

Change in admin, laws suggested for effective land reform

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar in the capital yesterday said any attempt to reform the existing land system must be supplemented by other measures like land administration reforms, updating the present land laws and a proper documentation system.

They said, the question of land reforms has been marginalised after independence because of poor political response and absence of any implementation mechanism.

The Association for Land Reforms and Development (ALRD) and Oxfam, Bangladesh, jointly organised the seminar on "Land Reform: Agenda in the 1990s" at the Caritas auditorium at Malibagh.

Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, a Senior Research Fellow of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), presented the key-note paper at the seminar.

Abdur Rab Chowdhury MP, ADAB Chairperson Khushu Kabir, noted economists Dr Atiur Rahman and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, journalist Rahat Khan, Abdus Sattar Khan of Bangladesh Krishi Federation and ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda took part in the discussion.

Hossain Zillur Rahman in his paper said, attempts to reform the land system of the country have proved a flop because the issue never got due importance from the political leadership.

He said that between 1930s and 1940s land reform was a major national issue. However, after independence, it became marginalised in the political agenda.

Besides, land reforms could not be possible due to age-old administrative system in the country, he said.

Dr Rahman informed the seminar that total land area in the country was approximately 35 million acres of which only two-thirds under cultivation.

The fallow land as a proportion of total land area was less than three per cent, he said. per capita land availability was under 20 decimals.

He said that at the beginning of this century, there was one person for each acre of land while now, there are five persons for each acre.

Hossain Zillur Rahman said that with the present population growth, per capita availability of land could rise to as much as eight persons by the end of the century.

The total landlessness in the country stood at 53 per cent of the total households during 1980s, he said, adding that with the increased migration of rural population to urban areas increase in the rate of rural landlessness may have slowed down in the 1990s.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said the net cropping area in the country was more than 53 per cent.

He said agriculture growth was required in the rural

economy which would lead to surplus, increasing the buying capacity of the majority population.

Rahat Khan said, criss-crossing 'als' (the land boundaries) symbolised the state of land in the country.

"Our politicians never paid their attention to the need for land reforms, he said, "because they had to spend more time on removing the constitutional problems than looking at the people's problems."

Abdur Rab Chowdhury pointed out that a law in 1950 abolished the 'jamindari' system in the country eliminating all rent-seeking interests for the interest of the common people.

But the present waterbody leasing system brought back not only the feudal system but also their repression, he said.

The Member of Parliament

said, without strengthening the existing local governments, any attempt to reform lands would prove futile.

Union parishads have to be activated, he said, putting all state-owned land under the union parishad, so that they would list the amount of khas land and the number of landless people.

Abdus Sattar Khan said, development initiatives and high technology in agriculture have 'deep fried' the lives of the farmers wiping out their indigenous farming knowledge.

Khushu Kabir said, the landless people aspiring for 'khas land' have been repressed by the vested groups with 10 to 12 false cases filed against each of them.

Shamsul Huda hoped the politicians would restore the priority of the land reforms in their political agenda and bring about the desired economic emancipation of the people.

Dhaka Youth Foundation anniversary

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Youth Foundation will hold a reception in honour of some eminent persons on the occasion of its founding anniversary on January 20.

The programme will be held at the Institution of Engineers in the city, said a press release.

On the occasion, it added a souvenir titled "Rhidaye Dhaka" will be published. The foundation has urged all interested persons to send their articles on the Liberation War or the tradition of Dhaka to A Sarkar Babu, B 29, Block E, Zahir Hossain Road, Mohammadpur or Md. Munir Hossain Mintu, 198, Bangsal Road, Dhaka.

He will also give lectures on "Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature" at a Conference on Colonial and Post-Colonial Encounters at Dhaka University from December 20-22, 'Commonwealth Literature' and 'TS Eliot's Poetry' at Jahangirnagar University on December 17 and 18 respectively.

He will give lecture on 'Post-Colonialism' at Rajshahi University today.

Productive assets of the country have been destroyed in the name of development, he said pointing out that the land acquired for bungalows of the DC, and SPs at the districts prove what kind of development usually takes place in the rural areas.

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Dr Angus in city to give lectures at universities

Dr Angus Calder, an eminent literary critic and writer, is now visiting Bangladesh to deliver a series of lectures at the universities of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar and Rajshahi, says a press release.

He will also give lectures on "Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature" at a Conference on Colonial and Post-Colonial Encounters at Dhaka University from December 20-22, 'Commonwealth Literature' and 'TS Eliot's Poetry' at Jahangirnagar University on December 17 and 18 respectively.

He will give lecture on 'Post-Colonialism' at Rajshahi University today.

SC vacation bench

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has constituted a vacation bench to deal with urgent matters of the High Court Division during the period of vacation, a notification of Supreme Court said yesterday, reports BSS.

The two-member vacation bench has been constituted with Justice B B Roy Chowdhury and Justice D M Ansaruddin Ahmed.

The court has gone into vacation from yesterday and the leave will last till January next.

During the vacation period, Justice Ansaruddin Ahmed will sit in the court room no 8 on December 18 and 19 while Justice Roy Chowdhury will sit in the court room no 6 on December 26 and 27 for hearing of special emergency matters, the notification added.

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