

Seminar on state of democracy Good governance a must for peaceful society

Experts at a seminar yesterday said that the greatest challenge of the 21st century would be to maintain and sustain the culture of peace across the globe, reports BSS.

Three main components of democracy—accountability, transparency and good governance—should be established first for achieving a peaceful society, they observed.

The observation was made at a national seminar on 'State of democracy in Bangladesh,' organised by the Peace and Conflict Studies Department of Dhaka University at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) auditorium.

Vice-Chancellor Professor AK Azad Chowdhury inaugurated the two-day seminar, the first academic venture of the newly established department in collaboration with the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) of Sweden and the

Institute of Politics and International Studies of the University of Leeds of the United Kingdom.

The university is conducting research work in 10 emerging democratic nations. Two countries from Asia—Bangladesh and the South Korea—have been chosen for the global study.

Dr Nalin Vittal from the University of Leeds gave a presentation at the inaugural session chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof M Shahadat Ali.

Chairperson of the Peace and Conflict Studies Department Professor Dalem Chandra Bannan, Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism Department of Dhaka University Dr Golam Rahman and Dr Tasneem Siddiqui of the Political Science Department also spoke on the occasion.

Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury said that democracy cannot be cultured and nurtured only by the social and political elite, but it requires the active participation of the common masses.

"As long as the gap between the have's and have not's remains,

democracy cannot get an ideal shape. If you can meet the basic needs of the people and give them better life, democracy could be established," he said.

Referring to Bangladesh, Prof Azad said that a unique system of caretaker government to hold the general elections in a free and fair manner has been developed through people's movement that can be taken as a model for emerging democratic nations.

Dr Nalin Vittal from the University of Leeds in her speech said that people should run the country as the centre of democratic system lies with the people.

She said the policy makers of Bangladesh should consider the complex nature of the society in establishing democracy.

"Accountable governance is the pre-condition of democracy. People should actually get what has been described in papers like the constitution," she observed.

The inaugural session was followed by the first working session where presentation was made on "citizenship, law and rights" by the chairperson of the department.

Khaleda demands release of Ctg Sramik Dal leader

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded immediate release of Sramik Dal leader MM Nazimuddin in Chittagong and urged the government to stop filing 'false' cases against opposition activists under the Public Safety Act.

In a statement yesterday, she said that the government arrested labour leader Nazimuddin under the PSA to cover up the failures of the ruling party.

She said the government, instead of curbing terrorism unleashed by cadres of AL, is arresting opposition leaders and workers on false charges to divert

people's attention as well as to foil the current oust-government movement.

Khaleda Zia also condemned the killing of BNP activist Mohammad Ismail at Feni. She alleged that the BNP activist was killed in an attack by Sonagazi police and AL terrorists.

The BNP Chairperson demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of those responsible for the murder.

In another statement, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan protested the arrest of Feni district JCD President Yeakub Nabi and another leader Naimullah. He demanded immediate release of the JCD leaders.

EPZs: Trade union

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and seven lobbyist firms—the possibility of increasing export of Bangladesh apparel to that country.

Referring to the recent proposal by EU for allowing duty-free and quota-free access of goods from least developed countries, Sinha said the government should take immediate steps to avail the chance and ensure entry of Bangladesh goods to markets in US, Canada, Japan and such other countries.

He suggested that the government could send letters to heads of government of these countries seeking such facility.

The issue can also be raised at the next conference of World Trade Organisation (WTO). Sinha said the TDA 2000 Bill passed by the US Congress last month will also affect Bangladesh's apparel export to the US.

The Bill allowed duty-free and

quota-free access of apparels from 72 sub-Saharan and Caribbean nations to the US markets from this month.

The America-Bangladesh Friendship Society, in New York has taken an initiative to form a 'Bangladesh caucus' in the US Congress to persuade amendment to the TDA Bill or movement of a new Bill allowing duty-free and quota-free access of goods from Bangladesh, he said.

The caucus to be represented by 15 Congressmen from the Democratic and the Republican parties will be formed at the next session of the US Congress.

This was told by Benjamin A Gilman Chairman of International Relations Committee in the House of Representatives at a dinner party in Washington which was attended by the BGMEA delegation and some prominent Congressmen, Sinha said.

Alongside this, the government should also launch a diplomatic offensive in Geneva, Washington and Brussels immediately so that the developed countries come out with a positive declaration at the conference of least developed countries (LDCs) in Brussels in May next year regarding duty-free and quota-free access of goods from LDCs, he said.

If a diplomatic offensive is launched, US, Japan and Canada may make such declarations at the conference, he observed.

Sinha said he would go to Geneva soon to meet WTO Secretary General Mike Moore to discuss possibility of such facilities for Bangladesh goods.

BGMEA Vice-president Benajir Ahmed, Director Tipu Munshi and K M Jaman Ronel also addressed the press conference.

Japan, DPRK

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"We have only entered into the serious phase of real negotiations," said the official.

The talks, scheduled to continue tomorrow will probably yield only an agreement to keep on talking, he said.

Two previous rounds of talks this year sputtered over North Korea's insistence on compensation for Japan's often brutal 1910-45 occupation and Tokyo's demands for information on Japanese citizens allegedly abducted to North Korea to train spies.

North Korea broke off earlier talks on ties eight years ago after angrily rejecting Tokyo's demands to track down 10 Japanese citizens allegedly abducted by Northern agents. Negotiations resumed in April, but North Korea has continued to deny abducting anyone.

While refusing to confirm whether the abduction issue was raised Monday, the Japanese official said negotiators opened an in-depth discussion into Japan's colonial past and how Tokyo could compensate property and other claims related to the occupation.

Fraudulent practice for JCI membership

By staff correspondent

Bangladesh Junior Chamber (BJC) yesterday said a fraudulent practice for membership of the Junior Chamber International (JCI) has been detected.

In a press release the BJC said it has recognition of the JCI since 1996. The JCI is based in Florida in US.

But another organisation styled Junior Chamber of Bangladesh has been operating in the country for the last few years, misleading BJC members and other professional bodies.

It said a Senator from US is coming to Bangladesh today to hand over a cheque for about one million US dollars for development activities of the 'unrecognised' JBC.

The JBC is representing Bangladesh in different world forums. It is also carrying out development activities and assisting its members in developing their careers, the press release said.

After BJC was recognised in 1996, JCI gave Bangladesh the status of National Organisation Member (NOM). Shaminur Nahar (Lipi) is the 'official contact person for Bangladesh' it said.

The JBC has been formed by some 'black listed' and expelled members led by one Nesar M Khan, it said.

The unrecognized body has been carrying out undesirable activities, which are confusing JCI, it added.

BNP high-ups

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Only former Dhaka City Mayor and President of BNP's youth front, Mirza Abbas and former minister Abdullah Al Noman attended the rally.

Speaking on the occasion, Mirza Abbas expressing his party's support to the Employees Association. He claimed that results of the last parliamentary election were manipulation and so his party could not form government.

"We were aware of the rigging. But we did not stop them as we wanted a peaceful election," Abbas said.

He said that in the next general election, they would not remain silent. He alleged that voters in the CBA election were being threatened not to vote for the Employees Association.

"Do not bow to threats. Resist them by all means and be ready to gouge out eye-balls of those who show red eyes. BNP will support you," Abbas said.

Abdullah Al Noman said that he has advised other party colleagues not to attend the rally due to press criticism. Other leaders did not turn up fearing criticism in the print media, he said.

He said that the press tried to interpret this rally as a meeting of BNP.



A two-day exhibition of Pakistani apple and date began at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday. The High Commission of Pakistan organised the event.

Kuwait to increase aid

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to sign an agreement tomorrow on fresh recruits of workers from Bangladesh. More than two lakh Bangladeshis are now employed in Kuwait.

The talks also covered other bilateral trade and economic matters as well as the ongoing crisis in the Middle East.

The Kuwaiti side expressed willingness to enhance development aid in different fields, expand volume of two-way trade and increase investment in Bangladesh.

The two sides agreed to hold a meeting of the Joint Commission on Trade under the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement signed between the two countries in 1979.

Kuwait investment in Bangladesh now stands at US \$265 million, which is channelled through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). The investments have been used in different projects in power supply for irrigation, electricity, deep tubewells and in Ashgabat thermal power plant.

Briefing newsmen on the outcome of the talks, PM's Press Secretary Jawadul Karim said the talks were held in a very cordial and friendly atmosphere.

The PM thanked the Kuwaiti government for extending 'excellent' cooperation to Bangladesh troops engaged in UN peace-keeping mission in Kuwait since 1990.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina called on Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah at the Amir Dewan on her arrival at the oil rich Gulf state. The Amir assured continued support and economic assistance to the development of Bangladesh.

During the 30-minute talks, the two leaders exchanged views on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in the economic field as well as situation of the Muslim Ummah with reference to ME crisis.

Hasina recalled Kuwait's initiative for inducing Bangladesh into the OIC summit in Lahore in 1974 and also the visit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Kuwait in 1974.

Hasina said Bangladesh always stands for peace, which is essential for democracy and development.

In an oblique reference to Kuwait-Iraq crisis, she said, "We don't want that sovereignty of one country should be encroached upon by another country." She said Bangladesh stands for the

Aman rice price fixed at Tk 1250 per quintal

The Food Planning and Monitoring Committee at a meeting yesterday fixed the price of Aman paddy at Tk 800 per quintal and Aman rice at Tk 1250 per quintal for the year 2000, reports BSS.

The meeting, presided over by Food Minister Amir Hossain Anu, also fixed the production target of Aman paddy at 105 lakh metric tons while the procurement target of Aman rice at 2.50 lakh metric tons.

Businessman rescued, 3 held

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Oct 30: Police rescued a businessman on Sunday night who was abducted earlier in the afternoon from No.2 Railgate area of the town and arrested three abductors.

Police said, a group of terrorists kidnapped Abu Taher, 40, a small trader from Lalpur of Fatullah area, at gunpoint from in front of Diamond cinema hall at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday and took him to a house in Deobhog Akhira.

Later on the same day, when the kidnappers sent a note to Taher's wife Aleya Begum demanding a ransom of Tk 20,000 for his release, Aleya Begum promptly informed the local thana about the incident.

Following up the ransom note, police raided the house in Deobhog area at around 11 p.m., freeing Abu Taher and arresting three kidnappers Khokon, 22, Mahub, 20, and Ranjan, 22.

Flood problem: Team visits India tomorrow

Star Report

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Water Resources has completed selection of a 10-member parliamentary delegation that is scheduled to leave on a 15-day visit to India on November 1 to discuss the long-standing flood problem.

During their visit, the 10-member delegation which includes seven MPs and an official from the Water Development Board, will hold talks with the Indian Water Resources Minister aimed at finding a permanent solution to the common flood problem that affects the two countries almost every year.

The MPs in the delegation are: Anwarul Islam, Kazi Sekendar Ali and M A Bari of ruling Awami League, Advocate Harunar Rashid, Dr. Habibur Rahman and Golam Mohammad Siraj of opposition BNP, and Sharfuddin Ahmed of Jatiya Party. Additional secretary to the Water Resources Ministry, the director General of WDB and the PS to Chairman of the standing committee will also

be in the delegation.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee in a meeting yesterday briefed the delegation members on the subjects to be discussed in the bilateral talks.

Presided over by committee chairman Abdul Momen, the meeting lasted for about half an hour.

Meeting sources said, the members of the delegation would seek co-operation from their counterpart in finding a permanent solution to the long-standing problem.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, who attended the meeting, informed that the delegation would visit Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay and have talks with officials of the Indian Water Resources Ministry, said the source.

The recent flood in the country's southwestern region will be reviewed in the meetings in India. The delegation will visit some dams in the India-Bangladesh border areas, sources said.

Israel warns Syria, Lebanon for violence along border

JERUSALEM, Oct 30: Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Ephraim Sneh warned today that Israel would hold Syria and Lebanon responsible for any escalation of violence along its northern border, reports AFP.

"Lebanon is a sovereign nation and we have reached the conclusion that (Syrian president) Bashar Assad has given the green light to Hezbollah," Sneh told public radio, referring to the fundamentalist Shiite Muslim guerrilla movement that fought Israel's occupation of Lebanon.

"We must draw certain conclusions because we are no longer in Lebanon, Syria and Lebanon are the addresses for us and we are warning them," he added.

"They are responsible for the situation," Hezbollah guerrillas captured three Israeli soldiers in an attack on October 7 and there have been numerous skirmishes along the border since Israel pulled out of Lebanon in May after 22 years of occupation.

AP adds, Israel's offensive against Palestinian gunmen and dislodged special units trained in guerrilla warfare, the deputy defence minister said today, as embattled Prime Minister Ehud Barak launched a fight

in parliament for his long-term political survival.

Still, Barak's minority government was not expected to fall in the next few weeks because a large religious faction has offered him a temporary 'safety net'.

Barak, speaking before parliament reconvened Monday, ending a three-month recess, blamed the Palestinians for the ongoing violence. "Understandings are not being kept by the other side, and this is its responsibility," said Barak, referring to a cease-fire agreement that has not taken hold.

In an Arab neighbourhood of Jerusalem, assailants fired on two Israeli security guards from close range, killing one and seriously injuring the other. Palestinian shooting attacks on Jewish settlements and Israeli army posts have become routine in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but Monday's incident marked the first time in more than a month of fighting that shots were fired at Israeli troops.

The death toll rose to 143 on Monday after two bodies were found in the West Bank of an Israeli man who was stabbed and of a Palestinian shot in clashes with Israel the night before.

Rickshawpullers

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Shyamoli, Argagaan and Kalyanpur areas were the main trouble spots where the protesters pelted stones and fought pitched battles with police intermittently, witnesses said.

The rickshawpullers and leaders of rickshaw owners associations later held a rally in front of the Shishu Mela and announced that they would continue to ply their vehicles on the road ignoring the government decision.

Later, a four-member team went to the Prime Minister's Office and submitted a memorandum to allow plying of manually driven three-wheelers on the Mirpur Road, sources said.

Vehicular movement resumed after police brought the situation under control and removed the barricades at about 11 a.m., police and witness said.

A high official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police later said it was a 'trial operation' yesterday. Manually driven three-wheelers will not be allowed to ply the Mirpur Road from November 15, he said. He however said such three-wheelers will be allowed to cross the road.

Sharif

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people on board, including 40 students of a US-government-run school, eventually landed after the army took power. When the aircraft landed there was barely seven minutes of fuel remaining.

Sharif's six codefendants in the case were acquitted. The prosecution also lost its appeal to overturn their acquittal.

"The defence argued the case well. It was a lengthy argument. We hope that Nawaz Sharif is eventually acquitted," said Shah.

Sharif is currently in prison in a 16th Century Aitoff Fort in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province where anti-corruption courts have been set up to hear charges of corruption and abuse of power against the former prime minister and several of his former colleagues.

FBCCI

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"Speaking of the electoral procedural anomalies of FBCCI, Founder President of Nitol Group Matlub Ahmad said two former BGMEA vice presidents and one from Information Technology (IT) sector could not be elected in the FBCCI polls though they represent prominent sectors nowadays, he added.

A large number of business leaders including Square Group Chairperson Samson H Chowdhury and representatives of various business associations were also present at the press

Kuwaiti Amir

From page 1
desh in OIC in the 1974 summit in Lahore and also visit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Arab country in 1974.

Hasina said Bangladesh always stands for peace which is essential for democracy and development.

Hasina invited the Kuwaiti Amir to visit Bangladesh. The Amir gladly accepted the invitation and wished to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time.

"We have very good and brotherly relations and this tie should be further strengthened," the Amir told the Bangladesh premier.

Foreign Minister Abdus Azad, Labour Minister MA Mannan, Principal Secretary Dr SA Samad, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami, Press Secretary Jawadul Karim and Bangladesh Ambassador Aminul Hossain Sarker were present.

PDB

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Marubeni-Sithe stayed away from negotiations on different pretexts, resolution of controversial Kalco issues being one of them. Marubeni is one of the leading stakeholders and main contractors of Kalco.

After repeated reminders and deadlines, Marubeni recently returned the IA, PPA and GSA to PDB.

According to sources close to the project, Sithe has abandoned the project on the ground that financing the Meghna 2 was not possible until 2004 due to the government's priority agreements with AES.

Marubeni was also aware about the difficulty of financing its project but has taken a strategy to negotiate at a slow pace with PDB until such time the financing is possible, sources said.

Foreign ministry

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NBR officials in releasing goods and also forging exemption certificates for this purpose has been insinuated as well.

A foreign ministry official, who was in charge of issuing exemption certificates, has already been suspended.

The ministry has also started an internal investigation into the matter. Meanwhile, NBR sources suspect that more containers would come through the diplomatic channel very soon. They also suspect that some smugglers have already changed their route following the recent confiscation. The NBR, however, has decided to keep an eye on all containers

Goods train derails

MYMENSINGH, Oct 30: Rail communications on Mymensingh-Chittagong route remained suspended following derailment of a number of bogies of a goods train at Kristipur level crossing in the town since this morning, reports UNB.

Railway sources said nine bogies of the Balidurabad-bound train from Chittagong went out of the tracks at the level crossing, causing serious damages to the rail lines.

KMCH tense

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The administration has collapsed as both physicians and nurses are divided over this issue as reports of three probe bodies are yet to be submitted, KMCH sources said.

Rahela's husband Tawhidul Alam Mantu complained to Sonadanga police on October 28 against Dr. Razia Sultana, Dr. Afroza and Dr. Rabul Iqbal in this regard. Mantu filed a case today accusing with ten doctors and nurses as witnesses.

AC (Sadar) Mahbub Hakim and OC Md. Shajahan today met KMCH authorities seeking cooperation in the investigation.

The appointment of orthopaedic surgeon Dr AQM Hamid Asgar both as the new principal of KMCH and head of the probe body formed by Health Ministry has also angered the doctors, nurses and employees of the hospital.

We are in no mood to accept whatever the report the new principal submits as his appointment is quite irregular and unwanted to at least 80 per cent of doctors, nurses and general employees due to his moral turpitude and weakness to the ruling party, KMCH Nurses Association leaders said.

Meanwhile, 109 patients have so far left the KMCH following the tense situation.

Indian daily lauds new tide in Dhaka-Washington ties

A leading Indian daily, The Statesman, yesterday appreciated the outcome of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to the United States at the invitation of President Bill Clinton, reports BSS.

"It is an irony of history that the country (United States) that dispatched its seventh fleet up the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 to attempt to scuttle Bangladesh's liberation war and whose then secretary of state described the new country as a bottomless pit and an international basket case, today views it as a partner in progress," The Statesman said in an editorial published yesterday.

Indicating the importance that the United States now attaches to Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina the paper said,

"within a gap of seven months President Clinton not only met Sheikh Hasina twice, once by visiting Dhaka in March last and then by inviting her to Washington, but talked of evolving a new relationship intended to be different from the donor-recipient ties in the past. Clinton accorded this honour in recognising the American investment in Bangladesh's gas sector. No wonder he promised Hasina to like the American investment to US dollars 8000 million soon. In 1996 it was only US dollar 80 million."

Referring to President Clinton's comment that "America was not a safe haven for killers," the editorial said, "President Clinton has shown understanding for Sheikh Hasina's demand that the killers of Sheikh Mujib

hiding in the US be extradited. Knowing Hasina's sensitivity over the issue which figured prominently during her discussion, President Clinton ordered his Attorney General Janet Reno to expedite matters."

Rolling out a red carpet welcome to Hasina soon after Atal Bihari Vajpayee's successful visit to Washington was meant to convey the importance that Washington attaches not only to South Asia but the region's two functioning democracies vis-a-vis the military dictatorship in Pakistan, the editorial said.

In March last, The Statesman said, the American president showed his open disapproval of the military regime by only making a flying visit to Islamabad whereas "he spent almost a week in India and Bangladesh."

One beaten to death in Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Oct 30: One person was beaten to death following an altercation over damaging crops in Sadar upazila.

The dead was identified as Cheniruddin, 45, son of Abu Taleb Molla of village Kalnagar in Magura Sadar upazila.

Police and witnesses said, Cheniruddin got into an argument when his hens damaged the paddy of Akmol Molla's land in Kalnagar village.

At one stage Akmol and his supporters beat him severely.

Cheniruddin was rushed to Magura Sadar hospital in critical condition at about 5 pm yesterday. He succumbed to his injuries at the hospital this morning.

A case was lodged with Magura Sadar thana in this connection.

Shab-e-Barat

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October 29, the committee asked the DC and Islamic Foundation, Nilphamari, to check genuineness of the news on emergency basis.

Interviewing the locals, the district administration and Islamic Foundation found the news valid and accordingly informed the committee.

After reviewing the messages, the Moon Sighting Committee decided that the Shaban month began October 29 and therefore the holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed on November 11, said a press release.

JS body

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ment and stressed the need for increasing institutional efficiency and skills of NBR.

Proposing some amendments to Financial Institutions (Amendment) Bill 2000 and Bank Company (Amendment) Bill 2000, the parliamentary watchdog asked the ministry to make a final statement before the next session of Jatiya Sangsad.

Presided over by Committee Chairman Prof Ali Ashraf, the meeting was attended by its members Chitra Bhattacharya, Syed Masud Reza, Karim Uddin Bharsa, Salfur Rahman, MD Anwar and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria attended the meeting on special invitation. Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan and NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan were present at the press