

Make local govt focal point of all dev activities

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said local government institutions should be the focal point of all development activities.

They called upon people to force politicians and bureaucrats to give more power to local government.

The discussion titled 'Strengthening local governance by increasing accountability of public service institutions' was organised by Governance Coalition at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

Taking part in the discussion, representatives from different union parishads demanded decentralisation of power including increased money allocation.

They said the government should bring changes in the existing system of the local government

so that public services including health, education and agriculture can reach people through elected representatives.

Former adviser to caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan was present at the discussion as chief guest while Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam, Executive Editor of Janakantha Borhan Ahmed, Dr Akhter Hossain of Dhaka University, Senior Assistant Editor of Sangbad Muniruzzaman, Dr Nitai Dash, Muhammad Helal Uddin, Nurul Amin, Morium Sheli, and Monoronjon Mondol took part in the discussion.

National Project Coordinator of Governance Coalition Abdus Shukur presented a keynote paper at the discussion moderated by Mohsin Ali.

Laying emphasis on empower-

ing the local government, Dr Akbar Ali Khan said the country is not meant for politicians.

"We can't leave the country only for politicians. Everyone of us should work from our respective position for golden Bangladesh," he said.

"No government in the past implemented the directives of the constitution regarding the local government institution although as per constitution elected local government at district level is mandatory," he said, adding that politicians and bureaucrats don't want to make the local government effective.

Two major political parties during their regimes in last 10 years did not implement their electoral pledge to re-establish the upazila system though it was an important pledge in their election manifestoes, he added.

Shaheen Anam called upon people to force the government to enact right to information act.

She said the government must have political will to decentralise the power in order to ensuring accountability even at union parishad level.

"It is tough for NGOs or donor agencies to make all union parishads effective as there are more than four thousand union parishads across the country," Shaheen Anam said, adding the NGOs can work only to create awareness.

Abdus Shukur said people's alliance (lokmorcha) played key role in different areas of the country to make the union parishad more effective.

Other speakers urged the government to increase the budget of union parishads and review their activities.

Sacked SIs demand reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-one sub-inspectors, who were sacked at the eleventh hour of their one-year training on November 2004, yesterday alleged that they were sacked on political ground and demanded a neutral investigation into the irregularities.

They blamed a list sent by Hawa Bhaban for losing their jobs.

The sacked sub-inspectors of the police (non-armed) also submitted memorandums to the Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and secretary to the home ministry demanding reinstatement of their jobs.

They urged the caretaker government (CG) to form a neutral probe committee to disclose irregularities of the police department.

They alleged the home ministry sacked them according to the list made by Hawa Bhaban after completing 11 months and 16 days of their one-year training course at Sarda Police Academy.

They also said that the High Court had already issued a show cause notice to the government why the removal of 21 sub-inspectors would not be declared illegal and asked to give a reply by four weeks.

"But the government did not send reply letter even after passing of four weeks. The present CG should give attention to our application as they were sacked on political ground," said Shaheen Fakir, one of the sacked sub-inspectors, told The Daily Star.

Sacked sub-inspectors gathered in front of the Chief Adviser's Office at 10:00am and submitted their memorandum.

Later they also submitted a memorandum to the secretary of the home ministry.

Azam Khan nominated SCC acting mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Ward Commissioner of ward no 27 of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Azam Khan has been nominated as the acting mayor of the city.

SCC Chief Executive Officer Kazi Abdul Nur yesterday sent a letter to the LGRD ministry for approval in this regard.

The nomination was proposed by SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Kamran before he was taken into custody by Kotwali police Friday morning, an official said.

The nomination had been given in accordance to the city corporation regulations, he added.

Thaksin to be indicted within 2 months: Thai PM

AFF, Tokyo

Thai prosecutors will bring corruption charges against deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra within two months, his army-appointed successor said in remarks broadcast yesterday.

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, in an interview taped during a visit to Tokyo last week, repeated that Thaksin had the right to return to the kingdom but would face charges.

"I think it should be done in one or two months from now, no later than that," Surayud told Japanese public broadcaster NHK on being asked when the indictment would be finished.

Surayud said last week during a press conference here that Thaksin may be charged by the end of April and voiced confidence that prosecutors would "pin him down."

Thailand's army cited alleged corruption by Thaksin, a self-made billionaire, as the main reason to oust him in September.



Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed and Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam adorning new Chief of Air Staff Air Commodore Shah Md Ziaur Rahman with Air Vice Marshal rank at Armed Forces Division yesterday.

PHOTO: ISPR

Security to be tightened on Pahela Baishakh

UNB, Dhaka

The authorities have decided to tighten security for smooth celebration of 'Pahela Baishakh', first day of the Bengali new year-1414.

The Pahela Baishakh falls on April 14.

Asked if there is any threat against the Pahela Baishakh celebration, a home ministry official said, "There is no threat following execution of top Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants. But the government can not take it casually."

Some 7,000 members of law enforcement agencies will be deployed in the capital to avert any untoward incident at different points during the celebration the Pahela Baishakh.

Besides, members of the Army and BDR will assist them.

Home ministry sources said strong security parapets will be on alert especially in and around Ramna Park, the main venue of the celebration.

Talking to journalists emerging

from a meeting on law and order, Home Secretary Abdul Karim said 24 CCTVs and five observation towers will be set up inside the Ramna Park.

Replying to a question he said there is no direct threat from JMB. But the government did not take it casually.

Chaired by the Home Secretary, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and top officials of police were present in the meeting. It decided to set up 50 check posts throughout the city.

Special security will also be posted at diplomatic zone and Key Point.

Installations, meeting sources said.

Twenty-two teams of detective branch of police will be deployed in and around the Ramna Park. Dog and bomb squads and plainclothes police will sweep also the park with metal detectors and security devices.

The meeting ordered to Superintendents of Police (SP) across the country to ensure law and order in their respective districts on April 14.

20 sailors missing after Cambodian vessel sinks

AFF, Beijing

Twenty sailors on a cargo ship were missing after their boat collided with another vessel and sank early Sunday off eastern China, the government reported.

The accident occurred just before sunrise yesterday morning in the Taizhou strait off the coast of Zhejiang province, the State Administration of Work Safety said on its website, citing maritime police.

The 3,700-tonne (4,100-ton) cargo ship was identified by its name "Harvest", the administration report said. The ship was laden with around 5,000 tonnes of steel products when the accident occurred.

Nineteen Chinese sailors and one Indian were aboard the ship when it sank after colliding with the 17,000-tonne Chinese vessel

"Jinhaikun," the report said.

The boat was travelling from China's eastern port of Shanghai to Vietnam, it reported.

Xinhua news agency said the ship was Cambodian, although the administration report said it was registered in Belize.

Officials at the Taizhou maritime police when contacted by AFP, were unable to immediately comment on the accident.

Search vessels were currently searching the area for survivors, Xinhua reported. The cause of the collision is under investigation, it added.

Iraq PM's arrival in Japan delayed

AFF, Tehran

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's arrival in Tokyo was delayed yesterday amid reports that Iran had refused to allow his plane to fly through its airspace, a Japanese official said.

Maliki had been scheduled to arrive early afternoon Sunday at the start of his first tour to Japan and South Korea.

"We are informed by Iraqi authorities that his arrival will be delayed considerably although he is still en route to Japan," a Japanese foreign ministry official said.

"We have not been given any reason for the delay, although we received unconfirmed information that his flight was unexpectedly diverted to Dubai because Iran refused to allow the airplane to fly over the country."

New air chief adorned with rank of Air Vice Marshal

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed and Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam adorned new Chief of the Air Staff Air Commodore Shah Md Ziaur Rahman with the rank of Air Vice Marshal at Armed Forces Division yesterday, says an ISPR release.

President and Supreme Commander of Armed Forces Iajuddin Ahmed was present on the occasion.

Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Major General Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Director General of Forces Intelligence Major General Md Sadique Hasan Rumi, Military Secretary to the President Major General Md Aminul Karim, Director General of Special Security Force Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, Defence Secretary Kamrul Hasan and Secretary of the President Md Sirajul Islam were also present.

Later, new Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Shah Md Ziaur Rahman placed wreath at Shikha Anirban and paid homage to the members of Armed Forces martyred during the War of Liberation in 1971.

He was given a guard of honour by a smart BAF contingent at the Air Headquarters.

Shops, markets to remain open until 10:00pm on Pahela Baishakh

UNB, Dhaka

All shops and markets will remain open until 10:00pm on Pahela Baishakh, the Bangla New Year's Day, to facilitate the celebrations of 'Halkhata'.

It was decided at a meeting between leaders of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association and Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Adviser Tapan Chowdhury at his Secretariat office yesterday.

Association President Amir Hossain Khan led the shop owners.

The leaders also urged the government to allow them to keep open their shops and markets until 8:00pm everyday instead of 7:00pm.

They said most shop owners are incurring losses since the timing to help tackle the nagging power crisis.

The delegation also promised to increasingly use electricity-saving bulbs in their shops and markets to save electricity.

The Adviser said the early shutdown of shops and markets has helped save electricity, which is being used for irrigation and thanked the businessmen for their cooperation.

Tapan Chowdhury, however, said no immediate decision could be given on their proposal to keep their shops and markets open until 8:00pm.

He said the proposal will be placed before the Advisory Council soon.

Prof Fazlul Halim's anniversary of death today



University, says a press release.

Prof Chowdhury, also founder chairman of the Department of Applied Chemistry and member of University Grants Commission (UGC), was the Science Adviser of UNESCO.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his graveyard at Banani after Asr prayers.

Today is the 10th death anniversary of Prof Fazlul H a l i m Chowdhury, former vice-chancellor of D h a k a

Care lauded for promoting women's economic empowerment

Proper opportunities, capacity-building training and commitment can enhance managerial capacities of female staff, contribute to gender balance in organisations and promote equity and diversity in a male-dominated environment.

This was observed at a reunion ceremony of graduates of Care Bangladesh's three major initiatives at the Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Human Resource Development and Management Department of Care arranged the ceremony to share knowledge and promote understanding on how the initiatives-'Management Development Programme (MDP), Women's Internship Programme (WIP) and Female Apprentices Development Programme (FADP)-are contributing to societal, organisational and individual growth.

Former adviser to caretaker government Sultana Kamal, Acting Country Director of Care Bangladesh Hasan M Majumdar, and General Manager of Human Resources Department of Care Munmun Salma Chowdhury spoke at the function.

Representatives from different local and international NGOs attended the ceremony.

Hasan M Majumdar inaugurated the function and elaborated on the justification of initiating the MDP, WIP and FADP.

He noted that MDP has minimised the gap between male and female employee ratio at the mid-to-senior level management positions of the organisation while the internship opportunities opened avenues for fresh female university graduates with the ambition to pursue a career in the field of development.

Addressing the function as chief guest, Sultana Kamal said Care is doing a noble job and this is imperative for promoting women's economic empowerment.

To achieve greater benefit from this gesture, it is important to build partnership with others to expand its periphery, she added.

Dakop UZ AL leader arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested Golam Mostafa, joint secretary of Dakop upazila unit of Awami League, from a house near Dakop Police Station yesterday.

Molla Nazrul Islam officer-in-charge of Dakop Police Station, said the AL leader was arrested along with a professional sex worker from the house.

Mostafa is also Dakop upazila correspondent of the Dainik Purbanchal published from Khulna.

TIB welcomes Saarc stand on corruption

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has welcomed the recognition of and determination to fight corruption at the recently concluded Saarc Summit in New Delhi, says a press release.

TIB has been encouraged that alongside other key challenges like poverty, disease, natural disasters and terrorism, for the first time the "Heads of State or Government of South Asia recognised that corruption was an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption effectively.

"We understand that this has happened at the initiative of the Bangladesh delegation, and we commend them, especially in view of the strategic thrust of the summit on regional connectivity," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB.

Because of the growing importance of cross-border dimension of corruption, international cooperation has become indispensable for fighting the menace, he said.

Corruption being the main predicament against development and poverty reduction, TIB urges the government to explore jointly with other Saarc governments specific follow-up measures for strengthening cooperation in the field of anti-corruption.

These may include mutual assistance in prevention, repatriation of laundered money, investigation and prosecution of offenders.

Cooperation can be sought for specific forms of mutual legal assistance in gathering and transferring evidences for judicial use, and to facilitate extradition of offenders.

Such cooperation may be explored bilaterally as well as regionally, the press release added.

Saarc should now seek membership of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) which includes ground-breaking mechanisms to facilitate recovery of stolen assets including measures for tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of corruption.

Since work has already begun on a draft Saarc Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, TIB demands inclusion of specific provisions against corruption in it.

This can pave the way to a Saarc Regional Convention Against Corruption in line with UNCAC and similar regional anti-corruption conventions already adopted in other regions.

Central American states have recently declared themselves as a corruption-free zone, similarly South Asia can also show the courage and commitment to adopt a time-line in the same direction, TIB urged.

WEATHER TODAY

Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said. Highest temperature 37.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.5 degree Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.18pm today and rises at 5:42am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.7	22.5	68	59
Chittagong	32.2	24.8	65	79
Rajshahi	37.4	26.3	69	67
Khulna	34.0	25.5	77	65
Barisal	33.0	25.0	76	72
Sylhet	28.8	18.5	79	67
Cox's Bazar	32.4	24.0	62	72



International Turkish Hope School organised a day-long Annual Science Fair on its campus at Uttara in the city on Saturday.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Karmojibi Nari organises a seminar on 'Liberalisation of trade in service sector'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Lecture

Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim will deliver a lecture on 'Administration, good governance and democracy'. Venue: Bangla Academy seminar room. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organises a seminar on 'National budget and economic security'. Venue: Institute auditorium. Time: 10:30am.