

Police reform

FROM PAGE 16
can serve people freely and fairly. The Daily Star organised the roundtable titled 'Police Reforms: Some Immediate and Long Term Goals' at its office.

"The success of any reform depends on political will. The primary goal of the reform is its insulation from illegitimate interference from wherever it comes," former adviser to a caretaker government and also a former inspector general of police (IGP), ASM Shahjahan, said at the roundtable.

"Police should be pro-active, not be reactive as has been known and experienced in our country over the years. In a democratic country performance of the police should be measured by the satisfaction of the community and not only by some statistical data," he said.

"There is hardly any police station which can be run with the insufficient money given by the government. Their day-to-day need should be met properly, so they do not have to look out for other means of income," he said.

The PRP should have a provision that would make the force serve the people, instead of making it a quasi-force of the government, said the former IGP, who is also UNDP's senior adviser on police reform.

In his key-note speech, ex-IGP Nurul Huda said the Police Act of 1861 should be replaced by a new police act which would not only change the system of superintendence and control over the police but also widen their role to make the body function as an agency to promote the rule of law and render impartial service to the community.

"Another important thrust of reform should be to ensure that the investigative tasks of police are kept beyond any kind of intervention by the executive or non-executive," Huda said.

He also suggested relieving the police from general administration tasks like collection of intelligence of political parties for the government.

"We are living in a time of great irony in Bangladesh when democracy is restricted for the betterment of democracy," he said.

Huda stressed the need for bringing substantial changes in the strategies of policing and a smaller but skilled police force.

He suggested fixing the tenure of the police chief and forming of a commission, through appropriate statute, which would approve any premature expiry of the tenure.

"The onus of ensuring mal-practice-free management of the force, including recruitment, promotions, postings and transfers, squarely rests with the police hierarchy," Huda said.

He said efficient human resource management, efficient use of financial resources and adoption of modern technologies are other areas for which the police leadership need to take initiatives.

Officers of impeccable integrity, good repute and proven competence have to be deployed to probe public complaints against the police, he said.

He said ensuring gender-sensitive policing should be a critical element of the ongoing police reform efforts. Programmes and strategies aimed at changing police's attitude towards women should involve proactive induction of substantially large proportions of women into the police force. A gender-sensitive training strategy should be integral to the police reform agenda.

He said the problem of corruption stems from several interrelated factors which include low pay of policemen, wide discretionary powers available to them, outdated performance appraisal systems, poor working conditions, ineffective internal accountability (by seniors) and abysmally weak external accountability mechanisms.

Expressing grave concern over the politicisation of recruitment in the police department, former IGP M. Azizul Haque said political governments' unfettered changes and transfers in the top posts of the force led to the collapse of the chain of command. He cited the incident of changing the IGP six times in five years of the immediate past BNP-led government.

If the police are guided by the law, political influence will reduce to a great extent, former IGP Ismail Hossain said. He suggested privatising police recruitment.

Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said the general impression of the people is that police beat up people taking part in processions, do not file any case without instructions from the political party in power and they take bribes from people.

He said the police have been used as a mechanism for oppression whereas a civil society cannot exist without a people-friendly, just and honest police force.

"The draft has to be something that will make people feel comfortable. The reform must have some system through which different interest groups can get benefits," said Khushu Kabir, head of Nijera Kori, an organisation working for protection of the livelihoods of the rural poor.

Prof Asif Nazrul of the Faculty of Law of Dhaka University said people must be sympathetic to the police. They are working for the society round the clock without any overtime payment, he added.

"Police have to disobey illegal or undue orders of ministers. If there is no scope, it needs to be created through reforms," he said.

UNDP Programme Manager Hubert Staberhofer said the drafted PRP is now being translated into Bengali, which will be distributed in the country for widespread discussions. He said the reform proposal has the standard of the countries in Europe.

Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association advocate Salma Ali, Director of Aini-o-Salish Kendra Dr Faustina Pereira, barrister Tanjibul Alam also took part in the roundtable moderated by Brig Gen (retd) Shahedul Anam Khan, editor, defence and strategic affairs of The Daily Star.

Venus

FROM PAGE 16
won a game to make it 3-1, but she double-faulted for the fourth time for set point, and Williams converted by charging forward to put away a backhand volley.

The 19th-ranked Bartoli held serve to close to 3-1. But Williams hit a backhand winner to break serve for 5-1, and closed out the victory with a 124 mph service winner that handcuffed a weary Bartoli.

The crowd roared as Williams raised her arms, grinned and, after shaking hands with her opponent, let out with an exultant "Woooooo!"

With Wimbledon paying equal prize money to men and women for the first time this year, Williams won 1,407 million dollars. Bartoli received 703,500 dollars.

Saifur's son

FROM PAGE 1
his tenure in the administrative post.

HOW BABU GOT THE LEASE

Babu applied to then state minister for land Shahjahan Omar in March 2002, seeking a lease of 524.59 acres of land at Majidhi in Srimangal upazila of Moulvibazar to establish a tea garden.

In the application written on the letterhead pad of his Shahjalal Tea Garden Estate, Babu said people illegally occupied the state-owned land in the area and it should be handed over to him so that the state can benefit from the creation of a tea garden there.

Shahjahan Omar sent the application to Mokhles on March 11, 2002, who later sent it to the then additional deputy commissioner (ADC) Abdul Kader and assistant commissioner (land) Badrun Nahar on the matter.

Nahar reported back to Mokhles that the land could be leased out to Babu to increase government revenue and that the 300 families living on the khas land should be evicted.

In the preliminary stage, Moulvibazar district administration in a letter to the land ministry dated June 12, 2002 had sought approval for 212 acres of land for Babu, saying the land is very suitable for establishing a tea garden.

When the ADC (revenue) of Moulvibazar visited the area for an investigation the people living in the

Pope allows wider use of Latin mass

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI gave the go-ahead yesterday for greater use of the old Latin mass, signalling a bid to heal a decades-old split in the Roman Catholic Church.

But the move, which also applies to other religious rituals, is controversial and leading figures have already expressed misgivings.

A papal decree said priests should now meet requests by the faithful to hold mass in the traditional Church language, which had widely been dropped after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

"In parishes where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their request to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962...," said the decree.

The pastor, having attentively examined all aspects, may also grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penitence and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it," it added.

The virtual abandonment of the Tridentine mass after the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was one of the causes of a breakaway led by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970.

The move was to encourage the greater use of the mass in local languages, one of a series of reforms made by the council in a bid to modernise the Church.

Traditionalists say the Tridentine mass, named after the town of Trento, now in northern Italy, is more spiritual and historically authentic than the modern version.

French bishops secretly approached the pope late last year to voice their concerns about his then apparent readiness to revive the Tridentine mass.

Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard, chairman of the French bishops' conference, said in November that differences with followers of Lefebvre were not only liturgical, but also theological, dealing with religious freedom, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and politics.

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Two AL lawyers -- advocates Sahara Khatun and Kamrul Islam -- were however allowed by the police to enter the Sudha Sadan.

"The insinuation by the Election Commission of splitting up of the political parties will also hinder democracy and give rise to militancy," Motia said.

Motia also questioned about the authenticity of the much-talked letter that AL general secretary Abdul Jalil supposedly sent to the government.

Advocates Sahara Khatun and Kamrul Islam told journalists that they were visiting party chief Hasina to discuss legal aspects of graft cases filed against her.

They termed the graft cases against Hasina as "false, fabricated and baseless" and said they were confident about winning those 'false' cases.

The two lawyers also questioned under what authority Jalil's letter, written to the government, made its way to Jalil's family and the news media since according to the jail code, an inmate has to acquire prior government approval to send letters to anyone.

Jubo Mohila League observed its fifth anniversary.

Leaders of Jubo Mohila League, a front organisation of AL for young women, yesterday celebrated its fifth anniversary at the entrance of the Sudha Sadan as the law enforcers barred them from entering residence of the AL chief.

Around 35 leaders and activists of the Jubo Mohila League cut a cake and celebrated the anniversary in a quiet manner.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

ensure supply of fertiliser to the farmers.

The government has an obligation to guarantee supply of agricultural inputs to the farmers as they make an important contribution to national development, she observed, says a UNB report.

"Filing cases against farmers for demanding fertiliser at fair price is not acceptable on any logical ground. Likewise, any death in safe custody or in prison is not admissible -- it's unconstitutional and inhuman," Hasina said.

Police filed the cases against the farmers on Thursday on charges of attacking and damaging government properties on the premises of Nachole UNO office in Chapainawabganj on Wednesday.

Later, these people went to the High Court on orders of which the eviction process was abandoned.

The progress of leasing out the rest of the land also halted.

Titas gas leakage

FROM PAGE 1

crisis like this one. The gas and power sector is unlike all other sectors, where such a crisis can imply huge losses or even a national disaster. The present procurement rules do not recognise this urgency," he added.

Earlier, based on arguments of a Bapex expert that the leakage problem has originated from well-3 located three to four kilometres off the gas leakage area, the BGFCL floated a tender to assign an operator for remedial action in well-3. Sources said that by the end of this month, the BGFCL would open the tender and select the best bidder for the operation.

"Well-3 will need expert intervention because it is actually unstable. But fixing this well alone is unlikely to resolve Titas field's crisis," said a high official. "When we need an emergency procurement like we need for Titas, the PPR can be counterproductive."

Wells 9 and 10 were supposed to undergo a work-over that was approved last year, he said.

"The BGFCL took the initiative to purchase materials for the work-over last year. But after complying with the PPR, required materials would be delivered in August this year. Is this how a gas company should operate? Who is going to pay for the gas loss which may be worth Tk 50-60 crore or more?"

Meanwhile, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports that the number of gas-leaking holes in Titas field location-3 has increased recently. Villagers in the adjacent areas expressed their grievances against the authorities for what they said was not taking any reasonable step to stop the leakage for the last three years.

In recent times, many of the leakage holes have become larger and some of those located in croplands have become sealed by streaming mud due to heavy rains. At the same time, new holes are emerging, and villagers say gas is coming out in big bubbles from croplands and marshy lands there.

Air at the villages is getting full of gas, and the villagers are fearing a possible explosion.

As the entire areas of Sampur and Anandapur villages and Loiska Beel are now submerged with rainwater and all croplands and the beel are under five feet water, bubbling of gas from the holes is visible.

Fertiliser plant

FROM PAGE 1

arid due to the pollution of many years.

This correspondent recently visited Kandarpa village. As he entered the affected area, a heavy acrid smell of ammonia hit his nostrils making it very difficult to breathe and very soon his eyes also started to burn, making the visit quite injurious to personal health.

But the villagers have been living in this dangerous situation for 16 years now. Trees of the village have already died while the water of the ponds have become poisoned and discoloured.

Azizul Haque, 50, of Kandarpa said he had cultivated different kinds of fishes in his three ponds last year with loans from the local Krishibank, but the fishes worth about Tk 1 lakh died due to the ammonia mixed in the pond water.

"I went to the factory authorities including the managing director with the dead fishes in my hands but they paid no attention to my complaint and did nothing about the problem," he said.

The farmers of the worst affected four villages are feeling helpless as yields of their boro crop on 200 acres of land contained no grain in them last season due to the effect of the large amount of ammonia in the environment, local residents said.

Razzak Ali, a landless farmer of Kandarpa village said during the last boro season he had cultivated boro rice on 35 bighas of land taking advance payment from buyers, but his entire yield of the crop turned out to be sterile.

"I invested Tk 36,000 for the cultivation but the entire yield of paddy was sterile due to the ammonia in the environment," he said adding, "Now I don't know how I'm going to repay."

Not only Razzak, most of the farmers of the village including Tota Miah, Joinul Abedin, Shamsher Ali, Khanu Miah, Badal Miah, Abdul Aziz, Marfat Ali and Surj Ali are also suffering from similar fates.

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"The factory authorities will take necessary steps regarding the matter when the plant will be overhauled in October this year," he said.

The power authorities also listed the factors like increase in the duration of daytime and end of irrigation season. The meeting, after discussing pros and cons of the matter, approved the proposal.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, who was present at the meeting, said the Power Division also mentioned the appeal of the leaders of Dhaka City Shop Owners Association for extending the business timing for shops, markets and shopping malls.

The plea was made during their recent meeting with the power adviser.

"I will also leave the village as soon as possible with my wife and children," he said.

Shamsher Ali of the village said, "I am only 40 but I can't see clearly anymore, moreover my hair has already fallen due to the pollution."

Members of the Council of

Advisers attended the meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office to

fix the problem on an urgent basis.

Since this appointment was being made on