

Election system commercialises politics: Temple

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The political system in Bang-ladesh is being increasingly commercialised by the way the election system works and generates the demand for bribes, Fredrick T Temple, World Bank country director in Dhaka, told a seminar yesterday.

Candidates spend huge amounts of money to get elected, and if they win, many use their offices to recoup their investments with profit, he said.

The seminar on 'Accelerating Growth and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh' was jointly organised by the Bureau of Economic Research (BER) of Dhaka University, the South Asia Region of the World Bank and the World Bank Institute.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, chairman of the BER, presided over the first session of the seminar held at Hotel Sheraton in the city.

Temple said one motive for running for parliament was to gain protection from prosecution as a lawmaker, especially from loan default.

The inner circles of political organisations, that are not very democratic, decide who will run, said Temple, who completes his assignment as the World Bank's country director next Monday. The lack of democracy inhibits the emergence of new leaders, he added.

"Candidates from the major political parties violate the campaign spending limitation, and when the winners become members of parliament, one of their first acts is to lie, by certifying they didn't exceed the campaign expenditure limit," Temple said.

He said law and order must be improved, especially by breaking the nexus among some politicians, the police and criminals.

Weak law and order creates an enabling environment for extortion and toll-taking. They add to the cost of doing business at all levels and also discourage entrepreneurship, he observed.

Temple said reforms of the police and criminal justice system were essential, but they would not be successful unless the top political leadership took disciplinary measures against senior party members

who are known to be corrupt.

However, society has been changing, civil society finding its voice, and politicians may begin to realise the people's penchant for voting non-reforming governments out of power, Temple said.

Prof Muhammad Yunus, managing director of the Grameen Bank, said widespread corruption and outright bribery were taking place due to lack of governance. He added that local governments should be given the fund for local development.

Speaking at the session, Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan said the poverty reduction strategy paper would be finalised by December next year.

In his paper on strategy for pro-poor growth in Bangladesh, Prof Wahiduddin said despite many obstacles -- some man-made, some natural -- the Bangladesh economy experienced moderately accelerated growth in the 1990s compared to the previous decades.

Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan chaired the second session on Poverty and Inequality: Trends and Causal Links.

Shibir's 72-hr siege starts at CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

Cadres of the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) in the Chittagong University (CU) yesterday ousted all the officials and employees from the administrative building before locking it up.

Some ICS cadres rushed to the five-storey building at around 1pm and drove all away, asking them not to come back in the next 72 hours, campus sources said.

But the vice-chancellor (VC) and pro-VC were not asked to leave during the siege.

The ICS enforced a 72-hour siege following a clash with the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on Tuesday at the Sholoshahar Station that left three Shibir activists injured.

'Independent HR commission an urgent need'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An independent human rights commission is urgently needed in Bangladesh to prevent human rights violation, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The discussion took place yesterday at Odhikar's Gulshan office on the occasion of United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. It was organised by Odhikar and Global Network for the Prevention of Torture (GNPT).

The developed countries that had once played an important role in protecting human rights have suddenly cooled off since September 11, 2001, observed a speaker.

Justice Syed J R Modassir Hossain, judge of Appellate Division of the Supreme Court attended as chief guest while International Press Freedom Award holder Tipu Sultan moderated the discussion.

However, Attorney General A F Hasan Arif could not attend the discussion due to unavoidable reasons.

The need for a human rights commission in Bangladesh cannot be overemphasised, said Justice Modassir.

Shahin Anam, team leader of Manusher Jonno, said although Bangladesh has ratified many UN conventions including the Convention on Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Child Rights Convention (CRC), the actual benefits are yet to be seen.

We also need all the human rights organisations in the country to have a stronger role, she added.

Annan

FROM PAGE 1 UN Security Council resolution 1483", passed unanimously in May, "which leaves the responsibility for security and for creating a secure environment to the coalition forces or the occupying power.

"The occupying power does have a responsibility to promote the welfare of the Iraqi people through effective administration of Iraq," Annan added.

"I think the security should be left to a multinational force of the coalition."

Annan also met British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who thanked the UN chief for voicing his condolences over the deaths of the six British military policemen in Iraq.

Straw said that he and Blair had told Annan during their talks that they wanted the UN to play a vital role in the political process and reconstruction work in Iraq.

Dutch firm

FROM PAGE 1 the local agent of AVR, told this correspondent yesterday.

BADC sources said the agreement on transportation, recycling and destruction of the toxic fertiliser was signed between Chemico and BADC last January. But AVR signed the document recently and submitted it to the BADC three days ago.

The BADC imported 6,300 tonnes of ZOS from Stollrar Chemical Company of the US under an Asian Development Bank (ADB) credit in 1991. After marketing 3,536 tonnes of the compound, the government got proofs that the fertiliser was toxic with abnormally high concentration of lead-cadmium.

State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir informed parliament on June 22 that a US court fined the producer of the toxic fertiliser \$1 billion.

BADC officials said the government received Tk 3.77 crore as compensation after a US court penalised the toxic fertiliser producer.

They however ruled out any possibility of compensating the farmers who had bought a large quantity of the fertiliser between 1991 and 1992.

"Mainly growers of potato, sugarcane and turmeric bought the fertiliser, but it is not possible to find them out now and give them compensation," said an official on condition of anonymity.

PM

FROM PAGE 12 and Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintoo.

Khaleda sought cooperation of the city dwellers to keep the capital clean and help its uplift efforts.

Placing stress on the cleanliness of the capital, she asked for taking steps to reduce the water-logging problem that usually occurs during the monsoon.

Kuakata

FROM PAGE 12 local association that works for the protection of the beach, dumped sandbags to stem the tide of erosion, but the effort failed to halt the process.

The authorities concerned are yet to take any effective measure to protect the beach, a tourist dollar earner, and the huge investment in local tourism by the public and private sectors.

Kalapara upazila administration said they informed the higher authorities of the situation and hoped that effective measures would be taken soon.

Landslides kill 23

FROM PAGE 1 from rail tracks at Chinki Astana in Mirir Sarai, disrupting operation of trains on Chittagong-Dhaka route for about five hours in the morning.

Met office recorded 186 mm rainfall in 24 hours till 06:00 pm yesterday.

In the port city, Md. Enamul Azim, 27, a teacher of computer science and engineering at the University of Science and Technology, was drawn into a drain by strong current and he drowned at Olonkar crossing at around 1:30 pm. He did not know how to swim.

He was returning to his residence at Halishahar from the university. Son of Fauzul Azim, Enamul hailed from Chunati under Lohagara upazila of Chittagong.

An unidentified schoolboy drowned in rushing waters at Sholoshahar in the afternoon. A landslide at Hukkapara of Karerhat under Mirir Sarai left five persons dead. They are Rashed, 7, Riaz, 3, Parul Akter 5, Monu Mia, 85

AL boycott

FROM PAGE 1 not possible on our part to join an ineffective and farcical parliament session," the memorandum read.

Following Kabir's remarks what the AL deputies found 'very offensive and libelous', they tried to protest. But as the Chair did not allow them floor to air their protest, they staged an walkout.

The deputy speaker, who was in the chair yesterday, informed the House it that he had examined Wednesday's proceedings and had asked to expunge 'the offensive, indecent, libelous and unparliamentary words'.

Asked about the order, Hamid told reporters that 'expunction in general will not do'. There has to be specific expunction of the 'derogatory remarks' of the minister, he said.

AL found Kabir's statement a political ruse to make parliament ineffective.

Following the ALPP meeting, Hamid briefed the press about its outcome. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, senior party leaders Suranjit Sengupta and Mohammad

and Monowara 54.

Reports said landslides took place at 16 places in Khagrachhari. Of these, four landslides at Ramgarh claimed 16 lives.

A landslide at Nagapa Tanmonipara killed one Khorshed Alam's son Kamal Hossain, 13, daughter Rahima Khatun, 10 and a girl identified as Masuma 11.

Four persons -- Hanif, 30, his mother Sayera Khatun, 55, Hosnara Begum, 27 and Reshma Akter, 25 were killed in a landslide at Kaladoba Shampurpara.

Nine persons were buried alive in two other landslides at Jony-chandrapara and Dakbanglapara under Patachhara union. The victims were tribal people.

The victims were Bano Kumar Tripura, 35, his son Hiru Kumar Tripura, 7, daughter Hirabala Tripura, 5, her mother Chikobi Tripura, 60, Hari Dash Tripura, 15, Dipika Tripura, 3, Aubongallia Tripura, 30, Dulal Chandra Tripura, 52 and Punapatri Tripura, 45.

Nasim spoke while Zillur Rahman, SAMS Kibria, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Whip Faruq Khan were present among others.

Hamid alleged that while Alamgir Kabir was making the remarks against Hasina, the Chair sanctioned him more time at the indication of Leader of the House Khaleda Zia.

Suranjit expressed dismay over such a situation in which the Leader of the House apparently enjoyed Kabir's statement and encouraged him to continue with the derogatory remarks against the opposition leader.

He said Kabir's provocative remarks came following Khaleda's June 23 speech in old Dhaka that said she would not give any concession to the opposition.

Jalil said as his party deputies were not allowed to speak in the House they would have to take to the streets.

The AL lawmakers abstained from the current budget session when it began on June 10, but joined it on June 16.

Gram Sarkar

FROM PAGE 12 members will be 5,25,096.

One Gram Sarkar will be constituted in each of the 40,392 wards in 4,488 Union Parishad (UP).

Explaining the delay, Mannan Bhuiyan said 'training for the trainers' concerning the formation of Gram Sarkar is yet to be completed as many officials could not take part in it because of their involvement in HSC examinations and other important official assignments.

Training of upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) and others concerned could not be completed despite all efforts by the National Institute of Local Government (NILG), Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) in Comilla and the Rural Development Academy (RDA) in Bogra, he added.

Under the relevant laws, every ward in a UP will be treated as a village and Gram Sarkar will be a statutory body comprising 15 members, headed by the elected UP member of the ward concerned. The UP chairman would be advisor to the Gram Sarkar.

Of the 15 Gram Sarkar members, 13 will be selected from different professional groups like rural doctors, lawyers and teachers and from among farmers on the basis of consensus at a meeting attended by at least one tenth of voters of a ward in the presence of the UNO.

Late president Ziaur Rahman had introduced Gram Sarkar. Later, president HM Ershad passed a law titled "Palli Parishad" in 1989 and the previous Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina passed a law styled "Gram Parishad" in 1997. But there was no consequent progress.

Mannan Bhuiyan said the new Gram Sarkar would not have any major difference with the two other models of village governance proposed by the Ershad and the Awami League governments.

On February 27 this year, the Jatiya Sangsad passed the Gram Sarkar Bill, aimed at involving grassroot people in rural development activities, planning and the process of implementation.

Justifying the move to reintroduce Gram Sarkar, the BNP secretary general and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister said it would greatly help infuse dynamism in development activities in rural areas.

In reply to a question, Mannan Bhuiyan ruled out politicisation of the formation Gram Sarkar and conflict between Union Parishad and Gram Sarkar. The latter will be a complementary body of Union Parishad, he said.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haque was also present at the press conference.

Two US soldiers killed

FROM PAGE 1 US forces, has been the scene of a series of ambushes using trip wires dangling from overpasses or grenades tossed from bridges. Last month, two US soldiers were killed and two injured when a Humvee detonated an anti-tank mine hidden under debris on the highway.

On Wednesday afternoon, ambushers dropped grenades from a Baghdad overpass onto a passing convoy of Army Humvees, said Marine Corps Maj. Sean Gibson. There were no serious injuries.

In Hilla, 45 miles south of Baghdad, three Marines were wounded Wednesday in an ambush, a US military statement said. One Marine was killed and two were injured when their vehicle - part of a quick reaction force dispatched in response to the ambush - rolled over on the soft shoulder on the way to the scene.

On Thursday, two Iraqi employees of the national electricity authority were killed when their US-led convoy came under a grenade attack in west Baghdad, US soldiers and Iraqi police said.

The convoy included US Humvees at the front and the back and two Iraqi civilian vehicles in the middle. The soldiers and Iraqi police said the two Iraqis who were killed were travelling in the same car.

US troops evacuated the two bodies from the badly damaged vehicle, which was covered with blood

Body formed to probe sexual harassment allegation against medical college teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Sher-e-Bangla Medical College (SBMC) authorities have finally formed a three-member inquiry committee yesterday to look into the alleged sexual harassment of a female student by the head of surgery department.

Dr Syed Zahid Hossain, associate professor of paediatrics, heads the committee. The other two members are Dr Aziz Rahim, associate professor of orthopaedics and Dr Rowshan Ara, associate professor of gynaecology. The committee is to submit its report within a week.

Meanwhile, Head of Surgery Department Dr Zinnatul Islam Jinnah is absconding. Intern doctors' association threatened to go on a strike if steps were not taken against the accused within 72 hours.

Dr MA Berek Khan, principal of the SBMC, said higher authorities have already been apprised of the situation.

Tit for tat!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

In an apparent bid to retaliate snapping of all its telephone lines, Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) has sent notices to five offices of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) here to pay off a total outstanding dues of Tk 5.16 lakh by June 30.

The notices issued on June 23 asked the BTB offices to make payment by the deadline 'on an urgent basis'.

"If the outstanding dues were are not paid within the deadline, all RCC facilities including the water supply to BTB will be suspended", said a top official of the RCC.

The BTB offices have not paid holding taxes of Tk 4,82,641 for fiscal 2002-03 and water supply bills of Tk 33,460 for 76 months despite repeated reminders, the RCC notices mentioned.

The defaulters are the offices of divisional engineer of Rajshahi, divisional engineer of phones, general manager of Rural Telecommunication Project, superintendent-in-charge and assistant engineer of phones.

Earlier on June 21, the BTB had disconnected all the 31 telephone lines of the RCC for non-payment of bills amounting to Tk 13.62 lakh.

The lines were however restored on June 23 after the RCC paid off all outstanding bills, BTB sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, RCC Magistrate Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who also holds charge of the chief revenue officer, said the RCC move was a routine one and 'not a retaliatory bid'.

But RCC Chief Executive Officer Khalilur Rahman came down heavily on the BTB, saying it was yet to pay Tk 40 lakh in compensation bills for digging RCC roads to expand telephone lines. "Very soon we will charge them for non-payment of the compensation bills", he said.

Hartal

FROM PAGE 12 urging people to observe tomorrow's hartal to protest the misdeeds of the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

Mohammad Hanif and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, president and general secretary of the city AL, also urged people to observe the hartal.

IU teacher suspended for 'sexual harassment'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An assistant professor of Islamic University (IU) has been suspended by the Chancellor on charge of sexually harassing a female student.

Following a probe committee report, IU Syndicate recommended the Chancellor of the university and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to approve the suspension order.

Twenty-three female students of three departments under Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies brought a written allegation on Department of Al-Hadith and Islamic Studies' Assistant Professor Moulvi Mohammad Ashraful Islam of sexual harassment.

The allegation letter said he called one female student in his room and proposed better marks in the examination insinuating a bad intention.

The IU vice chancellor formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the matter on June 23, 2002.

After investigation the probe body found Ashraful guilty and submitted a report to the vice chancellor and the matter was then presented in the syndicate meeting.

Tales of torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Persons subjected to torture on various pretexts under the present government are haunted by fear of further persecution, victims said at a seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

Twenty-nine persons, tortured allegedly by the ruling coalition activists, law enforcers and members of army during Operation Clean Heart, narrating their experiences further said they were so dreadfully treated that they were still far from being fit, mentally and physically.

They were speaking on the opening session of a two-day seminar, Together Against Torture, being held on the occasion of UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) and Women's Voice jointly organised the seminar at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

"Don't ask me to describe the unnerving pains. I'm fearful to disclose it not for my own security, but for the family," said former Reuters stringer Enamul Haq Chowdhury, who was taken into custody for allegedly misquoting the home minister in his story on a bomb incident last year.

Chowdhury said he was still suffering from the injuries inflicted on him by police during interrogation.

"A death warrant still hangs on me," he claimed in a choked voice, without giving further details.

Rape victim Shiuly of Puthia in Rajshahi alleged that ruling alliance activist Harun raped her on April 19 last year. "He is at large," she said, but gave little details for fear of further reprisal.

"Activists of Jatyataabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) are now teasing me on my way to school," said Fahima, sister of Mahima, who committed

Young woman shot dead at Bangshal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young woman was shot dead in front of a restaurant in Bangshal yesterday.

The identity of the woman aged about 24 could not be known immediately. The victim was wearing a veil (Borkha).

According to police, the lady, along with a man, had breakfast at Al-Razzak Restaurant in Bangshal and left at around 7:30am.

As the two started walking towards Gulistan the woman was suddenly shot in the head. She died on the spot.

The reason behind the attack could not be known but police suspect that the man accompanying the victim might have shot her. He could not be found after the crime.

Kotwali police sent the body to Mitford Hospital for autopsy.

Several police teams are investigating the woman's identity, said assistant commissioner of police of Kotwali zone.

Detectives are checking the register books of various city hotels as well, he added.

A case was filed with the Kotwali Police Station.

UNDP

FROM PAGE 12 development activities in 20 paras in each of the five upazilas -- Bandaban Sadar, Thanchi in Bandaban, Rangamati Sadar, Belachhari in Rangamati and Pachari in Khagrachhari. The first phase of development work will run on a fund of \$5 million.

Moudud

FROM PAGE 12 redressed the injustice done by the Awami League government," he said.

"Those who link politics with the appointment have actually proven that the then government had not appointed Justice KM Hasan to the Appellate Division on political grounds."

Referring to the seniority of Justice Hasan, Moudud said he was most senior judge at the High Court Division when appointments were made to the Appellate Division on January 11, 2001.

"He is known as an efficient, sincere and illustrious personality in the judiciary. But the Awami League government violated all the rules and conventions and appointed his juniors, first Ruhul Amin and then Fazlul Karim to the Appellate Division in a conspiratorial way without reasons," he said.

He said Justice Hasan joined the High Court Division on July 13, 1991, Justice Ruhul Amin on February 18, 1992, and Justice Fazlul Karim on November 1, 1992.

Moudud said those who were trying to make the appointment controversial were bent on tarnishing the dignity and independence of the Supreme Court as well as the entire judiciary.

The leaders and activists of the party that made the judiciary subordinate to the executive by introducing the one-party rule are now trying to foment the controversy, he said.

suicide on February 19 after being raped by JCD activists at Rajshahi.

Describing his torture in police custody, Saleem Samad, Bangladesh representative of the Reporters sans frontières, said he was tortured at the instruction of top government officials.

He was arrested on charge of helping two foreign journalists who came to Bangladesh clandestinely.

Reza Monirul Islam, a primary school teacher of Rajshahi, said army men picked him without any grounds and subjected him to electric shocks in their camp during the joint drive.

Eighteen-year-old Rahmatullah suffered paralysis following alleged army torture at Sherpur stadium during the joint drive.

He was taken into custody while he was going to his shop and was applied electric shock for three days, but he did not know why.

The armed forces were called out to support the law-enforcement agencies from October 16, 2002 to January 9 this year to curb crime.

While describing Trisha's suicide in Gaibandha, her father Abdus Sattar said she preferred jumping to death in a pond to standing insults by local youths.

Khosbar, who was crippled in an attack in Puthia last year by a gang allegedly led by BNP leader Nadim Mostafa, said his fault was that he campaigned for the Awami League (AL) candidate.

AL President Sheikh Hasina attended the opening as the chief guest. Barrister Rakanuddin Mamhud was present as special guest with BIHR Chairman Justice KM Sobhan in the chair.

BIHR Secretary General Akram Hossain Chowdhury delivered the welcome speech.

A video document on torture by law-enforcers was screened at the function.

Muktijoddah Parishad observes Jahanara Imam's death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muktijoddah Sanghati Parishad (MSP), a forum of Liberation Fighters, organised a discussion yesterday to mark the death anniversary of Jahanara Imam, known as *Shaheed Janani*.

Shawkat Ali, MP, chairman of MSP, said the movement Jahanara Imam had launched in 1992 had inspired people with the spirit of Bangladeshi nationalism.

He also urged people to build a strong resistance against the anti-liberation forces of today.

The programme was also addressed by Rejaul Karim Reza, Abdus Samad Pintu, Hasanuz-zaman Hasan, Abdus Samad, Abdur Rahim, Kazi Rafiqul Islam, Amzad Hossain, Shahjahan Shaju, Yunus Ahmed Khan and Motahar Hossain Mollah.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12 against her in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday, Hasina said the ruling party legislators were hurling abuses, as they did not want Awami League in the House.

The prime minister herself is provoking her MPs to hurl abuses and make indecorous speeches, she alleged. "In such a situation, the AL lawmakers expressed their unwillingness to join the House."

Hasina renewed her oft-repeated charge that the BNP-Jamaat government had turned the country into a "safe haven" of killers by patronising them.

She also criticised the government for its move to increase remuneration and privileges of the prime minister, ministers and MPs by imposing heavy taxes on the people.

Referring to the IMF loan, Hasina said the present government has taken loans from IMF under tough