

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 govern-

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.

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.

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.

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 disaster.

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 Lakhimpur village waylaid him near Lakhkipur 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 Lakhkipur, he was dragged out from that house 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 Adivashi 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.

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

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 secretary 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

Saarc plan of action for cooperation in medical expertise and pharmaceuticals, harmonisation of standard and production of affordable medicines as well as traditional medicines.

Meanwhile, final draft of the discussion has been finalised and health ministers of Saarc countries except Nepal will participate, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain said while addressing a press briefing at his secretariat auditorium yesterday.

"We will focus on AIDS and Bird flu in the conference as it is a great challenge for all Saarc countries to prevent HIV and Avian Influenza," the minister said.

Replying to a question, the minister admitted that so far Bangladesh has no achievement in the health sector under the Saarc. He, however, said although the Saarc was established 21 years ago, the health conference began only three years back.

The minister said the conference is attaching importance to the development of the health service and guard against various diseases of about 1500 million people of the Saarc countries.

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 Amzad 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

the prime minister, finance minister, general manager of Khulna branch of Bangladesh Bank and the managing director of Al Arafah Islami Bank seeking their intervention to recover her land.

Fahima Yasim, senior assistant secretary to finance ministry who investigated the incident in October 2004, directed the manager of the Khulna branch of the bank to go for legal action against the persons involved in the financial scam.

But the manager did not carry out the order.

Upon this, Mohammad Kaiyum, son of Saleha, filed a petition with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) on May 11 last year naming six people as accused in forging the documents.

The CMM later ordered the officer-in-charge (OC) of Daulatpur Police Station to investigate the allegation.

The case was filed as allegation was proved true during the investigation.

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 Nanak 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 Bhuiyan also issued a rule upon the government to show cause within two weeks as to why the petitioners

should not be granted regular bail in the cases.

The petitioners appeared in persons before the High Court bench for bail.

Dhanmondi police filed a case against nine Awami and Juba League leaders on charge of preventing the police from discharging their duties during April 20 hartal programme.

On April 18, Lalbagh police filed two cases against 72 leaders and workers under a speedy trial act and Kamrangirchar police filed two cases against 38 people following clashes between Juba League activists and Juba Dal cadres and police at Chwakhazar.

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.

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

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

Khandakar 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.

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 Shaikpura 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 Saikpura 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



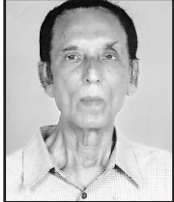
Dr Abu Haider Sajedur Rahman, founding principal of Dhaka Dental College, passed away due to old age complications at his residence on Thursday at the age of 82, says a press release.

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



Cardiac 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 qulkhwani 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 qulkhwani.

Death anniversary



Today is the 19th death anniversary of Mohammad Nurul Huq, an educationist, poet and social worker, says a press release.

He was also the founder of Payalagacha Comprehensive High School and Payalagacha 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.

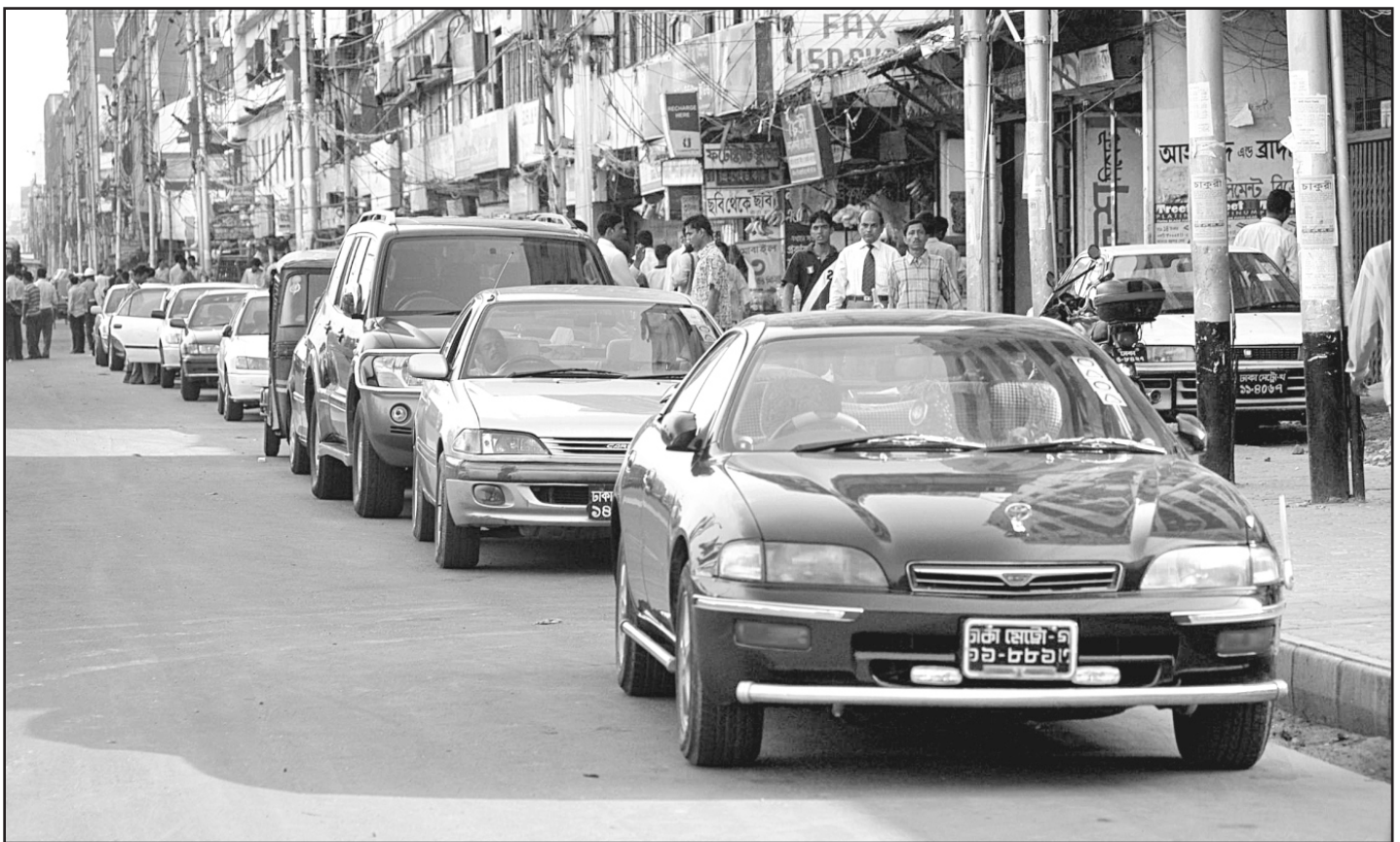


PHOTO: STAR

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 area in the city yesterday.

'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".

He however observed that there are many NGOs in the country, which are working only for helping poor people and they do not have enough financial and other technical capacity to follow all principles of the proposed code of conduct.

Therefore, he suggested that the proposed NGP should not be applicable to all NGOs rather it should be voluntarily.

Barrister Manzoor Hasan, deputy executive director of Brac, said all capable NGOs should provide audit report and other data in their websites to ensure transparency and accountability.

To address poverty reduction, good health, education, nutrition and other issues, building good relationship and strong cooperation among all large and small NGOs is a must, he added.

Barrister Hasan said, "We have to make the NGP in such a way so that all NGOs can easily adopt those principles."

BEI President Farooq Sobhan presided over the discussion, while Dr MA Hakim, general manager of Palli-Karma-Sahayak Foundation

Shamsuzzoha passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Shamsuzzoha Khan, a renowned industrialist, politician and social worker, passed away due to old-age ailments at his Indira Road residence yesterday at the age of 75.

Shamsuzzoha, 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 qulkhwani will be held at his home village at Rajanagar in Toghoria, Sirajdikhan after Juma prayers on Friday.

(PKSF) and representatives of different NGOs, international development agencies and relevant government officials were also present.

TORTURE OF SHANTA Magistrate asked to submit supplementary probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed a magistrate to submit within seven days the supplementary probe report on the incident of torture of Shahin Sultana Shanta by police during an opposition protest on March 12.

Judge Kaniz Akhter Nasrina Khanam of the Fourth Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression directed the Metropolitan Magistrate Shafique Anwar, who had earlier conducted the judicial inquiry and submitted the report.

The judge said the probe report did not mention anything about Shanta's going to police station after the incident to file a case. So the magistrate was directed to collect report about it.

The judge issued the order following the filing of a naraji (no-confidence) petition against the opinion of Shafique's probe report.

On March 14, Shanta filed a case with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka against two deputy commissioners of police, a constable and 14 other unnamed policemen and policewomen.

Shanta filed another case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on March 19 where she also accused the same policemen of attempting to violate her. The court ordered a judicial probe into her allegation the same day.

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION SEA ANGEL General Stackpole arrives tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Lieutenant General Henry C Stackpole, who led the massive relief mission after a devastating cyclone hit Bangladesh on April 29, 1991, will visit the country on the occasion of 15th anniversary of Operation Sea Angel.

The US General is expected to arrive tomorrow, foreign ministry sources said.

Speaking at her first press conference yesterday, US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis said General Stackpole will soon be visiting Bangladesh to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Operation Sea Angel.

"The massive humanitarian relief mission he led in the wake of the devastating cyclone was a shining and defining moment in our bilateral relationship, and it is well worth commemorating," she said while describing the US-Bangladesh relationship.

In the wake of the cyclone, the US president on May 10 in 1991 directed the US military to provide humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh within 24 hours of a request made by Khaleda Zia's government.

A Contingency Joint Task Force (CJTF) was immediately formed under the command of General Stackpole, commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) based in Okinawa.

A US Navy Amphibious Task Force (ATF) returning from the Persian Gulf war was also redirected to Bangladesh for the relief mission.

Between May 10 and June 13, 1991, Joint Task Force Sea Angel, one of the largest military disaster relief forces ever assembled, was sent to the aid of the people of Bangladesh. Cyclone Marian (April 29-30, 1991) was one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in recent times.

The cyclone killed nearly 1,40,000 people and rendered over five million people homeless.

Operation Sea Angel began its work on May 10, involving over 7,000 US soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and multinational forces. They provided food, water and medical care to nearly two million people and thus saved their lives.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar
Nagorik Uddoyog organises a seminar on 'Repression: State vs Human Rights'. Venue: WVA auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 2:30pm.

Meeting
American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh organises a luncheon meeting on 'Forthcoming parliamentary election: Role of the Election Commission in conducting a free and fair election'. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 12:30pm.

Discussion
Jatiya Chhama Parishad will hold a discussion with Awami League Presidium Member Abdur Razzak as chief guest. Venue: Monishingha Farhad Sriti Trust Bhaban. Time: 4:00pm.

Seminar
Lawyers for Transparency organises a seminar on 'Proposed court contempt law and dignity of the judicial systems'. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association Hall. Time: 4:30pm.

Rotary Dhaka
The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.