

Mobilise people to bring about positive change in society

Speakers tell seminar on governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policymakers, economists and civil society members at a seminar yesterday came down heavily on corruption and poor governance in the country, stressing the need for mobilising people to bring about a positive change in society.

Taking part in the panel discussion, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former secretary and director of Centre for Governance Studies of the Brac University, said Bangladesh has a serious problem relating to governance and there is a bad system where good people are not rewarded and bad people not punished.

"Governance will collapse if bad people are not punished and good people are not rewarded. Such a system does not exist anywhere in the world," he said, adding that the poor people bear the brunt of such anarchy.

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) organised the pre-launch seminar on 'Unbundling Governance: Toward an Annual Report on Governance in Bangladesh' in association with Manusher Jonno at LGED auditorium in the city, with Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the prime minister, in the chair.

Dr Kamal Uddin stressed the need for mobilising people to bring about a change in society, saying that this mobilisation happens.

"I agree with Akbar Ali Khan that good people should be awarded and bad people punished. But who is going to do that?" he questioned.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said there are studies highlighting that corruption is going at the highest level and the corrupt people are not punished.

But instrumental outcome is not there in those cases, he said, urging the researchers to go beyond 'cultural' indicators (indicators that are used frequently).

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former advisor to the caretaker government, said: "We have a very large bureaucracy in which there are layers after layers, which makes things complicated."

Stressing the need for effective functioning of the institutions, he made a comparison between the democracy in Bangladesh and a matured one, saying that in a matured democracy, the leaders are able to uphold the credibility of the institutions.

Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, governor of Bangladesh Bank, said most governance-related problems in the country would be solved if

different regulatory bodies are made effective.

He also called for introducing e-governance to improve efficiency and reduce harassment to a great extent.

Successful reforms in governance have to have political commitment and ownership, Christine Wallich, country director of the World Bank, said, adding that access to information, education and connectivity are dominant factors for better governance.

Appreciating the government decision to discontinue Dhaka-New York flight of Bangladesh Biman, she said it gives a signal that Biman is now focusing on financial discipline.

David Wood, head of DFID in Bangladesh, said his organisation will continue its support for social movement so that human rights, gender and other activists can contribute to the development process.

"At the same time, we will support government-led reforms to improve governance and address corruption issues," he said. "And I believe that progress is possible in Bangladesh."

Hua Du, country director of Asian Development Bank, said it is essential to encourage the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and introduce e-

governance in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

Citing the example of e-procurement, she said ADB has already initiated the process in some ADB-funded projects under several ministries.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno, said the problems are known to all, but the people now want to know the solutions.

She called for solution-centric approach of different surveys and said these should be homegrown. The report on unbundling governance is an advocacy document, which will be used by the Manusher Jonno to develop its programmes as well as the programmes of its partner organisations.

Earlier, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of PPRC, gave a presentation on the report of 'Unbundling Governance'.

According to the survey, 81 percent of the respondents are concerned over price hike, 43 percent over poverty, 36 percent over corruption and 34 percent over unemployment.

On the other hand, around 67 percent of the respondents have less confidence in police, 43 percent in business class, 40 percent in government offices, 36 percent in political parties, 33 percent in government-run media, 19 percent in local government, 16 percent in NGO, 16 percent in judiciary and 15 percent in civil society.

PPRC conducted the survey among 4,500 people in 64 villages, 30 rural towns, 10 district towns and two metropolitan cities this year.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University also took part in the panel discussion.

NAT'L MOURNING DAY AL calls hartal on Aug 15

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Awami League has drawn up elaborate programmes, including a half-day hartal, to mark National Mourning Day on August 15.

Protesting the cancellation of public holiday on August 15, AL will enforce the nationwide hartal from 6:00am to 12:00noon.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members was assassinated on August 15, 1975.

On the occasion, a discussion meeting will be held at the auditorium of Institution of Diploma Engineers in the city on August 14. Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina will preside over the discussion.

The other programmes include keeping the national and party flags at half-mast and hoisting black flags atop the party's central office as well as the unit offices, placing wreathes at the portrait of Bangabandhu and holding milad mahfil by Women AL after Asr prayers on August 15.

Besides, on the day, AL central leaders will place wreathes and offer special prayers at the mazar of Bangabandhu at Tungipara and at Banani graveyard where other family members who were killed on August 15, 1975, are laid to rest.



Buddhist Women's Fed executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shuva Barua and Shipra Barua were elected president and general secretary of Bangladesh Buddhist Women's Federation, newly formed women's front of Bangladesh Buddhist Federation, says a press release.

The other elected office bearers are Executive President Monica Barua, Vice Presidents Sukti Barua, Dr Parmita Barua and Arpita Barua, Joint General Secretaries Jhinu Barua Chowdhury and Ilora Barua and Organising Secretary Sadeepa Barua.

Ratna Mutsundi has been elected as finance secretary, Parul Barua as publicity secretary, Belurani Barua as education and research secretary, Ajanta Barua Shila as office secretary, Nilu Rani Barua as religious affairs secretary. Suchana Barua as health and social welfare secretary and Papia Barua as sports and cultural secretary.

The 25-member committee took oath under the leadership of Bishwapati Barua, president of Bangladesh Buddhist Federation at Dhaka International Buddhist Monastery.



Lamar Cravens speaks at a workshop at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Dr Mahabbat Khan and on his left are Jamil Ahmed and Ajoy Das Gupta.

Govt urged to relax control over local govt instts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should relax its control over the local government and the lawmakers should refrain from interfering in its activities in order to ensure good governance and strengthen democracy, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

They also called on the government to increase budgetary allocation for the local government institutions, allow them to mobilise its own resources and determine the role of lawmakers with regard to the local government.

Bangladesh Centre for Communications Programme (BCCP) organised the workshop on 'The role of media in strengthening local government' in association with Democratic Local Governance Programme (DLGP), the USAID and RTI International at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

"The local government cannot be strong enough in a country where the local government ministry is too strong and intends to control it," said Dr Mahabbat Khan, a professor of public administration at Dhaka University (DU).

The interference by lawmakers

also diminishes the power of the local government representatives, he added.

Prof Dr Salahuddin Alimuzzaman said it seems that the local government institutions act like a front organisation of the ruling party.

They should be independent and a local government commission, not any ministry, should control them, he added.

According to the constitution, the government should encourage the local government institutions, not control them, said Advocate Azmatullah Khan, president of Municipality Association of Bangladesh.

But some local government institutions are run by administrative officials, which is a violation of the constitution, he added.

"Although laws allow the local government institutions to realise holding taxes, we cannot do it because of executive orders," he said.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, country director of The Hunger Project, said inadequate budgetary allocation for the local government institutions leads to rural poverty,

widening economic disparity between rural and urban areas.

Prof Dr Tofael Ahmed of Chittagong University suggested formulating a common law for all types of local government institutions.

Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of The News Today, said the local government is highly dependent on the central government.

Stressing the need for transparency and accountability of the local government, he said a strong movement should be waged to force the government to give the local government institutions due authority in order to ensure democracy at the grassroots level.

The speakers also said the media should focus on the activities and problems of these institutions.

Dr Asif Nazrul, journalist and columnist Zagiul Ahmed Chowdhury, Ajoy Das Gupta, assistant editor of the daily Samakal, Selina Rahman Ivy, chairman of Narayanganj Poursava, and AKM Mozammel Hossain, chairman of Gazipur Poursava, also spoke at the workshop chaired by Lamar Cravens, chief of the party of DLGP.

BSF returns body of Bangladeshi

BSS, Sathkira

The body of a Bangladeshi who was shot dead by Border Security Force (BSF) men on July 18 reportedly inside the Indian territory was handed over to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) following a flag meeting yesterday.

The company commander level flag meeting between BDR and BSF was held at Kakdanga border area under Kalaroa upazila yesterday afternoon.

BDR sources said that BSF men of Tarau Border Outpost (BOP) sprayed bullets on some Bangladeshi cattle traders, who were returning to Bangladesh, leaving one dead. The BSF men took away the body.

After the flag meeting that lasted for half an hour, BSF handed over the body of Mukhlesur Rahman, 30, son of Abdul Aziz Mollah of Boalia village under sadar upazila, to BDR.

BDR Madra Company Commander Subedar Abdul Karim and BSF Hakimpur Company Commander led their respective sides. Both the sides agreed to maintain peace across the border. Later BDR handed over the body to Kalaroa Police Station.

Countrywide NFTE protest today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE) will bring out processions and hold rallies in all upazila headquarters across the country today to press home their eight-point demand.

NFTE leaders yesterday urged the teachers and employees across the country to make the programme a success.

They said they will continue agitation until their demands are met.

They have also urged all aggrieved teachers and employees to make the August 1 programme to blockade main roads and river routes of district headquarters a success.

Two sisters stabbed over land dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Neighbours stabbed two sisters as a sequel to land dispute at Tongli on Friday.

Critically injured Jasmine Akhter, 25, is under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital while her elder sister Shahnaj Parvin is receiving treatment at Tongli Hospital.

Sources said neighbours of Jasmine and Shahnaj blocked the road to their home on Friday morning and as they protested the move, both sides were locked into an altercation. At one stage, the neighbours hit the two sisters with sharp weapon in their heads and they fell on the ground.

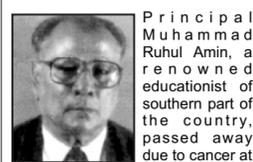
Locals then rushed them to local hospital, the source added.

Obituary

M A Hannan, spiritual leader of Khanqah Sirajia in Dhanmondi, passed away due to old age complications at the city's Defarm Hospital yesterday at the age of 75, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Muhammad Ruhul Amin

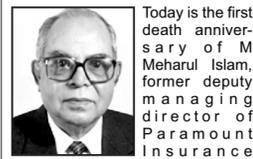


Principal Muhammad Ruhul Amin, a renowned educationist of southern part of the country, passed away due to cancer at a local hospital

in the city yesterday, says a press release. In his career he served as the principal of Khulna Commerce College, Khulna BL College, MM City College, Bangabandhu College and Ayub Musa College.

He left behind his wife, three sons, two daughters and a host of admirers and relatives to mourn his death.

Death anniversary



Today is the first death anniversary of M Mehrul Islam, former deputy managing director of Paramount Insurance Company Ltd, says a press release.

He has served as general secretary of National Shooting Federation for several years. On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held. Relatives, friends and admirers have been asked to pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) Chairman Quazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad addresses a discussion on 'Next general election and crisis in election process and system' organised by BUP at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

CEC's resignation a must for fair polls

Speakers tell BUP discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded immediate resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and his two deputies for holding a free and fair general election.

They also demanded registration of political parties, regular audit of party accounts and provision for negative vote in the polls.

The speakers called upon people to raise their voices against black money holders who are trying to participate in the election.

They also stressed the need for people's unity to save democracy in the country.

The discussion on 'Next general election and crisis in election process and system' was organised by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) at the National Press Club with its Chairman Quazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad in the chair. The speakers observed that there is no need for caretaker government if the election commission is independent and powerful.

Mashih Malik Chowdhury, a life member of BUP, presented a keynote paper at the discussion.

He proposed formation of a supervisory commission on state affairs comprising maximum seven members including two immediate-past chief justices.

The commission will appoint chief election commissioner and two of his deputies on the basis of consultation with grassroots level political and social activists.

He also suggested registration of political parties and audit of their income and expenditure including the tax taken and provision of negative vote in the election.

He said the parties which failed to obtain any seat in parliament in last 20 years should not get the status of a political party.

Mashih said only those people should get nomination who are elected by the party workers of their areas to prevent black money holders.

Besides, for getting nomination from a party, the aspirant must be a member of that party at least for five years, he observed.

Khondoker Ibrahim Khaled,

managing director of Pubali Bank, stressed the need for protecting the voting rights of people.

He urged people to foil all sorts of conspiracy against democracy.

Khaled stressed the need for developing democratic culture in the society.

"Due to lack of democratic culture, the country often goes under autocracy and military rule," he pointed out.

Former member of parliament Hafizuddin Ahmed Mojumdar demanded powerful election commission as well as powerful parliament.

He said the Speaker in parliament often becomes spineless as he belongs to the ruling party.

"The Speaker must be impartial to strengthen parliament," he added.

Justice Golam Rabbani said elitism in the society will exist until

the local administration is strengthened properly.

He also demanded commitment from political parties before the election about establishing people's rule in the country.

Demanding immediate resignation of the chief election commissioner and his two deputies, Taheruddin said people must have confidence in the person who would conduct the election.

He also underscored the need for development of political culture in the society.

Abdul Karim, managing director of Midas, urged people to raise voices for honest and dedicated candidates before the next general election.

He was critical of political parties which are lobbying for bringing the person who was once an autocrat and champion in corruption into their alliance.



Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places, Met Office said, predicting a fall in day temperature over the country by 1-2 degree.

Highest temperature 34.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sayedpur and lowest 23.1 degree Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:43pm today and rises at 5:27am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 3 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.