

Ensure accountability of admin involved in electoral process

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politicians and members of civil society at a roundtable yesterday welcomed the draft reform proposals of the Election Commission (EC) on electoral laws, but strongly recommended measures ensuring accountability and transparency of civil and police administration involved in electoral process.

They said officials of police and civil administration involved in electoral process should submit their wealth statements, as politicians or their parties have the scope for poll rigging with their assistance.

The roundtable titled 'Reform proposals: Present thoughts' was organised by Shushashone Janney Nagorik (Shujon) at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers also suggested immediate dialogue with the political parties and civil society members for some additions and omissions in reform proposals.

"I welcome the provision for registration of political parties, but there should be check and balance of power in the EC so that

political parties do not become weak," said Jatiya Party leader GM Quader while talking to journalists on the sideline of the roundtable.

"There might be different types of problems if the EC is given much power," he added.

GM Quader said, "The political parties adopt irregularities with the help of the police and civil administration. This must be stopped. There is however no such proposal in the draft."

He said if congenial environment is created, a candidate even does not need to spend Tk 5 lakh for election publicity.

Registration of political parties will help bring financial transparency with regard to politicians, but the declaration of wealth statements by the deputy commissioners, officers-in-charge and police superintendents, who assist the electoral process, should also be made mandatory, said Awami League (AL) leader Dr Abdur Razzaq.

He said stringent laws could be formulated to regulate the student fronts of political parties, but other

front organisations should be there, at least for decentralisation of political power.

Justice Qazi Ebadul Haque said the EC should make it mandatory that only those parties, which will not have any front organisations, will be eligible for registration.

"The professional bodies will be organised only for professional causes," he said, adding that front organisations of the professional bodies highly politicise the administration and thus divide the nation.

"At present, the student organisations are nothing but sources of extortion and power," he added.

Shujon Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder in his keynote presentation proposed publication of all information about the candidates as soon as the EC gets them.

He regretted that the EC had proposed nothing for bringing it out of the control of the Prime Minister's Office and making it financially independent.

Dr Alam proposed for electoral tribunals with retired judges for speedy disposal of electoral disputes saying that it is not possible to

impose timeline on the High Court for disposal of cases of such nature.

The EC has also not proposed any measures for stopping the use of muscle and money power in the election, he said, adding that the EC should supervise printing of election posters and organise the projection meetings with continuous monitoring of the expenditures of candidates and political parties.

Dr Alam proposed that the political parties should operate all financial transactions through bank accounts and publish the audited accounts annually.

To resist nomination business, the primary members of political parties should play their due role, he noted.

"We should encourage independent and neutral candidates, as most voters support the major political parties for vested interests," the Shujon chief added.

Former adviser to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan suggested measures for instant punishment to law enforcers and other officials who will violate electoral rules.

Demanding mobile courts in such cases, M Hamid, a cultural personality, said the whole activities of the elected representatives should be well defined so that they cannot abuse political power for personal gains.

AL leader Abul Mal Abdul Muhit alleged that the EC is killing time for reforming the electoral laws.

This is the other name of delaying the election, he added.

"A non-elected government, whatever popularity it may have, is liable to act on its own will," he said.

Brotee Chief Executive Officer Sharmin Murshid said the EC should also think about the elections of local government bodies while reforming electoral laws.

Columnists Syed Abul Maksud and AZM Abdul Ali, Air Vice Marshal (retd) AG Mahmud, Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury of Gonoshasthaya Kendra, Barrister Harunur Rashid and Journalist Rafiqul Haque Sarker also spoke at the roundtable moderated by former adviser to caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan.



Former adviser to caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan speaks at a roundtable at National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are former adviser to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan and Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury and on his left are columnist Syed Abul Maksud, Justice Qazi Ebadul Haque and Shujon Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder.

40 injured as madrasa boys clash at Sylhet trade fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

At least 40 people, including 30 students and 10 security personnel, were injured in a clash between a group of students of Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa and security men at a trade fair at the madrasa maidaan yesterday afternoon.

Four stalls were also vandalised during the incident.

Sources said, two students of Alia madrasa tried to enter the trade fair without ticket at about 2:30pm, and the security men took the boys to the security camp at the venue and kept them confined.

On information, about 30 to 40 agitated students with sticks from the nearby madrasa hostel went to the venue and ransacked the ticket counter and locked in clash with the security men there.

They also vandalised four stalls and managed to free their fellows.

Later, the law enforcers brought the situation under control.

The month-long fair was organised by Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on April 10.

New radar station opens in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox' Bazar

A new meteorological radar station has been inaugurated in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Japanese Ambassador Masayuki Inoue and Secretary to the Ministry of Defence Kamrul Hasan formally inaugurated the station at a function at a hotel in Cox's Bazar.

On the occasion, Kamrul said this modern radar system would lead to uninterrupted monitoring of tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and predict the landfall of tropical cyclones with sufficient lead time.

He hoped that the new radar system would contribute greatly towards the safety of lives and properties and help sustain the socioeconomic development of Bangladesh.

He said we received assistance and guidance from World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and friendly countries like Japan during the last three decades.

Japanese Ambassador

Five injured in clash at Sadarghat launch terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were injured in a clash between Sadarghat Launch Owners' Association and Transport Workers' Association at Sadarghat in the city yesterday.

The injured were identified as Hazi Abdul Wahab Melkar, Jamal Hossain, Bacchu Mia, Ali Mia and Muhammed Shuman.

Jamal is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital while others were rushed to different city hospitals.

Sources said passengers of 'Sadia' exchanged heated words with coolies over carrying their goods when the launch harboured at Sadarghat launch terminal at about 7:00am.

At a point, Jamal Hossain, son of the owner of 'Sadia', came to mediate between the parties, which led to a clash between two groups loyal to Sadarghat Launch Owners' Association and Transport Workers' Association.

At about 9:00am there was another spell of fighting between the parties.

Working in shifts shortens life span Says study

UNB, New Delhi

Sunday. Shift work affects the circadian rhythm, the 24-hour cycle in the physiological processes of humans that leads to several sleep-related and social problems.

Circadian rhythms are important in determining the sleeping and feeding patterns of all animals, including humans. Brain wave activity, hormone production, cell regeneration and other biological activities are linked to this daily cycle.

Pati and his colleague K Venu Achari analysed a database of dates of death, retirement and death of each worker and published their findings in the latest issue of "Current Science".

They also studied data on deaths due to all causes of 594

railway employees, including 282 day workers and 312 shift workers, over a span of 25 years. The cause of death was not documented in the database.

An analysis of the data showed that day workers tend to live 3.94 years longer than counterparts working in shifts.

All day workers performed duty between 9:00am and 6:00pm with an hour-long lunch break at 1:00pm and included those on office job and doing miscellaneous duties, the study said.

Those coming for shift duties worked in a rotating system consisting of a day shift (6:00am to 4:00pm), first night (4:00pm to midnight) and second night (midnight to 8:00am).

They worked in each shift con-

tinuously for six days and had a single day break before resumption of the next shift.

The shift workers included running staff, gangmen and those doing miscellaneous jobs.

The longevity of each worker was computed from the dates of birth, retirement and death," Pati said.

The researchers cited a number of animal studies that documented the life-shortening effects of weekly shifting of light-dark cycles.

It has been argued that these effects could be mediated through disruption of the circadian rhythm. Lighting schedule manipulation has also been reported to produce detrimental effects on the lifespan of insects.



Schoolgirls try to avoid inhaling the stinking air from garbage left on Mirpur Mazar Road in the city. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

9 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least nine people were killed and 32 injured in separate road accidents in Habiganj, Keraniganj, Brahmanbaria and Khagrachhari yesterday and on Saturday night.

UNB from Habiganj reports: Five people were killed and 11 others injured as a truck ploughed through a tea stall at Chaitatola in Bahubal upazila on Dhaka-Mawa highway on Saturday night.

Four of the deceased were identified as Shibu Biswas, 55, of Kharia village, college student Faisal, 18, of Noagaon village, rickshaw-puller Abid Ali of Manikpur village and Oli Mia. The identity of another man, aged about 25, could not be known immediately.

Local sources said the goods-laden truck rammed into the tea stall at about 10:15am, leaving four people dead on the spot as its driver lost control over the steering.

Seven of the injured were rushed to the upazila health complex from where six were shifted to

Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated. Oli Mia succumbed to his injuries in the afternoon.

Another report from Keraniganj adds: Two people were killed and 15 others injured when a BRTC bus plunged into a roadside ditch at Kadampur in South Keraniganj on Dhaka-Mawa highway on Saturday night.

Local people said the BRTC bus with 42 passengers left Mawa Ghat for Dhaka at about 11:15pm. The bus plunged into the roadside ditch at Kadampur area, leaving bus helper Badshah, 23, and supervisor Syed, 24, dead on the spot and 15 passengers injured as its driver lost control over the steering.

Of the injured, eight were rushed to Mitford Hospital while the rest were released after first aid.

Police sent the bodies to morgue for autopsy yesterday. Police seized the bus but the driver managed to escape.

Our Correspondent from Brahmanbaria adds: One person was crushed under the wheels of a bus yesterday while he was trying to get down from it at Khera bus stand under Kashba upazila.

The dead was identified as Md Azad, 35, son of Abdul Awal of Monderpur village in Kashba

upazila.

According to eyewitness, Azad was returning home from Brahmanbaria by a Kashba Kutti bound local bus.

The accident occurred while he was trying to get down from the speeding bus, leaving Azad dead on the spot.

Azad's family members said helper of the bus pushed him down from the bus after an altercation with him over the fare.

Our correspondent from Khagrachhari adds: One woman was killed and six others were injured in a road accident when a passenger jeep fell into a roadside ditch at Bajendra Karbari para under Matiranga upazila here yesterday.

The dead was identified as Satibala Tripura, 35, and the injured are Tempu Laxmi Tripura, 40, Samirita Balu Tripura, 30, Chandra Tripura, 45, Bishanna Tripura, 35, Zibari Kanai, 21, and Nila Prava, 40.

The injured were rushed to the Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital.

Police said the Khagrachhari-bound jeep fell into the ditch at around 9:00am as its driver lost control over the steering.

The dead was identified as Md Azad, 35, son of Abdul Awal of Monderpur village in Kashba

'Nasreen remains alive through ActionAid work'

ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) organised an award ceremony titled "Nasreen Memorial Award 2007" at a convention centre in the city yesterday to mark the first death anniversary of Nasreen Huq, former country director of AAB and a dedicated human rights activist, says a press release.

Nasreen's mother Poet Zaheda Khanam was the chief guest of the ceremony while renowned freedom fighter and sculptor Ferdousi Priyobhashini attended it as special guest.

Zaheda in her address said Nasreen would always be alive through the work of ActionAid in bringing to light the rights of the poorest and the marginalised and freeing the society from the chains of oppression.

Six voluntary activists, based on their performance in combating social injustices and contribution in societal change, were honoured at the ceremony.

The awardees are Ajoy A Mree for Adivashi rights, Saleha Begum for education of children in river island areas, Abdul Karim for teaching of the disabled, Shamima Akhter for acid survivor rights, Momtaj Begum for sex workers rights and Nazneen Akhter for journalism.

AAB's Interim Country Director Shoib Siddiqui in his welcome address said, "All the issues that have been awarded were all issues close to Nasreen Apa's heart."

In the afternoon, the conference room of the AAB office was dedicated in the name of Nasreen Huq and was inaugurated by her mother.

Obituary

Abul Hossain Mondol, father of Md. Rustom Ali Mondol, treasurer of Dinajpur Press Club, passed away at his residence at Shampur village on Saturday night at the age of 70, says a press release.

He left behind his three sons and four daughters to mourn his death.

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard yesterday Sunday.

Cambridge varsity introduces Maissa Karim Scholarship

Cambridge University's prestigious Judge School of Business announced the establishment of Director's Maissa Karim Scholarship to honour Maissa Karim, says a press release.

A greatly valued member of the MBA class of 2005-2006 and a Director Scholarship holder, Maissa was studying at the Judge School of Business when she had a relapse of a major illness and passed away peacefully in her sleep on the July 5, 2006 at the age of 31.

The Director's Maissa Karim Scholarship will be offered as a supplement to a Director's Scholarship to an outstanding candidate whose financial circumstances are such that they would be unable to join Cambridge MBA programme. This would be the second highest non-corporate scholarship at the Judge School of Business.

Maissa Karim graduated from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and additionally held a Masters degree in Mass Communications from Boston University. She worked in various capacities in major companies in both London and New York before entering the MBA programme at Cambridge.

DHAKA TODAY