

Corruption, politicisation bring health sector to a halt

AL leaders tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Widespread corruption, politicisation and anomalies have brought the health sector to a halt, said the Awami League leaders at a seminar yesterday.

Due to financial irregularities, the World Bank, one of the largest development partners, has even suspended disbursement of fund for the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP), they said.

The leaders also said that the government brought the health sector to the verge of ruin by giving appointment to less qualified physicians on political grounds, enrolling ruling party activists to post-graduate medical courses and closing the planned operation of some 8,500 community clinics.

The alliance government soon after its takeover has suspended all the projects, including the community clinics, initiated during the previous

AL rule, they added.

The AL organised the seminar on 'Prevailing crisis in the health sector and its solution' at the Rajuk auditorium in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper, former health minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP said that politicisation and corruption are evident in the recruitment of staffs and teachers at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Hospital.

"Most of the appointments are illegal. In 2001, the university had 207 teachers and physicians and 693 support personnel. Today the figure rose to 1,224 and 1,838 respectively, whereas the hospital has only 979 beds. Many of the employees even have no place to sit," he said.

Moreover, the ruling party men are plundering public funds in the name of procurement of equipment for the hospital, he alleged.

The former health minister said the government has launched a revised drug policy recently, excluding the provision of controlling drug prices. "This is nothing but an opportunity for a few business magnets aligned with the alliance government to make money."

Referring to the Transparency International report, he said the health sector has become the most corrupt sector and the report is a reflection of that.

The AL presidium member said the government has allocated Tk 17 crore for procuring a 'linear accelerator machine' recently for cancer treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, but the actual price is not over Tk 3 crore.

He also presented a 10-point proposal to be implemented if the Awami League is voted to power.

The pledges include reopening the

community clinics, appointing doctors and staff on the basis of merit, creating vacancies for doctors, nurses and staffs, setting up a training institute for capacity-building and revising the drug policy.

Prof Atiur Rahman said that reducing the child and maternal mortality rate was the main goal for the alliance government, but there has been no sign of success in the last four years of its rule.

Party's acting General Secretary Obaidul Kader, former state minister for health Prof M Amanullah, noted economist Dr Atiur Rahman, former pro-vic-chancellor of BSMMU Dr Mahmud Hasan Prof Ruhul Huq, Dr Iqbal Arsalan and Prof Syed Modasser Ali also spoke.

AL presidium member Motia Chowdhury was also present at the seminar moderated by Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia holds a meeting with the secretaries of different ministries at the Cabinet Division conference room in the city yesterday.

'50pc children underweight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 50 percent children are underweight making the country one of the most severe cases of malnutrition in the world, said a keynote paper at a national workshop on food security and challenges.

Quoting the reports of government, World Bank and the United Nations, the paper said recovery of 34 percent of the underweight children from malnutrition is non-attainable at the present rate of progress, while Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

Usha Mishra Joshi, senior advisor to World Food Programme (WFP), and AK Motaheb Hossain, director general of Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU), presented the keynote at the workshop organised by the Ministry of Food and

Disaster Management in collaboration with the WFP at IDB Bhaban in the city.

According to World Bank MDG report, Bangladesh has far higher level of child malnutrition than expected at its present level of per capita GDP. This further underscores that access to available food is seriously limited, said the presenters.

They said about 70 percent people of the country were under food-based poverty line in the 70s, which now has come down to less than 50 percent meaning that about six crore people are still under poverty line.

"This number is also larger than most other global cases, leaving half the country far from being food secured," they added.

Demographic changes in the upcoming years are likely to affect poverty and hunger in adverse ways, the paper said, adding, "Issues of governance and accountability further thwart the attempts at providing targeted safety nets."

The keynote paper apprehended that the production of crops in Bangladesh would be compromised by agricultural land decreasing at

one percent annually and the impact of climate changes.

"Any growth must come from increased productivity that demands investment in agricultural research and education," it suggested.

The paper also suggested diversification of food basket to attain minimum self-sufficiency in the non-cereal food grains and improve food access.

"Our policy programme must aim at improving and enhancing food security targeting the women and children, as this strata of society is the most vulnerable among the hungry," said Edward Mathew Kallon, WFP Deputy Country Director to Bangladesh.

Speaking as chief guest Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf said despite significant achievements in food grain production, food security at national, household and individual levels remain a matter of major concern for the government.

Muhammad Fazlur Rahman, secretary-in-charge of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, chaired the inaugural session of the two-day workshop.

IOJ LEADER MURDER

Investigation takes new turn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The investigation into the murder of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) leader Maulana Iqbal Bin Yakub has taken a new turn after the police arrested a housewife on Tuesday night in connection with the killing that took place in Chittagong on October 15.

The police suspected that an extramarital affair might have led to the brutal killing.

They arrested the woman, wife of one Sadek Anwar, an expatriate living in Korea, from her in-laws' house at Chatteshwari Road. She was being interrogated at Kotwali Police Station.

Police suspected that Shakil, a brother-in-law of the woman, might have a link to the murder as he reportedly has been in hiding since the incident, sources said.

The police yesterday raided five places in the city and several other places in Rangunia and Raozan upazilas to track down Shakil.

Meanwhile, police arrested a businessman, MA Rahman, from a phone-fax shop at the New Market on Tuesday night in connection with a death threat given to Yakub's father and brother over phone.

Rahman is the vice-president of Chittagong Shop Owners' Federation.

Vow to eliminate terrorism

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Speakers at an opinion exchange meeting yesterday vowed to eliminate terrorism at any cost and stressed the need for holding convention in the divisional headquarters to create awareness against the menace.

Unity Against Terrorism, a platform of professionals and civil society members, arranged the opinion exchange meeting at the Diploma Engineers' auditorium.

"We will have to be united and resist the menace of terrorism from across the country as one after another bomb attacks crippled the country with state patronisation," Bangladesh Bar Council vice chairman Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud told the gathering.

Justice KM Sobhan, Ramendu Majumder, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Prof Sultana Shafi, Dr Kamrul Ahsan Khan, Syed Abul Maksud, Engineer Khobiruzzaman and Dr Sarwar Ali also spoke at the discussion.

Regularisation of 7500 RHD staffs demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of three trade unions of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) yesterday demanded immediate regularisation of 7500 irregular employees who have been working for the last 13 years.

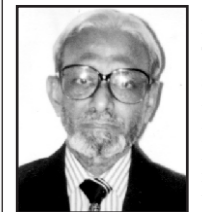
Speaking at a press conference, they also demanded measures for giving salary and festival bonus to the irregular employees.

The press conference was organised by Bangladesh Roads and Highways Employees Union (BRHEU), Bangladesh Roads and Highways Workers Union (BRHWU), and Bangladesh Road and Highways Workers Employees Union (BRHWEU) at Dhaka Reporter's Unity (DRU) auditorium in the city.

BRHEU General Secretary Md Moazzem Hossain in a written statement said the ferry jetties of the country will be closed automatically if the irregular employees are relieved of their duties.

The leaders also announced programmes, including rally in front of Sarak Bhaban in the city and at district offices on October 23, 24 and 25, submission of memorandum to the prime minister on October 27 and a human chain in front of Sarak Bhaban at 11:00am on October 31.

Obituary



Nuruddin Taufiqul Islam, a life member of the Institute of Engineers, passed away at his residence in the city on

October 16, says a press release.

A doa mahfil will be held at Sugandha Community Centre at Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, (opposite Medinova Hospital) after Asr prayers on October 21.

Relatives, friends, Rotarians, colleagues and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme.

Hajera Khatun



Hajera Khatun, wife of social worker Makbul Huq, passed away due to old age complications at a clinic in the city on

Tuesday morning, says a press release.

After a namaz-e-janaza at a mosque in Dhanmondi in the city, she was taken to Sherpur and buried at Sheikhhati family graveyard in Sherpur town.

Her qulshwani will be held tomorrow at her house in Sherpur.

AUG 17 SERIAL BLASTS

JS official on fresh remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Abu Taleb alias Babul Ansari, assistant security officer of the parliament secretariat, was shown arrested in a case and taken on remand yesterday.

Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Ansari and his accomplices - Giasuddin Azad, Mizanur Rahman Badsha, Saimum Islam Jewel and Azizul Haque -- before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on completion of their five-day remand.

Meanwhile, the investigation officer (OC) submitted a petition for showing Ansari arrested in a case filed with Demra Police Station in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts. The IO also sought a seven-day remand for interrogation.

The forwarding report placed before the court said that Ansari is an active member of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

Ansari gave significant leads about the serial blasts during the previous remand. He needs to be further interrogated for more information, especially the details about others involved in the countrywide bombings, the report said.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mujibul Haq granted him a five-day remand for interrogation.

The four others, activists of his organisation 'Allahr Dal', were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail as there was no petition for further remand for them.

Police arrested Ansari at his Green Road Staff Quarters residence on October 5 in connection with his militant link.

Later, he was shown arrested in a case filed with Tejgaon Police Station in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts and taken on a 12-day remand in two phases.

BRTC buses introduce half fare for the disabled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The physically challenged persons will now be entitled to travel on BRTC buses at a 50 percent discount.

The state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has introduced this facility as part of the government's policy of extending cooperation to the disabled.

The BRTC distributed identity cards among 20 disabled persons at a programme yesterday, which will enable them to enjoy the facility. Gradually all the physically challenged people will come under the programme.

Besides, two seats in each BRTC bus will be reserved for them, said the BRTC officials at the ID card distribution ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said the disabled persons with their dedication and commitment have proved that they can also contribute to society.

He also said that a similar discount will also be introduced in the railway.

Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khandakar, Barrister Joyal Abedin and Rafiqul Islam also spoke.



Police officials inspect bomb-making materials and Jihad books seized from the rest house of Bhangatikor Jame Masjid at Sheikhghat in Sylhet yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Tata wants a stake in Barapukuria mine

UNB, Dhaka

Tata Group wants a part of Barapukuria coal mine and its adjacent area to extract the fossil fuel for its proposed power plant and other purposes.

A delegation of the Indian industrial giant yesterday expressed the desire at a meeting with Energy Advisor Mahmudur Rahman at the Board of Investment (BoI) office.

Mahmudur Rahman, who is also the BoI executive chairman, told the Tata delegation that he would convey their proposal to the highest policy-making authority of the government.

The Tata delegation, led by Alan Rosling, executive director of Tata Sons, made a presentation on the group's proposed investment in the country's coal mining, particularly in Barapukuria.

In the presentation, Barapukuria coal mine and its adjacent area was divided into seven blocks. Of these, Tata is interested to extract coal

from four blocks using the open-cut mining technology.

But of the proposed four blocks, only one block has been developed where the Chinese operator, CMEC, was appointed to extract coal under an agreement with the government.

After expiry of the agreement with the CMEC in 2011, Tata wants to take over the operation of this particular part of the mine along with the other three blocks.

The Indian industrial conglomerate also claimed that the open-cut mining technology is the most modern method in coal mining through which 90 percent extraction of coal is possible.

Meanwhile, another delegation of Tata Group separately met State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood at his Secretariat office.

During the meeting, the Indian business group expressed its interest to sell 200 MW electricity to the government from its proposed 1000 MW power plant.

Join politics to face secular forces

Minister urges Imams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid yesterday urged Imams to join the Islamic parties to face the secular forces in a bid to establish Islamic rule in the country.

"Once upon a time, Imams and devotees did not like politics but now time has come to join the politics to face the secular forces because it is impossible to implement the Islamic rule in the country without defeating the secular forces in the next general election," said Mujahid while addressing a national seminar.

Bangladesh Masjid Mission organised the seminar titled 'Present Bangladesh: Role and duty of Imams' at Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the city.

Mujahid also blasted the progressive media for what he termed 'misreport' on Islamic forces and said these reports are prepared intentionally to tarnish the image of Islamic forces.

Moulaana Khalilur Rahman Madani read out a keynote paper at the seminar.

Secretary General of Masjid Mission Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, Prof Joydul Abedin and many other Imams spoke on the occasion.

Acute water, power crises at Demra, Shyampur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The residents of Donia, Kajla, Noyapara in Demra and Shyampur in the city have been facing acute shortage of water for the last 15 days.

Besides, they have been suffering from continuous power disruption for the last few months.

Abul Hashem, a resident of Donia, said, "For the last 15 days we are facing acute shortage of water."

"And due to frequent power disruption, specially in the evening, study of our children are being hampered seriously," he added.

He said Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has taken no alternative step so far to supply water among the sufferers.

When contacted, Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, executive engineer, zone-1 of Wasa, said, the main problem is low voltage that leads to low production of water. The problem is almost solved.

WEATHER TODAY. No change in temperature likely. UNB, Dhaka. Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Chittagong division with moderately heavy falls at places till 6:00pm today.

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.