

# Stop interference by bureaucrats, MPs to strengthen local govt

Speakers tell regional seminar

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to strengthening the local government, the interference by bureaucrats and lawmakers should be stopped right now, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The regional seminar on Local Government Reform was organised jointly by Rupantor, an NGO, and USAID Bangladesh at the LGED auditorium in the city.

"The MPs and government officials always stand in the way of the local government. The relation between the central and local governments lacks co-ordination and it is completely top-down," said Advocate Mohammad Ajmal Khan, chairperson of Municipal

Association of Bangladesh (MAB).

The government should send officials on deputation to work in accordance with the laws of union parishad and they should be accountable to local public representatives, said Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, convener of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF).

In their keynote speeches the two local leaders regretted that instead of having a strong financial base, the local governments have to look forward to the central government even for small allocation.

Apart from a number of suggestions for the reforms of the local government, they demanded rise in allocation in the forthcoming budget, formation of a finance commission and an autonomous local

government commission.

The keynote presenters also demanded that health and education at the grassroots level should be brought under the authority of the local government and proposed a two-tier structure instead of the current four-tier body to make the local government autonomous and pro-people.

Terming the democracy in Bangladesh 'conservative', Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to the caretaker government, insisted on the "democratisation of democracy."

He alleged that the central government has always made the local government institutions weak intentionally although the constitution envisages the formation of a

strong local government.

He called for holding the parliamentary election and local government election at the same time so that it would not have to play a subservient role, adding that since all the power is centralised in the hand of the prime minister, the country failed to get a democratic government.

Roger D Carlson, mission director of USAID, laid emphasis on local initiative.

"It is a wrong perception that development comes in the back of a jeep," he added.

Narrating the role of local government in her country, Dr Dora Rapold, ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, said local government is closest to the heart of people and this body is meant to ensure service delivery contributing to their welfare.

She laid emphasis on the smooth power sharing between the central and local governments.

At the seminar, two delegations from India and Nepal shared their experiences with other participants.

They were Deboprosad Jana and Dr Ashok Sirkar of West Bengal, India, and Rami Balaji Singh and Tri Bikram Pandey of Nepal.

Local Government Expert Dr Tofail Ahmed, Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Dr Salahuddin Aminuzzaman and Narayanganj Municipality Chairman Dr Selina Hayat Ily also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Rezaul Haque of USAID moderated the first working session, while the second session was anchored by Engr Quamrul Islam Siddiqui.

Earlier Swapan Guha, chief executive of Rupantor, delivered the welcome address.



PHOTO: STAR

Eight eminent personalities who received Mercantile Bank Annual Awards pose with the guests at the 8th founding anniversary programme of the bank at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

## Eight eminent personalities get Mercantile Bank Awards

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Eight eminent personalities received Mercantile Bank Annual Awards at a function celebrating the bank's 8th founding anniversary yesterday.

The Mercantile Bank Limited honoured the eight personalities in recognition of their outstanding contribution to different fields.

The award recipients are Prof Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed for Bangla language and literature, Prof Sanjida Khatun for education and culture, Meghna Guho Thakurta for research on Liberation War, former adviser to the caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan for economy and economic research, President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Latifur Rahman for industry and commerce, Dr MR Khan for science, technology and medicine, ABM Musa for journalism and Khaled Masud Pilot for sports.

Each winner received a gold medal, a crest and Tk 50,000 at the function held at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

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Deputy Town Planner of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha (Rajuk) Sirajul Islam said the Dhaka city is now home to 1.3 crore people. The owners of most buildings did not follow the rules and regulations during the construction.

So, if any massive earthquake strikes the city, there would be numerous casualties.

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