

'Cancel four-party govt coal policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday called on the caretaker government to cancel the coal policy formulated by the previous four-party alliance government and frame a new policy instead, keeping coal resources in 100 percent public ownership.

As the BNP-led four-party government framed the coal policy with a view to handing over the country's mineral resources to foreign companies, promoting the policy would go against the national interests, said Prof Anu Muhammad.

He also expressed concern over the energy adviser's remarks that this coal policy is going to be finalised by March.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port

organised the dialogue on 'Coal policy and national interest' at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

Prof Anu Muhammad, member secretary of the Committee, said that during the four-party rule, the then energy adviser tried to implement Phulbari coal project in line with the same coal policy but failed in the face of strong protest by local people.

The policy suggests encouraging foreign investors and exporting coal on the plea that the domestic market for coal is limited, he said and questioned, "Is there any need to extract a huge amount of coal in a short time when it can cause massive destruction?"

"Extraction of coal in Phulbari under open-pit mining method will turn the total area into a huge pot-hole, displacing a large number of people," he said, adding that the

policy does not care about the issue of energy security.

The energy security of the country depends on the long-term reserve of coal and its best use instead of exporting coal, he said.

Prof Nurul Islam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said, "Energy resources is a strategic commodity. So, we should use it very efficiently."

Committee Convener SK Abdullah, CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam, Selim, Justice Golam Rabbani, Prof Abu Ahmed, Prof Dr Akmal Hossain and Liberal Democratic Party leader Maj Gen (retd) Anwarul Kabir Talukder also spoke.

The president called upon all to build a gender-equal and prosperous society by removing all forms of discriminations against women.

Describing this year's theme as timely, the Chief Adviser, in his message, said, "The government is determined to take stern legal measures against women and children repressors in line with the theme."

He called upon the people to create an environment in society where women and children will feel safe.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has also issued a message on the occasion, calling upon all to march forward unitedly so that women could be made pioneers of progress instead of domestic and social burdens.

Decentralisation of power must to ensure good governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Decentralisation of power is a must to ensure good governance, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The speakers also said interference of the lawmakers should be stopped at any cost to strengthen local government.

Governance Coalition organised the discussion at Cirdap auditorium with the representatives of Union Parishad to bring the problems of local government to light and place some recommendations before the government to take immediate initiatives.

A Local Government Commission should be formed for a more effective local government and to help the government in policy making, the speakers said adding that direct allocation of money is important as well as increasing of manpower.

The Bangladesh Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said people's participation should be ensured from grass roots to administration legally and if people are not educated, aware and their rights of information are not provided, accountability could not be established in administration.

Former Adviser to the Caretaker Government (CG) and Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Sultana Kamal said good governance could be established only when the terrorists are curbed and patriots are patronised.

Dr Akhter Hossain presented the key paper.

Coordinator of Governance Coalition Moshin Ali delivered the welcome speech while Talya Rahman of Democracy Watch, President of Women Policy Group Nargis Akhter, Secretary of Supra Reazul Karim Chowdhury, Ranjan Karmakar of Steps Towards Development, Ali Sabri of Action Aid Bangladesh and Farjana Nirm of Manusher Jonno Foundation also spoke.

The eviction team led by Magistrate ASM Emdad Dastagir demolished the illegal portion of Ataturk Tower.

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