

Allocate 40 pc of development budget for Union Parishad

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Union Parishad Oikya Jote, a platform of 2700 public representatives elected to Union Parishads across the country, yesterday demanded allocation of 35 to 40 percent of the total development budget for this local government institution.

The UPs received only 1.04 percent of the Annual Development Project funds, which is not only inadequate but also completely unreasonable, the Jote leaders said at a roundtable styled 'Rural development and national budget' at the National Press Club in the city.

The Union Parishad has turned into a very weak institution due to

lack of resources, bureaucratic control and unwarranted interference from the Jawmakers, the speakers said.

Presenting a keynote paper, Matur Rahman Tapan, secretary general of the Oikya Jote, said that although a municipality and a Union Parishad have an equal number of population, the municipality gets Tk 28 to 30 lakh and the Union Parishad gets only Tk 3 to 5 lakh.

Tapan regretted that there are no steps to generate new sources of income for the UPs. Moreover, the Union Parishad has been deprived of the revenue from the lease on rural markets, he added.

Dr Md Hossain Khan, president of Swashashito Union Parishad Advocacy Group, said the Union Parishad is implementing development activities at the local level, but the policymakers have never consulted with the UP while adopting any development plans.

Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, coordinator Gonoshashthya Kendra, called for ensuring empowerment of the Union Parishad. "We have forgotten the villages where around 11 crore people are living."

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shujan and adviser to the Oikya Jote, said the prevailing fragility of democracy is due to the flaw in the system of governance,

which is highly centralised.

Dr Belal Hossain Joy, a lawyer of the Supreme Court, said there is no clear demarcation in responsibilities of the central government and the local government.

He also stressed the need for performance-based budgeting.

The speakers also emphasised that the Union Parishad should be empowered so that it does not need to depend on foreign aid.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud, CJP leader Ruhin Hossain Prince, Manobadrikar Samanna Parishad President AHM Noman, woman leader Noor Taj Parveen also spoke at the roundtable moderated by Golam Sarwar Milon.



Shamsul Bari speaks at a roundtable on poverty at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Selina Hossain, Prof Md Anisur Rahman and Dr Hamida Hossain. Research Initiatives, Bangladesh organised the event.

Form accreditation council for varsities to ensure quality edn

Educationists tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educationists at an international workshop yesterday called for formation of an accreditation council for the universities in order to ensure quality education in the country.

The public and private universities in the country have no external system or method to review the academic programmes, they said.

American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) organised the two-day workshop on 'Development of Measurement for Higher Education Quality Assurance in Bangladesh' that began at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

More than 20 foreign participants from 15 countries and about 30 educationists from public and private universities in the country are taking part in the workshop.

Inaugurating the workshop, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said the commission is very much worried about the quality of education in the country as most univer-

sities do not provide education of highest standard.

"Quality teachers are needed to ensure quality education. We have already submitted a recommendation regarding minimum qualifications of the university teachers," he said.

Prof M Asaduzzaman, former chairman of UGC, said the university is considered a place where new knowledge is created and disseminated for the welfare and development of human being.

"During my tenure as UGC chairman, I submitted to the government a set of proposals for reforms in the higher education. The main proposals are uniform recruitment rules for teachers and employees, uniform financial rules and account manual, operation of foreign universities and their branches, uniform grading system, rules for the establishment of an accreditation council, private university (amendment) act-2005 and strategic plan for higher education from 2006-2026," he said.

He also presented a keynote

paper on 'UGC experience on quality assurance in higher education in Bangladesh' in the second session, stressing the formation of an Accreditation Council for Private University in Bangladesh (ACPUB) to assess and maintain the standard of higher education.

Prof Dr Salahuddin Aminuzzaman said most departments of the universities do not have long-term national vision, but such a vision is crucial to quality education.

"Quality education in universities will be achieved through changing the method of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods, renewing the curriculum continually, updating and upgrading professional knowledge and skills and improving the broader educational, administrative and resource environments," he said in his paper on 'Overview of Quality Assurance in the Context of Bangladesh'.

AIUB Vice-Chancellor Dr Carmen Z. Lamagna, Prof Colin Peiris and Concepcion V Pijano also spoke.



BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed held a meeting with edible oil importers in the city yesterday.

Six get life for murder in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday sentenced six accused to life term rigorous imprisonment in a murder case.

Sources said the tribunal of judge AHM Mustak Ahmad gave the verdict on the accused for killing of Anwar that took place at the city's Halishahar on February 1, 2006.

The convicts are Abdus Sabur, 28, Hasan, 28, Sheikh Ahmad alias Shekhaia, 28, Sohel, 23, Badsha Mia, 24 and Ekram Mia, 24.

The court released two other accused Nur Begum, 35 and Nurul Alam Master, 58 from the case.

According to the deposition of the case, the accused kidnapped Anwar, son of late Jafar Ahmad, after calling him out of house at Abbaspara at the city's North Halishahar at around 8:30pm on February 1 in 2006 in the name of paying the money they borrowed from him earlier.

The body of Anwar was found inside a heap of sand at a nearby abandoned place at around 10:30pm on the same night.

Elder brother of the victim

Abdul Mabud filed a case with Halishahar Police Station on the same night in this connection.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Sub Inspector (SI) Wahiduzzaman submitted the charge sheet accusing eight people on July 10 in 2006.

The case came to the divisional speedy trial tribunal on October 9 in 2006 while the charge was framed on October 17 in the same year.

After hearing 21 witnesses, the court pronounced the verdict yesterday.

Bomb squad exercise at US Embassy Chancery in city

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh police in cooperation with US Embassy officials conducted a bomb squad exercise at the American Embassy Chancery in the city yesterday.

This exercise culminated an Anti-terrorism Assistance (ATA) training programme conducted by American trainers for Bangladesh police, says a release from American Centre.

The Anti-terrorism Assistance (ATA) Programme, established in 1983 to combat international terrorism, provides training and related assistance to law enforcement and security services of partner nations, including Bangladesh.

This ATA training programme was developed in consultation with Bangladesh authorities to meet local requirements in response to terrorism trends.

The ATA training focuses on a "train the trainer" approach to ensure that Bangladesh officials who have received training can successfully teach principles and techniques to other Bangladeshi police officers.

It holds local law enforcement expertise and fosters international cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts.

Chargé d' Affaires Beth Paige of the American Embassy will deliver an address today at the graduation ceremony for the police officials who have completed this training.

Duta concerned at death threat to its secretary

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) yesterday expressed concern over the death threat to its General Secretary Prof MM Anwar Hossain and his family members by a gang of criminals.

Duta at a meeting on May 29 with vice-president Prof Tazmeri SA Islam in the chair also demanded action against the criminals and security of his family members.

A person identifying himself as top-listed criminal Jisan on May 28 threatened to kill Prof Anwar and his family members if they fail to pay him Tk 1 lakh.

The meeting also demanded of the authorities concerned to install telephone lines with caller identity facilities at the teachers' residences immediately.

Addict expelled from DU hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

Authorities of Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall of Dhaka University (DU) expelled an addict yesterday.

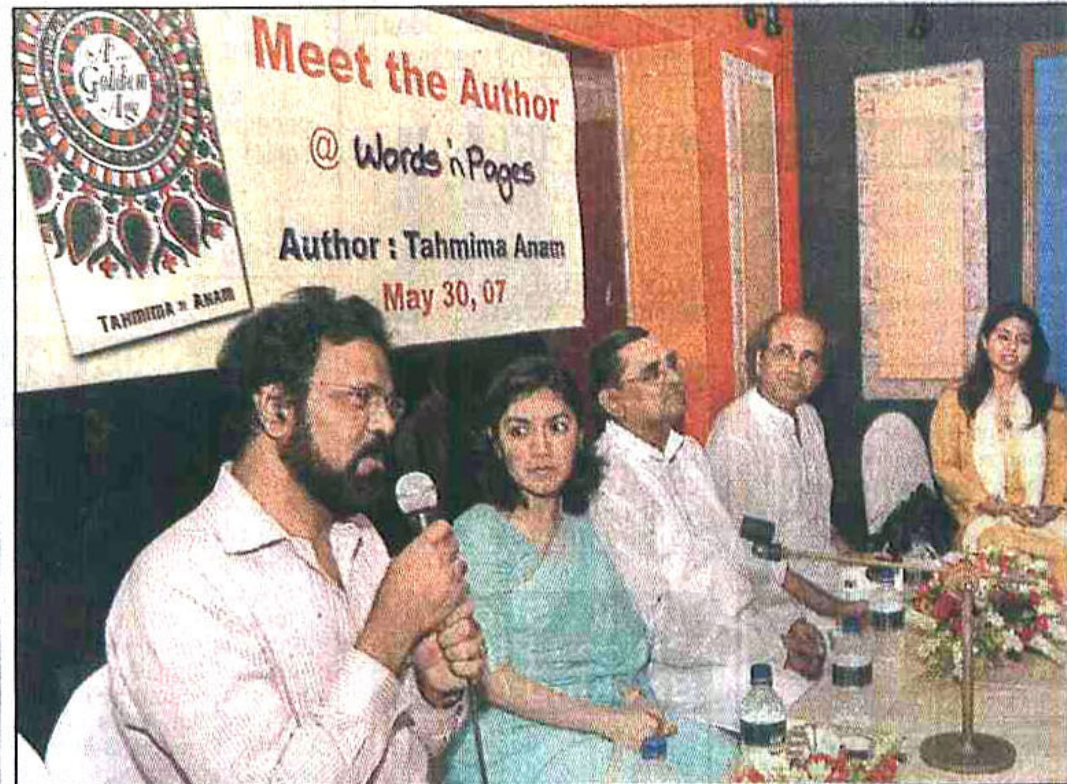
The student was identified as Toufikul Islam Russel, a second year student of philosophy department and a resident of room no 121 of the hall.

Sources said Russel bit one of his roommates at around 1:30pm when they tried to refrain himself from pushing a syringe.

Then he tried to go into hiding and took shelter at the rooftop. Police found him out and took to Shahbagh Police Station.

Hall authorities sent a letter to his guardians informing his addiction and expulsion. They also asked his guardians to help him rehabilitate, otherwise he will not be allowed to enter the dormitory again.

Hall sources said Russel is likely to be sent to a drug rehabilitation centre under the supervision of police within a day or two.



Cultural personality Tarique Anam speaks at 'Meet the author' session at a bookshop 'Words n Pages' at Gulshan in the city yesterday. On his left are author Tahmima Anam, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, poet Al Mujahidi and television actress Shomi Kaiser.

Gender equality a must to achieve MDGs

Speakers tell view exchange meet

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a leading women's rights organisation, yesterday said women empowerment and gender equality are a must to achieve UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within the stipulated period.

In the MDGs, women empowerment in social, political and economic arenas has been emphasised. To achieve the goal, a change must be brought in the gender-biased social culture with participation of youths, university students and all other concerns, speakers observed.

They were speaking at a view exchange meeting organised by Mahila Parishad at the auditorium of Institute of Social Welfare and

Research of Dhaka University (DU).

Reading out a keynote paper, Secretary of legal aid sub-committee of the Parishad Advocate Masuda Rehana Begum said, "Without developing an anti-women repression culture across the country, protection of human rights for women is not possible."

Based on her experiences while exchanging views with the students of various public universities and other educational institutes, she observed that gender discrimination is acute even in those high-earning bodies.

"As no anti-repression movement is seen in the society, even the higher educated women are frequently becoming victims of various kinds of physical, mental and sexual harassment in the public

universities and work places."

Victims often do not disclose harassments fearing social stigma or shyness and consequently nobody knows about those incidents, she added.

Chaired by central member of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Shahana Kabir, the meeting was also addressed by General Secretary Ayesha Khanam and Provost of DU Bangladesh-Kuwait Majiree Hall Tahmina Akhter Toffee. A number of DU students joined the meeting.

Ayesha Khanam gave students a wake up call and urged them to be vocal against any kind of women repression in the country.

She said, "It's high time that we broke the taboo and raised voice so that no more women become victim of repression."

'A Golden Age an eye-opener for younger generation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A local bookshop yesterday held 'Meet the author' session with writer Tahmima Anam whose novel 'A Golden Age' has been on the bestseller list in England and has received rave reviews from the British press.

In the session organised by Words 'n Pages at Gulshan in the city, Tahmima read out an extract from her novel and exchanged views with the audience.

Set in 1971, the novel 'A Golden Age' tells the story of a widow, Rehana, and her efforts to confront, accept and survive the realities of a nation at war.

Replying to questions from the audience, Tahmima said she would've written the book in Bangla, but lamented that her Bangla was not good enough to write a novel.

She also defended her decision to write in English, by saying that she had used her best asset -- English writing skills -- to narrate the stories of 1971 and make a contribution to Bangladesh.

Explaining the sources of information she used in the book, Tahmima, who was born four years after the Liberation War, said her exhaustive PhD research on the Liberation War and the more intimate stories of her family's experiences during the war provided the basis for the novel.

Asked about the imprint left on the book by her as a woman, Tahmima said her identity has been reflected in her choice of a strong female protagonist and the use of female voices in the narration of 1971.

She said her inspirations have been drawn from a number of young African writers retelling the lore of a past generation and from famous writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie who wrote epics about their homelands.

She also said that the book has acted as an eye-opener for a lot of younger Bangladeshis living at home and abroad who have not had the opportunity to learn about the people's experiences during the Liberation War.

Presided over by cultural personality Tarique Anam, the programme was attended by Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and poet Al Mujahidi.

The novel is priced at Tk 1095 and is available at a number of bookstores in the city.

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