

Enrol Urdu-speaking people in voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a view-exchanging meeting yesterday urged the government to enroll the names of Urdu-speaking people in voter list as they are the citizens of Bangladesh.

The meeting titled 'Human rights and enlisting of Urdu-speaking Bangladeshi people in voter list as citizens' was organised jointly by Actionaid and Stranded Pakistani Youth Rehabilitation Movement (SPYRM) at the National Press Club in the city.

Speaking as chief guest, former chief election commissioner Justice Abdur Rauf said without being biased by political consideration the government should make arrangements so that the Urdu-speaking people living in Bangladesh can enjoy all rights as citizens.

He said the present generation cannot suffer for any wrong doings that their ancestors might have committed.

Former lawmaker Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia said after the liberation war, International Conference for Red Cross (ICRC) looked after them, but later on Bangladesh government willingly undertook the responsibility for looking after their wellbeing.

But later the government deliberately neglected its responsibility that it pledged to undertake.

So the caretaker government should take up the issue and enroll them in voter list, he added.

If people who opposed the liberation war can take part in running the state affairs, then why the children who were born and brought up in this country would not be granted citizenship, Mamunur Rashid, an eminent cultural personality, posed the question.

Bangladesh should be humanised enough in handling issues of ethnic, religious and other minority groups, he added.

"Most Urdu-speaking people who wanted to go to Pakistan are now old or dead. Those born here owe their allegiance to Bangladesh. So they are the citizens of this country by birth and should be enlisted in voter roll," said SPYRM General Secretary Shaheed Ali Babul.

Manjur Rashid of Actionaid conducted the programme which was also addressed by Dr Anisuzzaman of philosophy department at Dhaka University (DU), Prof Dalim Chandra Barman of peace and conflict studies department at DU, Editor of The New Nation Mustafa Kamal Majumder and Acting Country Director of Actionaid Syed Naushad Ahmed.