

Put UN Convention against Corruption into action

UN official urges countries

REZAUL KARIM, from Bali, Indonesia

A senior UN official has urged the countries to put the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) into action and take measures to enforce it strictly.

At the same time, he emphasised that everyone has a role to play -- not only the governments, but also parliamentarians, business, civil society, the media and the citizens.

"Corruption hurts us all, therefore fighting it is a shared responsibility -- we all have a duty and the power to say 'no' to corruption," said Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), at a press conference on UN Anti-Corruption Conference at Bali International Convention Centre yesterday.

He also highlighted the areas where UNODC and others can provide technical assistance -- for

example recovery of assets, a key feature in the anti-corruption convention.

But Costa warned that despite political will and good intentions, efforts to recover assets, for example through the World Bank/UNODC Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, are running into resistance from "middle-level bureaucrats with connections, knowledge and entrenched interests who have a lot to lose."

"Efforts to recover stolen national assets are being hindered in many countries by politicians and bureaucrats who have an entrenched interest in maintaining the status quo," he added.

In addition, Costa called on private businesses to take an active role in fighting institutionalised corruption, saying that in the past too many had encouraged or profited from government graft.

Costa proposed a Corporate

Integrity Charter to promote businesses' conformity to the UNCAC, as well as a body to review corporate compliance.

He also urged the delegates participating in the conference "to neutralise these black holes in your administrations."

The UN official said the countries need to explain what they have done to fight corruption and implement the anti-corruption convention while finding out what further tools and skills they need to build integrity.

He added that they should also develop a device to measure their progress in addressing corruption.

He stressed that it is time for business to be more part of the solution and less part of the problem.

He also called on multilateral organisations to lead by example. Their rules should meet the same high standards that governments are being asked to meet, he said.

SSC EXAMS 2010 Guardians for withdrawal of SQ method

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of guardians in the city yesterday demanded the government cancel the Structured Question (SQ) method, new type of question pattern for SSC examination to be introduced from 2010, since most of the teachers and students are still in dark about the new system.

They also urged the government to introduce the SQ method from class six instead of class nine so that students can be familiar with the new method from an early stage.

"The new SQ will be introduced from SSC examinations in 2010. The students who are now in class nine will sit for the SSC examinations under the new question method. But most of the teachers and students are in the dark about it," said Utpalla Bhattacharya, mother of a student of Class IX at the Ideal School and College in Dhaka, while addressing a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU).

She also said that only 10 percent teachers were trained about the SQ method and the pattern of SQ is not added in the new textbooks.

Raihan Rahman, a mother of another class IX student at the Ideal school, said panic seized the students because they are not getting proper guidelines from the textbooks and teachers.

"The system might be better. But students have no clear idea about it because they have to face the new system suddenly in class nine which is very difficult for them," said Yasmin Ara, another guardian of a student at the Viharunnisa Noon School.

Guardians from Motijheel Ideal School, Viharunnisa Noon School, Uttara High School, Central Government High School and Basabo High School also attended the press conference.

However, government had to defer the SQ system for a year in the face of strong protest by teachers, students and guardians.

Sources in the ministry said the introduction of structured questions is a component of a Tk 793-crore Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESD).

A structured question will ask several bits of information on a single topic. There will be 60 marks for structured questions, instead of 50 marks as is now customary with essay-type questions.

There will be 40 marks for multiple-choice questions, instead of 50. The new system will not be applicable to the English papers and the Bangla second paper.



Students of Dhaka University stage a demonstration on the campus yesterday demanding reduction in 55 percent quota in BCS examinations. (Story on Page 3)

Only 39pc people enjoy good sanitation

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only 39 percent people across the country are provided with good sanitation facilities although sanitation for all is supposed to be achieved by 2020, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

They added that the problem lies in demand side, not in supply side and this should be considered seriously.

Brac, Water Aid and IRC for Water Supply and Sanitation jointly organised the three-day regional workshop titled 'South Asia Sanitation and Hygiene' at Brac training centre at Rajendrapur yesterday where more than 50 participants from Pakistan, Nepal, India and Bangladesh took part and shared their experiences.

It is found that many people in the South Asian countries are not accustomed to using sanitary latrine and maintaining proper hygiene, which leads to different types of communicable diseases. It is not that they do not have access or cannot afford proper sanitation rather it is their culture and it is very much difficult to change people's behaviour, said speakers at the workshop that began yesterday with the slogan 'Beyond construction, use by all'.

Inaugurating the workshop, Executive Director of Brac, Mahabub Hossain said, "Setting up a sanitary latrine cannot do much. We have to ensure that people are using it. Because if we don't create

demand for sanitary latrine for them by creating awareness and educating on personal hygiene, they would not use it as there is a culture of open defecation in many places of the region."

"We will incorporate the knowledge from the workshop in our Water and Sanitation Programme," he said.

"It is a big challenge to change the behaviour of people who are not using sanitary latrine. Second challenge is how to make this sanitation available to the poor people living in slum areas and then to run affordable technology for community managed toilets that is important for urban sanitation," said Tom Palakudiyil, IRC head of Asia region, adding that in this workshop the participants will share the best practices and will find ways to motivate the policymakers for sustainable programmes in this regard.

He also suggested developing indigenous ways to teach people the use of sanitary latrine and motivate them to go through hygiene practice.

Joep Verhagan of IRC and Carolien van der Voorden of Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council also spoke at the inaugural session.

Criminal shot in gunfight with Rab in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged criminal was wounded in a gunfight between Rab and his gang in the city's Mohammadpur area early yesterday.

He was identified as Sajeeb alias Baro Khokon who was admitted to Orthopedic Hospital following his arrest.

Rab-2 said three to four criminals opened fire on a Rab patrol as the law enforcers challenged them at Mansurabad, ensuing a gunfight between the two sides.

At one stage, the criminals fled the scene, leaving a bullet-wounded Sajeeb behind, Rab added.



Prof Harun-or-Rashid speaks at a reception accorded to the teachers and students of Dhaka University, who were released recently, in front of Aparajeyo Bangla on DU campus yesterday. Bandhusava organised the reception.

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Dhaka Club President Sadat Hossain Salim and other executive committee members, on behalf of the club, distribute warm clothes to homeless people in the city on Monday.

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