

DIALOGUE

AL, BNP accused of avoiding key reform issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the name of dialogue the BNP and Awami League (AL) are only sticking to the issues of chief election commissioner (CEC) and chief of caretaker government avoiding key reform issues, which are a must to strengthen democracy, said legal experts and civil society members yesterday.

Accountability of political parties, their sources of income, internal democracy as well as an independent Election Commission (EC) are the key reform issues, but the ongoing dialogue is limited to only a few persons, they observed.

The roundtable titled, 'Dialogue and reforms: Public views' was organised by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) at the National Press Club in the city.

There are controversies over the voter list, but neither AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil nor BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan are talking on the issue, said Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

"The whole spirit of the election could be destroyed if the voter list is not prepared properly," he said, urging the two leaders of the ruling

and opposition parties to go beyond the personal and partisan interest while pursuing the dialogue.

Stressing on upholding the neutrality of the constitutional bodies he said formation of a peoples' parliament that will work as a watchdog has become a necessity for the country.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder said a fair election depends on the independence of the EC and behaviour of the political parties.

If the political parties do not behave as they are supposed to do in a democratic country, fair election is not possible, he noted.

"That is why reform of the political parties should be the first priority," he said, adding nomination process of the candidates and parties' election expenditures must be made transparent.

As long as the EC remains under the Prime Minister's Office it is not possible for the EC to be neutral, Badiul said, posing a question, "Why did the present EC secretary meet the PM before joining his post?"

Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said CEC Justice MA Aziz has been violating the electoral laws since

the day of his appointment, which he said is 'motivated'.

According to the constitution, Justice KM Hasan will be the chief of the next caretaker government, he said, adding that there is no scope for the political parties to discuss the matter.

Former advisor to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan said the issues of Justice MA Aziz and Justice KM Hasan are obviously important in the dialogue, but other issues of reforms including the whole system of political parties and election are more important.

He observed that if the chief of caretaker government is not appointed on the basis of the consensus of all political parties, it would create a problem.

"Partisan interests are getting more importance in the dialogue," he noted.

Professor Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University said the issues of the CEC and caretaker government should not be the main concern as they are not the main problem.

"We, as the civil society members, should stress that the political parties pledge to separate the judiciary from the executive,

ensure autonomy of the state-run radio and television and cancel the Official Secrets Act," he noted.

Laying emphasis on making the constituencies smaller and increasing the number of polling booths, Brigadier General (Retd) Shakhawat Hossain said if a small number of people can cast vote in a polling centre in a short period of time, there will be less scope for vote rigging.

He also proposed a two-tier election system and a caretaker government headed by the PM and MPs from all parties on proportionate basis.

Prothom Alo Deputy Editor Abdul Qaium said the political parties should remain alert so that the dialogue does not push the election towards uncertainty.

DU Professor Syed Anwar Hossain, former secretary Moslehuddin, journalists Syed Abul Maksud and Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, freedom fighter Hamidul Hossain, cultural activist Golam Kuddus and Citizens Rights Movement Secretary General Tusher Rehman also spoke.



Haphazard car parking in front of the New Market adds to traffic congestion on Mirpur Road in the city. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

World Youth Day for Democracy today

The World Youth Movement for Democracy (WYMD) is celebrating World Youth Day for Democracy globally today as part of the Global Youth Democracy Campaign, says a press release.

In response to a WYND's call for celebrating the day in Bangladesh, Civic Youth Network for Democracy (CYND), a youth network of Civic Bangladesh, a civil society organisation committed to the advancement of democracy, will bring out a rally at 10:00am from National Museum at Shahbagh and organise a rally at 11:00am in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city today.

The WYMD is a youth wing of World Movement for Democracy (WMD). The Global Youth Democracy Campaign was launched in 2005. The WYMD participants have since been working around the world to promote and deepen democracy as well as inspiring the people in general.

The campaign mobilises youths to participate in non-violent actions to promote democratic values and concepts, educates them about the importance of human rights, press freedom, active citizenship and raises awareness of the positive contributions youth are making to democracy in the world.

This year, the World Youth Day for Democracy focuses on highlighting what youth are already doing in their communities to help get a better idea of the diversity of youth contributions to the building of democracy.

In this global context of democratic movement, Civic Bangladesh calls upon the young democracy activists to take part in celebrating the World Youth Day for Democracy in Bangladesh as part of the Global Youth Democracy Campaign.

AL leader Fizu passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Former MP and Dinajpur Awami League Vice-President Mostafizur Rahman Fizu passed away at Birdem Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 54.

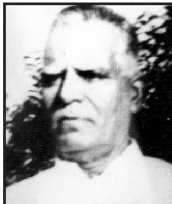
He left behind his wife, two sons, three daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death of Mostafizur Rahman.

In a condolence message, she said, "We have lost a sincere organiser, and the people of Dinajpur lost an eminent social worker at his death."

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil visited the Birdem Hospital and placed wreaths on the body of Mostafizur Rahman.

Death anniversary



Today is the 24th death anniversary of Rahatullah Sarkar, a member of the then East Pakistan Provincial Assembly, says a press release.

He was a close associate of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardi and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and a feeding of the destitute programme have been arranged at his home at Parbatipur.

'Curb corruption to eradicate poverty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday underscored the need for effective steps by the government to eradicate poverty from the country.

They also asked for eradication of corruption at different levels of administration.

The discussion titled 'Work unitedly to eradicate poverty' was held at the conference room of Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha's (BNPS) office at Dhanmondi in the city and coordinated by South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE).

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rashidi Mahbub, president of Doctor's Health Association, said the government took various steps including poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) to eliminate poverty but bad governance, gender discrimination and weak law and order situation remain as barriers in the way of removing poverty.

Presiding over the discussion, Dr SA Sadek, economist and former principal secretary, asked for coordination among NGOs and government, as it is not possible for the government alone to implement all the programmes.

Criticising the micro finance system, Shamsuddoha, team member of Participatory Research Development Initiative, said hardcore people especially women tend to receive loan from various sources that lead them to be overburdened with loans and interests.

Numan Ahmed Khan, executive director of Institute of Environmental Development stressed for development of Information Technology (IT) and turning population into skilled population.

He also asked for government's awareness about the socio-political structure of the country while making policy to curb poverty.

Criticising the attitude of the government, Rokeya Kabir, executive director of BNPS, said "The government should play managerial and executive roles rather than ruling roles."

Among others, Abu Naser Khan, coordinator of Save the Environment Movement, and Shahnaz Shumi, coordinator of BNPS, also spoke on the occasion.

3 killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

At least three people were killed and four others injured, two of them critically, in two separate road accidents in Khagrachhari district yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Manahor Tripura, 35, Abser uddin, 41, and Nimrol Barua, 43.

Police said a Rangamati-bound passenger bus collided head on with a Khagrachhari-bound Honda at Modhupur Bazar leaving three people killed on the spot.

In another incident, a Dighinala-bound jeep fell into a roadside ditch at Babuchhara when the driver lost control of the vehicle injuring four people.

They are Sanchaye Chakma 21, Sujata Chakma 25, Joya Chakma 26 and Purnachan Chakma 55.

Of them, Sanchaye and Sujata were injured critically. They were rushed to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital and Matiranga upazila health complex.



Appeal for help

Bushra, a three-year-old girl, has been suffering from a rare form of blood cancer called Juvenile Myeloid Monocytic Leukemia, says a press release.

According to doctors, she needs immediate bone marrow transplantation.

The treatment available to save her life costs a huge amount of money, which her family cannot afford. So, her family is asking everyone for a helping hand to save her life.

Contributions can be sent to her mother, Kazi Mst. Nazmin Akhter, Savings A/C No. 6662, Janata Bank, Shyamoli Branch, Dhaka.

Interested persons can also contact her family at 9110046, 01716157306 and 0152479020.



Abul Kalam Azad

Abul Kalam Azad, a motorcycle mechanic, is now fighting for his life as his both the kidneys have been damaged, says a press release.

His father Abdul Khaleq, a rickshaw van driver, has appealed for financial assistance for the treatment of his son as he even cannot afford to get the boy admitted to a hospital.

The 19-year-old boy is now living at his village home at Kirta under Saltha upazila in Faridpur.

According to doctors, the treatment would cost around Tk 5 lakh, said his father.

He has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save his son.

Contributions can be sent to Account No. 4532, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Saltha Bazar Branch, Faridpur. Interested persons can also call on 01721092548 for contact with the family of the boy.

More congratulations to Prof Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Messages of congratulations to Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus continued to pour in on his winning Nobel Peace Prize 2006.

Hailing Prof Yunus and Grameen Bank, Director General of Unesco Koichiro Matsuura expressed his highest satisfaction for this choice that "recognises a man who tried to find easy solutions to complex problems."

"Amid a grave political unstable condition where the political parties are busy to gain their own interests leaving the nation to a darker and more vulnerable situation, Yunus's winning of Noble Peace Prize lit a light of hope to the countrymen," said a statement of Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) signed by its Executive Director Sultana Kamal yesterday.

Congratulating Dr Yunus, a banker to the poor, it said the

achievement of Prof Yunus would inspire all to work hard to make the world better.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Bangladesh Museum Council and Rakhain Buddhist Welfare Association also greeted Dr Yunus.

In a statement, Chairman of

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury said we should uphold the honour that Dr Yunus has brought to the nation by winning Nobel Prize and we must win against poverty that he has long been striving for.



Secretary of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Shahid Alam offers munajat at an Iftar Party for orphans and underprivileged children, hosted by Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel at its ball room in the city yesterday.



Kaiser Tamiz Amin, acting managing director of Brac Bank, inaugurates the 18th ATM booth of the bank at Narayanganj recently.

Brac Bank opens ATM booth at Narayanganj

Brac Bank has opened its newest ATM booth at Narayanganj recently, says a press release.

This is the 18th ATM booth of Brac Bank. The new ATM is expected to attract a large number of people as it is located at the centre of Narayanganj.

This ATM will provide a 24-hour cash withdrawal facility to complement its branch.

Acting Managing Director of the bank Kaiser Tamiz Amin inaugurated the ATM booth. Zabed Amin, head of Distribution, Imtiaz Ahmed Siddiqui, head of External Affairs, and other high officials were also present at the inaugural ceremony.



Birth anniversary of Sheikh Russell today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 42nd birth anniversary of Sheikh Russell, the youngest son of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will be observed today.

On the occasion, main opposition Awami League and its front organisations have chalked out various programmes including a discussion, milad mahfil and Fateha at the graveyard of Bangabandhu's family members.

Sheikh Russell was assassinated on August 15, 1975 with his family members when he was only a student of class four.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday in a statement urged the party men as well as the people of the country to mark the day with significance.

"The murderers killed Sheikh Russell along with the father of the nation. They didn't even spare the women or children that day," he said.

Sheikh Russell Shishu Sangsad has chalked out a daylong programme to mark the day. Renowned scientist M Wazed Miah will preside over the programme at Banani graveyard at 11:15am.

The leaders and activists of this organisation will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in front of Bangabandhu Museum early in the morning.

A discussion will be held in front of Bangabandhu museum at 10:30am today.