



US Ambassador Harry K Thomas speaks as chief guest at the second national conference of National Union Parishad Forum (NUPF) at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Gene V George, Golam Sarwar, Todd M Sorenson and William J Cartier.

Strengthen local govt for democracy

US envoy tells NUPF national confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas yesterday underscored the need for strengthening the local government for promoting democratic practices.

He was speaking as chief guest at the second national conference of National Union Parishad Forum (NUPF) at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

The US ambassador assured all-out support of his country to forum activities and wished its success.

USAID Mission Director Gene V George, NUPF President Golam Sarwar, Secretary General Mustaqur Rahman Mafur and M N Roy from India also spoke on the occasion.

Parliament members, representatives of different development organisations and donor agencies were present.

Held with the support of local government initiative (LGI), the conference laid emphasis on institutionalising the NUPF.

The main objective of the forum is to provide union parishads with a

mechanism for defining their common interests and exercising their collective voices.

The LGI has been assisting in creating district UP forums throughout the country.

Divisional committees have already been formed in all the six divisions.

DU urged to set up Humayun Azad research chair

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers Association Sunday urged the Dhaka University (DU) authorities to set up a research foundation or a research chair after the name of eminent linguist and writer Humayun Azad.

Duta made the appeal at a meeting in memory of late Prof Azad on Sunday at the DU club with its President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique in the chair.

Abdullah Harun passes away

BSS, Chittagong



Abdullah-Al-Harun, former MPA, senior Awami League leader and acting Pro-Vice-chancellor of University of Science and Technology of Chittagong (USTC), died of a severe stroke at his residence here yesterday at the age of 71.

He left behind his wife, three sons, three daughters and a host of admirers to mourn his death. He is the elder brother of Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed her shock at the death of Harun.

In a message of condolence, she conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury, former commerce minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and USTC Vice-Chancellor Prof Nurul Islam also condoled the death of Harun and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Harun was the founding president of the then Chittagong district Chhatra Union. He was elected member of provincial assembly (MPA) in 1970. He joined USTC as acting Pro-VC in August 2003.

Begum Hasna Hazari

Begum Hasna Hazari (Jelly Apa), wife of late journalist Abdul Ghani Hazari, passed away on Sunday at the Birdem Hospital, says a press release.

Her qulkhwani will be held at her Gulshan residence after Magrib prayers tomorrow.



SAA Masrur, head of Client Relations of Standard Chartered Bank, and June Rollinson, director of British Council, signed an agreement recently to help improve English language skills among the learners.

Pourasavas, UPs take bribes for services

TIB survey on local government reveals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poursavas and Union Parishads in greater Mymensingh took bribes from the people for different services such as approval of house building plan and dispute resolution, a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) survey revealed yesterday.

The residents of these areas also expressed resentment at various irregularities and lack of civic amenities, the survey report on local government said.

TIB, the Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog, conducted the surveys on 1200 households in six poursavas and 1800 households in 52 Union Parishads in October last year.

According to the study report, 10 percent respondents said they paid an average of Tk 4,500 in bribes to UP chairmen or members for dispute resolution.

About 12 per cent households settled disputes through arbitration by municipal chairmen and UP members and in 40 percent cases, the arbitrators were not

neutral, it added.

Also eight percent of those who obtained citizenship certificate from the UP chairmen paid Tk 20 each.

Some 47 per cent respondents said that they had to pay on an average Tk 505 as bribe to obtain different licenses. About 61 per cent people have to pay on an average Tk 9 to collect a citizen certificate.

About 36 percent of those who got the house building plan approved by the poursavas had to pay bribes for it while 47 percent of those who got trade, vehicle and contractors' licences paid an average of Tk 505.

The questioner-based survey was aimed at assessing the service of local government bodies, condition of roads, cleanliness efforts and drainage system.

About 63 percent residents of poursavas and over 71 percent in Union Parishads are dissatisfied with the service of two local government bodies, the survey said.

About 52 percent of those who got relief said they did not get just share of relief provided by the government. And 29 percent of those who were registered for relief said they had to bribe or sought help from influential relatives in this regard.

About 24 percent of households who remained off-limits to different relief schemes of the government said they were qualified for VGD (vulnerable group development), VGF (vulnerable group feeding) or test relief. And 38 percent of them said they were kept out of these programmes due to nepotism.

About 84 percent respondents said that the elected representatives did not spend all the budget allocated for the development of their areas, the survey report said.

Over 56 percent respondents

in poursava said roads are dirty and solled.

In its recommendations, the report said most local government representatives forget their election pledges they made before the election. So it suggested forming a committees with professionals and noted citizens who will remind them of their pledges and duties.

These committees would work as a bridge between elected representatives and local people, it said.

The survey also found that the local government representatives could not perform their duties properly because of inadequate fund and human resources.

It recommended raising allocation and providing new source of income for the local government bodies.

The TIB released the report at a roundtable at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday, with noted economist and Treasurer of its Board of Trustees Prof Muzaffer Ahmad in the chair.

Atiur Rahman, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), MM Akash of economics department, Dhaka University, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, country director of Hunger, and Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, were present.

Poursava chairmen, UP members, and members of Committee of Conscious Citizens also attended the roundtable.

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad in his speech underscored the need for an efficient role of elected local government representatives as welfare of people largely depends on them.

They should also be accountable to the people who elected them, he added.



Shahed Noman, managing director of Dhaka Bank Limited, hands over a cheque for one day's salary of the bank employees recently in aid of the flood victims.



Akhtar Sohail Kasem, president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, hands over a cheque for Tk 5 lakh to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office recently in donation for the flood-affected people. The members of the ICAB contributed the amount.

Policy to monitor pvt TV channels soon

Information minister tells JS

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday said that it was not the main objective of the government to run Bangladesh Television (BTV) on commercial basis and a profiting organisation.

"As a national electronic media, the main objective of BTV is public service broadcasting or broadcasting for the welfare of the people," Islam said while replying to a question from treasury bench member

SA Sultan (Chandpur-4) at the Jatiya Sangsad.

Replying to a supplementary, he said that the government would soon formulate a policy to monitor activities of the private television channels to promote national causes.

He said the BTV is involved to promote public welfare by broadcasting activities of the government, including the issues relating to education, culture, sports, health and national heritages.

22,500 tonnes of Australian wheat for the poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh has received a consignment of 22,500 metric tons of wheat from Australia under a bilateral agreement between the two countries for the current fiscal.

The foodgrains will be utilised for the World Food Programme (WFP) country programme that covers more than 40 lakh of the poorest people and helps them attain better food security and a more sustainable livelihood.

The Australian government will also provide another 22,500 metric tons of wheat under the agreement.

Australian High Commissioner Lorraine Barker handed over the consignment to Siddiqur Rahmian Chowdhury, secretary, ministry of food and disaster management, at a simple ceremony at the Chittagong port on Sunday. WFP Representative Douglas Casson Coutts was also present.

The second consignment will arrive here next week, said Barker

at a press conference.

In addition, the Australian government will also contribute another 22,000 tons of wheat this year for the rehabilitation of flood victims, she said.

Australia has supported the development efforts of Bangladesh government and will continue its assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable women and children, Barker said.

WFP Representative Coutts said Bangladesh attained self-sufficiency in foodgrains, particularly in rice, but in most cases poor people could not afford to buy rice.

First Secretary of Australian High Commission Jannet Donnie and M Emamul Haque of WFP, Bangladesh were also present.

Australia made a total contribution of around 600 thousand metric tons of wheat for the poor, vulnerable and victims of natural disasters during the last one decade, said Jannet.



Heavy falls likely

UNB, Dhaka

Moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at most places over the country till 6.00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at a few places, Met Office said predicting that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

Highest temperature 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Dinajpur and lowest 23.4 degree Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:03pm today and rises at 5:45am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.2	23.6	96	95
Chittagong	27.0	24.8	96	91
Rajshahi	25.4	24.6	87	—
Khulna	25.7	24.8	99	97
Barisal	27.2	24.8	100	98
Sylhet	25.2	23.4	94	94
Cox's Bazar	29.0	25.4	92	90

1,023 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested some 1,023 people on various charges during their countrywide drive in the last 24 hours ending at 6.00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered four firearms and seven bullets and filed a case against three people under the Arms Act, says an official release.