

## BBC BANGLADESH SANGLAP

## Concern over spiralling prices of essentials

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over spiralling prices of essentials, speakers at an open discussion yesterday criticised the caretaker government for not taking any action against the syndicate and middlemen responsible for the price hike.

"No action has been taken against those [syndicate and middlemen] who are responsible for the price spiral. The nation has been waiting to see action against the price syndicate," BNP chairperson's adviser Mofazzal Karim said at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap in the capital.

The people hoped that the prices of essentials would come down during the tenure of the present caretaker government, but the prices are spiralling instead, causing immense suffering to the common people, said Jatiya Party (JP) presidium member GM Quader.

The price syndicate and the middlemen are still playing their role in raising prices, he said.

He also said that businessmen are now afraid to open L/Cs, which might also contribute to the price hike.

BBC Bangla Service in conjunc-

tion with the World Service Trust organised the discussion at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. BBC's Shakeel Anwar moderated the event.

Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), said the prices of essentials have gone up alarmingly as the monitoring mechanism has not been functioning properly in the free market system.

Mofazzal Karim said the caretaker government should have made interventions much earlier to control prices of essentials.

Replying to a question, Prof Arefin Siddique observed that the neutrality of the non-party caretaker government has been undermined due to comments by an adviser that most Jamaat leaders as partners of the previous four-party coalition government might not have any link with corruption.

Rather, Jamaat was involved in large-scale corruption during the tenure of the BNP-led coalition government, the former Duta president said, adding that Jamaat cannot avoid its responsibilities for the massive corruption, which took place in the five years of the coalition government.

Replies to another query, both the AL and BNP leaders ruled out any splits in their parties. "People or leaders can quit, but the party will remain intact," said Sajeda.

"Differences of opinion have emerged in the BNP, but it won't split," Mofazzal Karim said, adding that their reform proposals are not aimed at removing anybody from the party.

"But if anybody is caught in the process of purge, we have nothing to do," he added.

All the participants said reforms must be brought to the mindset of politicians first and then in politics and political parties in order to ensure a free and fair election.

Expressing similar views, Awami League presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said Jamaat was involved in arms smuggling, killing, looting and torture.

If Jamaat leaders have resorted to corruption, they must be brought to book, said BNP leader Mofazzal Karim.

JP leader GM Quader, however, said he does not think that the neutrality of the government has been undermined due to the remarks by an adviser over Jamaat.

The debate competition was divided into three categories — school, college and university. Chittagong Collegiate School, Mohsin College and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) seized this year's championship in their respective categories.

The runners-up are Silver Bell's Girls' High School, Government City College and Chittagong University (CU).

Takbirul Islam of Collegiate School, Urmia Atandria of Mohsin College and Zinia Akhter of CU were adjudged the best debaters.

Drishy Debate Club organised the competition at the Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) auditorium under the auspices of The Daily Star and Mutual Trust Bank.

A total of 16 schools, eight colleges and eight universities of the port city took part in the debate held in parliamentary style.

Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank Samson H Chowdhury attended the prize giving ceremony as the chief guest while former adviser to the caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi was present as the guest of honour.

Resident editor of the daily Prothom Alo poet Abul Momen presided over the ceremony attended by Executive Consultant and Founder-Managing Director of Mutual Trust Bank Mosharraf Hossain, Vice-Chairman Dr Arif Uddaula, Managing Director Kazi Shafiqur Rahman and Drishy Vice-President Rashedul Amin Rashed.

Speaking on the occasion, Samson H Chowdhury called on the students not to be confined to textbooks only. Rather, they should also obtain knowledge from society, which will help them steer the country towards development, he added.

He also hoped that such debate competitions would provide students an opportunity to expand their knowledge base.

Syed Manzur Elahi said, "Reading enriches the mind, but healthy debate and discussion polishes it."

Terming students the 'builders of future Bangladesh', poet Abul Momen called on them to build a society based on logic.

Drishy President Masud Bakul gave the address of welcome while Vice-President Rashedul Amin Rashed gave the vote of thanks.

The adjudicating panel of the final round of the debate comprised Dr Masud Rana, Advocate Mili Chowdhury, Prof Tahurin Sabur of Chittagong University and Chittagong Bureau Chief of The Daily Star Shahidul Islam Bachchu.

Drishy President Masud Bakul and Joint Secretary of Bangladesh Debate Federation Adnan Mannan moderated the debates as speakers.

During a presentation, the author showed how the people pioneered movements to realise their rights to live.

"Sometimes these people floated community-based movements, sometimes they took assistance from different organisations, but in most cases the people had to face strong resistance from the government," he added.

Altaf said though small and medium non-government organisations assisted people, but NGOs with reputation hardly came to help these people.

Earlier, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad unwrapped the cover of a book titled 'Protirodh and Unnayon'.

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