

Nominate more women in elections

Speakers urge political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday called on the political parties to nominate more women in the upcoming election to increase women's participation in parliament.

Although women make up 50 percent of the total population, their participation in the policymaking is very poor, they said, adding that it is not possible to bring about qualitative changes in politics and strengthen democracy unless women are well represented in parliament.

Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) organised the dialogue entitled 'Women leadership and the upcoming national parliament election' at Jatiya Mahila Sangsadsa auditorium in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dr Nazma Chowdhury said women leadership is almost absent in all

the sectors.

"Vote is the main weapon of women and we have to use our votes to establish our rights. We have to encourage women to vote those political parties who nominate more women in the elections and also care about the development of women," she said.

She also suggested floating a non-political forum comprising women's organisations who work for the development of women.

Educationist Dr Dilara Chowdhury said, "We have to empower women to offset the negative impacts of globalisation as women are worst affected by them."

Women have played important roles in various fields, but they could not play any role in politics since they did not get any opportunities to do so, she said.

She suggested forming a forum of women, which will help women contest the elections as independent candidates.

CPB token hunger strike April 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday declared to stage a token hunger strike next Sunday (April 20) demanding introduction of rationing and mass distribution system, procurement of rice directly from farmers and just rights of agriculture labourers, says a press release.

The announcement came at a press briefing at the CPB office after police dispersed a human chain that the leftist party formed at Muktangon in the city.

CPB said the token hunger strike will start at 11:00am and will continue up to afternoon.

Leftist leaders said the government created a bad example by dispersing the peaceful human chain of CPB, though it did not hamper the meeting and rallies of the communal anti-liberation forces.

CPB acting President Shahidullah Chowdhury, central committee Secretary Rezul Hossain Prince and leaders - Ahsan Habib Lablu, Abdul Kader, Abdul Jabbar, Sadegur Rahman Shamim, Joly Talukder, Kulsum Begum, Rehana Mollick, Jamshed Anwar, Ruhul Amrin and Mohiuddin Ahmed -- were present at the human chain.

Rice supply

FROM PAGE 1 people had to wait for five to six hours to collect rice... now they can get rice within an hour," the commander said. He said the rush started to lessen from April 13; it was tremendous between April 1 and April 12.

He said, "The rush was huge as people panicked fearing they would not get rice in future and the prices would go higher... now the panic is gone."

Col Hoque said, "650 to 660 tonnes of rice is sold daily at 75 BDR outlets and even though the rush has eased the sale of rice did not come down."

He said 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh people are benefiting from the BDR shops everyday.

Col Hoque said 10 BDR personnel were terminated from service on specific charges of irregularities at the BDR outlets in the last one year.

BDR would suggest the government to build a safety net in urban areas to keep a stable rice market in future.

"If the agriculture ministry, food ministry and the commerce ministry make an integrated effort in land management and ensure timely supply of agriculture inputs to the farmers, the country would achieve self-sufficiency in food and the international market prices would not affect us that way," he said.

Asked if BDR would run these outlets for good, Col Hoque said the BDR's primary job is maintaining security at the borders. But, they are running the outlets since the government asked them to tackle the situation.

He said, "We will think about opening fair price shops if the government made such requests," adding that such systems should be implemented to face bad times.

Meanwhile, Director General of the Directorate of Food Pia Costa yesterday told The Daily Star that the OMS dealers from Saturday will be able to sell rice to 300 people a day three days a week instead of the 204 people which they are now allowed to sell to.

He said from Saturday the 687 OMS dealers across the country will be given 1,500kg of rice a day three days a week instead of 1,020kg.

However, he said OMS programme with the increased amount of rice started yesterday in other divisional headquarters.

Meanwhile, rice prices increased by Tk 10-15 per maund (37.32kg) in wholesale markets yesterday.

Following the government's decision to buy boro rice at Tk 28/kg, the prices of rice in rural markets as well as the wholesale markets in the capital has increased.

RIGHT TO INFO ORDINANCE

'Media representation a must to make it effective'

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for the participation of journalists and media personalities in formulating the Right to Information Ordinance, says a press release.

They also called for the representation of journalists in the proposed information commission for proper implementation of the act.

The discussion titled 'Draft Right to Information Ordinance 2008' was organised jointly by South Asian Free Media Association (Safma), National Press Club and Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFU) at the Brac Centre with Safma President and Editor of The News Today Reazuddin Ahmed in the city.

Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said people would not get the actual benefit of the right to information law if it is formulated and implemented without the representation of the journalists community and the media, who are the main stakeholders of the law and through whom people will have the access to information.

Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Zagul Ahmed Chowdhury said the act should be formulated in a way so that people and media are benefited from it.

BFU Presidents Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Mozammel Haque, Secretaries General Ruhul Amin Gazi and Jalil Bhuiyan, Safma Secretary General Zahiduzzaman Faroque, General Secretary of the Press Club Kamal Uddin Sabuj, Presidents of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shah Alamgir and Azizul Haque Banna, General Secretary Omar Faroque, former BFU secretary general MA Aziz, journalists Nurul Huda, Nasirunnisa Ara Haque Minu and Bilkis Banu also spoke.

Appreciating the initiative to formulate a draft on right to information ordinance and opening the

avenue for making a review, Editor of the Ittefaq Rahat Khan said the provision of constituting the Search Committee for selecting the members of the Information Commission is very vital and there must have representation of the media in the committee.

The seized 286 birds of three species from a residence at Uttara in the city.

Forrest officials said though the birds are pet ones, they seized the birds as those were smuggled in.

The seized species -- Love Birds, Rose Ring Parakeet and Australian Parakeet -- were kept in 40 cases at a house of Kawser Ahmed of Road-13 at Section-7 of Uttara.

Forrest officials said the birds were smuggled by Pakistani national Mohammand Amin Gazi and Jalil Bhuiyan, Safma Secretary General Zahiduzzaman Faroque, General Secretary of the Press Club Kamal Uddin Sabuj, Presidents of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shah Alamgir and Azizul Haque Banna, General Secretary Omar Faroque, former BFU secretary general MA Aziz, journalists Nurul Huda, Nasirunnisa Ara Haque Minu and Bilkis Banu also spoke.

Nomanuddin, however, told the forest officials that he has legal papers and customs clearance of the birds.

Forest Department Assistant Conservator Hossain Mohammad Nishat, who led the drive, told The Daily Star that "Customs department has no authority to provide clearance without the permission from the forest department."

The forest officials said they seized passport of the Pakistani national and the birds were kept under the custody of Kawser.

He said a case will be filed with the court in this connection.

Raising voice against corruption 'our moral duty'
Says ACC chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

With a vow to curb corruption, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury yesterday asked all to raise their voice against corruption, saying it is 'our moral duty'.

The ACC chief called for forming anti-graft committees at grassroots levels and stressed the need for building a massive social movement to contain corruption, which is hindering and plunging the country into economic disaster.

"ACC or any government cannot curb corruption. It is a social movement, which needs participation of all sections of people. Students and youths can play a vital role to lead the movement," said the ACC chief.

He told those while addressing a prize giving ceremony at Govt Kumudini College among the winners of an anti-corruption essay writing and debate competition.

ACC Director General Abu Taleb Miah, Principal of Govt Kumudini College Nazir Ahmed and Member Secretary of ACC, Tangail Khan Mohammad Khaled also spoke on the occasion.

Later, the ACC chief went to Govt Sadat College in Karatia and administered an oath to the students and teachers of the institution to stand against corruption.

He also distributed prizes among the winners of another essay writing and debate competition there.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said Bangladesh is committed to attaining self-sufficiency in food and reducing imports to the minimum.

He made the remarks to a group of 20 international volunteers of the Hunger Project who had a meeting with him at the Foreign Ministry yesterday.

The team was led by Ms Jill Lester, President of the Project who is from Australia. The members comprised volunteers from Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, the US, and Bangladesh.

Dr Badul Alam Majumdar briefed Iftekhar about the goals and purposes of the project, which was to ultimately address the issue of hunger through self-training, education, women empowerment and change of mindset.

The adviser lauded the goals and said the answer to the problem of food availability in today's world lay in producing enough domestically to meet demands, particularly given the soaring costs of food.

He said with the bumper 'boro' harvest that is expected, and the sufficiency in strategic stocks, there is unlikely to be a crisis in this country.

Lester praised the enthusiasm of the Bangladeshis and observed that the institution that the government was building would help sustainability of its current achievements.

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Fire damages 2 rooms at Danish diplomat's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at the residence of the Councillor of Royal Danish Embassy damaging two rooms of the residence in the city's Gulshan area yesterday afternoon.

Fire service sources said the fire originated from an electrical short circuit at 2:40pm. The fire burnt an air-conditioner and partially damaged two rooms of the residence.

Two units of the fire service rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire.

No casualty, however, was reported.

Fateha-e-Yaz Dahum mahfil held

A mahfil on the occasion of Fateha-e-Yaz Dahum, the 868th death anniversary of Sura Pir Hazrat Abdul Qader Zilam (RA), was held at Azimpur Dayera Sharif Khanah in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Qurankhwan, Fateha Khwani, Zikir Asker and Milad Sharif were held on the occasion. Besides, a discussion was held on the life of the great spiritual leader. Gaddinshin Pir Shaheb Alhaj Moulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmadullah Zubair (Zubair) took part in the discussion.

Later, the Gaddinshin Pir Shaheb led the munajat and prayed for the peace and progress of Bangladesh, for the greater unity among the Muslim ummah and for the freedom of oppressed Muslims in different parts of the world.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:21pm today and rises at 5:34am 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	35.1	26.6	69	60	
Chittagong	31.5	24.6	80	72	
Rajshahi	36.5	26.0	80	66	
Khulna	35.4	26.7	76	70	
Bardia	34.7	26.5	79	73	
Sylhet	29.8	25.0	100	69	
Cox's Bazar	34.0	25.2	62	73	



Leaders of Awami League place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday on the occasion of Mujibnagar Day.

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