bangladesh, he expressed the urgency of releasing at least 25 percent of land from rice cultivation for growing other cash crops for the economic benefits of the farmers. The groundwater zoning map shows that a record high of 78 percent irrigated croplands in Pabna have become critical for STW operation, followed by 75 percent in Comilla, 60 percent in Kushtia and Naogaon 55 percent in Mymensingh and Cox's Bazar, 50 percent in Joypurhat, 49 percent in Chittagong, 45 percent in Bogra and Rajbari and 30 percent in Jhenidah, Netrakona, Gazipur and Narayanganj. Besides, farmers are being unable to draw water by STWs in 28 percent of the lands in Sherpur, 20 percent in Jamalpur and Tangail, 18 percent in Natore, 16 percent in Manikganj, 15 percent in Dhaka, Narasingdi and Sirajganj and 10 percent in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Kishoreganj and Munshiganj. With BADC Chairman Md Muktesur Rahman in the chair, the seminar was also addressed by Dr Lutfar Rahman Khan, Mahmudur Rahman Chowdhury, Kazi Mohiuddin, Dr Wais Kabir, Dr Asaduzzaman, Dr Mafizur Rahman, Dr Fazlul Bari, Prof Ziauddin, Prof Sazzad Hossain, Dr Kamrul Hasan and Prof Shahidullah Talukder.

DHAKA TODAY Lecture Brac University organises a lecture on 'The Role of Trans-national University in the 21st Century' by Prof Jeffrey Sean Lehman of Cornell University. Venue: Brac Centre Auditorium. Time: 6:30pm. Seminar Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities organises a seminar on 'Religious thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and his love for human beings'. Venue: Lecture Theatre, DU. Time: 4:00pm. Roundtable Bangladesh National Council of Textile Garments and Leather Workers will hold a roundtable on 'We Want a Safe Workplace, Not a Death Wall'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm. Discussion Bikalpa Chhatra Dhara will hold a discussion to mark its 2nd founding anniversary. Venue: Auditorium of Kendriya Kochi Kanchar Mela. Time: 10:30am.

FFs demand rise in honorarium, allowance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighters and their family members at a press conference in the city demanded rise in their honorarium and other allowances by one hundred percent. They also demanded perpetual state allowance for their descendants, which is now applicable only for wife and children up to 21 years old. "War-Wounded Freedom Fighters and Martyred Freedom Fighters Family Welfare and Implementation Council" organised the press conference at the city's Reporters Unity yesterday. Addressing the function, Council President Amir Hossain Mollah said, "Our descendants deserve state allowance as the money comes from the fund of the Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust which is regarded as our own property."

"The government may generate funds by utilising lands of Welfare Trust to maintain expenditure of state allowances," he suggested. Reading out a written statement, Amir said, there was a declaration on December 16, 1979 that a Housing Complex would be constructed for them but it is yet to be implemented. As a result over two hundred freedom fighters families are leading a miserable life at Mirpur Freedom Fighters Housing Complex. The speakers criticised the role of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs for its inefficiency. Council General Secretary Belal Uddin, Senior Vice-Chairman Khandaker Abdul Karim Jibon, Vice-Chairman Nurul Islam, Joint Secretary Abdul Gafur and other freedom fighters of the organisation were present at the conference.

BD Foods Ltd wiggles to shake off stigma

FROM PAGE 16 Mainuddin is the manager of King & Company, a sister concern of BD Foods Limited. The National Board of Revenue in its primary investigation report found Nazmul and Mainuddin to be involved in the smuggling racket. The NBR investigation report found that BD Foods Limited and its sister concerns manipulated the entire export process, starting from getting a trade license to shipment of consignments to the UK ports. Messrs Emdad Traders, Messrs Jamil International, Messrs MM Enterprise and Green Heaven Enterprise smuggled drugs to Ocean Line Foods, Messrs Bengal Bay and Coastal Spices in the UK in the guise of legitimate export consignments. According to the investigation report the suspect companies are sister concerns of BD Foods Ltd. In the report three persons - Shamsul Arefin, Nazmul Haider Bhuiyan, and Mainuddin - are accused of smuggling heroin. Shamsul Arefin is the owner of Emdad Traders. The other two are employees of King and Company. These exporting companies' existence remain only on papers and their trade licenses, tax identification numbers and business identification

numbers are false. The UK customs and excise department in a letter sent through the British deputy high commissioner in Mumbai on May 20, 2005 asked the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Department of Bangladesh to probe the drug trafficking ring. The company management however denied the allegations at the news briefing yesterday at a hotel in the capital saying that the entire matter is still mysterious to them despite the company's own investigation. "We have conducted a detail investigation after knowing that the value added tax (VAT) number of King & Company was used in smuggling heroin. The whole issue is still mysterious to us," Badrul Haider said. He said a 'vicious circle' is behind the smuggling but he failed to provide any detail of the 'circle'. "You the media and investigators should find out the circle for the betterment of the country," Badrul Haider said. He said a large quantity of exportable goods of his company are facing hurdles at different overseas ports due to the publication of the probe report. The company management said they raised the company's paid-up capital to Tk 4.5 crore from only Tk 1

lakh within two and a half years through borrowing from Islami Bank and Exim-Bank. Badrul Haider said the company exported goods worth Tk 60 crore in the year 2005 but refused to reveal the amount of the company's investment. Despite the fact that his father Bodrudozza Momen is the chairman of the company, Badrul Haider claimed that his father retired from business. The management of the suspected drug smuggling company left the venue immediately after the news briefing and declined to provide journalists with business cards or cell phone numbers. MA Shahrier, deputy managing director, Tanbir Ahmed Alamin legal adviser and Bishnu Battacharya general manager of the company also spoke at the briefing. Meanwhile Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association yesterday expressed grave concerns over the news of smuggling of heroin and demanded exemplary punishments for those who are responsible.

Health budget needs to be doubled

Health secy says at BMA roundtable STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical experts, including the health secretary at a roundtable identified bureaucratic tangles, mismanagement in the hospitals and lack of efficient human resources in the health sector as major impediments in providing quality health services in the country. In this backdrop, they suggested increasing the number of human resources, especially nurses, paramedics and health technologists, as well as improving the standard of medical education to reduce mortality rate and develop overall health services. Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) organised the roundtable on 'Millennium Challenge: Human Resource for Health Development in Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday to mark the Health Day 2006. Speaking as chief guest, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said there are only 38,206 doctors and 20,034 nurses for the 14 crore people of the country. The ratio of one doctor for 3,664 people and one nurse for 6,988 is too imbalanced, while the doctor-nurse ratio is even worse, which is 1.9 nurses for one doctor, he said. "Moreover, many posts in the health sector are still vacant," the health minister said, adding that the government has filed up a good number of posts with doctors and other health workers. Emphasising the skill development of the nurses, increasing their number and maintaining the standard of postgraduate education, AKM Zafar Ullah Khan, secretary to health ministry, said the budget for the health sector has to be doubled and the doctors must be made accountable. Presently, mothers' mortality rate is 320 per one lakh, infant mortality 28 per one thousand and children under 5 mortality 88 per one thousand. To reach the millennium goals, mothers' mortality rate should be reduced to 120, infant mortality to 38 and institutional delivery of the pregnant mothers to be made at least 50 percent, said BMA Secretary General Dr AZM Zahid Hossain. Dr Zakir Hussain, health consultant to Asian Development Bank, suggested conducting a need assessment of different categories of health forces and strengthening public-private partnership for developing human resources in the sector. Yuki Yoshimura, advisor to project formulation of Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA), suggested formation of a technical working group on human resource development. National Press Club President Reaz Uddin Ahmed demanded that the government stop private practices by the doctors of the public hospitals and monitor properly the standard of the private clinics mushrooming at different corners of the country. BMA President In-Charge Dr AKM Azizul Haque chaired the roundtable also addressed by Justice Abdul Rouf, MA Akmal Hossain Azad, director general of Family Planning, Khadiza Begum, director of Nursing Directorate, Dr Khaleel Hassan of World Health Organisation, Ataus Samad, advisory editor to the daily Amar Desh and Gias Kamal Chowdhury, president of one faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists.

Obituary

Advocate Kazi Moklesur Rahman passed away due to cardiac arrest on Saturday at the age of 65, says a press release. He left behind his wife, daughter, brothers and sisters. His kulkhwani will be held on the premises of Government Employees Welfare Association, Palashi in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow. Relatives, friends, colleagues and admirers are requested to attend the kulkhwani.

Death anniversary

Today is the 16th death anniversary of Md Shamsud Doha, former music director and a noted singer of radio and television, says a press release.

On this occasion, Quran khwani and milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at 15/5 Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur in the city. Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the milad and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.