

Removal of elected VCs, pro-VCs condemned

UNB, Dhaka

Some professionals and intellectuals yesterday strongly condemned the removal of elected VCs and pro-VCs of various universities terming the move as 'blatant violation of laws and democratic norms.'

Protesting the removal of six Vice Chancellors and pro-Vice-Chancellors of different universities by the government, they also termed the action as a clear violation of 1973 University Ordinance.

They made the protest at a rally at the Jatya Press Club auditorium with noted intellectual Prof Dr Mazharul Islam in the chair.

The rally was addressed, among others, by removed VC of Dhaka University Prof Dr A K Azad Chowdhury, VC Jahangirnagar University Prof Abdul Bayes, DU Pro-VC Prof Dr Shahadat Ali, BFUJ President Iqbal Sobhan

Chowdhury, DUTA President Prof Aminur Rashid, JUTA General Secretary Ahmed Raja, DU senate members Advocate Syed Ahmed, Dr Harun-Ar-Rashid and Ismat Kadir Gama, former general secretary of National Press Club Shafiqur Rahman, BMA Social Welfare Secretary Dr Jamaluddin Chowdhury and Engineer Golam Mostafa.

Pleading to moot legal fight against such illegal action of the government, speakers at the rally also expressed determination to launch all-out movement against such unlawful move of the authorities.

They also criticised the role of the outgoing President and Chancellor of Universities Shahabuddin Ahmed saying that his action for illegal removal of the elected VCs would remain as a stigma on his forehead forever.

Australian envoy meets Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Australian High Commissioner in Dhaka Robert Flynn yesterday called on Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and said Australia would always remain besides Bangladesh for its development.

During the meeting at Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence, the envoy said that his country would extend all support like in the past for the development of Bangladesh.

The former prime minister congratulated John Howard for his election as the Prime Minister of Australia for the third time and handed over a letter of greetings to the high commissioner.

She also recalled her visit to Australia last year and thanked the envoy for the continued help and assistance of his country for the development of Bangladesh and also requested him to continue the support.

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman, former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Opposition Leader's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury, personal aid Dr Hasan Mahmud and private secretary Nazrul Islam Khan were present.

Mockbul's son

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Prosecution side opposed the bail petition and prayed for remand of the accused. After hearing both the sides the Magistrate Biman Bihari Barua rejected the bail petition and placed the accused on remand.

The police in its forwarding report before the additional district magistrate proposed a one-month detention.

AL leader Mockbul was present in the court during the hearing.

In a statement the former AL MP protested the arrest of his second son without any valid ground. He claimed that his son was arrested with a political motive and the move was to divert attention from the illegal occupation of a private university by a ruling party MP.

Mockbul said that he established the Dhaka International University. Masudur is a well known businessman and a Commercially Important Person (CIP) and taxpayer, Mockbul added.

PM: Armed forces

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sacrifice to protect our hard-earned independence," she said. Describing the National Defence College as the highest seat of learning for the Bangladesh Armed Forces, she said armed forces needed wise, knowledgeable and professionally competent leaders.

She noted that the contribution of the college towards the fulfillment of that need is significant.

Commandant of the NDC Maj Gen Abu Kaiser Fazlul Kabir also spoke on the occasion.

Ministers, high commissioners and ambassadors in Dhaka and chiefs of the three services were present on the occasion.

A total of 20 senior officers from Bangladesh Army, Navy and civil services participated in the 44-week National Defence Course while 20 senior officials from the army, navy and air force took part in the Armed Forces War Course (AFWC). Five civil servants three joint secretaries, one DIG of police and one DG from foreign ministry took part in the National Defence Course.

Col Khairul Absar and Lt Col Kazi Anwarul Hossain were adjudged the best individuals in research work in NDC and AFWC respectively.

3 economists

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They emphasised that each minister should exchange ideas and views with experts that would help the government in bringing economic emancipation and fulfilling aspirations of the people. Even the prime minister could have such non-political expert advisor, they said.

Against the backdrop of the bad shape of garment sector, they suggested that obstacles in IT sector be identified and steps taken to remove those barriers for its expansion. IT could radically change the economic situation of the country.

They also suggested massive preparations for good harvest in the coming Boro season and steps to stop import of non-essential items, increase foreign remittance, reform banking system and dispose of non-profitable public enterprises to reduce loss to government exchequer.

The prime minister thanked the economists for their suggestions and said that she would consider those favourably.

She said such dialogue with experts of different professions would continue irrespective of their political identity. Any suitable suggestion would be actively considered in the national interest, she added.

PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqi was present.

Experts against gas export

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awarded three Sylhet blocks (12, 13 and 14) to Occidental through unsolicited bidding in violation of the law of the land, he claimed.

Although the Awami League government had been under pressure from foreign companies, it did not give in considering the national interest, Kibria said.

He claimed that a 'secret conspiracy' was hatched before the election with the condition that whichever party agreed to export gas would go to power.

The Awami League felt prey to the conspiracy, as it had refused to play a party to the scheme, he said.

Dr Golam Mohiuddin of BUET said that Mosharraf was the main architect of the KAFCO deal, a deal which would be a national burden forever and for which the government had sent him to prison.

"He is the man who had signed the agreement for the KAFCO to sell gas at one dollar per thousand cubic feet whereas the government is buying it at around three dollars and giving huge subsidy," he added.

Professor Nurul Islam said if the country now exported gas to India, it would be compelled to import gas in a short time, as the reserve would be exhausted.

The BEA president Moinal Islam noted that the government must be aware that India would save around US\$400 million by importing gas from Bangladesh.

MM Akash of Dhaka University said there was no arrangement to monitor the cost of any gas project.

If the government wants to export gas, it will be necessary to change the PSCs because there is no provision in them for gas export through pipeline, he said. So, he asked, why the government is so interested to do it?

The government is trying to export gas to earn only Tk 1,000 crore but when there would be no gas reserve, the country would be compelled to buy gas at a higher price. At least 10 ministers of the present government are not in favour of gas export, he claimed.

Dr Abul Barkat said no political party committed to gas export in their election manifesto and asked why the government was so interested to do it.

Citing credible figures of 11.15 TCF of gas reserve, jointly determined by the United States Geological Survey and Petrobranga and published in February this year, the speakers expressed strong reservations about gas export as this reserve would meet 16 to 17 years of domestic demand at best.

Dr Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury of the Department of Geology at Jahangirnagar University presented a paper, which revealed that Unocal figure stood so high because it had mixed 'gas in-place' with 'recoverable gas reserve'.

Only 60 per cent of the total gas resource of the country were recoverable, the paper said.

Out of 22 gas wells in operation, only eight have over one TCF reserve and reserve in some wells is depleting, Dr Hossain Mansur said,

cautioning that the words on reserve might flit.

Nuruddin M Kamal, former chairman of the Power Development Board (PDB), said that hypothetical estimation regarding gas reserve caused confusion among the people and might rob the country of a priceless non-renewable energy.

Rafidul Islam Khan, a hydrocarbon expert, said planning, management and distribution of mineral resources was vital for productive utilisation and development.

Policymakers have to decide whether to follow the path of Norway or Nigeria, two contrasting examples of utilising mineral resources, he said.

The BEA seminar was addressed by Professor Nurul Islam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), former Petrobranga chairman Professor M Hossain Monsur, MM Akash, professor of economics of Dhaka University, BUET professor Dr Golam Mohiuddin, Chartered Accountant Masih Malik Chowdhury and others.

The BFDR seminar was addressed by former PDB chairman Nuruddin M Kamal, M Hossain Monsur, former director of the Atomic Energy Commission Dr Mujibur Rahman Khan, hydrocarbon expert Rafidul Islam Khan, Dr Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury of Jahangirnagar University and others.

Rehman Sobhan honoured

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of the struggle. I dedicate this award to all of them," he said.

He mentioned the names of economists who worked with him in the first Planning Commission and also recollected the role of young economists in Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Grameen Bank Managing Director Dr Mohammad Yunus handed over the award as chief guest at a simple ceremony held at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) auditorium yesterday.

The function was largely attended by intellectuals and economists. Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Mohammad Farahuddin presided over the function where economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud focussed on the professional life of Prof Sobhan.

Although Finance and Planning minister M Saifur Rahman was scheduled to attend the programme as chief guest, he did not turn up.

Toll collection

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Talking to The Daily Star, a senior BNP leader admitted that toll collection in the city has increased. He said the government is determined to take stern action against the miscreants.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia held a meeting with members of the Law and Order Committee yesterday and reviewed the situation. The meeting discussed ways to effectively check such crimes.

She instructed the ministries and departments concerned to take stern action against the criminals irrespective of party affiliation.

The sources said, the PM gave clear-cut instruction that no excuse would be entertained if the law and order situation can not be improved immediately. "I do not want to hear occurrence of any untoward incident in the holy months of Ramadan", she told the meeting.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Education Minister Dr Osman Faruq and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar attended the meeting, held at the Prime Minister's Office.

"Today, largely due to those dissenting voices, there is a rethinking on market-oriented reforms so as to accommodate some of the earlier concerns regarding developmental roles of the state," Prof Mahmud said. Mentioning Prof Sobhan's role

The BB Governor in his speech mentioned that the minister could not attend due to 'unexpected and unavoidable reasons'.

Arguably the most influential economist in the country, Prof Sobhan has had tremendous impact in development thinking in Bangladesh and is a voice against injustice in the society. Through this award, he got formal recognition in his lifetime.

Prof Sobhan in his speech recalled the days during the Pakistani period, the economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan, his role in the War of Liberation

and his and his colleagues' post-war efforts through policy planning to build the country.

He also mentioned the days he and his life long comrades Nurul Islam, Mosharrarf Hossain and Anisur Rahman spent in building the Bangladesh Planning Commission.

Recalling the days of the War of Liberation, Prof Sobhan said, "It (War of Liberation) made all of us who were associated with it feel bigger than what we were."

But, he added, "It is the misfortune of post-liberation Bangladesh that so much time is invested in making people feel smaller than they deserve to be."

Focussing on his next work -- 'Correcting Structural Injustices' -- Prof Sobhan said, "I hope it will be my concluding work as an economist, which I see as one of the crucial issues of our time."

"We have been held captive, as a people, within layers of injustice which have narrowed the opportunities and abridged the lives of large numbers of our citizens," he pointed out.

Prof Sobhan also talked of democratisation of wealth for equitable development and growth and empowering the poor.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said Prof Sobhan was a voice of dissent to the "uncritical acceptance of neoliberal or laissez-faire ideas promoted in the 1980s through aid conditionalities of Bretton Woods institutions".

"Today, largely due to those dissenting voices, there is a rethinking on market-oriented reforms so as to accommodate some of the earlier concerns regarding developmental roles of the state," Prof Mahmud said. Mentioning Prof Sobhan's role

as a member of the first Planning Commission, Prof Mahmud said, "After independence, he dreamt of transforming Bangladesh into an egalitarian society by using the Planning Commission as the vehicle of this transformation a dream that arguably was too idealistic."

He mentioned that the same commitment was reflected in the large number of publications of Prof Sobhan.

He continued, "Within Bangladesh, though the state-versus-market debate has had the risk of being unfairly tilted on one side, there was no one of Professor Sobhan's stature to represent the case of the market."

But, Prof Mahmud said the risk was largely remedied as "Prof Sobhan, unlike many intellectual crusaders, welcomes criticisms and does not hesitate to modify his position when confronted with reasonable arguments and credible evidences contrary to his ideas. In fact, he is at his intellectual best only when he is provoked."

Dr Md Farahuddin said people of all paths and ideology found honest neutrality in Prof Sobhan.

Ctg: Hartal

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Chowdhury spoke at the rally. Indu Nandan Dutta read out the declaration of the rally.

Addressing the rally Mustari Shafi said people of the country were scared after seeing the first month's rule of Khaleda Zia's coalition government. "We don't know what more is in store for us," he said, adding that efforts were on to turn secular Bangladesh into an Islamic Republic.

He said problems would not be solved by leaving the country and called for building up resistance against all sorts of repression.

Shafi also criticised the Home Minister's statement in Parliament denying repression perpetrated on members of the Hindu community in Mirersara. If nothing happened there why Firoz Khan of BNP who led the attack was arrested, he questioned.

Binod Bihari Chowdhury said the issue of repression on the minority in Bangladesh would be internationalised when the matter would come up in the UN general assembly on November 17.

Indigenous people

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ing development financial institution of the world to act in conformity with indigenous people's safeguards under existing and emerging international legal instruments and development process," the statement said.

The statement issued jointly by representatives of the National Adivasi Coordination Committee and the Bangladesh Adivasi Forum said the broad objective of the draft policy in comparison to the current policy suggests a narrower vision of the bank with regard to the rights and needs of the indigenous people and how they may benefit from the development process.

The current policy does not qualify how the indigenous people are to benefit from development projects. The draft policy reduces the meaning of benefit by relating it to 'the bank's mission of poverty reduction and sustainable development'.

"A concept of benefit that is unacceptable to the indigenous people cannot be imposed upon us without our prior informed consent," the statement noted.

The statement also said the draft policy allows borrowers (countries) ample scope to exclude the application of this policy to the indigenous people it does not wish to recognise. This is contrary to the self-identification rights of the indigenous people.

The statement also said that the draft excludes the application of policy to those 'who have left their communities of origin and moved to urban areas to obtain wage labour'.

On participation, accountability, transparency and access to information, the joint statement said the draft policy indirectly recognises the indigenous people's right to prior informed consent only in the case of commercial use of land and resources and not in other cases where the development process affects them.

The statement strongly recommended for enabling the indigenous people to give revised inputs on the current draft policy after they get an

AL activist murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An Awami League activist was hacked to death at Chitalmari upazila at midnight Tuesday night.

Some unidentified assailants swooped on Abul Shikder, 40, while he was returning home.

The murder was a sequel to previous enmity, police said.

Many PSCs

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Mineral Resources Engineering of the BUET respectively.

Professor M Ruzwan Khan, president of the BUET Teachers Association, chaired the seminar.

The minister blasted Petrobranga for having "never consulted with local experts before signing the PSCs with foreign companies" and said it could not take any decision on its own, as it was fully dependent on foreign experts.

Petrobranga paid three crore taka in legal fee against an international arbitration but it was not settled, he told the seminar.

"The case is still pending even after directives from the former prime minister for immediate settlement," he said.

Mosharrarf revealed that the present government has formed two committees, one to assess demand supply and reserve position and the other to assess economic feasibility of natural gas.

He said the committee reports would be discussed at a national forum comprising all quarters to reach a consensus on the issue.

"Everything would be done on the basis of transparency and accountability. No hide-and-seek policy would be adopted," the minister said.

He said all the member of parliament, non-government organisations, local experts and other stakeholders would be invited to participate in the forum.

US military courts

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order gave Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld the authority to establish the tribunals. The order did not name anybody who would be subject to prosecution in the military courts and did not apply to Americans.

"The president would make a separate independent finding that someone was a member of a terrorist organisation like al-Qaeda and a security force drawn from a variety of nations.

"Things are changing fast on the ground, as we saw over the last few days, especially last night and this morning with the Northern Alliance expanding its control over territory and entering Kabul," the UN envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi, told the 15-member Security Council.

He said UN political personnel had been asked to go to Kabul immediately, beginning with his deputy, Frances Vendrell, a Spanish UN career official now in Islamabad.

At the same time, he said, he was organising a conference as soon as possible of all Afghan factions and called on the international community to get food and other supplies to ordinary Afghans, millions of whom risk starvation as the winter snows set in.

opportunity to analyse the findings of the ongoing evaluation of the policy being undertaken by Operations Evaluation Department of the bank.

It also recommended that the indigenous people should be involved through their representative institutions in all relevant levels of negotiations between the Bank and borrowing governments.

It also suggested the bank retain the broad meaning of its objectives as contained in the current policy. It also urged the policy makers to incorporate provisions to recognise and strengthen the customary land and resource rights of the indigenous people, including rights to lands and resources owned, used or occupied by the indigenous people and to enable them to defend the rights.

Frederick T Temple, Bangladesh country director of the World Bank, addressed a large number of indigenous people at the inaugural session while Navin K Rai, senior social development specialist, indigenous people of the World Bank, delivered presentations.

Jiten Chakma and Sanjib Drong of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Sushmita Chakma, Mrinal Kanti Tripura, coordinator of Hill Tracts NGO Forum, Hla Thowai Hri Marma of the Committee for the Protection of Forest and Land Rights of the CHT, and Babul D Nokrek of Abima Garo Youth Association, Tangail were also present at the meeting organised by the World Bank.

When the matter was drawn to the notice of ruling BNP leaders, including LGRD Minister and BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Information Minister Dr Moyeen Khan, they said they were not aware of any such decision about reporters.

PM's political secretary Haris Chowdhury and her PS Saiful Islam came out of the Darbar Hall to the lawn to persuade the reporters back into the Hall, but failed.

The journalists, however, entered the Hall after the oath-taking ceremony was over to collect reaction from the new President.

Newsmen boycott

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tion." President of the Dhaka Reporters Unity Anwarul Huq said echoing the sentiment of the agitating journalists.

Termining unfortunate the gesture shown to journalists both by some civil and military officials there, he said, "We're treated as second-class citizens out of sheer bureaucratic arrogance."

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5 murdered in city

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village of Majdi in Noakhali, out of his house at 11:00 pm Tuesday. He was taken to a slum near the planning commission office at Agargaon and severely beaten up. Police recovered him from the spot and send him to the Pangu hospital where he died at 4.40 am yesterday.

His body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Sources said that Shajahan had an affair with a girl in the area. Relatives of the girl may have hired hoodlums to kill Shajahan, they added.

No case was filed with the police in this regard.

The body of Emdad Hossain, 28, Publicity Secretary of the Uttara thana unit of JASAS, was found slaughtered near an under construction building at Madhubagh, Uttarkhan in the city's Uttara area yesterday morning.

Emdad, son of Ashraf Uddin, left his residence in Uttarpura, Dakshinkhan at about 10:30 p.m on Tuesday. He was missing since then.

Faruq Mia, a local resident, found his body at 7:45 am yesterday. His body bore marks of injuries

in different parts and his clothes were wet when his body was found.

The reason behind the killing could not be known.

His body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy. No case was filed in this regard.

The body of an unidentified man, aged around 40, was recovered from near Agargaon police camp at noon yesterday. His identity could not be known till writing of this report.

Police sent the body to DMCH morgue for autopsy. Hospital sources quoting a morgue employee said the man might have been strangled.

In yet another incident a handloom employee was stabbed to death at a bazaar of Mirpur 11 yesterday evening.

Murgi Jamil, 25, son of Mohammad Shamim, was stabbed to death by a gang of miscreants at about 3:45 pm.

He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead. Relatives who brought the victim to the hospital said the victim told them that Jamal and Mokbul stabbed him.

The reason behind his killing could not be known.

Body for power

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prime minister, will also be in it.

Besides, the government will appoint two power sector experts and one economist to the council, according to the draft. There will also be representatives from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, different chambers, trade unions and the civil society.

Iqbal Hasan Mahmood, the state minister for power, told The Daily Star that the proposed council will play a significant role in the development of the power sector.

He could not say exactly when the council would be formed, however. The minister said he expected the draft to be approved by the prime minister shortly as it is on the agenda for the first 100 days of the government.

Mahmood said none of the decisions taken by the previous government on the power sector was transparent. "Formation of this council will ensure transparency in the power sector," the state minister observed.

The council will look into the recommendation made by different committees on reforms in the sector before placing those before the parliament, the minister said.

Sources said the council would not only scrutinise the proposals of the government but also come up

with new ones if and when necessary.

Meanwhile, power sector experts were sceptical about the effectiveness of the proposed council unless it is endorsed by the parliament. "If the council only aims to meet expectations of the government, then it will fail," said a high PDB official.

A number of PDB officials observed that there should be representatives from different wings of the power sector in the advisory council.

Hartal today

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BNP-led government is now talking about forming of a committee of experts regarding gas export in the face of protest by LDF, there has been no change in its policy to export gas.

Bangladesh Ganatantrik Ainjibi Samity in a press release said it supports the hartal call. It demanded of the government to ensure gas supply to industries and to northern and southern districts, stopping the bid to export gas.

Ganatan