

CG should hand over power to elected govt as soon as possible

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday appreciated the role of the armed forces during the recent developments in the country and observed that the main duty of the new caretaker government should be to hand over power to an elected government as soon as possible.

They said the armed forces can play a vital role in safeguarding democracy and tackling any national disasters.

They also pointed out that the declaration of state of emergency was needed to tackle the social disaster the nation was facing before January 11.

Some speakers, however, suggested that the army should act as a pressure group and play its role for the national interest.

They also warned that prolonga-

tion of the present situation would prompt the political parties to unitedly launch a movement against the caretaker government.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (Bilia) organised the discussion on 'Democracy and the role of army in consolidating democratic system' at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Former military officials, former ambassadors, university teachers and civil society members attended the discussion moderated by Bilia Director Ambassador Wali-ur Rahman. Three former army chiefs - Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiullah, Lt Gen (ret'd) Harunur Rashid and Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman -- were also present.

The speakers called for forming an independent national security council to safeguard the internal and external security.

Underscoring the need for a national defence policy, Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiullah said an initiative was taken to organise a broad-based discussion for formation of a national security council. Such a national council is necessary to protect the national interest, he added.

"I think the armed forces should play a dominant role in safeguarding democracy," said Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman. He, however, observed that democracy should be restored as soon as possible.

The army has no role in ruling the country, but definitely it has a role in consolidating democracy, said Lt Gen (ret'd) Harunur Rashid.

He said the army can also play a vital role in implementing the election code of conduct. Candidates who would violate election rules should be handed over to law

enforcement agencies, he added.

The former army chief also demanded an election free from the influence of money.

Supporting the role of army in consolidating democracy, Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan said general conception about the armed forces has changed a lot recently.

Earlier, it was not possible to discuss the army's role in democracy, he said, but the people have supported the army for its role in the recent developments in the country.

He also suggested using the armed forces and their expertise in consolidating democracy.

Ambassador Harunur Rashid opposed the army's formal role in democracy. The army can come forward only as a temporary measure in response to popular demand, he said.

Prof Kalimullah said the army can play a catalytic role in consolidating democracy and holding a credible election.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University said parliament remained inoperative for most of the time during the tenure of the previous elected government.

He suggested that the speaker of parliament should come from the opposition party in order to make parliament vibrant.

Former army officer AMSA Amin said there is no role for the army to play in the administration if democracy prevails. But if democracy does not exist, the army can play its role, he added.

The army stepped in because all the democratic institutions have been destroyed over the years, he observed.

He also pointed out that the democratic values do not exist among 80 percent of people who live in villages; they exist only in the urban society.

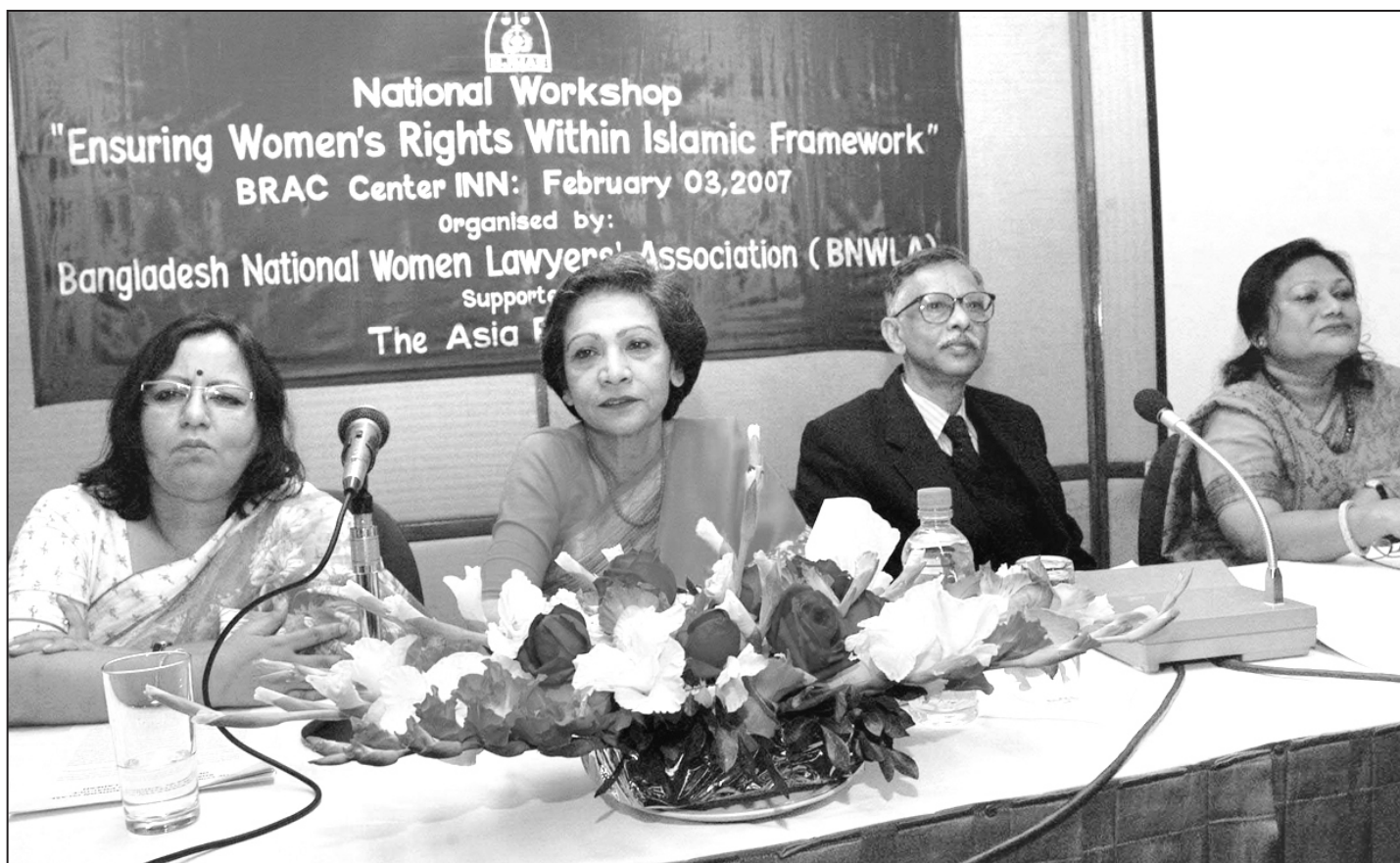


PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) in collaboration with The Asia Foundation organises a workshop titled 'Ensuring Women's Rights Within Islamic Framework' at the Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. Sitting from right are Advocate Salma Ali, Justice Golam Rabbani, Adviser Geeteara Safiya Choudhury and Advocate Fawzia Karim Firoze.

Ensure women's rights in light of Islam

Speakers say at workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called on the religious leaders to preach proper teachings of Islam to help ensure equal rights of women in the society.

They also suggested incorporating madrasa education into mainstream to make students aware of the equal rights of women as provided in Islam.

The workshop titled 'Ensuring women's rights within Islamic framework' was organised by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) in collaboration with The Asia Foundation at the Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Presiding over the workshop Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA, said around 80 to 85 percent of total cases, that her organisation usually deals with, are related to domestic violence.

She said although the Muslim Family Law Ordinance was amended in 1961, it is yet to be followed at grassroots level.

While delivering her speech on 'Divorce and rights of women', Advocate Fawzia Karim Firoze, immediate-past president of BNWLA, pointed out that although the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 made some specific provisions, but it did not make them mandatory to help raise the voice of women in reconciliation process.

She also pointed out that the misinterpretation about women's rights occurs due to lack of proper teachings of the holy Qur'an.

She urged the religious leaders to propagate women's rights, especially the rights after their divorce and dower money in the light of Islam.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said from the true perspective of Islam,

both women and men are meant to enjoy equal rights in the society.

The injustice regarding women's rights is continuing due to ignorance and not following the ideals of Islam, he said, adding that the literacy rate will have to be increased to stop this injustice.

He also suggested incorporating madrasa education into the mainstream to make students literate about Islam.

Speaking as chief guest Geeteara Safiya Choudhury, adviser to the caretaker government, urged media to highlight the positive picture of women's empowerment to inspire others.

She also urged electronic media to arrange programmes on Islam to help establish women's rights in the society.



PHOTO: STAR

Ambassador Wali-ur Rahman speaks at a discussion on 'Democracy and the role of army in consolidating democratic system' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan and on his right are Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiullah and Lt Gen (ret'd) Harunur Rashid.

SUNDARBANS

Staffs at forest outposts feel insecure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Officers and guards working at 77 patrol outposts under four ranges of Sundarbans Forest Division (SFD) are reportedly feeling insecure in the face of frequent armed attacks by pirates.

According to a highly placed source at SFD, there are 200 rifles in 36 out of 77 patrol outposts and most of these 303 rifles are outdated.

On the other hand, pirates are possessing most modern arms.

Sources said it is not at all possible for forest guards to face pirates with 50-to-60-year-old arms and ammunitions.

Moreover, most of these patrol outposts are manned by two to three forest guards only.

Despite several reminders, authorities concerned are yet to respond to their appeal for replacing outdated arms and ammunitions with new ones.

As a result, forest guards do not feel secure in performing their patrol duties risking their own lives.

The entire Sundarbans has been a safe haven for criminals since last five years, sources said.

Its resources are being plundered recklessly and piracies have been rampant right under the nose of helpless and insecure forest officers and guards.

ROW OVER RAGGING

6 JU students injured

JU CORRESPONDENT

Six students of Jahangirnagar University (JU), including a female one, were injured when some unruly students attacked them following a row over an incident of ragging yesterday.

The injured included Munni, Foyzal, Mamun, Sumon, Razib and Swapan.

Foyzal received several stitches in his head while the others were given first aid at the university medical centre.

The incident occurred when Munni and Nabil, masters students of anthropology, protested ragging against Masud, younger brother of Munni, by a group of student of Al Beruni (AB) hall.

Masud came to the campus to attend the viva-voce examination for being enrolled under the academic session 2006-07.

Soon after the incident, about 25 students of AB hall, mostly cadres of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dai (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), equipped with hockey sticks and rod launched the attack near old Arts faculty building at 1:00pm.

Imtiaz, Jony, Shajon and Imon led the attack in presence of Assistant Proctor Kamruzzaman Monir.

Make ACC active, ratify UN Convention against Corruption

TIB members urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday strongly reiterated its demand that the government make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) active and ratify the UN Convention against Corruption immediately.

The call came from the annual meeting of the TIB members held at Brac Centre Inn at Mahakhali in the city.

The members also expressed deep concern over the pervasiveness of corruption in the country.

They, however, welcomed the initiative taken by the caretaker government to root out corruption. It is possible to contain corruption through making the ACC active, they said.

They also underscored the need to enact and enforce the right to information act in order to ensure free flow of information.

They also called for implementing legal reforms to eliminate the influence of black money on the election and strengthen the Election Commission.

The members expressed concern that the government has not yet signed the UN Convention against

Corruption, although 148 countries of the world have already signed it.

TIB Trustee Board members and officials were present at the meeting that reviewed the TIB activities of 2006 and discussed the work plan and strategies for 2007.

The meeting ended with an anti-corruption cultural show where a theatre group of Srimongal Sachetan Nagorik Committee staged a play titled 'Jago Manush'.

Fish trader shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of muggers shot bullet at a fish trader and looted Tk 5,200 in city's Khilgaon area yesterday.

Mohammad Rafiq, 20, while going to Kawran Bazar market, was attacked by three muggers near East Rampura Market area around 7:30am, said the police.

The bullet hit Rafiq on his left leg and soon after criminals ran away with the money.

Injured Rafiq was later admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

AMMO HAUL

Businessman Tareq sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered to send Anwarul Islam Tareq, a businessman held for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition, to jail rejecting a bail petition by the defence lawyers.

Metropolitan Magistrate Quamrunnahr delivered the verdict after hearing both the prosecution and defence lawyers.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday arrested Tareq and seized a shotgun, two double-barrel guns, an airgun, three walkie-talkies, 5,242 cartridges and 5,373 rounds of ammunition from his Bijoynagar residence in the capital, according to the case statement.

The defence lawyers submitted a bail petition saying their client is innocent and possessed the firearms and ammunition just for hobby.

However, the investigation officer (IO) informed the court that the arrestee could not show any licences or valid documents.

Earlier, Tareq, 48, was put on a two-day remand for interrogation after a case was filed with Ramna Police Station in this connection.

On completion of the remand, IO Sub-inspector Sirajul Islam produced Tareq before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. Dhaka yesterday with a forwarding report clarifying the confinement in jail custody.

According to the report, Tareq gave important information about the seized firearms and ammunition and claimed he collected these just for 'hobby' and 'not for committing any crime.'

The report also walked the arrestee as saying that he used to hunt birds with the firearms and ammunition.

The IO said Tareq should be confined in jail custody until the investigation completes, as he failed to show licences or valid documents.

Obituary



Shami Khanam, wife of late Matiur Rahman Khan, passed away in the city yesterday due to old-age complications at the age of 85, says a press release.

A doa mahfil will be held at the residence of her eldest son Col (ret'd) Mujibur Rahman Khan at House # 144, Lane # 4, New DOHS, Mahakhali after Maghrib prayers on February 07.

All relatives, well-wishers and friends are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul and attend the doa mahfil.

Ensure voting rights of minority people

Menon urges CG

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party and central leader of the grand alliance, called upon the caretaker government to ensure voting rights of the minority communities.

Menon while visiting different educational institutions of Jalla union under Uzirpur upazila of the district yesterday said members of all communities have the equal constitutional rights and without proper ensuring these rights, democracy would be incomplete.

During the visit, students, teachers and local people cited some examples of harassments of minority community before and after the general election of 2001.

Local and central leaders of the grand alliance accompanied Menon during the visit.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Dismissal of JU teacher demanded

JU CORRESPONDENT

The students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) under the banner 'Jahangirnagar Against Harassment (JAH)' formed a human chain yesterday to press three-point demand including dismissal of the teacher suspended recently for alleged sexual harassment.

The human chain was formed in front of the administrative building at noon and lasted till 1:30pm where students of different faculties joined. Their other demands include formulation of policy against sexual harassment and establishment of allegation cell.

A protest procession was also taken out from university Prantik gate yesterday evening to drum up support to their demands.

The students have been agitating for the last two months soon after the allegation of sexual harassment filed by a first year female student of Bangla department against a teacher of the same department came to light.

The agitators will enforce fast unto death from February 5 if their demands are not met by then.

Road crashes kill 6

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 25 others injured in separate road accidents in Sirajganj and Keraniganj yesterday and on Friday night.

Our correspondent from Sirajganj reports: At least four people were killed and 25 others injured in a road accident on Hatikumrul-Bonpara highway at Bashbaria Khalkula in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at around 7:00am when a Natore-bound bus collided head on with a Nasim (locally made auto-tempo), leaving two people dead on the spot and 27 others injured.

Of the injured, two more succumbed to their injuries at Sirajganj General Hospital.

The rest were rushed to several hospitals and clinics in Natore, Bonpara and Sirajganj.

The dead were identified Mofiz Ali, 32, son of Abdul Awal, Sobur Ali, 30, son of Afzar Ali, Eaz Uddin, 28, and Abdul Gafur, 35, all hailed from Shampur village in Tarash upazila.

The injured said their valuables were looted in the name of rescue by some locals with the help of some police personnel of Tarash Police Station after the accident.

They said the accident took place due to dense fog and cold wave.

When contacted Afzal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tarash Police Station over cellphone about complaints of the injured, he said he does not know anything about the accident.

But, a sub-inspector seeking anonymity, said necessary steps will be taken against the culprits after an investigation.

UNB from Keraniganj adds: Two

young men were killed in a tragic road accident at Teguria in Keraniganj upazila on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as carpenter Russell, 18, son of Karim Sheikh, and Sohel, 22, son of Minnat Ali, of Kaliganj under Keraniganj Police Station.

Police said the accident took place when a truck hit a three-wheeler tempo at about 10:00pm, leaving tempo passengers Russell and his friend Sohel critically injured.

Later, they were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where they succumbed to their injuries.

Injured RU teacher files case with police

RU CORRESPONDENT

The law and justice department teacher of Rajshahi University (RU) Abdul Alim who received knife injuries near the campus on Thursday night, filed a case with Mother Police Station on Friday accusing unidentified assailants.

Police however failed to arrest anyone in this connection.

Alim in his complaint said on January 22 his departmental office received a letter in which he along with Chairman Rabiul Islam and Julfikar Ahmed was warned that if they do not give first class marks to some students loyal to Islami Chhatra Shibir in masters examination, they (teacher) will have to face dire consequences.

Referring to the letter Alim said, "The terrorists made an abortive attempt to kill me."

Prof Rabiul, accompanied by other teachers of the department, met with Vice-chancellor Altaf Hossain yesterday and sought impartial investigation of the attack.

He also requested the VC to ensure security of other teachers.

Prof Altaf assured them that university administration would take up the matter seriously.

Meanwhile, some pro-Jamaat teachers of the department are saying that Alim was a victim of snatching.

Talking to newsmen, Proctor Enamul Haque said police are still posted at the residence of Alim, a newly recruited lecture, who was stabbed by unknown assailants on his way home at Binodpur from the Jubery Teacher's Club on the campus.

He is undergoing treatment at his residence.

Hawkers urge DCC to rebuild newsstand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Sangbadpatra Hawkercs' Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Ltd, an association of newspaper hawkers, has urged the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to rebuild the newsstand adjacent to Dhaka City College in Science Laboratory area.

The DCC and Rajdhani Unnayan Katiripakha (Rajuk) bulldozed the newsstand recently, although the newspaper hawker produced all the valid documents in favour of it, Samity President Md Mostafa Kamal said in a press release yesterday.

He said the Samity earlier filed a writ petition with the High Court after the city corporation had demolished a number of newsstands without issuing any notice. Following the writ petition, the court gave an order not to demolish any newsstands without issuance of notice, he added.

The Samity president said over 100 newsstands were built in Dhaka and its suburbs in 1984 and rented to hawkers who are paying the rent regularly.

He urged the mayor to take necessary steps to rebuild the newsstand adjacent to Dhaka City College.

AR Mallick's death anniversary today



release.

Dr Mallick was a professor of South Asian history at the University of Pennsylvania, USA and the founding vice-chancellor of Chittagong University where he mounted a resistance during the War of Liberation. He was the president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia in 1971.

The first education secretary of Bangladesh, Dr Mallick was also the first high commissioner to India. He was also the chairman of the Asian Development Bank.

His publications include 'British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal' and 'Amar Jibon Kotha O Bangladesh Mukti Sangram'.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, food will be distributed among orphans and underprivileged children in different areas of the city.

Lion Monowara Islam



Today is the third death anniversary of Lion Monowara Islam, wife of late Lion Aminul Islam Miah, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at 25/17 Khiljee Road, Mohammadpur in the city after Maghrib prayers today.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the mahfil and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

DHAKA
TODAY

Seminar

Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board organises a seminar to mark the World Wetland Day. Venue: Office of the Board. Time: 11:00am.