

Stress on equitable society for growth

FROM PAGE 16
society. We have deviated and are exactly moving far away from an equitable society. There are structural problems, which are creating inequalities in the society," he observed.

In terms of policies, laws and institutions, concrete interventions are needed to bring about a change in the present situation, he said.

Pointing to the growing inequality and referring to a possible situation in 2021 he asked, "If a section of the people in the society live with enormous security leaving the rest of the population marginalised, will it be possible to sustain a peaceful and democratic society?"

Sultana Kamal said the people of the country failed to set a compliance level for accountability of political leaders.

Emphasising on social justice, she noted, "There may be large stocks of food in the government godowns but if the poor people die from starvation, how it would be

evaluated? So, we have to think about a better distribution system."

Making a presentation on 'Vision 2021 for Bangladesh: Goal 8: To be a more inclusive and equitable society', Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of CPD said, "We must aspire to build a more inclusive and equitable society by 2021 and failure to do so could not only constrain our growth potential but threaten the sustainability of our democracy."

Some of the aspects of vision 2021 had already been there in the election manifestos of the political parties and if the political parties had implemented these after going to power, the initiative taken by the civil society members would not be needed, he said.

People are aware of the commitments made by the political parties but a monitoring system is needed, Debapriya mentioned. "We would hope that they would include these issues in their next election manifestos and implement them."

Atiur Rahman, an economist, observed that rethinking is needed about the present safety net programmes for the vulnerable section of the people.

There is no 'graduation' in people's lives after running a safety net programme for six years, he said recommending an independent survey to assess and to find out in which direction the programmes are going on.

"Violence and instability in the society have increased because we have veered away from the spirit of 1971," he observed.

Atiur said the government can take special measures to eliminate inequalities among the people and the regions of the country by following the constitution.

Dr Manzur Ahmad of Brac University said education has emerged as a key that is creating divisions in the society. "Which type of education a person will receive depends on what is the financial ability of that particular individual."

Dr Mahmudur Rahman of Initiative for People's Development said divisions are created among the people in the name of politics.

Without naming the state minister for home affairs, and Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad, he questioned, "How a person in charge of the home ministry can have a discussion with someone who is dishonest and has been convicted?"

Dr Rushidan Islam Rahman of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said regional development strategies should be formulated instead of having all the focus on Dhaka to eliminate inequity in the society.

"We have to have a strategy now in place so that we don't need to see child labour and famine-like situation in some particular districts after 10 years," she suggested.

A development strategy for comparatively less advanced regions like Khulna and Rajshahi should be taken, she noted.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said people in some particular areas in the country become poor due to land erosion by the rivers and it is a very different type of situation for the human beings. "We need to have a plan now to see that there will be no monga (famine-like situation) after 10 years," she added.

Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association said pressure should be put on political parties so that more female candidates can get nominations in the next general election.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, said people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are still ruled by the military while there is no military rule anywhere else in Bangladesh, which should not be.

He said special measures should be taken to address the problems of the indigenous people.

Barrister Tanya Amir, citing the examples of introduction of CNG-driven auto-rickshaws in Dhaka and some newly launched satellite channels, said with a particular political party in power, a section of its leaders grabbed all these big deals. "Can anything be done that will disqualify and stop these people from having unfair access to big deals like these?" she asked.

Nagrik Committee 2006 was formally initiated early this year in Dhaka at a national dialogue titled, 'civil society initiative for accountable development'.

The committee, which identified eight goals for Vision 2021 for Bangladesh, organised separate expert group consultation sessions for each goal throughout August.

SA Games

FROM PAGE 1
a bomb-blast at the heart of the Sri Lankan capital two weeks ago, bad weather and a lot of doubt, ended peacefully as the government agencies worked round the clock to provide maximum security and comfort to over 3,000 guests.

Weather kept smiling towards the end and as it goes traditionally, the athletes' march past at the closing ceremony was unlike the opening as they walked hand in hand at the farewell party, making promises to meet again.

It will be two years from now when the eight South Asian nations come together again in Dhaka. The Bangladeshi athletes -- led by national flag-bearer and swimming gold medalist Shahjahan Ali Rony -- handed over paper-made national flags as invitation cards to the ones with whom they had shared glory and battle on turfs as well as tears of joy and pain. When they parted with each other, 'See you in Dhaka' must have been the words uttered by the future of sports of the region.

Before the march past the pageant started with fanfare, band display, dance and music, as usually blending the culture and heritage of the land known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean.

There was huge roar from the jam-packed stadium as official symbol 'Porapol' and mascot the 'jungle fowl' were displayed.

Flags of the SA Games, Sri Lankan National Olympic Committee, the outgoing hosts and Bangladesh were hoisted before the show switched over to another series of songs.

Speaker of the Parliament WJM Lokubandara declared the eight-day event closed as the Games flag lowered down with the famous tune of 'Auld Lang Syne' and the flame, which burned for 11 days, faded off gradually.

The Bangladeshi cultural troupe, led by famous dance duo Shibli Mohammad and Shamim Ara Nipa, presented 'Shambhawan', a composition of modern and folk dances portraying many hues of the simple lifestyle of rural Bangladesh.

Putting all doubts aside, Sri Lanka's NOC president and chairman of South Asian Olympic Council Hemasiri Fernando handed over the Games flag to Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed in absence of the BOA president.

Sports and Youth Minister of Sri Lanka Jeewan Kumaratunga and Bangladesh State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman, who had raised their respective national flags earlier, were present.

As the two delegations marched to the stands after the brief flag takeover ceremony, all lights ceased to make way for the laser spectacle, followed by drum tattoo, more songs and dance. The work of more than 2,000 performers climaxed as noisy fireworks illuminated the night sky, gripping people in awe in and out of the venue, just as it did on the opening day on August 18.

SC Bar body worried over judiciary

FROM PAGE 1
judges, acquittal of Ershad of corruption cases and government's failure in separating the judiciary in the last five years.

They stated how the 17 additional judges were confirmed as High Court judges on sheer consideration of "political loyalty" ignoring the opinion of the chief justice.

"The confirmation of most judges was made without considering their merit, competence, experience and acumen of law... Here party loyalty was the only criteria," the Bar president said.

Moreover, he said, another High Court judge, Justice Joyful Abedin, has recently been elevated to the Appellate Division by superseding his three seniors "on political consideration".

On the longstanding issue of separating the judiciary from the executive, Barrister Islam said the Supreme Court's 12-point directives in the Mazdar Hossain case were completely ignored by the government on the question of judiciary separation.

Instead of separating the judiciary, the government rules made the lower judiciary subordinate to the executive where the executive would control appointment, promotion and transfer of judicial officers in the lower court.

Referring to the latest adjournment of hearing up to November 7, he said the adjournment order virtually acquitted the government of its declared pledge to separate the judiciary within its five-year tenure.

Deploring what he said the withdrawal of corruption cases against Ershad to fulfil his pre-condition to join the four-party alliance, the SCBA president observed that this action has not only exposed the chief executive of the state but also tarnished the image and prestige of the judiciary.

He said the two judges stated incompetent to become High Court judge were confirmed by the government.

He was also critical of the law minister for initiating a move to exclude the "proclamation of independence" from the constitution. He said the proclamation of independence is the genesis of the country's constitution.

"The country now stands at a dangerous crossroads while the judiciary system is in jeopardy," he said, urging national political leadership and conscientious citizens to stand by the lawyers to protest all these.

He announced that the Supreme Court Bar Association and other Bar associations throughout the country would stage demonstrations on August 30 to register their protest.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said "a grave crisis has been created" as the government finally did not execute the Supreme Court judgment on separation of the judiciary from the executive despite taking 20 to 25 times extension in the last five years.

"There is nothing could be more shame than this where the secretaries of the Prime Minister's Office, law ministry, finance ministry and establishment ministry had to stand in the dock for violating the judgment in the Mazdar Hossain case concerning the judiciary separation."

On the issue of confirming the 17 additional judges, he said some "controversial" persons, who never visited the High Court, were made judges, ignoring the opinion of the chief justice.

Dr Kamal said the chief justice did not recommend the confirmation of four judges out of the 17 on the list, but the government did not show respect to the recommendation of the chief justice.

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Dr Kamal observed an evil axis

has started striking the state, constitution and national security. "This force is patronising bombs and terrorism, pushing the existence of the state towards ruination."

Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud said this is unprecedented in 35-year history of Bangladesh that the judges were confirmed without paying heed to the chief justice. "It's a clear intervention of the government in the judiciary," he noted.

Citing example of Pakistan, he said even under military rule, opinion of the chief justice of the Supreme Court is placed high in appointing judges of the High Court and the Supreme Court.

He termed the withdrawal of corruption cases against Ershad a "naked use of power by the executive".

tive". He lamented how the appointment process of the judges has been "politicised" and lower judiciary made "subordinate to the executive".

Barrister Rokon and Barrister Islam both observed that a provision of caretaker government under the 13th amendment to appoint the immediate-retired chief justice as chief advisor led the government to politicise the higher judiciary.

On the issue of JMB kingpins, he said when nearly 1,000 condemned convicts are kept in the condemned cells in jails why the government has kept Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai and others in a special place providing all hospitalities.

48 dead as water tank collapses in India

AFP, Jaipur

At least 48 people were killed and dozens injured in western India on Sunday when a large water tank they climbed on to watch a village wrestling match gave way, police and officials said.

Senior police official Bhupinder Singh said the death toll was expected to rise with some of the 45 injured in serious condition.

Officials at Kama village, 400km from Jodhpur in Rajasthan had tried in vain to stop people climbing on the tank, he added.

Rajasthan state home minister Gulab Singh Kataria told AFP that about 200 people had clambered on to the tank to watch the wrestling match, which was part of a village fair.

"My officials tell me that 48 people have been killed in the accident," he said.

The Press Trust of India news agency said the incident triggered panic among the thousands of people who had gathered for the fair.

The Rajasthan government had ordered a probe into the incident, the report added.