

REFORMS IN CG AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

'Govt, opposition dialogue a must to resolve differences'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the government and opposition should sit in a dialogue to resolve any 'possible deadlock' over the proposals for reforms in the caretaker government system and the election commission (EC) before the next general election, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday.

They said a broad consensus of both the parties is needed to ensure a free, fair and credible election.

The discussion on 'Existing election system and reforms in the caretaker government: Debate and solution' was organised by the Centre for Democracy at the National Press Club in the city.

Centre for Democracy President Abul Ahsan said apart from reforms in the caretaker government system, power and resources of the EC should be enhanced.

"It is the EC which plays vital role in conducting the elections," he added.

Major General (Retd) Moinul Hussain Chowdhury, former advisor to the caretaker government, said the 13th amendment of the constitution that introduced the caretaker government system and some articles of it are not clear.

"There are some grey areas in the amendment that can be exploited," he said.

Moinul Hussain said, "Mere strengthening of the institution is not enough, the people in the EC will have to exercise their power."

On the criticism of wholesale transfer of senior government officials just before the last general election, he said, "It was done to ensure a free and fair election and I will recommend the next caretaker government to do the same."

"Unfortunately it is a fact that political governments politicise the administration and give posting of their favourable people in important positions before they hand over power to the interim government," he said.

Brigadier General (Retd) Shakhawat Hossain urged the political parties not to make sweeping criticism about Army's role in elections and make the institution controversial.

He opposed the opposition's demand of transferring the charge of defence ministry to the caretaker government and said, "It is the President who represents people as he is elected by parliament."

Executive Director of Democracy Watch Taleya Rahman, former ambassador Mohammad Zamir and former bureaucrat Golam Rahman also took part in the discussion.

Citibank awards scholarships

Citibank NA Bangladesh has awarded scholarships to ten meritorious students of several educational institutions, says a press release.

These are Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, University of Dhaka, Institute of Business Administration, BRAC University, Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of Bangladesh, and Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh.

The scholarships were awarded by Judith Chammas, Charge d' Affairs of the United States Embassy, during the 10th year celebration of the Citibank in Bangladesh recently.



A mobile court raided a factory of spurious cosmetics inside a house at Tantibazar in the city and seized 10 jars of chemicals and two drums full of spurious materials yesterday.

METRO RAIL, ELECTRIC TRAIN SERVICES

Feasibility studies soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will start feasibility studies on underground metro rail service in the capital and Dhaka - Chittagong electric train service soon.

It was decided at an inter-ministerial meeting at the communication ministry with Communication Minister Nazmul Huda in the chair yesterday.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) will conduct the study on metro rail with the financial assistance from Japan government while the survey on electric train service to be done by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) with its own fund.

The main objective of the underground metro rail service is to solve the long traffic congestion in the capital permanently.

The survey on those two mega projects will start within a couple of months, according to sources.

Meanwhile, Huda expressed his dissatisfaction over slow pace of implementation of development work in railway department.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of 29 projects for develop-

ment of railway sector. The projects include procurement of rail engine, locomotive, carriage wagon, development of signaling system and remodeling of old railway stations.

Huda said though the government has declared the railway a thrust sector and allocated enough money, but the people do not see any result due to inaction by the railway officials.

The meeting was told that the government allocated Tk 838.46 crore for those projects. Only a few small projects were implemented in the last four months and rest are still under implementation stages.

Huda criticised the railway department for depending on foreign spare parts while repairing railway engines instead of spare parts from machine tools factory.

He asked the railway officials to take projects and procurement proposals in a package instead of piece meal basis so that the people can get the benefit of the development.

Communication Secretary Shafiqui Islam, representatives from finance and planning ministry and railways eastern and western zones were present at the meeting.