

'Empower people to ensure good governance'

BSS, Dhaka

Political leaders, legislators, academicians and civil society leaders yesterday called for paying heed to the poor and disadvantaged groups and honour their opinions in public policies and resource allocations.

The call came from a workshop titled 'Perception of Governance: The Unheard Voices' organised by the Manabik Shahajya Sangstha at its Banani office in this city.

There is no scope for poor and socially disadvantaged groups -- marginal peasants, sharecroppers, landless labourers, artisans, informal sector workers, urban slum dwellers, disabled people and disadvantaged women -- to raise their voice and exercise any influence over public policy and resource allocations, the research paper of the workshop observed.

Legislators Dr Alauddin Ahmed, GM Quader, M Akbar Ali, Asaduzzaman Noor and Mahi B Chowdhury, Gano Forum general secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, latiya Party (Manju) secretary General Sheikh Shadidul Islam, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah, professors AKM Nurun Nabi, Dalem Chandra Barman and Dr Shawkat Ara Hossain and Karmajibi Nari president Shirin Akhter spoke on the occasion.

Saifuddin Ahmed Manik stressed the need for empowering people to establish good governance in the country. Sheikh Shadidul Islam said unlimited power given to the central government by the constitution and the law of the land presented a drag on the establishment of good governance and created the 'winners-take-all' mindset in the ruling quarters.

He also criticised the "extra-constitutional centres of power" that the country witnessed under different governments.

Dr Alauddin Ahmed said the trend of politically sponsored violence in recent years was a major hindrance to the achievement of good governance.

GM Quader said free and fair elections are prerequisites to strengthening democracy, the practice of which for years ultimately leads to the achievement of good governance.

Mahi B Chowdhury stressed the need for basic moral education to create a political culture conducive to the rule of law, good governance, independent judiciary and human rights.

Politicisation of the administration should be stopped to ensure good governance, he added.

Asaduzzaman Noor said political leaderships should pay heed to the voices of the people. He also stressed the need for intra-party democracy.

The lawmakers also called for strengthening local government bodies and authorising them to earn revenue to run their activities, reducing dependence on the government.

The local government bodies are now virtually accountable to the central government, not to the people, as they receive funds from the government, they observed.

Professor Maniruzzaman Miah said curb on corruption, transparency in government activities and the presence of a strong press and civil society could establish good governance.

Dr Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman presented the research paper at the workshop.

The researchers had held a series of group discussions with rickshawpullers, women garment workers, small grocery owners, class III and IV government employees, villagers, NGO beneficiaries and stakeholder groups of union parishes to know people's perception about good governance.

They found that the people's perception of governance is better management of the economy, including maintenance of price level of essentials within the reach of the poor and the common man, creation of jobs in the public sector, enhancement of pro-poor and rural-based investment and easy access to credit and investment.



Police intercepted a procession of the Bangladesh Krishak League near Zero Point in the city yesterday. The Krishak League took out the procession demanding trial of the killers of its leader Shaheed Azam.

Irregularities in food import Move for quick disposal of under-trial cases

The government has taken the initiative for quick disposal of under-trial cases of irregularities and complexities in the official import of rice and wheat at different times in the past.

"The government is considering, on priority basis, the resolution of such complicated issues as several thousand crore taka is involved in these cases either as dues or liabilities," food ministry sources told BSS yesterday.

Food Minister Abdullah Al-Noman yesterday directed the department concerned to take initiative in this regard.

He also asked the officials concerned to inform him of the latest position of the cases pending for long and to take immediate steps for quick disposal of the cases in consultation with the legal advisers.

He also directed the officials to inform him about the culprits involved in irregularities of food import and take legal measures against them.

The sources said 24 cases are now under trial on irregularities of rice import in last few years. Of them, eight cases are now pending with the Supreme Court and the rest 16 with the lower court.

Tk 728.23 crore dues or liabilities were involved in 13 cases out of 24 while the financial involvement of the remaining cases was not found on the records of the ministry.

The sources said these are the partial accounts of irregularities. The government is looking into more irregularities in the import of rice and wheat, and appropriate measures will be taken in those cases, the sources said.

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8 arms seized: 1317 more arrested

BSS, Dhaka

Police seized eight firearms and 29 bullets from across the country during the last 24 hours drive ending at 6 am yesterday.

Police arrested eight identified criminals including three members of an outlawed party while 10 people were arrested in connection with the arms seizure and eight cases were filed under the Arms Act against them, a police headquarters press release said.

During the drive, police also arrested 1,317 people, of them, 642 were wanted by police and 657

accused in cases under investigation.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) recovered an explosive and registered a case in this connection.

Three members of outlawed party are Bidyut and Gama of Kushita and Mofizul Islam of Khulna district.

Other identified criminals are Mohammad Shamsul Alam of Chittagong, Billal Hossain and Mohammad Nazir of Sirajganj, Farman Ali of Tangail and Abdur Rouf of Dhaka city.

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Flood situation reviewed

BSS, Dhaka

A meeting for assessing the flood damages across the country was held yesterday with Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Uddin Yusuf in the chair.

Held at the ministry, it was attended, among others, by State Minister for Disaster Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury and Relief Secretary BMM Mozharul Haq.

The meeting approved test relief of 630 metric tons of rice for destitute families of 13 flood affected, waterlogged and river eroded districts and house building grants of Tk one lakh and 800 pieces of saris and 800 pieces of lungis for three affected districts.

This allocation is additional to the already approved Tk 51.17 crore, said a PID handout.

The 13 districts for which the allocation was made were Nilphamari, Sirajganj, Bogra, Feni, Sunamganj, Netrokona, Mymensingh, Pabna, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jessore, Cox's Bazar and Tangail.

Nasim Firdaus made envoy to Indonesia

UNB, Dhaka

Nasim Firdaus, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to Indonesia.

Earlier, Nasim Firdaus served as Deputy High Commissioner in Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad and Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington.

She also served in Brussels and Kolkata, and in Geneva as the Bangladesh Consul to the Confederation of Helvetia and Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in the United Nations.

Prayers for early recovery of Nafa today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star will hold special prayers for early recovery of its Special Correspondent Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa who underwent surgery at the Shanghai First Hospital in China.

The prayers will be held at the seminar room of the newspaper office at 5.30pm.

Shehabuddin fell seriously ill while on a visit to China. He went there on July 14. Still under treatment, he will undergo another operation soon.

Friends, relatives and well-wishers of Shehabuddin have been requested to attend the prayer session.

Philosophers urged not to be slave of their own culture

A seminar on 'philosophy, culture and pluralism' was held yesterday at the Department of World Religions of Dhaka University, says a press release.

Prof William Sweet of St Francis Xavier University of Canada presented the key-note paper. Prof Aminul Islam of the Philosophy Department took part in the discussion. In his paper Prof. Sweet urged the philosophers not to be slave to their own culture. A time has come when we should study all the cultural heritage of the world, he said.

Prof. Aminul Islam emphasised the necessity of bringing about a sense of unity, amity and understanding among all religions and shades of opinions.

Prof Kazi Nurul Islam, Chairman, Department of World Religions, presided over the seminar.

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