

Strengthen local govt to institutionalise democracy

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local government will have to be strengthened to institutionalise democracy in the country, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They said delegation of more power to local government will ultimately strengthen the central government.

The daylong seminar titled "Democratic local government and good governance: An experience from southwest region" was organised by Rupantar, an NGO, in collaboration with USAID at LGED Bhaban in the city.

The speakers said there is no alternative to political consensus to strengthen the local government.

They said only political will can bring positive change in the overall infrastructure and financial sector by strengthening the local government.

PHOENIX BUILDING
Victims receive cheques for Tk 55.5 lakh as compensation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The twenty-three injured and the families of 12 dead in the Phoenix building collapse received compensations of Tk 55.5 lakh in total yesterday.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Jalal Ahmed handed over the cheques at his conference room around 12:30am.

The CMM said it was an unprecedented measure made possible by an order of the High Court (HC). The rest of the money will be handed over to the other dead victims' families and injured victims when they appear before the court with proper documents, the CMM added.

Earlier on March 27, Deen Mohammad, owner of the Phoenix building that collapsed on February 25, leaving 22 dead and 48 seriously injured, obtained bail from a Dhaka court after depositing Tk 1.20 crore as compensation for the victims of the building.

Families of those who died received Tk 3 lakh each while those who lost their limbs got Tk 2 lakh. Victims who were critically injured got Tk 1 lakh each while the victims who sustained minor injuries received Tk 50,000 each.

Tejgaon police had filed the case accusing Deen Mohammad and seven others in connection with the collapse.



Hajong leader murdered in Netrokona

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of hoodlums beat a leader of Hajong community to death in Kolma Kanda in Netrokona on Sunday.

Sources said when Shatyaban Hajong, son of Tushil Hajong, was coming back from his workplace in Durgapur Sadar thana to his village home in Manikpur in Kolma Kanda, a group of miscreants including Rahimuddin, Shuruj Ali and Kazim Uddin of Lakhnupur village waylaid him near Lakhnupur and demanded extortion, according to a press release of Dushtha Swasthya Kendra (DSK).

As he refused to give toll, they swooped on him. Although he could manage to escape from their clutches to one of his relative's house in Lakhnupur, he was dragged out from there and beaten to death.

Shatyaban was serving as the hostel super of a hostel run by DSK and was General Secretary of Hajong Unnyan Committee and a leader of Bangladesh Adiushi Union (BAU).

Sources closely related to him suspect that he was killed in a planned way as a gang of listed miscreants had been threatening him for the last few days.

Leaders of BAU and Executive Director of DSK condemned the killing and expressed deep shock at the death. They also demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits and their kingpins.

ment.

Quoting the examples of some union parishads in southwest region, they said it is already established that if locals and representatives of local government act together, they can play significant role in accumulating internal resources to implement different development works in their area.

Speaking as special guest Awami League lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak said local government is now weaker than any time before.

He stressed the need for making upazila parishad more functional and posed question whether there is any need for 'gram sarkar' (village government) in the country.

Dr Razzak said the role of lawmaker should be made clear to reduce clash with the representatives of local governments over different development works.

Executive Director of Khan Foundation Rokshana Khondokar, USAID Mission Director Gene V George and Rupantar Director Rafiqul Islam Khan also spoke at the discussion chaired by Rupantar Chief Executive Swapan Guha.

He said a lawmaker has to work in his constituency keeping an eye on the next election but this should not be confined to distributing wheat only.

Former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Dr Amirul Islam Chowdhury said local government is a traditional democratic body and in western country it is the biggest democratic institution.

He stressed the need for defining the role of lawmakers before the next general election to stop their interference in local development works.

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Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdurrahman Al Noman, Minister for Health and Family Welfare Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia Butenis were present.

Noman said the joint efforts of ICDDR, USDHHS and Bangladesh government will help prevent bird flu. He strongly denied the presence of the virus in Bangladesh.

Khandaker Mosharraf also denied the presence of bird flu in Bangladesh, saying that the government has given importance to the matter.

He said the government's surveillance system is strong enough to detect such virus.

US Ambassador Patricia said her government is supporting the Bangladesh government to avert the avian influenza.

SAARC Health Ministers' conference to focus on AIDS, Bird flu

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Third Conference of Saarc Health Ministers will be held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in the city tomorrow focusing on the regional collaboration to prevent HIV/AIDS and Avian Influenza/Bird flu.

The preparation of the meeting has already been completed and it is expected that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the meeting at 11:30am.

A secretarial level meeting will be held today at the Sonargaon hotel on the eve of the third meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) health ministers.

The main agenda of the meeting include launching of third Saarc regional strategy on HIV and AIDS, review of progress in the implementation of the Report of the 2nd meeting of Saarc health ministers, mobilisation and intensification of regional action for progressive control of HIV/AIDS and Avian Influenza.

Moreover, the other agenda includes exchange of views on health policy and focus on regional collaboration, launching a regional initiative with regard to basic healthcare services and sanitation in the rural areas and to develop a

AL ARAFA ISLAMI BANK
Case against five officials for misappropriating Tk 15 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A case was filed with Khulna Police Station on Sunday night naming six people as accused in misappropriating Tk 15 lakh from the local branch of Al Arafah Islami Bank through forged documents.

The six FIR-named accused are former manager Molla Ali Ahmed, Foreign Exchange Officer Nazrul Islam, present Manager Mahatab Ahmed, Loan Officer Enayet Hossain, Junior Officer Mohammad Rafiqul Islam and Proprietor of Messers Amena Trading Abul Kalam Azad.

It has been stated in the FIR that accused Azad made a forged document showing him the owner of 12 acres of land that actually belonged to Saleha Khatun, wife of late Shaikh Hossain Ali of 25, Sharif Ali and Sharif Hossain Road under Daulatpur Police Station.

In connivance with five other accused, Azad withdrew the money from the bank on August 29, 2004.

When Saleha came to know the matter, she lodged complaint with

119 AL men get anticipatory bail

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to 119 leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations in five cases filed by the government.

Those who got bail include Dhaka City Awami League General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Joint Secretary Haji Mohammad Selim, Juba League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nankar and General Secretary Mirza Azam MP.

After hearing three bail petitions of the accused, a High Court division bench of Justice MA Rashid and Justice Mizanur Rahman Farhan also issued a rule upon the government to show cause within two weeks as to why the petitioners

BIRD FLU

US to extend tech help to ICDDR,B

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The US government will give technical assistance to the ICDDR,B to combat avian influenza.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed in Dhaka yesterday between the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) and Centre for Health and Population Research of ICDDR,B.

Assistant Secretary of USDHHS Stewart Simonson and Executive Director of ICDDR,B David A Sack signed the MoU on behalf of their respective sides.

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BOMB ATTACK

BNP leader injured in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A local BNP leader was seriously injured in a bomb attack at Kabirpur village in Shalikupa on Sunday night.

According to the police, five unidentified criminals riding two motorcycles came to a shop and hurled two bombs at Idris Ali, organising secretary of Saikupur upazila unit of BNP at about 10:30pm.

Local people rushed him to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Sources said Idris, who was earlier involved with outlawed Gono Bahini, joined the BNP soon after the alliance government took office.

Obituary

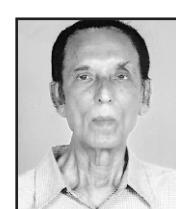


Dr Abu Haider Sajedur Rahaman, founding principal of Dhaka Dental College, passed away due to old age complications at his residence on Thursday at the age of 82, says a press release.

He left behind two sons and grandchildren to mourn his death. He will be buried after his eldest son returns from the USA.

Author of 'Kuasha', a series of detective books, Dr Abu Haider also composed many songs.

ASM Mahbubul Hoque



ASM Mahbubul Hoque, former deputy general manager of Bangladesh Bank, passed away due to old age complications at Labaidi Hospital in the city on Sunday at the age of 76, says a press release.

He left behind one son and two daughters and a number of grandchildren to mourn his death.

He hailed from Sonapur village at Sudharam, Noakhali. He was buried at Azimpur graveyard in Dhaka.

His quirkwani will be held at his house at 266/C, Khilgaon in the city after Asr prayers on Friday. Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the quirkwani.

Death anniversary

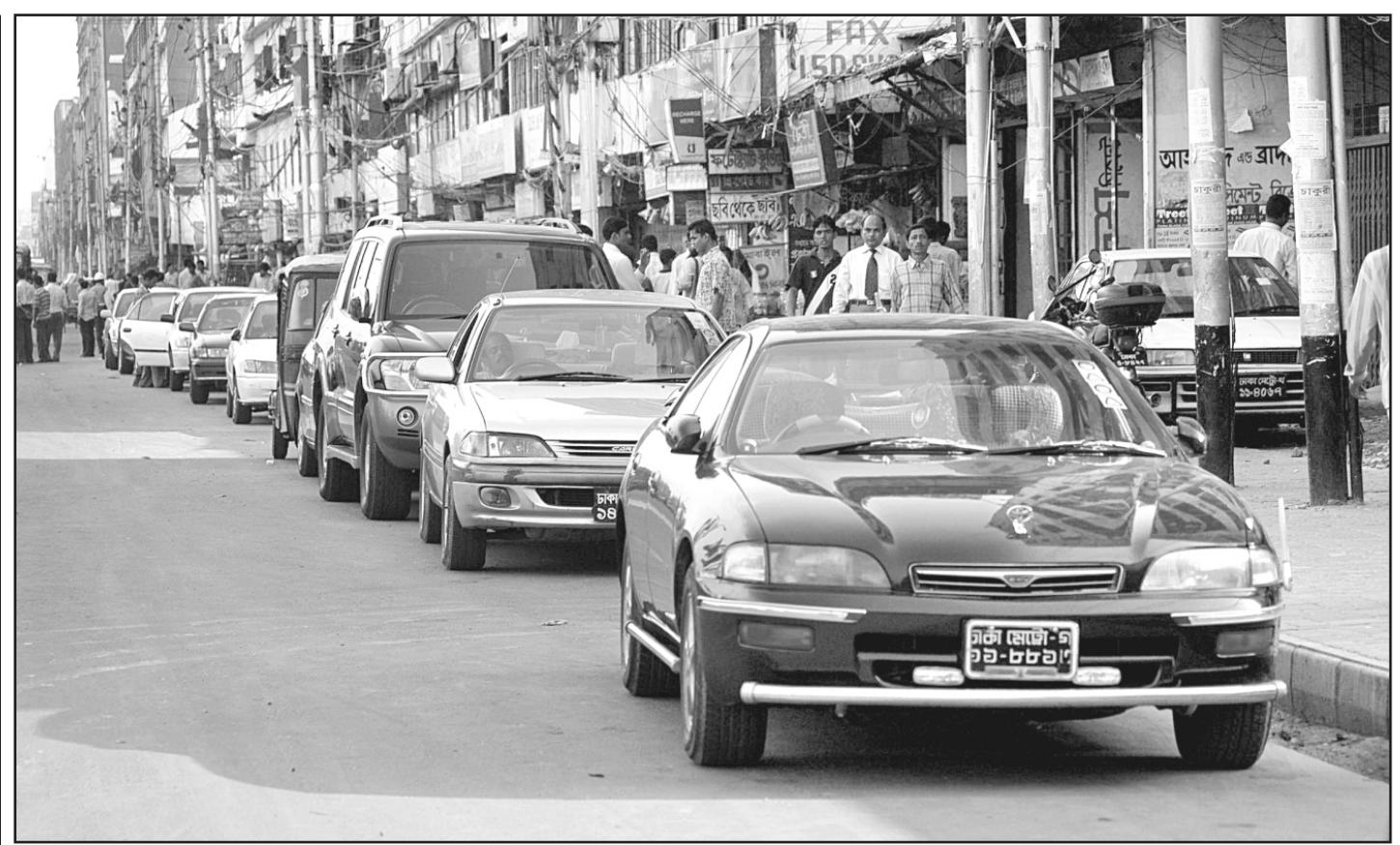


Today is the 19th death anniversary of Mosharrif Hossain, a poet and social worker, says a press release.

He was also the founder of Payalgachha Comprehensive High School and Payalgachha Post-graduate College.

A milad mahfil, distribution of food among orphans and a discussion will be held to mark the day.

Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Airport Road was expanded for smooth traffic movement, but now cars are being parked illegally on the roadside. This photo was taken from Banani-Kakoli

'Enact code of conduct for NGOs for transparency'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for enacting a code of conduct for good governance of non-government organisations (NGOs) to ensure transparency and accountability of NGO activities in the country.

They also said all NGOs, functioning in the country, have to abide by the proposed code of conduct willingly so that transparency and accountability in their work can be ensured.

The speakers were addressing at the roundtable on "NGO Governance Principles (NGP)" organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its office at Gulshan in the city.

Safi Rahman Khan, NGO Governance Consultant of BEI, presented a draft on NGP and Lopa Rahman, project coordinator of Corporate Governance Project of BEI, made a brief presentation on how the principles came about.

Addressing at the function, CQK Mushtaq Ahmed, director general of NGO Affairs Bureau, said there are 2,000 enlisted NGOs in the country and besides there are also some unlisted NGOs, which are working in the remote parts of the country.

"It is difficult for us to monitor transparency and accountability of all these NGOs," he said, adding that the donor agencies should also monitor the works of NGOs and their donations are being used.

There is lack of professionalism in many NGOs, so this code of conduct will be helpful for smooth running and will ensure transparency, he added.

Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, chairperson of Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh, said, "Today's roundtable is a good initiative to ensure accountability and transparency of NGOs".

Shamsuzzoha Khan, chairman of Joha Group of Companies and Siddique Akbaria Foundation, left behind three sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

His quirkwani will be held at his home village at Rajanagar in Teghoria, Sirajdikhan after Juma prayers on Friday.

Sheba introduces fixed wireless phone in 31 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Post and Telecommunications Minister Md Aminul Haque has said preparation for utilising the huge potential of the submarine cable has not been up to the mark although it will be opened shortly.

"It is true that we have not been able to prepare fully, but we must get connected first and start exploring its huge potential," he said while speaking as chief guest at a function.

Sheba Phone organised the function at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre on Sunday in connection with the introduction of fixed wireless phone in CDMA technology in all the upazilas of 31 districts of southeast and southwest regions of the country.

Sheba Phone in the form of public call office (PCO) will give the poorest of the poor access to telecommunication facilities, Abul Hossain said, adding, possessing a phone for regular call will not be required because PCOs will be established at the doorstep of the people.

Azfar Husain Chowdhury, chairman and managing director of Integrated Services Limited (Sheba Phone), said appropriate regulatory environment and policies need to be formulated to help rural operators sustain.

"A relook at the entire gamut of rural communications is necessary if we want to make a speedy headway. Most of the financing agencies were of the view that rural telecom will not work, but our dream is to

prove that it will work," he said.

Badiur Rahman, chief executive officer of the company, said Sheba Phone has just completed the first phase installation of its new project based on next generation WLL CDMA technology.

The system is now going through testing and commissioning by the American strategic partners - Alvarion, he added.

"We have fixed our tariff structure in line with that of BTTB, Tele Talk and Palli Phone which are affordable by our rural subscribers. We have kept the price at Tk 6,000 only by giving about 40 percent discount for the sake of poor subscribers despite high cost of the wireless telephone set and taxes," Rahman said.

For those who find it difficult to pay, arrangement have been made for providing telephones in installments