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Recommendations at int'l seminar

Downsize govt, strengthen local govt, increase transparency

By Staff Correspondent

Reduction of the size of government machinery, closure of unnecessary departments and directorates and transfer of maximum powers to district level authorities were the main recommendations made at an international seminar on administrative reforms that concluded here yesterday.

Transparency and accountability at government offices, abolition of the Office Secrecy Act 1921 and openness in signing contracts with foreign companies were also recommended by the three-day seminar for administrative reforms of the country.

At least one lakh posts out of 13 lakh can be abolished right now because those posts remained vacant over the years, it said.

Former finance minister A M A Muhibur who was chairman of the drafting committee read out the recommendations.

The rule providing for declaration of assets and properties by government officials and politicians, never followed earlier, should be enforced to curb corruption by government officials and bring transparency in the administrations, the recommendations said.

"All the local governments should be strengthened with decision making powers and accounting and auditing offices be separated."

The concluding session of the seminar was also addressed by Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Education Minister A S H K Sadique, Country Director of the World Bank Frederick

Temple and Public Administration Reforms Commission Chairman A T M Shamsul Haque.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC), Centre for Policy Dialogue CPD and Bangladesh University Parishad (BUP) at the Sonargaon Hotel.

Kibria blamed the previous governments for increasing the size of the government. "The process has been stopped after this government came to power," he said.

The government has started a reform process and public opinion should be created to make it successful, he said.

The World Bank's new Country Director said administrative reform is essential for economic growth and poverty

reduction.

Many governments including that of Bangladesh are too sensitive to the potential opposition to reforms as some groups become vocal against it. But they do not consider the large number of silent people who are the beneficiaries of the reforms, he said.

"Politics in Bangladesh is too much of a zero sum game at the top, with the main parties competing stridently for the pervasive power which comes with forming a government. If effective local government could be introduced, political power would be more diffused and political competition would be more widespread," Temple said.

Mintoo

From Page 1
liabilities for which he was served the notice and the outstanding loans are still due from him.

Mintoo therefore disobeying the judgement of the High Court in the most contumacious manner and in an open defiance and flagrant violation continued to act as the chairman and director of NBL, thereby making himself liable for punishment for contempt of court making them liable for punishment," the petition said.

Referring to the two Bangladesh Bank officials, the petitioner said: "The two were duty bound in law as a public servant to stop Mintoo from acting as chairman and director of NBL, but they refrained from doing so and allowed him to act as the chairman and director of the bank, and thereby committing contempt of court making themselves liable for punishment under the law."

"And the managing director and the chairman was a party to it without which Mintoo could not have violated and disobeyed the judgement. Therefore they are also liable for committing contempt of court making them liable for punishment," the petition said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy, police said.

But Mahfuza Begum, mother of the victim, and some relatives and neighbours, told The

One drowned by police

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Sabujbagh police claimed that following a general diary, filed by one local 'political leader', Fazlul Huq, and also a neighbour of Mujibur, police went to South Basabho area Sunday afternoon.

In the GD, Fazlul Huq alleged that miscreants fired a gunshot at a glass of a window of his house.

As soon as police went near the residence of the complainant, four young men, including Mujibur, attempted to flee the spot running. Police arrested three of them while Mujibur started running towards the jheel where he might have been drowned, police claimed.

Then the team of Sabujbagh police returned to the thana where they got an information that there were some stolen goods at Mujibur's house. The police then raided Mujibur's residence and recovered some "stolen clothes", they claimed.

Being informed yesterday, police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy, police said.

But Mahfuza Begum, mother of the victim, and some relatives and neighbours, told The

Daily Star last night that police grabbed Mujibur in front of his house after arresting the three others at about 4 pm on Sunday.

They alleged that police started beating him on the spot. At one stage, Mujibur somehow managed to free himself and started running. Police also chased him.

Mujibur got on a boat in the jheel and started rowing it. Police boarded another boat and chased him. As soon as police caught him, they started beating him with a long bamboo, they alleged.

Police also started plunging him in the jheel water. At one stage Mujibur disappeared into the water. Police then spent around half an hour in the jheel searching him with a long bamboo stick, they said.

Failing to detect Mujibur, police left the spot telling the local people that he managed to escape, they said.

The story did not end here. Police also picked up Shilpi, the elder sister of Mujibur, when she tried to resist police from torturing her brother, relatives and local people said. She was released from CMM's court on bail yesterday.

Mass killing case

From Page 1
Chittagong District and Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

Rahibul Huda was then arrested following court order but released on bail after two months on High Court order.

CID ASP Abdul Kader Khan, after a six-month fresh investigation, submitted his report with the higher authorities.

During the second investigation, the investigators questioned 65 people, including 21 eyewitnesses and 15 lawyers.

In the report nine policemen were accused of direct involvement in the massacre, the sources told the news agency.

In the case Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, five ministers, 10 journalists and 15 lawyers have been made witnesses.

The report has got clearance of the higher authorities of CID and is expected to be submitted to the CMM's court shortly.

Power accord

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try Director Haresh Jayasinghani signed the contract at the PDB office.

AES will build the 450 MW gas-fired combined cycle power plant at Meghna Ghat, about 20 km from the city, at a cost of 28 crore US dollars.

The contract will be followed by signing of an Implementation Agreement, Land Lease Agreement and a Gas Supply Agreement.

"Since the government has already signed a contract with AES for the 360 MW Haripur Power Project, the Energy Ministry expects that all other relevant contracts would be signed very soon," commented a source.

However, due to some differences between Meghna Ghat and Haripur Projects, the remaining contracts may take some time to be finalised, he added.

After PDB and AES finalise the PPA soon, the US company will have to arrange finances within six months and must start supplying power to the PDB on commercial basis within the next 30 months.

EOG felt that it was in the best interest of Petrobangla as well as EOG to postpone discussions until the results of these matters are known."

"In the first such press statement in Bangladesh, the US company further said, "Regardless of any proposals relating to EOG, Enron Corp. continues to have strong interest in the long-term investment opportunities in Bangladesh."

"In 1998, Enron had record revenue earnings (US \$31.3 billion) and net income (US \$703 million). The EOG itself had a net income of \$6.2 million dollars despite the downturn in international oil prices throughout 1998."

"Over the past several years we worked with the government and other interested parties on a number of innovative solutions to Bangladesh's electric power needs and to help the country realise the greatest advantage from its abundant natural resources. We continue to work on a number of these projects," the statement said.

Sources said that other than participating in the second round bidding, Enron has so far proposed a "ski-mounted power plant" which is a mobile power plant, and "study" of some gas fields.

"Enron will stay in Bangladesh because it has a huge involvement in Tapti natural gas field in offshore India. Its involvement in Bangladesh is much more cost effective than many other companies. Besides it can follow the energy sector in Bangladesh with regional perspective and sufficient ease."

"EOG, majority shares of which is owned by Enron Corp., is one of the largest independent oil and gas companies in the USA and operator of substantial proven reserves in the U.S., Canada, offshore India and Trinidad."

Bangabandhu Chair at DU inaugurated

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government could uproot campus terrorism if it gets cooperation from all quarters, including opposition political parties, reports UNB.

The situation has improved a lot and it will improve further if we get cooperation from the opposition," she said inaugurating the "Bangabandhu Chair" at Dhaka University at a function at Teacher-Students' Centre (TSC).

The Prime Minister said the government is trying to ensure congenial academic atmosphere in all educational institutions.

Begum Jebunnisa and Kazi Mahabub Ullah People's Welfare Trust is installing the Bangabandhu Chair to facilitate research on the subjects relating to the emergence of independent Bangladesh, post-independence situation and future prospect of the country.

The trust donated Tk 20 lakh for creating an initial fund for carrying out research under the chair named after father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Prime Minister thanked the Trust for installing the Bangabandhu Chair at Dhaka University, which she said would help the researchers and historians to project the glorious history of the nation.

JCD's strike at DU protesting PM's visit

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of opposition BNP, enforced a day-long strike on Dhaka University (DU) campus protesting the prime minister's visit to the university yesterday.

Other student organisations including Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), a conglomerate of some left-leaning student organisations, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)-backed Chhatra League brought out separate processions and held rallies protesting the PM's visit.

All academic activities remained suspended during the day-long strike. The Central Library, however, was open.

Most of the rooms of the administrative building was found closed at noon.

The university bus service operated partially. At least six buses were attacked and damaged allegedly by JCD men in different places of the city and four people including two students and a bus driver were injured during the attack, DU officials said.

They were critical of the two-country bus service as it would give a "spur to smuggling while various transmittable diseases will spread to the country from India."

Out of 64 districts, representatives from about 40 and central leaders were on the delegation.

The bodies of the two persons

Bomb attack designed to kill me, says Muhibur

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 16: Muhibur Rahman Manik, MP has alleged that an influential quarter was responsible for the bomb attack on his residence yesterday afternoon.

"It was pre-planned and designed to kill me," said the ruling party legislator today while talking to The Daily Star in the premises of his residence at Chhatak thana headquarters in Sunamganj district. A severe bomb blast on the first floor of his house killed two men and injured one.

Without naming anybody of his own party, Manik also alleged, "Some strong groups of terrorists had been up against me and attacked me several times during the last three years, especially after the last parliamentary elections."

"I am still at great risk and feeling insecure."

Manik was in Dhaka when the explosion had occurred. He came to his residence last night hearing about the bomb blast. He also said the high-ups in the government know about all these incidents, but no action has yet been taken.

The ruling party MP filed a case today with the Chhatak thana regarding the blast. In the case, he alleged that some unknown men had exploded powerful bombs in his house with an intention to kill him.

Meanwhile, the badly damaged portion on the first floor of the two-story building has been sealed. SP of Sunamganj Assistant Commissioner Miah, who has been staying in the thana headquarters since the blast, said it will be kept so until and unless a team of experts from the Army reaches here and gives clearance.

The bodies of the two persons

Khaleda

From Page 1

of Calcutta. They will have to run up to Salt Lake, far from the main city.

On the other hand, they observed, buses from Calcutta could run in Motijheel area, the commercial heartland in Bangladesh's capital.

They feared that Bangladeshi transport owners and workers as well as passengers would be economically loser as such.

They were critical of the two-country bus service as it would give a "spur to smuggling while various transmittable diseases will spread to the country from India."

Shie also was criticised for getting a short-term EU research job for a friend in 1995. The man was later judged to be unqualified; his work was deemed to be grossly deficient.

Partly driving the anti-fraud sentiments in the parliament is the fact that the assembly faces elections in June. European Commissioners are easy targets: 20 political appointees earning 16,000 tax-free euros (17,280 dollars) a month and up.

killed in the blast was sent to Sunamganj sadar hospital this afternoon for post mortem. The identity of the 20-year old victim is yet to be known, police said. Police recovered a number of small containers of Zarda and Dano from the house this afternoon.

The Prime Minister's Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs Suranjit Sengupta visited the house of Muhibur Rahman Manik last night. Meanwhile, Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, who issued a statement last night condemning the "bomb attack" on the MP's house, withdrew the same after a few hours. The statement was faxed to the press in Sylhet last night.

EU fraud

From Page 1

Karel Van Miert, the antitrust commissioner told Belgium's RTBF radio, "Most of my colleagues took their responsibilities very seriously."

The report made clear that no commissioner was directly and personally involved in fraud or personally enriched himself or herself.

But Pauline Green, leader of the Socialist group in the European Parliament, spoke of a collective responsibility for mismanagement at the EU head office. The 626-member assembly set up the inquiry by five independent experts, including two former EU auditors, in January.

The fraud report was harshest on Research Commissioner Edith Cresson, a former French prime minister who failed to act in response to known, serious and continuing irregularities over several years in educational and other programmes for which she was responsible.

It said when informed of fraud and waste in an outside contractor that squandered 150 million euros (160 million dollars) meant for a youth training programme, she failed to stop it.

She also was criticised for getting a short-term EU research job for a friend in 1995. The man was later judged to be unqualified; his work was deemed to be grossly deficient.

Partly driving the anti-fraud sentiments in the parliament is the fact that the assembly faces elections in June. European Commissioners are easy targets: 20 political appointees earning 16,000 tax-free euros (17,280 dollars) a month and up.

<img alt="A large black and white photograph of a man with glasses and a mustache, identified as Sheikh Hasina. The photo is framed by a decorative border. Text at