

Dhaka Day by Day

The Householders' Friends

by Samia Islam

Everyday life is becoming harder for the householders of Dhaka. Especially when one thinks about the unfavourable odds on getting any domestic help or the ever increasing lists of things to be done — kids to take to school, bills to pay, house to maintain etc. These are a few chores that figure in a family's daily routine. On top of that there are things that are not a part of the daily work cycle but come up at fairly regular intervals for those who do not own a house in the city. Things like moving and shifting to a different place. These days most families in the city are constantly on the move. If the house is nearer to the office then it's too far from the kids' schools or it's too small, or the roads are too narrow and congested, or it's perennially submerged in water or the area is too notorious or too far from the city centre — if it's not one thing, it's the other. So people move to find a better place that would apparently suit their needs.

Given that shifting becomes imperative, what choice do you have but to go searching for just the right house for you. Oh, there are plenty of those around but the rude awakening hits you when you learn about the astronomical rents. Almost all houses of your choice are guaranteed to be financially out of your reach. Sometimes you make the wrong choices due to insufficient information on available options. You need professional help to choose something out of a range of prospective possibilities. Haven't you ever felt an urge to have someone else do all the searching and initial negotiations for you? That way you know what you are getting into before you make your move because the house owner knows what you require and you know what to expect. It does sound too good to be true but these days some people in Dhaka have started to venture into this field of mediation between house owners and

would-be tenants. It's an age old practice in most countries of the world but relatively new for the middle income households in Dhaka. One such firm is Osad House Rental Service at Elephant Road. The house rental agency makes a list of your requirements and then tries to find something that's closest to your specifications. It's unfair to imagine that they would come up with exactly what you were looking for but a close match is the next best thing and the most realistic proposition. This is a dream come true for any house holder — no searching, no harassment, no wild goose chases, no disappointment. What more could you ask for?

There is one more thing though. The actual trauma involved in packing and moving. Fear not because those harrowing times could be over for you too. Now you could afford to move the chic way. There's a new company named Pack and Move that will give you a cost estimate depending on the amount of your furniture and other belongings, add to that a service charge that includes transport fares and you are free of all hassles. They will sort your belongings and pack them systematically and take them to your new destination. These people give you insurance to compensate for any damage that might occur. They will also take full responsibility of dismantling and relocating electrical goods like air conditioners. So it's not only the hard work that you can trade in now but also the worry and the panic.

The availability of these services isn't a moment too soon in this growing metropolis. It is a welcome change from the ordeals that one had to endure earlier. With more companies coming into the market to cater to the needs of the public in more innovative ways, costs and the quality of service can only get cheaper and better in future. So next time you move, do it the 90's way.



Telemetering system at BWDB opens

Adviser for Energy and Mineral Resources and water resources Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury inaugurated the pilot telemetering system of flood forecasting and warning centre of Bangladesh Water Development Board at Wapda Bhaban yesterday, reports BSS.

Telemetering system aims at collecting real time data of rainfall and water level of rivers round the clock. It will specially help forecast the flash flood situation. Any abnormal event in respect of water level and rainfall may be detected within the net work covered by the telemetering system of flood forecasting and warning programme.

CCHRB to monitor voting in 150 constituencies

Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB) will monitor the June 12 election in 150 selected constituencies, reports UNB.

It will also monitor the election coverage by state-run radio and television. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Dainik Bangla and Bangladesh Times.

Addressing a press conference at Jatiya Press Club Saturday, member secretary of the CCHRB Election Observation Council Akram Hossain Chowdhury said 25 observers will monitor the polls in each of the 150 selected constituencies.

The CCHRB observers will monitor the pre-election situation on June 10 and 11, the polling process on the election day and the post-election scenario on June 13 and 14 in every district.

It will conduct a sample survey on the voters' list of one ward in every division to identify the flaws in the list.

Besides, 13 mobile teams will oversee the polling in the six divisions. Four teams will work in Dhaka division, three in Chittagong, two each in Khujna and Rajshahi, and one each in Sylhet and Barisal divisions.

The committee will announce a brief press report on June 14 and publish the complete report by June 30.

CU polls vacation

CHITTAGONG, June 8: All classes of University of Chittagong will remain closed from June 10 to 13 and the offices of the university will remain closed on June 12 and 13, on account of the national election, a university press release said today.



Child artistes performing dance at the Muktijoddha Janatar Mancha in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

বিভিডি : প্যাকেজ অনুষ্ঠান
নির্বাচন '৯৬ উপলক্ষে রাজনৈতিক নেতৃবৃন্দের সঙ্গে সিরিজ আলোচনা
নির্বাচন ও স্বদেশ চিন্তা
আজকের বিষয়
নারীর অধিকার
অংশগ্রহণে
আবদুল কাদের মোস্তা,
আমীনা বারী, তারানা হামিম
বিশেষজ্ঞ বক্তা
শেলিমা হোসেন
উপস্থাপনা
মুহাম্মদ জাহাঙ্গীর
প্রচারের সময়
আজ রবিবার, ৪টা ১৫মিঃ
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The caretaker Government is striving hard for holding a free and fair election on June 12, 1996 with the participation of all political parties.

The significance of holding a free and fair election for institutionalization of democracy is beyond any question. But more significant are the programmes to be adopted and implemented by the Government formed through this process. We, as members of civil society, are proposing the following to all these political parties who believe in democracy and development with the hope that they would incorporate our proposals/suggestions into their programmes and implement these on being elected to the Parliament. We believe that these will facilitate development of a sustainable, environmentally sound, economically productive and socially just society.

A. DEMOCRATISATION

- All laws, including the Special Powers Act, that are discriminatory in nature and against human rights should be repealed.
- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) should be ratified and implemented fully.
- The UN declaration on Children's Rights should be implemented fully.
- Rights of physically and mentally handicapped together with their full social and economic rehabilitation should be ensured.
- Political, social, economic and cultural rights of ethnic and religious minorities should be ensured constitutionally. Any type of social and state repression and discrimination against minority groups must be done away with.
- Total press freedom and freedom of speech should be ensured. Advertisements, ceiling of newsprint and such other means must never be used to influence the media.
- Ratification and implementation of the ILO Convention 141 should be made with assurance of recognising agricultural workers' right to organize.
- Industrial and Labour laws should be implemented properly in all industries and factories including garments. All the clauses of industrial and labour laws undermining basic human rights should be repealed.
- All types of terrorist activities, corruption and repression of women and the poor should be effectively dealt with.

B. INDEPENDENCE OF JUDICIARY

- Total independence of judiciary must be ensured through its separation from administration at all levels. The proposed frame-work adopted by the three political alliances (Tin Joter Ruparekha) during the 1991 elections should be implemented.
- Judicial system and laws should be reformed with a view to make these people centred and befitting with modern times and perspectives so that common people, men and women, can have easy and quick access to law and justice.

C. ADMINISTRATION

- Administrative systems and structures at levels should be reformed with a view to develop a people centred, accountable, non-partisan and effective civil administration.
- Rules and regulations controlling the responsibilities and conduct of government officials and staff should be amended with a view to make civil administration more accountable, responsible and efficient.

D. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

- A totally decentralized local government system free from all sorts of bureaucratic control should be introduced through implementing appropriate changes in the current system.

PROPOSALS ON BEHALF OF ADAB, GRASSROOTS PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY TO DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES PARTICIPATING IN THE ENSUING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, 1996

- Local government should be given considerable decision making power and financial authority.
- The poor should be provided with enough scope of participation in the local government structures and processes.
- At least one-third of the local government representatives should be women and be elected through direct elections.
- A representative local government structure should be developed from district, thana and down to the grassroots level in consonance with the guidelines of the Constitution.

E. INDEPENDENT AND NEUTRAL ROLE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION

- The Election Commission should be reorganised and empowered in such a way that facilitates its independent and neutral role and functioning.
- The election laws and regulations should be amended in such a way that prohibits participation of loan defaulters, war criminals, terrorists, corrupt individuals and repressors of women.
- A permanent code of conduct for elections should be developed and implemented rigorously with a view to prevent election process from being influenced by any organisation or individual.
- Use of arms, money and religion for influencing the election results should be totally banned.
- Strict and quick legal action should be taken against violators of expenditure limits set by the Election Commission.

F. LEGAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

- Although equal rights for women are guaranteed by the Constitution, discriminatory personal and family laws do not allow them to enjoy these rights. All these discriminatory laws must be amended and Universal Family Code should be introduced.
- All anti dowry and anti-repressive laws should be implemented strictly.
- The reserved parliamentary seats for women should be filled-in through direct elections.
- A minimum quota should be set for giving nominations to women with a view to encourage the political parties for increasing the proportion of women candidates in the elections.

G. NEUTRAL ROLE OF RADIO AND TELEVISION

- Radio and Television should be made autonomous.
- People-centred policies should be formulated and allowed to be pursued by Radio and Television with a view to facilitate performance of the media in the greater interest of the nation.

H. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

a. Poverty Alleviation

- Poverty should be identified as the number one problem and poverty alleviation be considered as the topmost national priority.
- Fifty percent of the development budget should be allocated for alleviation of poverty.
- Effective participation of poor men and women in the formulation and implementation of development plans should be ensured.

- A comprehensive land reform programme together with policies for ensuring the access of the poor to khas lands, water bodies and forests should be introduced and implemented.
- All the plans and programmes adopted and commitments given at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) should be implemented immediately.
- Collateral-free adequate loan provisions should be made for the poor. Policies should be formulated to allow government and private banks to provide collateral free loans to the poor. Government should provide financial assistance to the NGOs so that they can channel more loans to them.
- Land reforms, together with allotment of all khas lands, acquired and excess lands should be carried out for distributing these among the organised poor. All water bodies and khas ponds should be distributed among them on the basis of long time lease. Modernization of land administration and record systems should be carried out with a view to reduce chances of forfeiting of land and other complexities concerning land allotment.
- Land should be allowed to slum dwellers for building homes in the cities and urban areas. Slum dwellers should not be evicted without arranging alternatives for them.
- Extensive efforts should be taken to extend the irrigation system through the use of appropriate technology. Planned use of surface water should be ensured while unplanned use of underground water should be prohibited.
- Extensive employment opportunities should be created by developing agro-industries. Allot support should be provided to rural based labour extensive local industries.
- Minimum wage for agricultural workers should be ensured.
- National land, agriculture and water policies should be formulated and implemented with the participation of cross section of people.
- In the name of shrimp production all sorts of human rights abuse, oppression of women, pollution and destruction of agriculture and the environment should be stopped.

b. Integrated Economic Development and Planning

- All the processes and programmes aimed at developing a uni-polar World economy through promotion of free markets, structural reforms, and GATT have already created detrimental effect on the poor, especially on women and the environment of the third world countries. All these programmes should be reviewed and discussed giving highest priority to national interest and taking timely steps and decisions on the basis of national consensus.
- Participation of grassroots organisations, professional bodies, civil society groups and non-government

organisations should be ensured in planning and implementing development plans and programmes at national, regional and local levels.

g. Education

- Instead of different and parallel systems of education, a single-stream, universal, scientific, people centred and secular education system should be introduced.
- Investment in primary education should be increased and adoption and implementation of plans to eradicate illiteracy within a definite time frame should be made.
- Educational curriculum and teaching-learning process should be based on the need of the time and must be participatory and realistic.
- Effective participation of local people in school management should be ensured.

d. Health

- People-centred health policy should be formulated and implemented.
- Significant increase in the allocation for health and medical services should be made.
- Local government should be given the responsibility to manage all hospitals at thana and union levels.
- Health facilities in the rural areas should be extended through private sector intervention and quality of medical facilities should be ensured.
- Quality of food, medicine and other consumer items should be controlled strictly and public/consumer interest should be taken care of.

e. Environment

- Reform of existing laws for protecting the environment and ecological balance, promulgation and implementation of new laws in accordance with the declaration of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) should be carried out.
- Proper reforms of laws on environmental protection should be made and these should be implemented effectively.
- Disposal of industrial wastes into rivers, canals and water bodies must be controlled.
- Necessary steps should be taken to prevent air pollution by industries, factories and automobiles. Existing laws prohibiting use of fuel wood in brick fields should be executed effectively.
- Environmentally detrimental elements in major rivers and city areas should be identified and people should be made aware of these through newspaper, radio and television campaigns.
- Environmentally sound agriculture systems should be introduced.
- Social afforestation programmes with the participation of the poor should be strengthened with a view to create new forests and to protect the old ones.

f. NGO

- Non-government organisations (NGOs) are playing significant role in the nation building process. Many of their innovative developmental strategies have demonstrated great success in alleviating poverty, developing agriculture, protecting environment, promoting mass education and women's development, etc. Existing complex and anti-development rules and regulations concerning registration and operation of NGOs should be made easier, development oriented and commensurate with the need of the hour.
- Increased funds should be allocated by the government to be channelled to NGOs for allowing them to provide enough collateral free loans to the organised poor.