

DISTORTION OF HISTORY
Two PWs give deposition against Moudud
COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two more prosecution witnesses (PWs) of a criminal case filed against former law minister Moudud Ahmed for distorting history about the proclamation of independence in 1971 gave their deposition before a Dhaka court yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafique Anwar recorded the statements of the PWs -- advocates Towhidul Islam and Nahidul Hossain Chowdhury -- where they demanded exemplary punishment to the accused for distorting history.

After recording statements, the court fixed March 28 for next hearing of the case.

Earlier on December 21 last year, complainant advocate ASM Iqbal Hossain gave his statement where he also demanded exemplary punishment to the former lawmaker.

On December 10, another court deferred a judicial inquiry after Iqbal filed a criminal case against Moudud with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

In their yesterday's statements, Towhid and Nahid told the court that Moudud, with his knowledge, distorted the history about the proclamation of independence. So, Moudud should be punished for committing the offence, PWs added.

In his complaint on December 10, Iqbal mentioned that Moudud, while holding his former portfolio, in the preface to the publication of the constitution printed on August 1 this year, said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the national leader of the majority party, was arrested from his residence and taken to the then West Pakistan.

"The elected political leadership failed to give directions to the people at that critical moment.

"In that situation, in response to the indispensable demand of time, the then Major Ziaur Rahman of the Army, made the historic declaration of independence from Kalurghat radio station in Chittagong as leader of the war of resistance."

Moudud's statement is contrary to the fact regarding the proclamation of the independence and nothing but a lie, the complainant said.

'Asia Energy still hatching conspiracy'

Leaders of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port yesterday claimed that Asia Energy Corporation (AEC) is still hatching conspiracy centering the Phulbari coal mine through changing its name, says a press release.

In a statement of the National Committee, the leaders also said that AEC has changed its name on January 11 and the new name of AEC is Global Coal Management (GCM).

Committee Convenor Engineer Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah and Member Secretary Anu Muhammad expressed deep concern over the new strategy of AEC and said GCM has already signed a contract with a tele-company as a part of its conspiracy.

At the face of people's upsurge against the AEC Phulbari coal mine project, BNP led four-party alliance government has been compelled to sign a contract for cancelling the project. But the alliance government did not cancel the project formally, they said, adding that taking this opportunity AEC is again hatching conspiracy.

They demanded formal cancellation of the AEC Phulbari project and urged the caretaker government to take stern actions against the AEC.



TIB Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan and on his left is TIB Executive Director Ittekhuzzaman. (Story on Page 16)

AL concerned over power crisis

Immediate past BNP-Jaamat govt blamed

Acting General Secretary of Awami League Obaidul Quader has

grid," said Quader.

The AL leader feared that the crisis would become severe during the upcoming summer and it would hamper agricultural and industrial activities in the country, clamping a negative effect on the economy.

He urged the caretaker government to take legal actions against people who are involved in corruption in the power sector. He also urged the government to take effective measures to minimise the crisis to a tolerable level before this summer.

DU ADMISSION TEST 151 application forms cancelled

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have cancelled application forms of 151 candidates for 'Ka' unit admission test for not fulfilling the requisite criteria.

These students were not eligible to apply for the admission test as they either do not have a GPA total of at least 6 in their SSC and HSC or equivalent examinations or are not from the humanities group, a DU press release said.

Letters have already been sent to the candidates to this effect.

Roll numbers of the candidates have been put up on the website -- www.univdhaka.edu.

The admission test of the Ka unit will be held on February 2.

People with disability lag behind in different sectors

Coordination among ministries needed to address their issues

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Around 1.4 crore people with disability are being deprived of their rights and lagging behind in different sectors due to the administration's indifferent attitude and bureaucratic tangles.

According to the government's rules of business, all issues of physically and mentally challenged people are under the charge of social welfare ministry, although the ministry alone cannot address all such issues properly.

"It is totally different from the scenario of other countries. The ministry alone cannot do much to bring the people with disability into the mainstream except giving allowance to them from time to time," said Khandaker Zahurul Alam, president of National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFWOD).

Although the constitution has guaranteed all kinds of rights to all, including the people with disability, they could not enjoy their rights as only the social welfare ministry is responsible for taking care of them and there is a lack of coordination among different ministries, he said, suggesting that the government's rules of business in this regard should also be changed.

Negative attitude of the bureaucrats towards the physically challenged people and lack of commitment on the part of the politicians act as an obstacle to bringing changes to the government rules of business, said Monsur Ahmed Choudhury, a member of NFWOD.

Although the social welfare ministry is largely responsible for addressing the issues of the people with disability, a little amount of its

total budget is allocated for them. The total revenue budget of the ministry for the fiscal 2006-07 was Tk 662.43 crore, but only Tk 5.94 crore was allocated for the physically and mentally challenged people. In 2005-06, the allocation was Tk 4.71 crore while the total budget was Tk 536.50 crore.

The amount is too little compared to the needs of the people with disability as their rights in various fields, such as education, sports, employment and communications, could not be ensured with this little sum, Zahurul said.

The world observed the International Day of People with Disability 2006 with the theme 'Improving access to new information technology for persons with disability' recently, but there is no financial allocation for this purpose in the country.

The physically challenged peo-

ple did not receive any allocation from the Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) as the ministry has no policy to distribute money to another ministry, said Secretary Wahid-uz-Zaman.

Secretary of the social welfare ministry MA Hye Howlader told The Daily Star that the budget was prepared long time ago. However, they requested the then adviser to the caretaker government to include the matter in ministerial policy, he added.

"As it was a policy matter, it would take time," said former adviser Sultana Kamal. She also stressed the need for inter-ministerial cooperation to address the issues of the people with disability.

"It is the duty of every ministry to address a particular issue of these people. Every ministry should have

the capacity and give mandate in this regard," she added.

In 2002-03, an action plan was prepared with the representatives of 18 ministries and NGO activists to develop coordination among different ministries. It was based on the policy and Disabled Welfare Act but could not be passed in the cabinet due to indifferent attitude of the ministries concerned.

However, the action plan was passed in the National Coordination Committee that has no authority to make any ministry do their work, several NGO activists said, demanding that the caretaker government pass the action plan, which is a must for the development of the people with disability.

The implementation of the action plan would facilitate coordination among different ministries, said Howlader.



CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya addresses a press conference in the CPD conference room in the city yesterday. On his right is CPD Research Director Mustafizur Rahman. (Story on Page 1)

'Implement new labour law to ensure workers' rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded implementation of the newly enacted labour law to ensure the rights of workers who constitute around one-third of the total population of the country.

They said the previous government passed the law at the eleventh hour of its tenure to avoid the complexity in its implementation.



Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akter speaks at a discussion at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her right are Dr Wajedul Islam Khan and Sultan Uddin Ahmed and on her left is Advocate Farida Yeasmin.

President of Karmojibi Nari Shirin Akter said if needed new law should be enacted and implemented.

"But the important fact is that minimum wage of the workers is not implemented. Minimum wage is not a matter of bargaining, it is their right to exist," she said.

Assistant Executive Director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) Sultan Uddin Ahmed

urged all political parties not to give nomination to people convicted in the Labour Court.

They also demanded Identity (ID) cards for all workers engaged in both formal and informal sectors, reform of the new labour law and its democratisation, and maternity and reproductive safety for female workers.

The speakers also demanded trade union right and full implementation of the tripartite agreements between the workers, owners and the government.

While presenting the introductory paper Ziaul Haque Mukta of Karmojibi Nari called for protection of domestic industries and access to duty-and-quota free foreign markets.

Alok Sarkar of Karmojibi Nari moderated the discussion which was participated by Shahidullah Chowdhury of Trade Union Kendra, Dr Wajedul Islam Khan of Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad, Advocate Farida Yeasmin of BLAST, Rina Roy of Manusher Jonno Foundation and Touhidur Rahman of Bangladesh Poshak Shilpa Sramik Federation.

The test will begin at 10:00am and continue until 11:45am at some 60 examination halls in and around the university.

This year some 25,167 forms were sold against 1,348 seats under science faculty.

said political commitment is a must to ensure the rights of the workers.

"No law or contract that goes against the interest of the workers should be enacted or signed," he said, adding that the workers should be made aware of their rights and power.

The speakers urged all political parties not to give nomination to people convicted in the Labour Court.

They also demanded Identity (ID) cards for all workers engaged in both formal and informal sectors, reform of the new labour law and its democratisation, and maternity and reproductive safety for female workers.

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