

Free local govt from grip of lawmakers, bureaucrats

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Union Parishad (UP) chairmen and civil society members at a roundtable yesterday expressed grave concern over the state of local government (LG), saying the system would be destroyed soon if it is not freed from the grips of the Members of Parliament (MP) and bureaucrats.

Most of the laws related to local government are inconsistent with the constitution and curb the power of the democratic institutions at the grassroots level, and thereby breaking its backbone, they said.

The views came at a roundtable on 'Our role in forming an effective Union Parishad' organised by Swashashito Union Parishad (UP) Advocacy Group-Bangladesh at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

"The local government is actually held hostage to the national government and bureaucracy. The local government structure has actually been transformed into the extended form of the national government and administration," said General Secretary of the advocacy group Matiur Rahman Tapan.

The local government is fully dependent on the MPs and ministers, he said, adding that even its representatives have also been threatened of being ousted from their elected posts, which is totally humiliating.

On the other hand, the national government compromises with the bureaucracy and butter it up for clinging to power, but shows no interest for decentralising and empowering the local government, Matiur Rahman said in his presentation.

Abul Hossain Khan said the Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) treat with the UP chairmen just as the feudalists did to people.

"Now when there is no political government in power, the UNOs are controlling us with an iron hand. The upazila coordination committee meeting decides one, but the executive orders are made different," he regretted.

Sazzad Hossain Mukul, UP Chairman of Chilmari in Rajshahi, said that if the control of bureaucracy over the UP chairmen

remains the same, the UP system will cease functioning within the next two years.

"They (bureaucrats) now are threatening the UP chairmen of joint forces," he said.

Demanding upazila parishad and district parishad elections, Shushashon Jonney Nagorik (Shujon) Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said the controlling power of the bureaucrats over the elected representatives is humiliating.

Financial and budget making freedom of the local government is a must for strengthening the local government, he said, adding that without the participation of people at the local government system, no true democracy could be established.

Awami League leader Dr Abdur Razzak said the bureaucrats' power of dissolving the post of a UP chairman is unacceptable. "I do not know if there is a crueler act than this."

When the power lies more in the central government, the MPs can help the local government in policy making, but the local government will have to implement those, he said, adding that decentralisation of power, however, should be made by changing laws.

Jatiya Party leader GM Quader said there is technically no local government in Bangladesh, as the bureaucrats control the system.

It is not right to blame the MPs for intervention in the local government, rather the bureaucrats systematically control them, GM Quader said demanding amendments to the laws to loosen the bureaucrats' control over the local government.

Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury of Gono Shasthya Kendra suggested putting the primary education under the local government and involving more women in the judiciary at local level.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud, former minister Golam Sarwar Milon and Prof Asaduzzaman also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

General Secretary of Swashashito Union Parishad Advocacy Group Matiur Rahman Tapan speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof Asaduzzaman while on his right are Abul Hossain Khan, Dr Badiul Alam Majumder and Syed Abul Maksud.

Road crash creates negative impact on economy

Global Road Safety Week begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health and Family Welfare Adviser Major Gen (Retd) ASM Matiur Rahman yesterday said high speed and tendency for overtaking are the main reasons for road accidents that create negative pressure on national economy of developing countries like Bangladesh.

"A strong and healthy person may become disabled and burden for his family as well as society at any time due to road accident. But we are not conscious enough to avoid it. We usually like to drive vehicles with high speed and overtake other transports which are the

main causes of road accidents in our country," said the adviser while speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session of the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week at the auditorium of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons at Mohakhali in the city.

This year the theme of the week, that began from yesterday, is: 'Young Road Users'.

The health adviser claimed that Bangladesh has to suffer a loss of Tk 5000 crore and around 12000 lives annually due to road accidents.

"Our 1.5 percent GDP wastes away annually due to road accident which is preventable. We can avoid road accident by increasing our awareness," he added.

The adviser suggested road dividers including the creation of separate lanes for different vehicles and awareness programmes for all especially drivers.

He also asked the doctors to be more alert in providing treatment to victims of road accidents.

"Emergency care unit will have to be opened in all hospitals and health centres for proving better treatment for road accident victims," he added.

Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, World Health Organisation (WHO)

representative to Bangladesh, said road accidents claim around 12000 lives in the country every year, including 3500 people who are aged below eighteen.

Vice-chancellor Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Prof Dr ANM Saifullah said co-ordinated efforts of law enforcing agencies and different non-government and voluntary organisations are needed to reduce road accidents and ensure better health services to the injured.

The CMP Commissioner while talking to journalists regretted the incident and said action would be taken after departmental investigation into the matter.

Witnesses said Pamela was returning to Chittagong from Dhaka aboard an air-conditioned bus of Silk Line Paribahan on Saturday afternoon.

The wife, brother-in-law and mother-in-law of Mofazzal were also the passengers of the same bus.

As the bus was crossing the City Gate at around 9:30pm, a team of cops stopped the bus and got inside it in search of Pamela while plain-clothes Mofazzal, who was standing in front of the door, forced her to get down, they said.

"As I got down from the bus, Mofazzal angrily ordered me to go to my residence (Jamal Khan Road) on foot from there. At this I got so frightened that I could not move for a while. Then I tried to hire a CNG auto-rickshaw, but the police officer again interfered and threatened the taxi driver not to carry me. Observing the scene, other passengers of the bus came to my rescue and helped me get on the bus again," Pamela alleged in her complaint.

She said the entire incident developed from a trifling matter that took place earlier in the noon in Dhaka while she was going to Arambagh main counter of Silk Line on board a minibus from Shukrabazar.

"An altercation took place with Mofazzal's wife on that minibus that made her so infuriated that the lady immediately informed her husband over mobile phone and threatened me with serious consequences after my arrival in Chittagong," Pamela said.

When contacted, Mofazzal admitted the incident of altercation but denied the allegation of harassment or misuse of power.

"I went to City Gate just to receive my wife and others," he explained.

Rainy weather may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 39.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ilishwardi and lowest 19.7 degree Celsius at Dhaka.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.24pm today and rises at 5:29am 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	35.0	19.7	83	76
Chittagong	32.2	22.0	74	83
Rajshahi	39.0	26.5	77	64
Khulna	36.0	24.4	74	67
Barisal	33.8	23.5	74	74
Sylhet	23.8	20.8	98	77
Cox's Bazar	32.4	23.5	80	80

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

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