

## Call for movement

**FROM PAGE 1**  
election system.

The benefit of the country's economic growth over the last fifteen years did not reach the grass roots level people and the dream for an equitable, democratic and non-communal society could not be achieved, they said.

"The very concept of the caretaker government and the provision of appointing technocrat minister should be cancelled immediately for the development of democratic norms in the country," said advocate AEM Sarwar-ul-Alam Dudu, special guest at the dialogue.

If election is held under an elected government, the government would be much more responsible, he said, adding that appointing a technocrat minister is against the norms of democracy.

Politics has been difficult for the politicians due to lack of confidence on each other, he said.

He demanded salary cut of the parliament members for remaining absent from the parliament.

Sarwar also demanded stoppage of calling hartal as it brings tremendous difficulties for the common people.

Executive Director of the CPD Debapriya Bhattacharya moderated the seven hour-long dialogue held at Begum Rokeya auditorium of Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS).

Presided over by renowned educationist Prof Reza Shah Towfiqur Rahman, the dialogue was also addressed by former member of caretaker government Hafizuddin Khan, former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Laila Rahman Kabir, editor of the Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, and prominent politician Mohammad Afzal.

Local leaders of various political parties, professionals, lawyers, teachers, representatives of local government, NGO workers, social and cultural activists also participated in the lively dialogue and expressed their views on bringing reforms in the existing political and election system.

In his presidential address, Prof Reza Shah Towfiqur Rahman said in the present day world there is no alternative to democratic form of government and the civil society is trying to help flourish democracy in the country.

People expect that the politicians also would be civil, he said, adding that otherwise the discrepancy among the people will not lessen and democracy will not survive.

He expressed hope that the civil society's continuous work for betterment of the society will help to resolve the crises.

Former advisor to caretaker government Hafizuddin Khan urged people to cast vote considering the competence of the candidate instead of considering his election symbol.

He said people have no confidence on the present EC and its chief. "It is not possible to hold a free and fair election under this commission," he said.

He regretted that there are no fixed criteria for appointment in the EC and that in the present system the government can appoint anybody the chief of the EC. "As a result, the ruling party has appointed the chief election commissioner according to its choice which is contrary to democracy," he explained.

Ruling BNP leader Ashraf Hossain urged the dialogue organisers to make the initiative a social movement and regretted that foreign diplomats often interfere in the country's politics.

The campaign for honest and competent candidates should not end with the 2007 elections, rather it should continue for all elections including those at the local levels, he said.

The BNP leader observed that everybody, including high commands of the political parties, should come under constructive criticism. He urged the media to earn people's confidence and guide the politicians.

Laila Rahman Kabir, former president of MCCI, called upon the people to progress the social and economic trends that have been persisting in the country for the last 15 years.

Explaining the motives of the dialogue, she said the views expressed in the discussion will be reflected in a vision paper and hoped that the government will follow that.

She said the continuation of democracy during the last 15 years is a great achievement for the country and hoped that the country will overcome the existing political deadlock as there is a very active civil society.

She regretted that none of the previous governments could carry out their constitutional responsibilities. "We lost some core areas of democratic practice," she observed.

Debapriya Bhattacharya said mere reforms in the EC and caretaker government system might not bring any positive result for development, democracy and good governance in the country.

Reform in the political parties is a must for these, he said, adding, "Leadership of the political parties will remain confined within corrupt and dishonest people if the political parties are not reformed."

Describing the present EC as

ineffective, he said people cannot rely on it for its recent activities in connection with preparing the voter list.

Mahfuz Anam called upon the country's civil society to be conscious so that eligible voters are not left out of the voter list.

He said the civil society is not a political party but it has the right to make the political parties accountable, transparent and pro-people.

He observed that those who questioned the right of the civil society are actually trying to snatch people's democratic right.

The Daily Star editor urged people to be involved in the activities regarding the preparation of the voter list and launch a nationwide movement for encouraging everybody to be listed in the voter list.

Lauding CPD, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Channel I for organising dialogues across the country, Abdur Rouf Manik, chairman of Rangpur municipality, said the honest and patriotic ones must replace the corrupt and crooked leaders.

Most of the politicians are out to make a quick buck and therefore, it is unrealistic to expect them to work for the development of the country, he observed.

Manik also stressed on the need for the political leaders of proper education being nominated for the next election.

He suggested that the political parties should not nominate anyone who has not been involved in politics for at least five years.

Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Mostafa Azad Choudhury said reforms of the political parties are essential for the parliamentary democracy to sustain in the country.

He said the businessmen should do business, not politics.

Political parties must be registered by the Election Commission, otherwise, accountability and transparency of those cannot be ensured, Choudhury added.

Vice-president of Rangpur unit Sammillito Sangskritik Jote Dr Mazluz Islam Mantu said the student politics these days are dominated by violence and musclemen. It is unfortunate for the country that the student leaders are not even students anymore, he added.

"We need to change the existing culture of the politics for the sake of future of the nation," he noted.

Criticising the role of foreign envoys in country's politics, he said, "Politicians cannot stand suggestions from the civil society, whereas they seem very tolerant towards dictates from the foreign diplomats."

Imrul Kaes Moniruzzaman, director (Social Empowerment) of Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), described the civil society initiative for accountable development as a step taken too late to be effective for the election 2007.

He said, "They [civil society] should have waged the campaign for honest and patriotic candidates much earlier."

Advocate MA Bashir Tipu, vice-president of Begum Rokeya Forum, said, "Politicians play pro-people just before the election. They talk in such a fashion as if they believe in people's power, but as soon as they are elected, they trample the rights of those very people."

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## Ahmadiyyas

**FROM PAGE 16**  
from the bigots. They have pleaded with the local administration to ensure security for them, otherwise they feared they might be starved to death.

Noor Hossain Nurani, president of Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh, who addressed the Thursday's rally, told The Daily Star last night, "Ahmadiyyas are not Muslims and so we've asked all local Muslims to stop having any kind of contact with them."

## JS probe body

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Criticising the newspapers for running 'false' reports, the communications minister said, "It was I, who as the information minister had ensured the freedom of the press."

Making an oblique reference to the TIB, he said people in the country are not fit to probe the so-called corruption situation.

Endorsing the minister's demand, the parliamentary body formed a sub-committee to probe the finds of the TIB report.

"We will examine the report. We will not proceed on with the issue if we find the report objective. But we will protest if we find it baseless," Manjur, the convener of the sub-committee, told The Daily Star on October 2 last year after the meeting.

**PROBE INTO THE CNG SCAM**  
The parliamentary body on communications ministry in 2004 raised allegations of corruption against the minister and the state minister of the ministry and formed two sub-committees to probe the allegations of corruption in import of CNG-run auto-rickshaws and allocation of land to set up CNG filling stations.

The parliamentary body on January 7 2004 formed a sub-committee headed by ruling BNP lawmaker Nadeem Mostafa to probe Nazmul Huda's allowing only one company to import CNG-run three-wheelers.

It formed another sub-committee headed by BNP lawmaker Mahmudul Haque Rubel on February 14 last year to probe the allegation against State Minister for Communications Salah Uddin Ahmed in allocation of lands to set up CNG filling stations.

The probe bodies are yet to submit their report although they were asked to do so within a month of their formation.

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## PDB's draft deal

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legitimise the flawed bid on the pretext of low price while keeping provisions for supplying inferior products.

The PDB in a statement on the Chandpur project identified at least more than a hundred types of essential spare parts of different categories, numbering at least 500, that are missing. The PDB estimate puts the price of the missing parts around \$ 5.5 million.

The actual number of missing spare parts however increases dramatically up to 4,448 on an analysis of the PDB's statement and technical evaluation of the Chandpur project, the sources pointed out.

For instance, Harbin did not mention either the capacity or the origin of the compressor in the contract documents. This has a significant impact on the price. The company used the same trick in Tongji plant and supplied compressor of lower capacity and unidentified origin, and cheated the PDB of about Tk 20 crore.

Harbin also did not mention the names and origin of the manufacturers of air-filters. It had installed poor quality air-filters in Tongji plant, which had been causing frequent closures.

The Chinese company also refrained from giving the name and origin of the manufacturer of transformer, a vital and expensive equipment for a power plant, and which can cause maximum outage due to its poor quality.

A prime example of inefficiency, poor machinery and corruption, Tongji plant was shut down for more than 2,933 hours between August 24 last year and April this year. In terms of money, this made the PDB incur a loss of over Tk 40 crore for being unable to sell power from the plant during this period.

Of all the sub-standard equipment installed by the company, the PDB has singled out an inap-

propriate Gas Booster Compressor (GBC) as the major cause of the problem. But the company would not change these faulty machinery, neither would the PDB penalise it.

The Cabinet Purchase Committee on January 1 approved the Chandpur bid of Harbin in violation of the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003 that upheld the IMED's authority to give a verdict through an independent review committee over any procurement in case of a dispute. The Chandpur issue is the only one that was formally reviewed by the IMED's committee as per the PPR.

Meanwhile, following the purchase committee meeting, its Chairman Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told the press, "The company (Harbin) that got the deal will do it for Tk 86 crore less than the next bidder. Why would we pay more?"

Harbin has been receiving unusual favours from the alliance government all along. In its second deal for the 90 MW Fenchuganj plant, the company got an exceptional treatment from the purchase body that allowed it around Tk 50 crore or 10 percent advance down payment for implementing the project. The government had restricted such down payments from 2003 and Harbin is the only exception in this regard.

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