

Set up local govt commission to ensure good governance

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An independent local government commission should be formed to make the local government bodies effective and ensure good governance at the grassroots level, experts at a roundtable said yesterday.

The commission, which would monitor the action plan, budget and other development activities of the local government bodies, should be accountable to parliament or parliamentary standing committee, they said.

The speakers also suggested that members of the commission should be appointed through a search committee comprising political leaders, professors, economists and civil society members.

The Governance Coalition along with 27 local NGOs organised the roundtable on 'Local Government Commission: Responsibility and Scope of Activities' at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to the caretaker government, said the existing local government institutions are the branches of the central government and such a system does not exist in any other country.

"I support the concept of an independent local government commission for strengthening the local government. The local government will have to be independent and all the bodies, including zila, upazila and union parishads should be formed through elections," he said while addressing as the chief guest.

He also said it is high time to set up an independent local govern-

Observer staffs to observe hunger strike

Nov 5

Journalists, workers and employees of The Bangladesh Observer and the Weekly Chitrali will observe a token hunger strike on November 5 at the Observer House in the city to press home their demand for immediate payment of salary arrears and other dues, says a press release.

They decided this at a general meeting at the newspaper's office on Sunday.

Presided over by Md Ashraf Ali, Bangladesh Observer unit chief of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), the meeting was addressed by Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Belayet Hossain, Solimuddin Selim, Pranayan Khisha, Nazrul Islam, Zahurul Huq, ATM Solaiman and Shahjahan Mozumder.

They urged the government to compel the owners to pay the legal dues and wages of journalists, workers and employees of the newspaper who are now passing their days in distress.

They also formed a 27-member Action Committee with Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury as its convener and Ashraf Ali, Belayet Hossain and Salimuddin Selim as joint conveners.

ment commission, as all previous political governments opposed the decentralisation of power.

Economist Dr Atiur Rahman, chairman of Unnayan Shamannay, said the country's development can be ensured through localising the development.

"Every local bodies will have to set a target to achieve its millennium development goal (MDG). And the proposed commission would help the local government bodies to reach their MDG targets, expediting the development process," he said.

Police, RMG workers clash in N'ganj: 33 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Workers of a garment factory went on a rampage in Fatulla industrial area yesterday over termination of jobs, leading to a clash with police that left 30 workers and three policemen injured.

During the rampage, hundreds of workers of Merina Apparels in Dapa barricaded Dhaka-Narayanganj old road and the link road for about one hour and vandalised seven or eight garment factories and 14 vehicles.

Book vendor shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown miscreants shot dead a book vendor in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Jasim Sarker, 26, son of Julhas Sarker of West Rajabazar under Teigaon Police station.

He used to sell books on the footpath at Farmgate area. Police arrested Iqbal Hossain and his former employee Alamgir Hossain jhony, in this connection.

20 Yaba tablets seized, 2 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) seized 20 Yaba tablets from a house at Shantibagh in the city and arrested two traders in this connection yesterday morning.

The arrestees are Muhammad Yasin, 26, and Shahjahan Hossain Dablu, 26.

The team also seized some Saudi and Kuwaiti currency, a passport and Tk 4600 from the house.

Meanwhile, Rab arrested three more youths from two areas in the city with a big haul of Yaba yesterday.

'6th Wage Board Award by Nov'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain has said the 6th Wage Board Award for journalists, press workers and general employees of newspapers and news agencies will be announced by November.

"It is totally ready and will be announced soon," he told reporters at the information ministry yesterday.

Since the announcement of the 5th Wage Board Award in 1996, no new wage board award has been announced for journalists, workers and employees of newspapers and news agencies although the government constituted two National Pay Commissions during the period.

Moreover, prices of all essentials have been hiked several times during this period.

Without detailing what will be there in the announcement, Mainul underscored the need for strengthening economic activities in the country for ensuring improvement of living standard of all professionals including journalists.

However, journalists' leaders have expressed their concern that the announcement may not have the structure of salary, allowances and other facilities as recommended by the 6th Wage Board.

On July 21, 2005 the government constituted the 11-member 6th Wage Board with retired Judge of the Appellate Division M Fazlul Haque as its chairman to fix salaries, allowances and other benefits for the journalists, press workers and general employees of newspapers and news agencies.

Some wage board members, who submitted the final recommendations to the government by the middle of last year, alleged that the government has brought changes to board's recommendations.

"We have already urged the government for fixing a ceiling of house rent without making it a certain percentage of the basic salary," Ruhul Amin Gazi, a member of the 6th Wage Board, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also protested the move that requires the employees to pay the income tax on their salary and allowances.

Another member of the board protested cutting conveyance allowance for employees and reducing gratuities from three to two.

Law doesn't allow

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restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order. Provide that no person shall have the right to form, or be a member or otherwise take part in the activities of any communal or other association or union which in the name or on the basis of any religion has for its object, or pursues, a political purpose," says Article 38 of the 1972 constitution.

But in 1976, the military government led by Ziaur Rahman repealed the restriction by issuing a martial law proclamation, allowing formation and functioning of organisations based on religion. Since then the relevant article of the constitution says every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order or public health.

The military regime however did not repeal the SPA provision that imposed restriction on formation or operation of any association on the basis of religion.

"No person shall form, or be a member or otherwise take part in the activities of, any communal or other association or union which in the name or on the basis of any religion has for its object, or pursues, a political purpose," says Sub-section 1 of Section 20 of the SPA.

The SPA also states the procedure of taking actions against such association and union formed on the basis of religion.

Sub-section 2 of Section 20 of the SPA says where the government is satisfied that an association or union has been formed or is operating in contravention of the provisions of Sub-section (1), it may, after hearing the person or persons concerned, declare, by notification in the official gazette, that the association or union has been formed or is operating in contravention of the provisions of Sub-section (1), and upon such declaration, the association or union concerned shall stand dissolved and all its properties and funds shall be forfeited to government.

"Any person who, after the dissolution of an association or union under Sub-section (2), holds himself out as a member or office bearer of that association or union, or acts for, or otherwise takes part in the activities of, that association or union, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both," says Sub-section 3 of Section 20 of the Act.

Since the constitutional ban was repealed in 1976, Islamic political parties and organisations have mushroomed in the country. No one knows the number of such parties and other organisations as neither the government nor the Election Commission (EC) has any accurate figures on them.

Government intelligence agencies' records however showed existence and activities of about 100 Islamic political parties and organisations since repeal of the ban, and of around 11 in between 1964 and 1971, sources said.

Of the existing parties and organisations apparently based on Islam, some have been identified as militant outfits. And the government banned four of them -- Shahadat-e-Al Hiqma, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Harkat-ul Jihad -- during 2003 to 2005. Some organisations were accused of patronising the militant groups.



Artists sing folk songs on a truck in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday in a campaign to raise awareness about how eye health can be improved. The Mass-line Media Centre organised the programme to mark the World Sight Day.

BDR hands list of 1,591 criminals to BSF

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"Of the killed, 94.5 percent were shot during night. Innocent people do not cross border illegally at night," Mitra observed.

The BDR chief reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to implement the 1974 Mujib-India border agreement and the 1975 Bangladesh-India border guidelines for resolving problems regarding construction of defence infrastructures, barbed-wire fences and other installations.

A proposal of building a flyover connecting Dahagram and Angapota with the Bangladesh's mainland is under consideration, Mitra said replying a question on Bangladesh people's unhindered access to the enclaves.

The conference decided that the BSF chief would request his government for effective steps to demarcate the 6.5-km common boundary, which includes 2 km in Muhurir Char, 1.5 km in Doikhatra and 3 km in Lathitia.

On handing over of Bangladeshis criminals hiding in India, the BSF DG said three Bangladeshis criminals had already been deported and more criminals who are facing charges in Kolkata courts would be sent back after declaration of court judgements likely in a few days.

Mitra welcomed dismantling of two "Indian insurgents' camps" in the Chittagong Hill Tracts recently.

His counterpart, however, refused to term those as insurgents' camps, saying, "We've tore down two bamboo-made abandoned huts. There is no evidence who had been using those."

There is a long patch in the CHT region, which is not manned by the BDR, he said, adding there is information that criminals hide there for a few days and leave soon.

Talking about the BSF claim of 141 insurgent camps, Shakil Ahmed said, "We've investigated but have not found any evidence in support of the claim."

The BSF chief said he would ask the Indian government to transform the temporary pillars into permanent ones along a 35.5-km frontline in Berubari, Shingipara-Kudhipara in Panchagarh.

Although most of the development works along the border were completed in last six months, some relating to river training and river embankments need to be done under the supervision of the Joint River Commission, he said.

Asked whether Ulfia leader Anup Chetia, now in a Bangladesh jail, would be handed over to India in exchange of Bangladeshis criminals, Shakil Ahmed rejected the possibility straight away adding that the matter did not come up for discussion since it is beyond the BDR-BSF jurisdictions.

Stressing the need for building fence at some points on the border to stop trans-border crime, the BSF DG said, "Bangladesh authorities are yet to respond in this regard."

Both the sides agreed to take effective steps to stop smuggling of illegal firearms, explosives, phensidyl, heroin and other drugs.

Shakil Ahmed and Ashish Mitra expressed hope that people in border areas would live in more peaceful environment from now on following adoption of positive approaches during the DG-level meet.

The BSF chief proposed frequent meetings at sector commander-level, preferably once a month, to consolidate mutual trust.

Mitra also asked the Bangladesh authorities to send some schoolchildren on a visit to India. India would also send schoolchildren to visit Bangladesh for the betterment of relation, he added.

Chowdhury and Rashed's wife Farhana Chowdhury from the charge sheet as their involvement was not found in the probe.

ACC Assistant Director Nurul Alam filed the case with Sutrapur Police Station against Maya and six others on June 13 for giving false information in their wealth statements submitted to the ACC.

Moreover, they earned Tk 6.29 crore illegally which was not mentioned in the wealth statements.

ABBAS CASE: Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman yesterday allowed the ACC to freeze two bank accounts of Abbas in a graft case.

The court passed the order after ACC Assistant Director Khairul Huda prayed for freezing two bank accounts that Abbas opened with Dhaka Bank at its Motijheel and Banani branches in the capital for the sake of proper investigation.

The case was filed with Ramna Police Station against Abbas and his wife Afroza Abbas for amassing wealth illegally.

In the case statement, ACC Assistant Director Shaiful Alam said they found that Abbas and his wife have assets worth Tk 3,348,581 which they did not mention in the wealth statements submitted to the ACC earlier.

Joint forces arrested Abbas on the ACC premises at Segunbagicha in the capital on February 25. CASE OF ZIAULHAQUE'S SON: Metropolitan Sessions Court Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque issued an arrest warrant against Masfiqul Haque, son of former state minister for LGED, after National Board of Revenue (NBR) Deputy Tax Commissioner Mamtaz Uddin filed the case against him for evading tax.

In his order, the judge mentioned that the charges brought against Masfiqul under sections 165/166 of Income Tax Ordinance 1984 were found to be true.

The NBR official mentioned that Masfiqul, proprietor of Royal Filling Station, evaded tax on his income of Tk 36,263,974 in fiscal years from 2002 to 2007.

Mainul refuses to comment on trial of war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday refused to comment on the demand for trial of war criminals terming the issue "complicated".

"If you ask me to talk about it, many things have to be said. I've already said many things. It will not be right for me to say anything about it now," he told the journalists after a meeting at the information ministry.

When his attention was drawn to Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed's recent statement that there is no war criminal in the country, Mainul asked the reporters not to involve him with anyone's statement.

"Those who are saying this now were in power earlier. But they failed to solve the issue then," the law adviser said.

"Will it be possible for me to give a solution now?" he asked.

15 workshops gutted in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

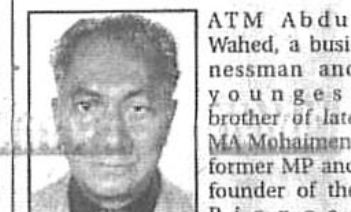
Fifteen metal workshops and machineries worth Tk 12 lakh were gutted in a fire at Mogtuli in the port city in the early hours of yesterday.

Fire sources said the fire originated from an electrical short circuit at a metal workshop at Mog Pukur Par of the area at around 5:20am and soon engulfed 14 other adjoining workshops.

Seven fire fighting units from different fire stations rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after an hour-long effort.

The loss in the fire was estimated at about Tk 12 lakh, added the sources.

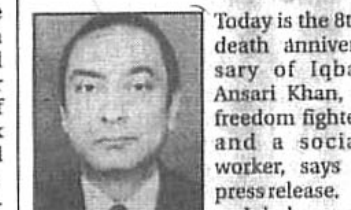
Obituary



ATM Abdul Wahed, a businessman and youngest brother of late MA Mohtamim, former MP and founder of the Pioneer Printing Press Ltd, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his Rajarbagh residence in the city on October 27 at the age of 76, says a press release.

He left behind one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Death anniversary



Today is the 8th death anniversary of Iqbal Ansari Khan, a freedom fighter and a social worker, says a press release.

Iqbal, son of late Ali Amjad Khan, was popularly known as 'Henry'. He was the vice president of both Jagannath College and Dhaka College Students' Union. He was also actively involved in the Language Movement.

Khan happened to be a powerful actor and was instrumental in building Drama Circle, the first group theatre.

He authored three books: 'The Third Eye', 'The Babri Mosque' and a collection of jokes.

Prof KM Nurul Huda

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Prof KM Nurul Huda, a former teacher at Chittagong University, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil and destitute feeding will be held at an orphanage in Chittagong.

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

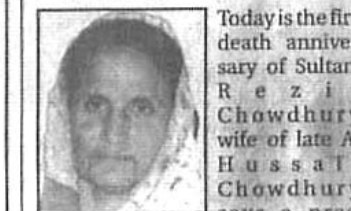
Abu Mosab

Today is the 12th death anniversary of Abu Mosab, former deputy general manager of Sonali Bank, says a press release.

On the occasion, a special doa mahfil will be held at his Ananda Road residence at Dhaka Cantonment.

Relatives, friends, colleagues and admirers have been requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for salvation of his departed soul.

Sultana Rezia Chowdhury



Today is the first death anniversary of Sultana Rezia Chowdhury, wife of late Ali Hossain Chowdhury, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for the salvation of her departed soul.

Hasina refuses to answer queries

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notice about the allegations. Then she will review the documents of the first information report (FIR) and consult her lawyers before answering them.

"To review all these I need at least two weeks, as nothing of these can be answered depending on memory," Hasina told the four-member investigators of the taskforce comprising ACC official, army personnel and police from Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The counsel said the investigating team could not confirm whether they would send Hasina any notice before such questioning or not.

The investigators including ACC Deputy Director Morshed Alam and taskforce official Major Humayun however stayed for about one and a half hours at the jail where the AL chief has been detained since July 16.

The ACC filed the case against her with Teigaon Police Station on September 2. It said Hasina and six others had taken Tk 3 crore as "donation" for the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust to approve three barge-mounted power plants depriving the lowest bidder.

Hasina yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the validity of the case under the emergency powers rules.

On the petition, Newaz said the hearing of the case is on and Hasina is waiting to get "positive news like order of stay and bail".

Before the investigators' arrival, Hasina's lawyers Khandakar Moniruzzaman and Barrister Fazle Noor Taposh met her and informed her about developments of different cases.

Taposh told The Daily Star the ACC did not notice the AL chief about the quizzing according to law.

He said they informed the ACC in the morning that they did not get any prior notice. "We have also asked them [ACC] to comply with rules and laws. Otherwise, it will be violation of laws."

He said the AL chief has again expressed her doubts that she would be "made" convicted by any

means. She also observed that she has been accused in different cases as part of evil designs against her, the lawyer said.

She also viewed that everything has been done in violation of laws. Laws are not followed in bringing charges against her. Hasina, eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, however expressed the hope that she would come out of prison through legal procedures.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 18.4 degree Celsius at Sitakundu.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:21pm today and rises at 6:04am 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	30.8	20.7	70	64
Chittagong	31.5	21.0	71	69
Rajshahi	31.0	20.3	82	79
Khulna	31.0	21.0	77	87
Barisal	31.2	19.5	83	91
Sylhet	31.5	20.0	68	70
Cox's Bazar	33.5	22.5	69	75