

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Involve marginal people in formulating law

Academics tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Academics and civil society members at a discussion yesterday called for creating mass awareness and involving marginal people in formulating the right to information act.

They also stressed the need for setting up government information offices at the grassroots levels to change the 'culture of secrecy' and bridge the gaps between the government and people, and between the private sectors and people.

The discussion titled 'People's ownership on public information: Bridging strategy' was held on the last day of the three-day programme organised by Massline Media Centre at LGED auditorium in the city in association with Manusher Jonno, Article 19 and World Bank marking the Right to Information Day of September 28.

"The draft of right to information act should be widely circulated seeking public opinion and be enacted as soon as possible to strengthen democracy, good gov-

ernance and accountability at every sphere of life," said Mahbubul Alam, former adviser to the caretaker government.

Speaking as chief guest, he said ownership of information lies with the people, but it is preserved by the government.

So the government must provide people with information on demand, he added.

Mahbubul Alam, also editor of The Independent, said the information offices at district and divisional headquarters could be rearranged, so that people as well as the journalists have better access to information.

Due to government service rules, the public servants usually do not want to share information, which slowly led to a culture of secrecy that must be changed for transparency of the government as well as of the private and NGO sectors, he observed.

Speaking as guest of honour, Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Iftekharuzzaman said establishing public ownership on the right to information act (draft) is very

important, and as an opportunity has been created now, the act could be promulgated immediately and then may be amended if necessary.

"We should not delay in promulgating the act, because we saw how it was ignored for years," he said, adding that available information is also not properly used by people for their ignorance about their rights.

The issue of right to information is not only a government issue, Iftekharuzzaman said, adding, "If private sectors like corporate bodies and NGOs are not transparent, then they do not have the right to ask the government to give information."

Presenting the keynote paper, Associate Professor Shameem Reza of Dhaka University said only some civil society members and NGOs were involved in the movement for right to information, but participation of marginal people was not ensured.

The common people are little aware of the right to information, he said, adding that involving people in the movement is important for effective enforcement of

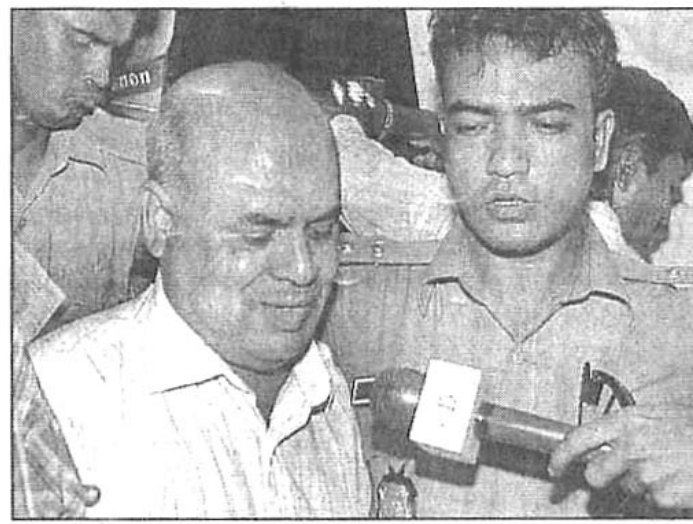
the act.

To bridge the gap between the government and people, Shameem suggested utilising information officer at the district level and using their mobile film units in creating awareness about the right to information and its impact on people.

"Our authoritarian mentality will have to be changed for bringing a change in information regime," said Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, who presided over the session.

World Bank Senior Public Sector Specialist Saku Akmeemana said people at the top like bureaucrats and politicians should also be involved in the movement of right to information, besides involving marginal people.

Former chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Marghuburshid also spoke at the discussion participated by journalists from across the country, rights activists and civil society members.



Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) President Sadrul Amin, left, and General Secretary Anwar Hossain, right, were produced before the judicial probe commission of Justice Habibur Rahman Khan at the Circuit House at Bailey Road in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



PHOTO: STAR

INT'L DAY OF OLDER PERSONS TODAY

'80pc people deprived of social protection in old age'

DU CORRESPONDENT

The International Day of Older Persons 2007 will be observed in the country today, as elsewhere around the globe with the slogan 'Addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing'.

The UN General Assembly designated October 1 the International Day of Older Persons in 1990 and the Day has been being observed across the world since 1991.

On the occasion, various socio-cultural organisations chalked out different programmes in the city.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in a message said population

ageing brings significant economic and social challenges for developed and developing countries alike.

He said, "Some 80 percentage of the world's population are not covered by social protection in old age. Finding ways to provide economic support for a growing number of older persons, through sustainable pension programme and new social protection measures is a daunting task, particularly in developing countries."

"Older persons now have many opportunities to keep contributing to society beyond any set retirement age. Our views on what it means to be old are changing all the time. Where older persons were sometimes seen as a burden on society, they are now increasingly

recognised as an asset that can and should be tapped."

Ban Ki-moon hoped together, taking a balanced approach to both the challenges and opportunities of ageing, all will be able to give life to their shared vision of a society for all ages.

Bangladesh Prabehn Hitoishi Sangha will hold a discussion on Prabehn Bhaban premises in the city at 10:00am.

Bangladesh Jatisangha Samiti will accord a reception to three veteran personalities. They are artist Prof Shafiqul Amin, musician Sudhin Das and Begum magazine Editor Nurzahan Begum.

Officers Club Dhaka will hold a discussion on "Elderly people's contribution in building a nation" at Bailey Road at 4:00pm.

Arrange polls as soon as possible

Hannan Shah urges CG

UNB, Gazipur

BNP Chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (Retd) ASM Hannan Shah yesterday said the caretaker government should hand over power after arranging an election as soon as possible.

Referring to the recent commitment of chief adviser that a non-elected government should not stay long in power, Hannan Shah said, "If he believes so then power should be handed over to an elected government as soon as possible."

He made these remarks while he went to Gazipur to appear before a court in an extortion case.

He said the people are still confident on the leaderships of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. "If anyone wants to challenge their leaderships then he/she can file candidature against them."

He said the government should take action against Mannan Bhuiyan after a proper investigation as questions were raised about him in public mind.

Hannan Shah said the LGRD ministry was the number one in the corruption list in the TIB report but the minister of the ministry was excluded from the list of corrupt people.

Talking about simultaneous movement of BNP and Awami League, he said it (movement) is possible on the issues of establishing democracy and running the government by the elected representatives.

October to be observed as Breast Cancer Awareness Month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will observe the month of October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month as elsewhere in the world.

On the occasion, Bangladesh Cancer Foundation (BCF) chalked out a month-long 'breast cancer awareness and service' programme to provide the patients with treatment and screening facilities on discount with a view to creating awareness in the society.

The cancer registry report of National Cancer Research Institute and Hospital says as the rate of breast cancer among the women is increasing in the country, it is a must to address the issue as early as possible since breast cancer is curable if it is detected and intervened early.

Under the month-long BCF programme, one can receive primary test by trained female physicians and counselling of expert surgical and medical oncologists if she gets registered with Tk 100. At the same time, necessary examination is offered at 35 to 50 percent discount rate and reduced cost for cancer operation and chemotherapy.

The services will be delivered from 3:00pm to 6:00pm throughout the month of October at Bangladesh Cancer Foundation (BCF) Hospital.

Five to die for killing girl after gangrape

UNB, Laxmipur

A special tribunal here yesterday sentenced five youths to death for killing an adolescent girl after gangrape.

The convicts are Monu Mia, Babul, Bellal, Abdul Karim and Ismail Hossain, of Duttapara union in Sadar upazila. Of them, Monu Mia, Babul and Bellal are absconding.

According to the prosecution, the convicts raped an unidentified adolescent girl at a vegetable field in Duttapara union on the night of April 18, 2004 and left the girl in an unconscious state.

Later, a village choudkdar rescued the girl and rushed her to Sadar Hospital where she died few days after admission. He also filed a case with Sadar Police Station in this regard.

After examining the records and witnesses, Judge M Mujibul Kamal found them guilty and handed down the verdict.

Order to freeze accounts of former Ctg DC, port project director, wives

UNB, Chittagong

Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday ordered to freeze the bank accounts of former deputy commissioner of Chittagong M Hasan, former project director of Chittagong Port Khairul Mostafa and their wives.

The court order came upon a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

M Hasan and his wife have 11 accounts while Mostafa and his wife have nine accounts with different banks.

Both Hasan and Mostafa were arrested in February this year on corruption charges. Hasan is now enlarged on bail.

Transport businessman murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a partially decomposed body of a transport businessman that was floating in the river Buriganga on Saturday night.

The victim was identified as Rabin Barman, 40, a resident of South Keraniganj.

Police sources said that on Tuesday night Shaheen, a land broker by profession, called Rabin out of his house and since then he had been missing.

On Wednesday, Rabin's brother filed an abduction case with South Keraniganj Police Station accusing Shaheen. Later, police arrested Shaheen in this connection.

Meanwhile, on Saturday night police recovered the body and sent it to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue. Rabin's family members identified his body at the morgue yesterday morning.

His family members claimed that Rabin owed Tk 2 lakh to Shaheen and on Tuesday Shaheen called him out of his house saying that he would be paying them money back.



PHOTO: STAR

Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal speaks at a discussion on the occasion of National Girl Child Day at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right are Ranjan Karmaker, Mahbuba Nasrin and Rebeka Sultana. Steps Towards Development organised the meeting.

Discrimination against girl child an impediment to dev

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 8th National Girl Child Day was observed with due festivity across the country to promote the rights and opportunities of girl child.

To mark the occasion, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in association with the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum organised a colourful rally and a discussion meeting in the city.

Adviser to the ministry Geeti Ara Safiya inaugurated the rally which was participated by the representatives of around 30 organisations.

Starting from the Public Library at Shahbagh the rally ended at the Shishu Academy.

Speaking as chief guest at the discussion at the Shishu Academy, Geeti Ara said half of the country's population are women, and as such

it is not possible to move forward by keeping them behind.

Considering this the government has taken various steps for the development of women in the country, she added.

The adviser said discrimination against girl child is an impediment to national advancement.

Highlighting the significance of the day, Chairman of Shishu Academy Mushfeka Ifiat said the girl children should be provided with equal rights so that they can overcome various obstacles that they face from their childhood.

Secretary to women and children affairs ministry Rokeya Sultana, President of National Girl Child Advocacy Forum Dr Badul Alam Majumder, Dr Halima Khatun and Latifa Akand of Dhaka University, litterateurs Indadul Haque Milon

and Anisul Haque also spoke with a call for eliminating existing discriminations against girl child as these are hampering national progress.

The discussion was followed by a cultural function and prize distribution among the winners of an art competition.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) also organised art competition, discussion and cultural function at four different places on this occasion.

Around 500 children took part in these programmes.

While inaugurating a programme, BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali highlighted the present situation of girl children and the story of their deprivation.

She also pledged to work for upholding the dignity of the children.

Thai donations for flood victims

BSS, Dhaka

The Thai embassy in Bangladesh and Thai nationals living here donated around Tk five lakh to the Relief and Welfare Fund of the Chief Adviser and Tk 11,42,600 to three non-governmental organisations (NGO).

Thai Ambassador to Bangladesh Suphat Chitranakroh handed over the cheque of the donation to Food and Disaster Management Adviser Tapan Chowdhury at his office in the city yesterday.

The Thai embassy and Thai nationals jointly raised the fund through four charity fairs titled 'Food against flood: Helping hands for relief'.

The NGOs that received the donation are Uttaran Mohila Sangstha of Sittarganj, Gono Unnayan Kendra and Village Education Resource Centre.

Adviser Tapan Chowdhury appreciated the cooperation of the Thai embassy and Thai nationals for Bangladesh people.

The Thai envoy said Bangladesh would get more relief from Thailand collected by the Buddhist monks in Thailand for the flood-affected people.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong division and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Khulna, Dhaka, Barisal and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sayedpur and lowest 23.3 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:46pm today and rises at 5:50am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.7	26.9	79	73
Chittagong	30.0	24.3	97	80
Rajshahi	33.8	26.0	85	77
Khulna	33.5	26.0	84	89
Barisal	32.7	25.5	92	90
Sylhet	32.5	25.2	--	--
Cox's Bazar	30.7	23.3	96	83

GRAFT CHARGE

Ex-PM Hasina's APS Alaaddin Nasim resigns

UNB, Dhaka

Alaaddin Ahmed Choudhury (Nasim), Deputy Secretary (OSD) of Establishment Ministry and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's APS, has resigned from his post following publication of a new list of suspected corrupts by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In a press release, Nasim, now in Canada on leave, said he was not involved in corruption during his 18-year professional life and has never been criticised because of corruption.

He said he and his physician wife, who earned money through share business and some other small businesses, regularly paid income tax and submitted their tax return to the NBR.

"I firmly believe, I would not have fallen in such a disgraceful situation if I had not worked in the prime minister's and opposition leader's office. And I think, I'm a helpless victim of sick political situation," he said.

"Considering the overall situation, I'm tendering my unconditional resignation from the government service considering myself morally unfit for the post."

The new list of 80 high profile corrupt suspects, including politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats, was published in different newspapers on Friday.

ACI director

Rafiqul Islam

passes away

Rafiqul Islam Khan, director of ACI Limited and former managing director of National Bank Ltd, passed away in India yesterday, says a press release.

He was also general manager of Durrani International Exchange Kuwait, director of Gulf Overseas Exchange LLC, Oman and director of Nepal Arab Bank Ltd. He was the treasurer of Dhaka University Geography Alumni Association and the vice-president of the Volley Ball Federation.

He is survived by his wife Hasina Montaz, a singer, and son Shibli Rubayatul Islam, assistant professor of Banking Department of Dhaka University.

Sarah Jabir BSS, Dhaka

Sarah Jabir, wife of late justice Abdullah Jabir of Bangladesh Supreme Court, passed away due to old age complications on Saturday at the age of 79.

She left behind five sons, three sisters, a brother, grandchildren and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Her qukhani will be held on October 5 at her residence at 75/1, Indira Road in the city at 3:00pm.

Death anniversary

Today is the second death anniversary of Lutfur Rahman, an eminent photographer, says a press release.

Lutfur Rahman took many rare pictures during the liberation war and electoral campaigns of 1954 and 1970.

He also took the photograph of Bangabandhu that is printed on the Tk 10 note. He also worked for Bangladesh Betar for a long time.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his Mohakhali residence in the city.

Kamal Mahmud

Today is the seventh death anniversary of artist Kamal Mahmud, says a press release.

On the occasion, Centre for Bangladesh Culture will hold a memorial meeting at Jatiya Press Club in the city on October 27.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1971 people were killed in the last nine months across the country due to various reasons, says a report of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC).

Of them, 1542 people were killed in social violence, 128 by law enforcement agencies, 94 for dowry, 40 lynched, 48 killed after rape and 18 died for negligence in treatment.

Besides, 33 politicians, three journalists, nine domestic aides

were killed apart from 56 who lost their lives in border incidents.

The total number of rape victim was 182 of whom two women were raped in jail custody.

A total of 38 died in the jail custody while 60 were victims of traffic accidents.

The report was prepared on the basis of the records of BHRC and stories published in different national dailies.

Expressing deep concern over the killings, the commission said the law and order cannot be termed as 'satisfactory'.



PHOTO: STAR

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manjurul Ahsan Khan speaks at a press conference at the CPB office in the city yesterday. On his left is CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services organises a seminar on 'Outsourcing in Finland: A case study of Scandinavian countries'. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Officers' Club, Dhaka organises a discussion on the occasion of Aged Day 2007. Venue: Club auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Workshop

Ministry of Agriculture, Pali Kama-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) will jointly organise a two-day workshop on scaling up comprehensive Monga mitigation beginning from today. Venue: LGED auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Ministry of Social Welfare and Bangladesh Association for the Aged will jointly organise a discussion on the

occasion of International Aged Day. Venue: Prabehn Bhaban premises. Time: 10:00am.

Dialogue

National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled organises a dialogue to mark the Child Rights Week. Venue: LGED seminar room. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

Liver Foundation of Bangladesh organises a seminar on the occasion of World Hepatitis Awareness Day. Venue: BIRDEM auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Sanitation Month

The inaugural ceremony of Sanitation Month 2007 will be held. Venue: Osmani Memorial Auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Rotary Dhaka

The regular weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 5:00pm.