

Next polls to be held under constitutional provision

Khaleda tells banquet by Turkish PM

UNB, Ankara

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said next general election in Bangladesh is due in about eight months time when people will exercise their franchise under the constitutional provision.

"We've been able to put our democratic institutions on firm settings. We've a vibrant parliament, an independent judiciary, an accountable executive and a free press. The people remain at the centre of power," she said in her speech at a banquet hosted in her honour by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the PM's residence.

Khaleda said Bangladesh and Turkey are among the largest democracies in the world having majority Muslim populations. "Our common aspiration is to pursue a

path of moderation, tolerance and liberalism. Our common goals are peace, stability and development," she told the Turkish leaders and elite.

On terrorism, she said her government is opposed to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Recently, she said Bangladesh came under attack of a small group of misled militants who wanted to destabilise the country by abusing the good name of Islam. "My government has dealt with the issue in a firm and resolute manner."

Describing her visit to Turkey as truly historic, she said it commemorates 30 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between Dhaka and Ankara.

She said late president Ziaur Rahman's visit to Turkey in 1976 and '78 laid strong foundations of bilateral relations that have grown in

strength and dimension over the years.

Khaleda said the naming of an avenue in Ankara will remain as a milestone marking the solidarity and goodwill of the two fraternal peoples.

"Bangladesh's relationship with Turkey is special and unique," she said, adding that national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was greatly inspired by the richness of Turkey's culture as many of his poems and songs are based on Turkish themes and tunes, including the immortal poem 'Karnal Pasha'.

Focusing on international arena, she said as members of the UN, OIC and D-8 Bangladesh and Turkey closely cooperate in all international forums to promote development, peace and stability worldwide.

OIC will gain momentum under the leadership of Turkey in safe-

guarding the interests of its members, she hoped.

About D-8 summit in Indonesia next month, she expressed her intention to attend the meet at Bali and hoped that the summit would be able to embark on a Plan of Action that will make the forum more focussed and action-oriented.

SHAHEED ZIA AVENUE

Earlier, Khaleda formally inaugurated Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Avenue in Ankara yesterday.

She, flanked by Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Mayor in charge of Ankara City unveiled the plaque of the avenue named after late president Ziaur Rahman in the afternoon.

The Presidential Palace of Turkey is located on Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Avenue.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday demolishes all the makeshift bamboo structures on Dhanmondi playground which were illegally set up to hold a Baishakhi fair.

Structures at Dhanmondi playground demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following reports published in The Daily Star yesterday, a demolition team of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) demolished all the makeshift bamboo structures on Dhanmondi playground which were illegally set up to hold a Baishakhi fair.

In the presence of about a dozen armed policemen, the DCC team, accompanied by Magistrate Nurul Alam and equipped with an excavator, demolished the structures. The structures were built after digging thousands of holes in the playground where children of Dhanmondi, Kathal Bagan and Kalabagan regularly play. Two officials of the DCC's Estate Department oversaw the demolition process.

The Dhanmondi club authorities defied a high court order and decided to hold the fair on the playground. The club authorities sold the right of use of the playground to a private firm for Tk 225,000. DCC's Estate Department is the custodian of the playground. The fair organisers had completed building nearly a hundred makeshift stalls and rented each for up to Tk 10,000 for the seven-day fair.

Chief Estate Officer Abu Taleb told The Daily Star Dhanmondi club itself is illegally occupying a part of the playground and the club officials built unauthorised structures.

Residents in the area yesterday expressed their relief at the DCC action but said the playground should be immediately repaired to avert accidents. Thousands of holes in the playground must be filled up with properly, they said. Nazma Akhtar, a resident of Road No 8, said throughout the city some unscrupulous people are occupying playgrounds to make some quick money at the cost of our children's mental and physical health.

"The authorities should send a message to these unscrupulous people that they would not be tolerated for such acts," she added.

'Allow women to take part in decision-making'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Empowerment of women will remain a far cry unless they are allowed to exercise their authority and actively participate in decision-making process, lawmakers and women leaders said at a dialogue yesterday.

Demanding an increase in the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and direct elections to those, they said women representatives both at national and local levels have little access to public welfare activities.

Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy (SPD), a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organised the dialogue on 'Empowerment of women: Vision, policy and challenges' at a city hotel.

Criticising the amendment to the constitution with regard to reserved seats, Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdu Shahid said the way 45 women MPs were elected is nothing but an act of disregard for the political empowerment of women.

"They were given the political posts, but they cannot exercise their power," he said.

Consensus among political parties is needed to ensure women's empowerment, the Awami League lawmaker said, adding that no development would take place if gender discrimination continues to prevail in society.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Begum Raushan Ershad said true representation and empowerment of women depends on how much they can involve themselves in development activities.

If women MPs are not allowed to take part in development activities, there would not be any significant step towards women's empowerment even in 50 years, she said.

She also suggested creating 30 more constituencies from where women can be elected directly.

Tribute paid to Syed Imtiaz

DU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and students at a memorial meeting yesterday paid tribute to late Syed Imtiaz Ahmed, an assistant professor at the Department of International Relations, Dhaka University (DU).

Imtiaz was a very brilliant student, researcher and human rights activist, they said, adding that his untimely death is an irreparable loss to the university as well as the nation.

Social Science Faculty and the Department of International Relations jointly organised the meeting.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, former DU Teachers' Association president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Dean of social science faculty Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Dean of arts faculty Prof Sadruddin Amin, Chairman of IR department Prof Aminna Mohsin attended the meeting.

Prof Harun-or-Rashid said the social science faculty will publish a memorial book on Syed Imtiaz.

The IR department will also publish a book containing articles and other write-ups of Syed Imtiaz, which were published in national and international journals, said Prof Dr Imtiaz Ahmed.

EWU seminar

East West University (EWU) holds a two-day international seminar on 'Passages: English Studies in the region' on its premises at Mohakhali in the city from April 15 to 16.

The seminar will focus on the exigencies of English studies pedagogy in South Asian region.

Professors of English from various universities of India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Bangladesh are expected to present papers at the seminar.



PHOTO: STAR

Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar speaks at the inaugural function of a dialogue titled 'Empowerment of Women: Vision, Policy and Challenges' at a hotel in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Prof ATM Obaidullah and Humaira Aziz.

Prof Dr Zarina Rahman Khan of Dhaka University said women Union Parishad members elected to the reserved seats have no specific role to play at the local level. So, they are no more interested in the UP elections.

If the political parties can stop the use of muscle power and black money in elections, women can play a greater role in the political arena, she said.

Sheaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said the country can achieve the Millennium Development Goals regarding primary and secondary education by 2015 through minimising the ratio of boys to girls.

She said development of women is not possible if implementation of women's empowerment issues in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is not monitored in consulta-

tive process.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said Bangladesh has made significant progress in the field of women's empowerment compared to many other countries in South Asia.

"The number of reserved seats for women can be increased in future through consultations," he said.

Lawmakers Moazzem Hossain Alal, Mashru Rahman Ranga, Prof ATM Obaidullah of SPD Project, Humaira Aziz, member secretary of Parliamentary Caucus on Gender and Nojibur Rahman, assistant resident representative of UNDP, also spoke at the session chaired by Begum Sarwari Rahman MP.

Joint Secretary of Bapa Mihir Biswas, Dr Nuruddin of Sheba, Alamgir Kabir of Green Voice, Sharifuzzaman of Nogorik Sanghati, Mahidul Haque Khan of Bapa, Abdur Rashid Sabur of Angikar Bangaldesh and Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan of Peshabji Sangram Parishad also spoke.

Most of the rivers in the country have already lost navigability as water flow from the upstream has declined, they said.

If the Tipaimukh dam is constructed on the Barak river, water level of Surma and Kushiara would go down to five feet even during the monsoon, they said.

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Advocate Rani Akhtar was shocked to find a leech in the dish of vegetables while having lunch at the canteen at noon.

The lawyers asked the association to take action against the leaseholder of the canteen.

The association leased out the canteen to a firm, Messers Doubles, for six months on an experimental basis, but it failed to provide quality service within the period.

The SCBA discussed the issue at an emergency meeting yesterday.

Joint Secretary of Bapa Mihir Biswas, Dr Nuruddin of Sheba, Alamgir Kabir of Green Voice, Sharifuzzaman of Nogorik Sanghati, Mahidul Haque Khan of Bapa, Abdur Rashid Sabur of Angikar Bangaldesh and Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan of Peshabji Sangram Parishad also spoke.

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