

Include physically challenged people in voter list

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physically challenged people must be included in voter list so that they can exercise their franchise without any hassles, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

Highlighting the problems of people with disability and indifferent attitudes of previous governments towards them, they urged the caretaker government to solve their problems immediately.

The discussion titled 'Enabling the disabled to vote: ID card, legal provisions and other facilities' was organised by Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), Institute of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW), Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Muslim Aid and Salvation for the Deserving (SFD).

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Director of DemocracyWatch Taleya Rehman said under the existing system there is no special arrangement for enabling the physically challenged and old people to cast their votes easily.

"It is time to prepare ramps and identity (ID) cards for those people," she said, adding the presiding officers

should know the number of physically challenged voters in their locality and the local government could be involved in the process.

In a keynote paper SFD Chairman Nasir-ur-Rahman Sinha, also a physically challenged man, said the government and NGOs are doing

some works for the welfare of physically and mentally challenged people, but these are not done in a systematic way.

He suggested preparing ID cards with four different colours for different types of people with disability and also stressed the need for special

education, health care, job quota and arrangement for their smooth movement in public places.

Zohurul Alam, president of NFOVD, said the people with disabilities are awfully stigmatised and coloured in the society.

Adviser to caretaker government Geeti Ara Safia Chowdhury, who was scheduled to attend the discussion, in a message termed the people with disability an integral part of the society and said the social welfare ministry has already directed the Election Commission (EC) to take necessary steps so that they can cast their votes.

The speakers said it is also important to train the officials concerned to deal with people of this group apart from commitment of the political leaders in this regard.

Founder of CRP Valerie A Taylor chaired the discussion where former adviser to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan, Country Director of National Democratic Institute (NDI) Owen Lippert, Director of Impact Foundation Bangladesh Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury and Monwar Hossain of the Institute of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) were present.

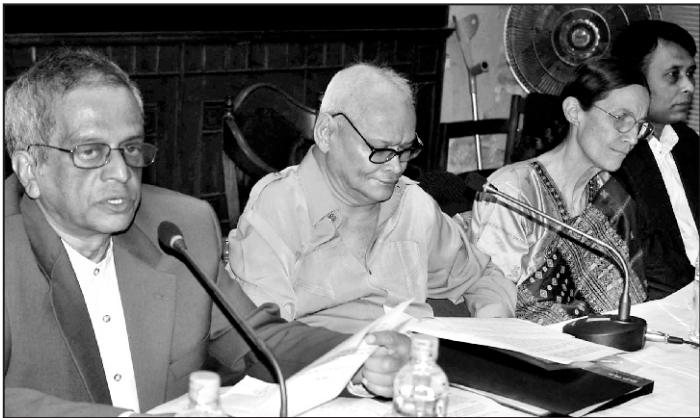


PHOTO: STAR

Monwar Hossain speaks at a discussion titled 'Enabling the disabled to vote: ID card, legal provisions and other facilities' at National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Nasir-ur-Rahman Sinha, Valerie A Taylor and Mozammel Haque.

Wife files case against Air Force officer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed against an Air Force officer under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act by his wife yesterday.

Dina Farzana filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station accusing her husband Wing Commander Shahbaz Imtiaz Khan of torturing her, police said.

In the FIR (first information report), Dina, a lecturer at Lalmitia Women's College, mentioned that Shahbaz often put pressure on her to give him money from her personal account to buy a flat and visit abroad. She also said that she has given her a handsome amount of money on many occasions.

Dina also said her husband beat her up on December 12 last year.

She also mentioned that a few days after their marriage on June 2 last year, Shahbaz started behaving rudely with her without any reason.

DEATH OF PATIENT

Negligence of Birdem docs, staff alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Relatives of a patient admitted to the Birdem hospital and died later brought allegation of negligence and irregularities of the doctors as well as the hospital authorities that allegedly led to the death of the patient.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday, relatives of late Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan said he was admitted to the Birdem hospital on January 21 following a cardiac problem and was undergoing treatment under an associate professor of the Department of Nephrology.

The doctors operated the patient without the consent of the patient and his relatives and he was not examined properly, they alleged.

The doctors experimented over the patient but did not provide proper treatment, said son of Habibur adding that no attendants were found when the patient needed them badly.

Late Habibur was the chief adviser to Managing Director and Chairman of Abdul Monem Limited.

A written complaint was submitted to the director general of Birdem on Saturday in this regard.

They urged the authorities to take stern action against the employees, doctors and nurses, who were responsible for this death for their irregularities and negligence.

When this correspondent tried to contact, no comment was found from hospital authorities.

IER admission schedule changed

DU CORRESPONDENT

The schedule for admission in first year honours courses of the Institute of Education and Research (IER) at Dhaka University (DU) under the academic session 2006-07 has been changed, a DU press release said.

According to fresh schedule, admission test will be held on March 9 at 3:00pm.

Application forms can be collected until February 28 from Janata Bank, DU TSC Branch and submission of the application forms will continue till March 1.

PHULBARI COALMINE

'Disclose experts' report'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerned citizens yesterday urged the caretaker government to disclose the experts' report on Phulbari coalmine and take stern action against the persons who signed agreement with Asia Energy Corporation (AEC) for extraction of coal through open pit system and are now trying to revive the old project.

They also demanded investigation into all ill agreements, including Phulbari coalmine project with AEC and publication of a white paper on the gas and coal sector that they said would bring transparency in these sectors.

Citizens under the banner of Udbigna Nagarik Samaj yesterday organised a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity demanding full cancellation of Phulbari coalmine project.

Prof Anu Muhammad, member

secretary of National Committee for Protection of Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port, said it is the duty of the caretaker government to save Phulbari coalmine from the AEC as it is our national resource.

He also said an experts' committee has already submitted their report where they claimed that agreement with AEC on Phulbari project is not acceptable neither economically nor environmentally.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal, also executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), said the present caretaker government should take stern action against the AEC.

Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hassan, director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Khushi Kabir, co-ordinator of Nijera Kari, and Jakir Hossain, chief executive officer of Nagarik Uddog, were also present at the press conference.

'Take steps to improve living standard of 5 lakh tea workers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the caretaker government to take proper steps to improve living standard of 5 lakh workers and their families, popularly known as tea-community, who had been living a miserable life in the country's tea estates for ages.

They urged the government to increase the wage of the workers and lease the abandoned arable land in the tea estates to them.

They were speaking at a seminar titled 'Life of Tea Community: Degraded Humanity' organised jointly by Bagania, a platform of the workers of tea estates, and ActionAid Bangladesh at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

Speaking as chief guest of the second session, former adviser to the caretaker government and human rights activist Sultana Kamal said human rights organisation could do little to improve the condition of tea community as tea estates are reserved area and have limited access to outsiders.

Chief guest of the first session litterateur Selina Hossain said unless the workers were organised against all types of injustices done to them, their sufferings would not end.

General Secretary of Bagania Rambhajan Kairi in his keynote paper focused on the sufferings of the workers and their families.

A worker gets only Tk 30 a day and no payment on the holidays, he said. The women workers are not entitled to any maternity leave, he added.

For workers' children, there are several primary and high schools, but those are not sufficient to meet their demand, he said.

News Editor of Channel i Shah Alamgir and General Secretary of Research and Development Collective Mesbah Kamal conducted the seminar while acting editor of Shaptahik 2000 Golam Murtoza, Associate Editor of the daily Jugantar Sohrah Hossain, former president of Bangladesh Tea Workers' Association Damini Goala, Chairman of Human Rights and Legal Aid Committee of Bangladesh Bar Council Zi Khan Panna also spoke on the occasion.

Basanta Utsab today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Basanta Utsab Udayan Parishad has chalked out day-long elaborate programmes to celebrate Basanta Utsab 1413 on the first day of Falgun (the first month of spring) today.

This year the celebration is dedicated to the memory of poet Shamsur Rahman and Tagore song specialist and journalist Waheedul Haque.

The programmes will begin at 7:00am at Bakultala of Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University amid instrumental music.

A 'Basanta Kathan', discussion on spring, will be held, where cultural personality Ali Zaker, Shafiuddin Ahmed and Kazi Arif will be present. Manjural Islam Chowdhury will read out a "festival declaration".

A cultural programme will also be held, as prominent drama, dance and music groups and individuals will render their performance.

The morning session will end amid a colourful procession on DU campus at 9:30am.

Channel i will telecast the morning session live while Baishakhi TV will air the programmes from afternoon.

DU authorities will also organise a daylong programme to mark the day at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC).

DIESEL SMUGGLING

One held in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Security personnel of Jamuna Oil Company Ltd caught an operator red-handed while he was trying to smuggle diesel from a lighter vessel at a jetty of the company in Guptaakhal area at Patenga on Sunday night.

The miscreant, identified as Mohammad Selim alias Selim Operator, however, was mysteriously neither shown detained nor did the authorities take any actions against him as of yesterday afternoon.

Instead, sources alleged, an influential quarter in connivance with few officials of the company was trying to save the operator, who was previously been withdrawn from his present position for his involvement in such activities.

Sources said the security team led by in-charge Khandakar Shamsul Islam caught Selim operator at around 8.00pm on Sunday while he was smuggling diesel in jerry-cans from MT Jerusalem, anchored at the Guptaakhal jetty of Jamuna for unloading diesel.

"Selim could have been able to smuggle over 500 litres of diesel to one Noor Majhi had he not been held by the security men," a source said.

Jamuna sources alleged that a section of staffs in collusion with some company officials and boatmen had long been involved in the racket but most of the time they manage to flee away.

When contacted, Jamuna Terminal Manager Kazi Monzoor Rahman, at first denied of any such incident but later admitted that such an incident occurred beyond the terminal area.

He also claimed that no Jamuna staff or operator was detained by security personnel for smuggling diesel.

Justice Khairul lauded

Karmojibi Nari yesterday hailed Justice Khairul Haque's decision to conduct proceedings of cases in Bangla, says a press release.

Leaders of the organisation in a joint statement felicitated Justice Khairul for his historic decision saying, "The whole nation is proud and optimistic, as you have taken the decision in the month of the glorious Language Movement."

Organisation President Shirin Akhter and General Secretary Sharmin Kabir said, "We had been remaining indifferent about using Bangla in all sectors although we have become independent a long ago. Now, this incident opened up a new window for our mother tongue to be universal."

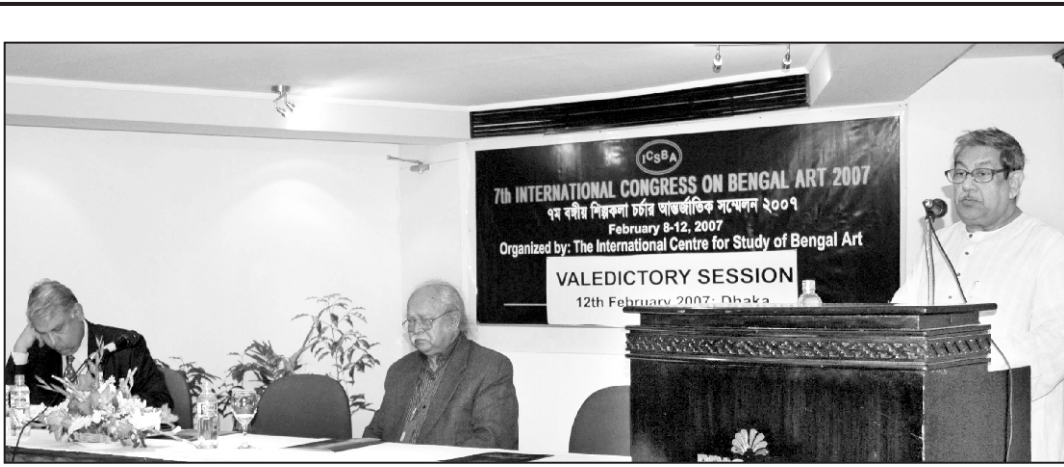


PHOTO: STAR

Prof Anisuzzaman speaks at the valedictory session of the 7th International Congress on Bengal Art at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, extreme left, and Prof Enamul Haque are also seen.

Call to preserve arts of Bengal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an international congress yesterday urged the authorities to preserve archaeological sites, sculptures, monuments, paintings and arts of Bengal to enhance the understanding of Bengal art at home and abroad.

The authorities should also provide financial supports and other facilities to conduct more researches and facilitate cultural exchanges among the people across the globe, they said at the valedictory session of the five-day biennial congress at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

The International Centre for Study of Bengal Art organised the seventh international congress on Bengal art.

More than 60 scholars from 13 countries, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the USA, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Australia, Korea, Singapore, Thailand and the UAE, attended the congress that began in Bogra on February 7.

Sixty research papers on ancient and mediaeval sculpture, painting, epigraph, architecture, decorative and folk arts of Bangladesh and

eastern India were presented in the congress.

Speaking as the special guest, Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty said the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh over two millennia harking back to Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and European influence has contributed immensely to the richness of archaeological and religious sites in Bangladesh.

Describing the archaeological style and use of terracotta bricks in construction of monuments as unique, he hoped that the authorities would cooperate in ensuring that all the important monuments in Bangladesh are preserved and maintained for posterity, enabling future generations to absorb the rich historical and cultural diversity.

Chairman of the study centre Prof Dr Enamul Haque said preservation and exchange of knowledge on Bengal art would develop the intimate relations between Bangladesh and India.

Regretting that the authorities in Bangladesh had stopped the grants to the centre, he urged the caretaker government to resume allocation of the grants and convene a national

convention to formulate policies on the preservation of Bengal arts.

Speaking as the chief guest, Prof Anisuzzaman said the arts of Bengal should be introduced across the globe by preserving them.

"The Bangladeshi expatriates in the Middle East, USA, UK, Australia and other countries are doing a great job by introducing our language and culture," he said.

Dr KK Bhatyacharya, member secretary and trustee of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts in Delhi, said it is extremely necessary to preserve and introduce the arts of Bengal for development and mutual understanding among different nations and cultures.

"We can arrest the process of degradation and destruction and supersede the geographical boundary through cultural exchange," he said.

Dr Claudine Bautze-Picron of Germany and Dr Ellen M Raven of Netherlands also spoke.

'Declare Bhabodaho a disaster area'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nagorik Sanghati, a non-government organisation, yesterday demanded that 12 upazilas in Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira be declared a disaster area as 10 lakh people of the area have been suffering from severe waterlogging for a long time due to non-functioning of Bhabodaho sluice gate in Jessore.

It also demanded special allocation in the next budget for various measures to remove waterlogging.

The areas are reeling under water for years due to a faulty project titled 'Coastal Embankment Project' of Water Development Board, said Nagorik Sanghati members at a press conference in the city yesterday.

A vast area of cultivable land in the area has remained under water for about two years, they said.

They said the sluice gate with 21 doors set up in 1960 had initially

helped people produce three crops. In 1980s the sluice gate went out of order, resulting in waterlogging. The problem is now so acute that 25,000 hectares of cropland is reeling under water in this dry season.

During the last monsoon, roads, educational institutions and houses were damaged due to waterlogging.

The governments have spent a few hundred crores of taka on different projects since 1996 to resolve the problem, but common people did not get any benefits from such projects due to corruption, Nagorik Sanghati members said.

They also said that any new development projects in the area should be implemented under the supervision of the members of the Armed Forces.

Robayet Ferdous, a teacher of the University of Dhaka, read out a written statement at the press conference while Nagorik Sanghati

General Secretary Sharifuzzaman Sharif delivered the welcome speech.

Nagorik Sanghati President Dr ASM Atiqur Rahman, Engineer Sarder Amin, Barrister Sadia Arman, Wahiduzzaman Loni, Principal Afsar Ali and Sukriti Mondol, a resident of Bhabodaho, were present at the press conference.

BIAM MODEL SCHOOL

Goons harass sacked teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The principal of Biam Model School and College and some teachers, who were sacked by the president of the governing body of the institute on Sunday, were allegedly harassed by hired goons yesterday as they tried to enter the institute.

The goons hurled abusive words at the teachers and prevented them from entering the school, witnesses said.

The teachers alleged that the goons were hired by Shahidul Alam, president of the governing body.

Alam, also former education secretary and former director general of Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (Biam), sacked the teachers who filed a case against him, college sources said.

The teachers said they filed the case against Alam in connection with a previous incident of attack on several teachers.

When contacted, Alam said the case filed by some teachers against him is a false one and that he sacked the teachers on charges of corruption.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court measures the rate of emission of black smoke from a minibus on Airport Road in the city yesterday.

Quorum crisis costs country Tk 20cr

FROM PAGE 1
unscheduled discussions, the study noted.

The sittings began on time only for nine occasions in the last five years. Out of a total of 373 working days, the prime minister and leader of the opposition did not show up for 178 and 328 days respectively. The opposition stayed away from the House proceedings for 223 days.

Muzaffer said the boycott of parliament should be banned as the people elect members to represent them in the legislative body, not to opt out of it. He said the TIB, a non-government organisation working to encourage the fight against corruption, would place a set of recommendations for the political parties to consider.

The present government should hold a national election as soon as possible on completion of necessary reforms as the people long to see an elected government, Muzaffer said.

He added that the caretaker government can place a national budget but they cannot impose tax on the people without a parliament in place.

The TIB chairman said the 8th parliament did not work the way it should have. He then called for

making it more effective for the sake of checks and balances in the governance system.

He also regretted that the House did not pay proper attention to the audit objections that, he says, is vital for reducing corruption. Prof Muzaffer criticised the ruling parties for increasing the allowances and benefits for the lawmakers.

The research found that the standing committees on six ministries did not submit any report to parliament. Out of a total Tk 13,154 crore audit objections, the 8th parliament could realise only Tk 63.76 crore.

The TIB recommendations include reducing the length of absence required for cancellation of a membership to 20 days from 90 days, amendments to the article 70 of the constitution, increasing the number of working days and duration of parliament sessions, appointing deputy speaker from the opposition bench, and declaring loan and bill defaulters disqualified for election.

It recommended setting up an office for a lawmaker at the constituency and a question-answer involving the constituents in every two months. All the private and public media should be allowed to cover the sessions, and regular

participation of the leaders of House and the opposition should be ensured.

It proposed a code of ethics for the members of parliament and a calendar for the parliamentary proceedings. The standing committees should be formed in the first session, drawing 50 percent of the members from the opposition parties, it observed.

The study pointed out that the last parliament had allocated as much as Tk 5,601 crore in block allocations for non-sectors. The prime minister had answered to 112 questions and 92 percent of those came from the ruling alliance legislators.

About 93 percent of the proposals submitted by the opposition members for assessing public opinion on them [proposals] were rejected by voice vote. The same was the case for most of the amendment proposals brought forward by the opposition, the research revealed.

Besides, the attendance in sessions was not at all satisfactory. A total of 104 members were absent for half of the working days and of them, 47 were from the government benches. Most of the absentees were businessmen by profession, it noted.

Engr suspended on charge of corruption

Executive Engineer of the Public Works Department in Patuakhali was suspended yesterday on charge of corruption, says a press release.

Zahid Hossain was suspended on charge of his involvement with the irregularity in a tender worth Tk 10 crore.

Seat plan of DU 'Ga' unit admission test

DU CORRESPONDENT

'Ga' unit admission test of Dhaka University (DU) for first year honours courses under Business Studies Faculty will be held on February 16 (Friday), says a DU press release.

The test will begin at 10:00am.

The seat plan of the test according to roll numbers is as follows: Roll number 10001 to 10547 at Curzon Hall Exam Centre, 10548 to 10964 at Department of Physics (Curzon Hall), 10965 to 11170 at Department of Applied Physics, Electronics and Computer Engineering, 11171 to 11385 at Department of Applied Chemistry an Chemical Technology, 11386 to 11644 at Department of Geology, 11645 to 11741 at Department of Chemistry (Curzon Hall), 11743 to 12044 at Department of Botany, 12045 to 12255 at Department of Zoology, 12256 to 12305 at Department of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, 12306 to 12631 at Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 12632 to 12865 at Department of Soil, Water and Environment, 12866 to 13802 at Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, 12992 to 13198 at Department of Microbiology, 13199 to 13360 at Department of Chemistry (Mokarram Building), 13361 to 13462 Department of Physics (Mokarram Building), 13463 to 13667 at Department of Computer Science and Engineering, 13803 to 13982 at ISRT, 13983 to 14253 at Department of Law, 14254 to 14566 at Department of Geography an Environment, 14567 to 15104 at Department of Mathematics, 15105 to 15393 at Department of Statistics, 15394 to 15602 at Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, 15603 to 15909 at Institute of Modern Language, 15910 to 16511 at Institute of Business Administration (IBA), 16512 to 17051 at Department of Population Sciences, 17052 to 17434 at Department of Public Administration, 17435 to 18214 at Department of Anthropology, 18215 to 18412 at Department of Economics, 18413 to 18609 at Department of Islamic History and Culture, 18610 to 18962 at Department of Bangla, 18963 to 19281 at Department of Philosophy, 19282 to 19620 at Department of Political Science, 19621 to 20302 at Department of Marketing and Lecture Theatre Building, 20303 to 20975 at Institute of Education and Research (IER), 20976 to 21670 at University Laboratory School and College, 21671 to 22097 Institute of Social Welfare and Research, 22098 to 23630 at Begum Badrunnesa Govt College, 23631 to 26162 at BDR College (Munshi Abdur Rouf Rifles College), 26163 to 28270 at Bir Shreshthya Nook Mohammad Rifles's Public School and College, 28271 to 30517 at Ideal College, 30518 to 32139 at Sheikh Burhanuddin Postgraduate College, 32140 to 32668 (and for O level A level) at Department of Management Studies, 32669 to 33361 at Department of Finance, 33362 to 34058 at Department of Accounting, 34059 to 34413 at Department of Banking, 34414 to 34834 at Department of Management information Systems and 34835 to 36000 at Agrani School and College.

DHAKA TODAY

Award giving ceremony

Bangladesh Academy of Agriculture will give away 'Kazi Badiuzzaman and Zamilia Khatun Trust Award 2006' and 'Dr Kazi Badruddoza Gold Medal 2006'. Venue: Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council. Time: 11:00am.

Sharing meeting

Brotee organises a sharing meeting on 'Findings from voter list survey in 30 parliamentary constituencies and future implications'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Basanta Utsab

Bangladesh Basanta Utsab Udayan Parishad organises Basanta Utsab 1413. Venue: Bakultala of Fine Arts Institute. Time: 7:00am.

Seminar

Renaissance Consultants Ltd. organises a seminar on HR Consultancy. Venue: China Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 9:15am.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind may occur at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

The weather may remain dry elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during the late night until early morning.