

# Participation of grassroots' people a must to strengthen democracy

Speakers tell Shujan roundtable

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development and institutionalisation of democracy is not possible without participation of the people at grassroots level and strengthening of the local government institutions with financial autonomy, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the local governments formed by elected representatives at all levels should be brought under strong monitoring and made free from the influence of lawmakers and central government officials.

The roundtable on 'Measures needed to strengthen and activate local government' was organised by Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) at Cirdap auditorium in the city in a bid to make a concrete proposal to put forward to the government for reforms in the local government.

"We want to make our future bright by learning from the mistakes of the past," said Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad referring to corruptions by many politicians both at national and local levels.

All should try to think how honest and competent people could be involved in political process, he said lauding the formation of a commission in the local government ministry and urging the present government to initiate effective reforms in this regard.

Prof Ahmad, who presided over the roundtable, said national planning should be framed on the basis of the recommendations made at



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Syed Abul Maksud.

PHOTO: STAR

the local government level.

The draft proposal prepared by Shujan Secretariat recommended that the local government should be formed at union, upazila and district levels by the elected representatives.

The government officials will work under the local government councils, it noted.

Every council should have clear responsibilities so that one does not clash with others, while there will be standing committees in the local government institutions to look after more important issues, it proposed.

There should be a finance commission to recommend to the government on making a formula for distribution of funds to the local government based on the needs and fund collected by them, said

the draft proposal presented by Shujan Central Coordinator Dilip Kumar Sarkar.

"The local government will not control the central government, but facilitate it," Dilip said, adding that it can suspend any elected representative only on the recommendation of the local government ombudsman.

The local government should hold council meetings mandatorily after every three months through which the elected representatives will be made accountable, he read from the draft proposal.

Economist Dr Atiur Rahman suggested formation of an ombudsman to hold the local government accountable and a finance commission to decide budgetary allocation and specify the role of the government officials

at the local level.

The conflicts, if there are, among the upazila parishad, union parishad and municipality should also be looked into, he added.

Taking part in the discussion, Justice Ebadul Haque suggested selection of judges to work at village court.

Awami League (AL) leader Advocate Rahmat Ali said the local government's role is very important in formulating policies, especially in collecting data on the resources and problems at grassroots levels.

AL leader Dr Abdur Razzak said the process of giving more power to bureaucracy instead of empowering the local government would not bring good results.

Col (retd) Shawkat Ali suggested elections at all tiers of local government simultaneously to save money and check frauds.

The first duty of the lawmakers is to formulate laws, national policies and monitor the executives, he said, adding that they should also monitor whether national policies are reflected in their own constituencies.

Shujan Secretary Dr Badui Alam Majumder, Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury of Ganashasthya Kendra, Columnist Syed Abul Maksud, Taleyeb Rehman of Democracy Watch, Aroma Dutta of Prip Trust, former lawmaker Golam Sarwar Milon, former upazila chairmen Ahmad Bashir, Bijoy Kumar Barua, Suwash Singh and UP chairmen Khorshed Alam, Matiur Rahman Tapan, Ataharul Islam Bulbul and Hasan Rakib Azad also spoke on the occasion.



Advisers to the caretaker government see off President Iajuddin Ahmed at Zia International Airport on Saturday night prior to his departure for Singapore for medical checkup.

PHOTO: PID

## Rath Jatra today

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual Jagannath Rath Jatra (chariot procession), a major religious festival of Hindus, will be celebrated across the country today.

The country's biggest Rath Jatra will take place at Dharmasi. The procession will start at 3:00pm with the participation of thousands of devotees.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon) will bring out a chariot procession from its temple at Swamibagan in the city at 4:00pm, seeking divine blessings for universal peace and harmony.

"The Rath Jatra will start from Iskcon temple at 4:00pm and end at Dhakeshwari National Temple. The chariot will return from Dhakeshwari Temple on July 24," Sukhi Susheel Das Brahmachari of

## Shop owner beaten to death

### Wife, daughter, son-in-law arrested

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A stationery shop owner was beaten to death allegedly by his family members at their house in the city's Mohammadpur area on Saturday night.

The police recovered the body of Boni Israel Mallik, 50, from his residence at Bashbari yesterday afternoon and also arrested his wife Faizunnesa, daughter Nasrin

Sultana, son-in-law Mir Imran Hossain and his friend Aminul Islam on charges of murder.

During the interrogation, all the arrested confessed to the police that they first tied the hands and legs of Mallik and beat him up with cricket bats and stumps, leaving him dead.

The police said family feud is the reason behind the murder.

Shahidul Islam, nephew of the victim, has filed a case against the four arrestees.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Seminar

Bangladesh Reform Movement organises a seminar titled 'The ongoing drive against corruption is an unforgettable chapter'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

### Exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of an exhibition titled 'Kathkothra Show on arts and crafts' will be held. Venue: Zainul Gallery-2, Institute of Fine Arts. Time: 11:00am. The exhibition will run till July 23 from 10:00am to 7:00pm everyday.

### Rotary Dhaka North

The 1817th regular weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 6:00pm.

### Photo exhibition

The British High Commission in partnership with British council and the

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit will jointly organise a photo exhibition of Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK by Mahmud/ Map photo Agency beginning from today. Venue: British Council. Time: 10:30am to 6:30pm everyday till July 22.

### Exposition

The inaugural ceremony of a month-long 3rd exposition of menswear and womenswear designed by Chakma community will be held. Venue: Nagordola premises, near Sobhanbagh Mosque. Time: 11:00am.

### DAB Seminar

The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (DAB) organises a seminar on 'Importance of public health and strengthening of north-south collaboration'. Venue: REDEC Bhaban, LGED, Agargaon. Time: 9:00am.

Baktarchar High School and Shaheed Gazi Alauddin Smriti Parishad will hold a milad mahfil and discussion on the school premises today.

### Sultan Ahmed

Today is the 37th death anniversary of Sultan Ahmed, secretary to the then East Pakistan government and also the secretary to the East Pakistan Red Cross Society, says a press release.

He was the founder of Brahmanbaria and Satkira Colleges and president of Gandaria Monija Rahman Girls' School.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held after Maghrab prayers at his residence at 32 Purana Paltan.

It also said that day temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 36.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 25.5 degrees at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:21am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:



## Thundershowers likely

### UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions and at many places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to very heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over the country, Met office said.

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City/Town	Temperature in celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.7	25.87	7	75
Chittagong	31.4	27.4	82	86
Rajshahi	33.5	26.4	77	93
Khulna	32.0	27.4	83	86
Barisal	32.0	27.0	92	87
Sylhet	36.2	27.0	73	78
Cox's Bazar	30.6	26.5	92	97

Today is the 16th death anniversary of Dhali Mohammad Monowar, a rhymers and a sports organiser, says a press release.

On the occasion, Dhali Mohammad Monowar Smriti Parishad organises elaborate programmes, including milad and doa mahfil and distribution of food among orphans, at his home village at Samashpur in Srinagar, Munshiganj and in Dhaka.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and one daughter.

His qulhwani will be held after Aras prayers today.

Syed Nizamuddin

Syed Nizamuddin, senior economist, World Bank Office, Dhaka, passed away at Labaidi Cardiac Hospital in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Nizamuddin joined the World Bank in 1979 and was the longest serving professional staff member of the Dhaka office.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and one daughter.

His qulhwani will be held after Aras prayers today.

## Ershad case hearing adjourned

### COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the hearing on arguments of the gold smuggling case filed against former president HM Ershad till August 14 following a time petition by defence lawyers.

Judge Mohammad Abul Bashar of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after the defence lawyers filed the time petition saying that their client, Ershad, could not appear before the court yesterday due to illness.

On June 12, Judge Abul Bashar said that he joined as a judge recently and he would hear arguments of the case again to be acquainted with the case.

The verdict of the case had been deferred six times before for different reasons.

The gold smuggling case against Ershad was filed with Cantonment Police Station on July 17, 1990 after a team of customs officials held four people, including two foreign nationals, at Zia International Airport the same day while they were trying to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991.

## Extortion case filed against 3 journalists in Rajshahi

### RU CORRESPONDENT

An extortion case was filed against three journalists with Boalia Police Station in Rajshahi on Saturday night.

Dilara Rahman, executive director of Development of Integrated for Social Association (DISA), an NGO, filed the case against Aslam Ahmed, editor of the daily 'Lal Golap' and weekly 'Mohanagar Barta', Asaduzzaman Rose, publisher and executive editor of the 'Mohanagar Barta' and Ramjan Ali, bureaur of the 'Goyenda Rahasyo'.

Following the case, the police raided the 'Mohanagar Barta' office in the city several times last night but failed to arrest anybody.

Sources said the journalists demanded Tk 20,000 and a computer from DISA Executive Director Dilara Rahman on June 2. They also threatened to close down the NGO if she fails to pay. Following the threat, DISA director filed a General Diary (GD) with the Boalia police on June 7.

On Saturday, the journalists published a report against Dilara Rahman and again demanded toll, the sources added.

## Construction work at DU stopped amid student protest

### DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday stopped the construction work of a labourers' shed in front of Central Library in the face of agitation by students.

The authorities had started the construction work of Social Sciences Faculty Building beside Madhu's Canteen in the last week of June. The shed was being built for the construction workers who will stay there during the construction.

Seeing a boundary wall being erected on the open space in front of the library, the students became enraged.

They met Dean of Social Sciences Faculty Prof Harun-or-Rashid and argued that the shed for labourers will be a source of noise pollution. As a result, students will have difficulty concentrating on their studies, they added.

Prof Harun told them that the contractor did not inform him before building the shed.

But he has now asked the contractor to stop the work.

He also said the boundary wall will be demolished soon and the shed will be shifted to another place.

## Hilsa worth Tk 1.3cr seized

Members of Coast Guard yesterday seized three trawlers full of hilsa worth around Tk 1.3 crore from Harbaria in the river Pashur at Mongla and arrested 41 crews of the trawlers in this connection, says a press release.

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