

Political will a must to ensure rights of indigenous people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Constitutional recognition and inclusion of their movement into mainstream politics are imperative to establish the rights of indigenous people, said the speakers at a view-exchanging meeting yesterday.

They said apart from constitutional recognition, political will is also a must to ensure the rights of indigenous people.

The meeting titled 'Rationality of constitutional recognition of the indigenous: National and international perspective' was organised jointly by Research and Development Collective (RDC) and Action Aid at Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

At the meeting, the speakers had threadbare discussions on various issues including constitutional recognition of indigenous people, introduction of primary education in their mother tongue, preservation of their culture and heritage and army deployment in Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) areas.

They said the country will be more rich and prosperous by preserving the linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of indigenous people.

Presiding over the meeting,

Justice K M Sobhan said it is true that nothing is said about the indigenous people in the Constitution of 1972.

He said there is no other way but to include the rights of indigenous people in the constitution since the country has ratified the international laws regarding rights of the indigenous people.

Justice Sobhan said according to the constitution all citizens are equal before the law but the lands of indigenous people are not yet recorded in their names.

This tendency that started from the British period is still going on and it needs to be changed immediately, he added.

"The country will make further progress when the constitution will be amended," Justice Sobhan said, adding, "Political will is a must to amend the constitution."

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said the issue of indigenous people is purely political.

"It is unfortunate that the rights of ethnic minorities were not recognised in the constitution though we, the Bangalees, have achieved international recognition for our language and culture," he said, adding, "This is a great mistake and

we have been paying for it."

Menon said in order to achieve constitutional recognition of indigenous people it is a must to incorporate their movement into the mainstream politics.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh Muzahidul Islam Selim said the indigenous people should be termed national minority from the demographic point of view.

"We have to think that this country is not for the Bangalees alone... many other ethnic minorities also live here," he said, adding that, "We are equal partners and they are also entitled to enjoy equal rights."

Lt Gen (Retd) M Harun-Ar-Rashid Bir Pratik, former chief of army staff, said there should be some apparatus to implement the rights of indigenous people apart from constitutional recognition.

"We fought for a non-communal and exploitation-free country but we are still deprived in many sectors," he said.

Referring to army deployment in CHT areas, he said it is a political issue and it should be addressed politically.

Advocate Alena Khan, executive director of Bangladesh Manabdhikar Bastabayan

Sangstha, said rights of indigenous people should be ensured through specific laws besides keeping them in the constitution.

Speaking as chief guest, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, former adviser to caretaker government, said introduction of primary education in their mother tongue along with Bangla and English is a must to ensure their rights.

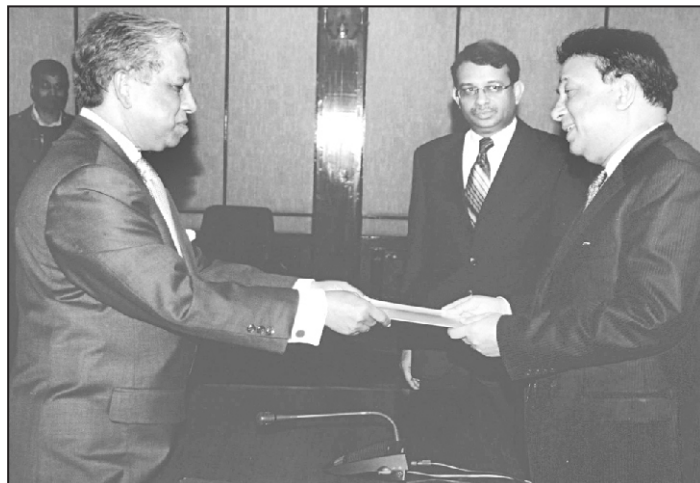
He suggested appointment of indigenous teachers who have adequate knowledge both in Bangla and English at the primary level.

A research conducted jointly by Prof Mesbah Kamal and Barrister Sadia Arman was presented in the meeting.

Moderated by Farah Kabir, country director of Action Aid, the meeting was also addressed by Hasanul Haq Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, country director of The Hunger Project, and Promod Mankin, former lawmaker.



KAFCO Chairman Dr Md Nurul Amin and Chief Executive Officer Md Qaiser Jamil hand over a cheque for Tk 1.5 crore to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in the city recently in donation to the relief fund for flood victims.



AQL Chowdhury, OBE, chairman of the Eastern Bank Limited, hands over a cheque for Tk 30 lakh to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed for the relief fund. The employees of EBL contributed their one-day's salary to this fund.



Rakesh Mohan, chairman and managing director, Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, hands over a cheque for Tk 20 lakh to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed for the relief fund at his office recently.



President of Bangladesh Navy Family Welfare Association Begum Muneera Nizam distributes relief among flood-affected people at Sottigram in Manikganj on Sunday.



Salma Masud, president of Zonta Club IV, Dhaka, and other club members distribute relief materials among flood-affected students of Nabokali Girls' School at Badda recently.



Members of the Lions Club of Dhaka Karwan Bazar District 315-A1 distribute relief among flood-affected people at Baniyahuri in Ghior, Manikganj recently.

Activists of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote distribute relief among flood victims at Kayetpara in Rugganj yesterday.

FP official held for taking bribe in Madaripur

UNB, Madaripur

A Family Planning (FP) official was arrested for taking bribe at her office in Shibchar on Sunday morning.

The arrested was identified as Kohinor Begum, 45, senior visitor of the Family Planning office.

Acting on a tip-off, Rapid Action Battalion members arrested Kohinor Begum red-handed while she was taking bribe from a man at her office.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Mohammad Nurul Islam, father of Mohammad Nasir Uddin, director, external publicity of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, died at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday due to old-age complication. He was 82.

He left behind his wife, five sons, three daughters and host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.



Death anniversary

Bangladesh Air Force observed the 36th death anniversary of Shaheed Flight Lieutenant M Matiur Rahman Bir Shreshtho yesterday, says a press release.

A milad mahfil was held at the central mosques at all BAF Bases after Asr prayers. Officers and members of all ranks of the Bangladesh Air Force attended the milad.

In the morning, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Admin) Air Commodore Muhammad Abdur Rauf visited the grave of Matiur Rahman at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur and offered munajat.

Sharif Md Nurul Hossain



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Sharif Md Nurul Hossain, former additional district magistrate of Brahmanbaria, says a press release.

His family has requested all relatives, friends and well-wishers to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Saiful Islam Khan



Today is the eighth death anniversary of Saiful Islam Khan Shamim, a director of Islam Polymers and Plastics Ltd and Islam Jute Baling Company Ltd, says a press release.

His family members requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Some advisers plotting

FROM PAGE 16 fair election. But they [government] are showing discriminatory behaviour towards my party," said Hasina as quoted by her counsel Abdul Matin Khasru who met the AL chief at the special jail on the premises of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

Two other counsels Sahara Khatun and barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Tapos also met Hasina to discuss legal affairs of different cases filed against her.

"On the one hand, they [government] are filing false cases against me in a bid to eliminate me politically and to keep me out of next elections. On the other hand, they are allowing someone to carry on political activities and someone [Khaleda Zia] to hold teleconference," Matin quoted Hasina as saying.

"The present caretaker government is the outcome of the AL-led alliance's movements that stopped the 22 January election plotted by the BNP-Jamaat coalition. We hoped that we would get justice. But we are getting rather hostile behaviour," said the AL chief to her counsel.

It seems that the government is implementing the unfinished agenda of the BNP-Jamaat coalition, said the AL chief.

Matin told The Daily Star that Hasina termed the government's behaviour 'unjust, partisan, discriminatory and imbalanced'. "Where are the cases against those who plundered tens of thousands of crore taka in the five years of the BNP-Jamaat coalition government?" said

the AL president.

She also alleged that the government is not allowing her to see her ailing husband Dr Wazed Miah, a renowned nuclear scientist. While talking to Khasru, she termed the government's attitude 'inhuman' and said, "They [government] want to take me at 1:00 o'clock at night or in the early morning. Why should they disturb my husband at midnight?"

The AL president also directed her party leaders to help the flood victims.

JMB convict dies in police custody

UNB, Mymensingh

A convicted patron of the executed JMB kingpin Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai died at Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) yesterday.

Hospital and prison sources said Shamsul Haque, 45, who was a village doctor, suddenly fell sick in the district central jail.

He was brought to the hospital where he died on arrival at 11:00am. Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Shamsul, along with his 15 associates, from Dulla area of Muktagachha on May 7 this year on charge of patronising Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activities, including giving shelter to Bangla Bhai.

1,000 acres of khas land reclaimed in Jessore

UNB, Jessore

Around 1,000 acres of khas land worth about Tk 30 crore were reclaimed from illegal occupants in the district in the last seven months.

This was disclosed at an annual revenue meeting of the district administration at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room recently.

The reclaimed lands belong to Zila Parishad, pourashava and Roads & Highways department and also includes water bodies.

With the help of the joint forces, the district administration also demolished unauthorised structures on those lands.

The present government soon after taking over the office in January decided to evict land grabbers and recover khas lands across the country.

At the meeting, the district administration also gave certificates to different land officials of eight upazilas of the district for playing an effective role in the eviction drive.

Deputy Commissioner Abul Hossain also called upon the land officials to perform their duties with honesty and sincerity.



Dhaka Bank officials distribute relief among flood victims at Araihaazar in Narayanganj recently.



Members of the Lions Club of Dhaka Karwan Bazar District 315-A1 distribute relief among flood-affected people at Baniyahuri in Ghior, Manikganj recently.

Ecneec okays Padma Bridge, ID card projects

FROM PAGE 16 approved Tk 10,162 crore for the Padma bridge project. Of Donors will provide Tk 6,881 crore for the project as loans and grants.

Of the donors' loans, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will give \$350 million, World Bank \$300 million and JBIC \$300 million. The DFID and Netherlands government will provide \$140 million and \$80 million as grants.

Sources said the 5.58 km bridge will be built at Mawa-Jajira site and it will have road, rail, telecommunication and power lines on it.

Drafting of the structural plan of the country's longest bridge will start

between January and February next year. Construction will start in 2009 and is likely to be completed by 2014.

Under the bridge project, Tk 538 crore has been allocated for acquisition of land and rehabilitation programme, and work on these has already begun.

For voter list with photographs, donors will give Tk 345 crore as loans while the total expenditure will be Tk 547 crore. Sources said preparation of voter list and providing them identity cards would end by October next year.

The next general election is due to be held by the end of next year.

"On behalf of the Chief Adviser, I am confirming the matter again that the next parliamentary election will be held within the time frame as described in the roadmap," Mirza Aziz said.

He said the project would continue yet after the election, as under it the government will prepare digital data bank of voters and ways to update it regularly.

The Ecneec-approved projects include second phase of circular waterways around Dhaka city, and Tk 48 crore will be spent on it. Sources said under the second phase, three major canals in the capital will be recovered from encroachers and connected with the circular waterways.

The other projects are small-scale water resources development project involving a total expenditure of Tk 454 crore with project aid Tk 320 crore.

The ADB-funded emergency rehabilitation project (revised) for the 2004 flood-damaged rural infrastructure -- total expenditure Tk 553 crore, project aid Tk 388 crore,

Balipara bridge construction project at Tishal-Nandail-Tarail over the Brahmaputra river-- expenditure Tk 39 crore

Renovation project for Bangladesh Railway's Lalmoni-hat-Burimari section -- expenditure 150 crore

Renovation project for Bangladesh railway's Rajshahi-Rohanpur border and Amnura-Chapainabagan sections, total expenditure tk 155 crore

Pilot Scheme (2nd revised) for prepaid metering -- total expenditure Tk 40 crore, project aid Tk 30 crore

Renovation and modernisation of units 3,4 and 5 of Ashuganj Power Station Complex project (2nd revised) with a total expenditure of Tk 940 crore, project aid 271 crore.

Lodised salt making project to meet iodine deficiency 2nd phase (revised) -- total expenditure Tk 62 crore, project aid Tk 32 crore.

They concealed property of Tk 8,02,88,489 in their wealth state-

ments submitted to the ACC.

MAMUN CASE

The IO of an extortion case against Mamun yesterday submitted a petition to allow him to interrogate Mamun at the Dhaka Central Jail gate.

ASI Abu Sayeed filed an arms case against Dipjol and his wife with Mirpur Police Station.

The investigation officer (IO) pressed charges against them on April 8, showing 13 people as prosecution witnesses.

Dipjol, an accused in 11 more criminal cases on charges of murder, extortion and abduction, is on the run.

PINTU CASE

ACC Assistant Director Nasiruddin Ahmed yesterday submitted a petition to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court for showing Pintu arrested in a case for giving false wealth statements.

The ACC sought permission to allow them to interrogate Pintu at the Dhaka Central Jail gate for concealing income of Tk 20,19,25,409 in the wealth statements submitted to the ACC.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman granted the petition and allowed them to interrogate Pintu at the jail gate.

The case was filed with Hazaribagh Police Station against Pintu and his wife Nasima Akhter Kalpana on June 13.

HUDA-SIGMA CASE

ACC Assistant Director SM Shahidur Rahman, also the IO of the case, yesterday submitted a petition to allow him to interrogate Huda and Sigma at the Dhaka Central Jail gate in connection with a graft case.

The court fixed today for issuing order in this regard.

The case was filed with the Dhanmondi Police Station against them on July 13 for submitting false wealth statements.

They concealed property of Tk 8,02,88,489 in their wealth state-

ments submitted to the ACC.

MAMUN CASE

The IO of an extortion case against Mamun yesterday submitted a petition to allow him to interrogate Mamun at the Dhaka Central Jail gate.

Metropolitan Magistrate KM Ruhul Amin will make decision today in this regard.

The case was filed with the Gulshan Police Station in March this year.

KOKO CASE

A Dhaka court yesterday directed a Gulshan police to submit the probe report of an extortion case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko by September 24.

Metropolitan Magistrate Ruhul Amin passed the order after the general recording officer (GRO) placed the case docket before the court.

Earlier, the same court directed the police to submit the probe report on several occasions but they did not submit it.

Abu Ahmed Jayed An Rabbi filed the case with Gulshan Police Station against Koko and his two brothers-in-law -- Mustaqin Reza and Muktaqin Reza - for extorting Tk 1.20 crore.

HARUN CASE

A special court yesterday indicted detained former BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid of Chapainawabganj and two others in a corruption case, fixing August 26 for commencing trial with deposition by the prosecution witnesses, reports UNB.

All the accused, standing in the dock, pleaded not guilty, when judge Begum Shamsunnahar of the special court set up at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan, read out the charges against them.

Anti-Corruption Commission

(ACC) Assistant Director Monayem Hossain filed the case. The two other accused are private television channel ntv boss Enayetur Rahman Bappi and Sky Auto owner Ishtaq Sadiq.

Police arrested them on March 7. They were accused of evading tax in importing a luxurious vehicle by abusing duty-free car import privilege for the members of parliament.

According to the case statement, former BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid purchased the vehicle, a Hummer H2, on April 25, 2005 using his duty-free privilege and sold it to Istiaq violating rules. Istiaq later sold the vehicle to Bappi.

BABUL CASE

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has sued Daily Jugantor's chairman Nurul Islam Babul, his wife and son for acquiring huge wealth illegally and concealing facts in their wealth statement, reports BSS.

Babul's wife and publisher of the daily Salma Islam, and her son Shamim Islam were accused in the case for their connivance in acquiring the assets.

ACC Deputy Director Sharmin Ferdous filed the case with Ramna police station on Sunday.

In the case, Sharmin Ferdous said Nurul Islam Babul and his family members concealed information about property of Tk 4.40 crore in the wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

According to the FIR, Babul in his wealth statement devalued the price of a building at plot no-8 of Gulshan and another building at Kamarkhola in Nawabganj.

Babul concealed information about purchasing 2,769.635 decimals of land in his name and his investment of Tk 32 lakh in Jamuna

Electric Engineering Co and over Taka 96 lakh in other businesses.

In an inquiry, the ACC found the information provided by Babul false in which he told that he received Taka 7.64 crore as donation from 455 persons on various occasions.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Young Researchers' Forum (YRF), a research wing of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), organises a seminar on 'Foreign investment in energy sector and energy security: The context of Bangladesh'. Venue: Faculty of Business Studies auditorium. Time: 2:00pm.

Inauguration

The inauguration of the online insurance system of Jibon Beema Corporation will be held. Venue: Corporation office. Time: 3:00pm.

Roundtable

Journalist Society for Human Rights and Welfare organises a roundtable titled 'Efforts of the caretaker government in upholding democracy'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Conference

The annual action plan conference of National Local Government Institute (NLGI) will be held. Venue: NLGI, Agargaon. Time: 9:30am.

Workshop

Centre for Development and Competitive Strategies organises a two-day workshop titled 'Promoting customer responsiveness in the healthcare sector of Bangladesh beginning from today'. Venue: Hotel Summer Palace. Time: 9:30am.