

## Regional dialogue

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eminent citizens and criticised the government for harassing them.

Independent research organisation Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the day-long dialogue jointly with The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo and the Channel i at a hotel in the district town.

This was the 11th such dialogue as part of a civil society campaign for honest and competent candidates in the election 2007 and accountable development.

CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya conducted the dialogue with prominent educationist Prof ANM Abdus Sobhan in the chair. A large number of people including politicians, lawyers, teachers, NGO leaders, students, social workers and cultural activists attended the dialogue and participated in discussion.

Educatorist Azizul Haque Khan and Advocate Fazlul Haque were special guests at the dialogue while Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman spoke on behalf of the organisers.

Former adviser to caretaker government S M Shahjahan and former finance minister M Syeduzzaman took part in the discussion on behalf of the Nagorik Committee 2006, formed for preparing a vision paper for Bangladesh in 2021.

Prof Abdus Sobhan underscored the need for bringing qualitative changes in politics. Qualitative changes are required in politics, particularly in the major political parties. The country would not develop until the civil society cooperates in the initiative to bring such changes, he said.

He thought intellectuals in the country are divided into major two groups, siding with the Awami League or the BNP.

According to him, the civil society should speak impartially. Honest and progressive sections in political parties should also come forward to bring constructive changes within their parties.

Azizul Haque Khan said if the civil society continues its initiative for accountable development, a prosperous Bangladesh could be a reality by 2021.

The concept of non-political organisations should be changed as everything is related to politics, he felt.

Fazlul Haque said a caretaker government can take account of wealth and property of candidates in polls, if it wishes. It can also separate the judiciary from the executive. "There is no legal barrier to it."

Haque said though the country is not a failed state, the government has failed.

Politicians go to power in the name of democracy but they kill democracy after going to power, he said.

He warned against political rehabilitation of a deposed military ruler.

Motiur Rahman expressed concern about the next general election. He also protested the issuance of arrest warrants against five eminent citizens following a case filed by an adviser to a ministry.

The Prothom Alo editor said the people want Bangladesh to be developed as a true democratic nation.

On the objectives of the dialogue, Motiur Rahman said the civil society wants to improve the country's image in the international arena.

Khadija Begum of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad for women more reserved seats for women in parliament and direct election to the seats. She also urged the major political parties to increase nomination of women candidates.

Prof Altaf Hossain demanded a healthy education system by 2021. Former adviser to caretaker gov-

ernment and a member of Nagorik Committee 2006 S M Shahjahan said caretaker concept emerged as politicians lacked confidence in each other.

There is no alternative to democracy, but the citizens are very worried about its future in the country, he said, adding, "Now democracy is being used only for capturing power."

M Syeduzzaman, former finance minister and also a member of Nagorik committee, said the main objective of the dialogue is to create awareness among the people about their civil rights.

He said the country achieved tremendous growth in export earning, remittance collection and GDP in the last one and a half decade but the benefit of the economic development did not properly reach the grass-roots level.

"We have much more to do as 40 per cent people are still below the poverty level."

The constitution ensures political rights of every citizen, but the democratic process has been disturbed in Bangladesh on several occasions, he said, adding that the politicians will have to come forward to solve the political crises.

Black money holders have dominated politics, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar MP, a prominent politician of the district, said.

The black money holders are lobbying for nomination while the politicians are running for money to contest the next general elections, he said.

Urging the civil society members to campaign for the honest candidates who will get nomination from the major political parties, he said people should vote for the candidates, not for the party symbol.

Zafar also proposed enacting a law prohibiting publication of posters and leaflets as part of election campaign to reduce election expenditure.

Member of Awami League Central Advisory Committee SM Nurunnabi said the black money holders have taken away politics. He urged the civil society members to go to the villages and mix with common people.

Advocate Modarres Ali Isha, general secretary of district BNP, said the civil society initiative would not continue for long if it is initiated to serve any quarters. He also criticised terming a people's representative 'razakar'.

Demanding massive reforms in the Election Commission for a free and fair election, President of Faridpur district Awami League Quazi Joinul Abedin said the election cannot be free and fair with the existing chief election commissioner.

Abedin demanded an education system free from discrimination, saying that students from outside the capital cannot score good results under the existing education system.

Former principal of Government Rajendra College Kamal Ataur Rahman proposed formation of a national government where all political parties will have share on the basis of seats in parliament.

If this system is introduced, there would be no hartal or political siege programme in the country and the country will run peacefully at least for five years, he added.

Demanding government's initiatives for protecting Faridpur from river erosion, freedom fighter MA Salam Lalman said the money wasted in the Local Government Engineering Department through corruption was enough to prevent the river erosion.

The politicians spend huge amount of money during elections and so nothing is left for the poor people, Waliur Rahman Khan of Fema said. He urged the major political parties to nominate honest and dedicated

candidates.

He also suggested bringing the dialogue up to the upazila level.

Rabeya Ahmed, a mother of two myrtars, urged the people to work for the welfare of the society.

The politicians change their attitude after being elected, Faridpur Press Club President Munshi Harunur Rashid said, adding that the present political situation makes people lose respect for the politicians.

He expressed the hope that the politicians will start practising democracy within their parties.

Opposing any provision of reserved seats for women in parliament, Shira Goswami said they should contest from all 300 constituencies.

Syed Shahid Reza Biplob demanded an acceptable election with participation of all political parties.

The politicians increase their wealth through politics, advocate Shahana Sholly said.

She wondered at the political parties' reluctance to register as political organisations.

ATM Amir Ali, editor of a local weekly, urged the civil society members to identify the black money holders before the elections.

Among others who participated in the discussion were: Advocate Shahidunnabi, Abul Fayedzhanewaj, Forkan Ahmed Khan, Asma Akhter Mukta, poet Kochi Reza, Mehedi Hasan Shob, Rafiquzzaman Layek, advocate Shamsunnahar, Monoj Saha, Khondoker Sairur Rahim Bitul, Mosharrif Hossain, Bashir Ahmed Chowdhury, Abdul Ali Shikder, Murad Hossain, Monoranjan Bosh, Ivy Masud, Altaf Mahmud, Suresh Chandra Halder, Ashraf Ali, Nasreen Sultana, Iva Mojmuder, Suprya Datta, Quazi Mosharrif Hossain, Khan Mahbubur Rahman, Golam Faruq Howlader, Noor Mohammad, Fakir Abdur Rashid, Mohammad Ali Rumi, Sheikh Mohammad Feroz, Mohammad Delwar Hossain, and Khondoker Monjur Elahi.

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1,000km areas. The BGR shared this data with the government in a raw form, which calls for advance scientific analysis and interpretation, for which the country is not equipped.

Sandstone, which highlights potentials of gas resources, was found predominantly in Bangladesh but existence of these highly permeable and porous carbonate rocks was not known before.

Each spherical grain of ooid sand, no larger than 2mm, forms around a nucleus of fecal matter or shell debris in a process similar to that of a pearl's formation. Over time, this oolitic sand accumulates in thick layers that cover hundreds of square kilometers. Upon burial, these layers eventually form a porous carbonate rock that can store large quantities of oil and gas. Between one-third and a half of the world's oil and gas reserves come from underground reservoirs in carbonate rocks, experts say.

Sources quoting survey team leader Dr HR Kudrass said that the oolite layer used to be the beach of southwestern region 20,000 years ago during the ice age.

This region is the largest delta in the world, and its rivers are accumulating sediment at the quickest rate towards a deep sea fan, which is the largest in the world. "Sedimentation thickness at places is 20km," said sources, quoting Kudrass.

This unusual sedimentation should have increased Bangladesh's land by 15 meters a year towards the sea. But as there is a submarine canyon in the southwestern Bay down by the Sundarbans, the sedimentation spreads up to Sri Lanka. The submarine canyon is so deep that it was named Swatch of No Ground (Song) during the British regime.

**WEAK DEAL**  
Sources said that had the foreign ministry consulted with local geological experts before signing its one-page agreement with the BGR, it could have been a much better deal for the country. The BGR conducted the same study two times-- during the nineties and the eighties. This time, the survey team was better equipped.

"Scientific or not, this data is valuable to oil companies. That is why the BGR did not get any permission to study the Indian waters," a source observed. "We don't know where this data will eventually land to. Whatever data we have got out of this study is in raw form, and we won't be able to interpret it as efficiently as the international oil companies do."

The BGR even asked money

when the government wished to obtain its data on the delta gathered in the nineties.

"We don't know exactly who gave them previous permissions and why. If we are not benefited from a study, why should we allow foreign countries to scan our region? Even this time, the foreign ministry did not think enough about our interest before signing the agreement."

Sources said that the BGR conducted the same survey in mid-eighties on the basis of an agreement with Petrobrangla, which focused more on geological information and extensive data sharing. As a result, Bangladesh was immensely benefited.

**ORDEAL OF LOCAL EXPERTS**  
Due to the weak agreement with the BGR, six government officials aboard the scientific vessel RV Sonne ended up in a series of embarrassing situations. Two officials joined the survey mission on June 5 and the others on July 5 upon government orders and with an understanding that the BGR would provide them with daily wages.

Aboard the ship, the officials discovered that the agreement said nothing about per diem or other expenses. So, they had to work for nearly two months literally at the mercy of the BGR team.

On completion of the survey, the BGR team declined to drop the officials at the Chittagong port and offered them to disembark from the ship in Penang, Malaysia, from where they would be able to fly back home.

The BGR would have to waste a day more in Bangladesh waters had it arranged the disembarkation in Chittagong and the rent of the ship a day was \$30,000, cost of which was much higher than the airfare of us from Malaysia, an official in the team told The Daily Star.

As the officials agreed to this proposition, the BGR on July 12 emailed the foreign ministry for issuance of the government orders (GO) to land in Malaysia. The ministry mailed back on July 22, asking the team to wait for the GO. The GO was issued on July 25, after the ship had left the Bangladesh waters, making the officials sick to death over the possibility of an imminent 'illegal' status on arrival in Malaysia.

After receiving the GO, the officials, however, obtained Malaysian visa with the help of the management of the RV Sonne. On July 30, they were dropped in Penang, from where they flew to Dhaka via Singapore the next day.

## Oil reservoir in Bay

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finance ministry last month to waive the penalty against its failure to maintain Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), but the Bangladesh Bank (BB) opposed it.

"The Sonali Bank has to cough up a penalty of Tk 70 crore since October last year," a Sonali Bank official said.

The government recently waived the penalty against failure to maintain the SLR of the Oriental Bank following BB recommendations, sources said.

After receiving the Sonali Bank's letter in this regard, the finance ministry sought the central bank suggestions referring to the Oriental Bank case.

The Bangladesh Bank opposed the Sonali Bank plea and told the finance ministry that such waiver will encourage other nationalised commercial banks to take the opportunity.

"The penalty of the Oriental Bank was waived under a special situation," a senior BB official said.

## Tigers

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returned to form with a quickfire 67 not out after Tigers paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza set up the stage for batsmen by restricting the hosts to 168 with figures of 3-25.

Ashraf struck a dozen fours and a six in his 43-ball knock, after walking in with the team in a precarious position of 58 for three. He immediately shot to action with a flurry of boundaries to dash any Kenyan hopes of a win.

All-rounder Forhad Reza accompanied Ashraf with an undefeated run-a-ball 34 to bat till the end. Earlier, the hosts, after being sent into bat, looked lacklustre as only skipper Steve Tikolo offered some resistance with a breezy 47 when they batted. Apart from Mashrafe, who bowled a brilliant spell throughout, spinner Abdur Razzak took three for 31 while fellow left-armers Sakib Al Hasan took two wickets.

Stand-in skipper Khaled Mashud picked up a personal milestone after claiming five dismissals -- three catches and two brilliant stumpings. His previous best had been two four dismissals, both against Zimbabwe at Harare -- first in 1997 and then last month.

The second match of the three-ODI series will be held at the same ground today. BTV and Channel 1 will telecast the match live from 1pm Bangladesh time.

## Shamsur Rahman

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Meanwhile, the medical team said there has not been any further deterioration in the poet's physical condition.

The doctors said the level of hepatitis in his body is better now while the functioning of his impaired kidneys has also slightly improved.

Poet Shamsur Rahman was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University hospital (BSMMU) with acute liver and ventricular complications on August 6.

can be released on parole, while a national committee headed by the home secretary will take the decision in special cases, he added.

Those sentenced to death or life terms will not enjoy the facility of parole.

Besides officially including a provision of providing iftar to the inmates who fast during Ramadan, the amendment officially introduces installing of televisions and ceiling fans in prisons although the practice has already begun.

The amended Jail Code will provide food for the children of inmates aged up to six years while the existing code allows food for children aged up to two years.

Instead of supplying only caustic soda in toilets, the amendment allows a toilet soap and two laundry soaps for each inmate.

The amended Jail Code also allows jail guards to use walkie-talkies and binoculars to strengthen jail security.

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The quantity of molasses for breakfast will be doubled from 15 grams to 30 grams. The number and quantity of spices used to cook meals for prisoners also have been increased in the amended Jail Code.

While earlier, only the courts used to define who among the under trial prisoners would get division facilities in jails, the amendment will also empower heads of prisons to decide who will enjoy the facilities.

Citizens covered by 18 categories of warrant of precedence comprising professor emeritus, those who received gallantry awards and Ekushey Padak, commercially important persons (CIPs), and presidents and general secretaries of all political parties represented in the parliament will get divisions.

Explaining the provision of releasing a prisoner on parole, the IG Prisons said, "Released few months or years before completing his or her term, a prisoner will stay at a designated place under observation of a social welfare officer."

District committees comprising prison officials will decide, after studying a prisoner's record, who

can be released on parole, while a national committee headed by the home secretary will take the decision in special cases, he added.

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and exploring 1,650 square kilometres of area in Haripur oil field in 1987, which caused the loss.

Mohammad Belal Hossain, an official of the defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption, filed the case against the two on January 16, 1992.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case pressed charges against them on May 2, 2003, showing 25 people as prosecution witnesses.

The case was later transferred to the court for its quick disposal but it could not frame charges against the two due to the submission of time petitions by the prosecution and the defence.

**CASE AGAINST ERSHAD, SHAHIDUL**  
Ersad and former education minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam and three others are accused of purchasing two ships from Pakistan during 1988-1991 causing a huge loss of public money.

It is alleged that Ershad and Shahidul, two high officials of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation

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## Salehi

**FROM PAGE 16**  
transporting the outsiders, Jamaat and Shibir leaders, from the city to the campus.

Proctor Enamul Haque admitted the use of RU vehicles by Shibir men but said they are not going to take any action against them. Asked why they allowed political rally on the campus, he said, "There is no provision for such rally, but they [Shibir] insisted on holding it."

Witnesses said a number of RU teachers welcomed Salehi when he reached the venue near the RU administrative building. Besides, assistant proctors and some pro-Jamaat teachers and officials met Salehi and assured him of ensuring tight security.

Prof Taher, a senior teacher of Geology and Mining Department, was murdered on February 3 this year. Three arrestees confessed to the murder and said they killed Taher at the dictat of the department teacher Mia Muhammad Mohiuddin and Salehi.

Salehi went into hiding just after the murder. Earlier he visited the campus on July 4.

RU teachers and students alleged that the Shibir rally affected their classes and examinations as they set up more than 30 loudspeakers at all academic buildings. Many students could not attend classes as Shibir men used the university buses.

The government accused the Tigers of repeatedly violating a February 2002 truce and stepping up attacks against government forces.

"The LTTE has intensified its terrorist activities to such an extent it appears that they want a fullscale confrontation," said government spokesman Kehelija Rambukwella.

However the Tigers blamed the government for the latest fighting saying it was determined to resume a full-scale war and had stepped up attacks against them as well as civilians, a charge denied by the military.

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Trincomalee as a diversion because of the intensity of the battle in the Jaffna peninsula," Jayawardena said.

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## UN resolution

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overlooking the river where they met fierce resistance from Shiite Muslim Hezbollah fighters.

Pan-Arab television Al-Jazeera reported four Israeli soldiers were killed and 23 wounded, but there was no confirmation from the Israeli army.

Hezbollah also fired a salvo of 20 rockets from southern Lebanon at Israel, police said, but no casualties were reported.

The Litani has served as a strategic limit for Israel's operations in Lebanon since it first invaded