

CG to seek civil society suggestions for qualitative change in politics

Says commerce adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will seek suggestions from different citizens' groups and professional bodies for qualitative change in politics during its talks with them in parallel with dialogues with political parties.

"Different groups of citizens in our society have different kinds of thoughts regarding qualitative improvement in politics. We'll try to get an idea about the improvement," Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman told journalists

yesterday after a dialogue preparatory meeting at his office.

The formal dialogue will be held with political parties where the citizens groups will not be invited. "The dialogue with the citizens groups will be held in a different track in parallel with political dialogues," he said, adding that they are now finalising the modalities for the talks.

Though the government earlier said the political parties reached consensus about engaging the civil society with the dialogues, pro-Khaleda BNP faction leader

Khandaker Delwar Hossain strongly opposed on Wednesday inviting them along with the political parties.

Hossain Zillur and three other advisers who coordinated the April 7-28 pre-dialogue talks had a meeting with eminent economist and former adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud on Tuesday to find out ways to engage the citizens' groups and civil society with the dialogues.

Talking to reporters, the commerce adviser also said they finalised recommendations for consideration of the chief adviser (CA)

who is going to address the nation in a week.

"You know, we earlier submitted a report to him (CA) on the recommendations that came up during the pre-dialogue talks. Today we finalised a shorter version which he can consider in his address," he added.

Meanwhile, talking to journalists at his ministry, Law Adviser AF Hassan Ariff said the advisers who are involved in coordinating the dialogues are not having enough time to attend their official works.

Plant two palm trees at home

Gen Moeen urges families

BSS, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday urged every family of the country to plant at least two palm trees at their homes to meet the demand for edible oil and eradicate poverty from society.

He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the nationwide plantation programme of palm trees at Kurmitola Golf Club course.

Amidst cheers, the army chief planted a palm sapling to start the programme. After that, a munazat was offered for the success of the project.

General Moeen said normally the palm tree starts producing oil within four to five years after its plantation and the palm trees on a hectare of land produce 10 tonnes of oil a year.

He said, "I believe that the prospect is very bright in our country and all experiments show that we have a chance to be successful as like Malaysia."

The army chief urged every family to plant two palm trees in their homes, which will not only fulfill their yearly demand for oil, but also contribute to reduction of poverty in society.

General Moeen hoped that the programme would inspire everyone to come forward in a big way.

Anti-corruption rally begins at Patia tomorrow

DU CORRESPONDENT

Patia Sachetan Nagarik Committee, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) jointly organise a two-day anti-corruption youth rally at Patia in Chittagong beginning from tomorrow, as part of TIB and ACC's 'Jago Manush' campaign, says a press release.

On the first day, an anti-corruption painting competition and anti-corruption cartoon exhibition will be held at local SA Ali High School ground at 4:00pm while an anti-corruption rally will be held on the second day.

ACC Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury is expected to inaugurate the rally.

Besides, a musical programme will also be held where famous singers of the country will perform.



JICA vice president due tomorrow

Masafumi Kuroki, vice-president of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), will arrive in Bangladesh on a five-day visit tomorrow, says a press release.

The purpose of his visit is to exchange information on JICA-JIBC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) merging process and also to observe the impact and developmental effects of JICA projects in Bangladesh.

He will call on Finance and Planning Adviser Dr A B Mirza Md Azizul Islam. He will also visit some JICA assisted projects.

NIKO GRAFT CASE Arrest warrants against Dr Samad, 5 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued warrants for arrest of former principal secretary to Prime Minister's Office Dr SM Samad and five others for awarding gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko Resources through corruption and abuse of power.

After scrutinising the case docket and other relevant documents, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court took the charges into cognisance for trial and issued the arrest warrants against the accused.

The order came after the investigation officer (IO) of the case appealed to the court to issue an order for their arrest and the order to attach their properties.

The five other accused against whom arrest warrants issued, are former energy secretary M Akmal Hossain, former Petrobangla chairman Mosharraf Hossain, and Vice-President (South Asia) of Niko Resources Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif, former secretary of External Resources Division Dr AKM

Moshir Rahman and former director of Petrobangla (mines and mineral and operation) Sayed Anwarul Haque.

Dr Moshir and Anwarul were included in the charge sheet in addition to others named in the first information report (FIR).

In the case, detained former premier Sheikh Hasina, former state minister for energy Prof Rafiqul Islam and former energy secretary Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury are also accused.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on Wednesday pressed charges against Hasina and others for committing the offences.

On December 9 last year, the ACC filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station against Hasina and six others.

Arafat Rahman Koko Meanwhile, detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko was shown arrested yesterday in a case filed for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information about his properties to the ACC.

Two shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were shot by a gang of armed criminals at Gandaria in the city yesterday.

The injured are Nazir Hossain, 24, an alleged drug peddler and Shimul Parvez, 27, a security guard of Group-4 security agency.

Nazir was shot in his back while Shimul in his right leg. Shimul was shot while he was walking on the rail track. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital

(DMCH).

Witnesses said Shimul was shot while two armed criminals chased Nazir spraying bullets at him on the rail track.

Locals chased the criminals and caught Abdur Rahim, 24, with arms and later handed over him to Shyampr police station after a good beating.

Locals said the place is a drug spot and the incident might have occurred over drug peddling.

One dies in rooftop fall during storm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A construction worker was killed after falling off the roof of a six-storey under-construction building during the storm at Mohakhali in the city last night.

The victim identified as Aminul Islam, 25, was rushed to Pongu Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in a critically condition. He was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) as his condition deteriorated where he succumbed to his injuries.

Witnesses said the stormy wind blew him down at about 8:00pm while he was working on the building along with his fellow colleagues.

Prince Richard visits Sidr-hit Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Duke of Gloucester, Prince Richard, yesterday visited Sidr rehabilitation project under Ghotoker Andua, a remote village under Mirzaganj upazila in Patuakhali district.

British High Commission in Dhaka Anwar Choudhury accompanied the Duke during his visit.

It is the second visit to Bangladesh by Prince Richard who visited Bangladesh back in October 1987.

He visited the area to have a glimpse of the Sidr rehabilitation project of Habitat for Humanity, one of a large number of organisations he patronises.

Chris Austin, country director of DFID, Alistair Wood, private secretary to the Duke, and Tim Khan, head of British Business Group, were present during the visit.

Habitat for Humanity International Bangladesh is constructing 280 core shelter units at Mirzaganj under its disaster response project, funded by a disaster relief agency called Christian Aid Ministries (CAM).

On a short briefing to local journalists, the Duke of Gloucester said, "I am absolutely happy to help the Sidr-affected people. We will be taking all possible steps to rehabilitate them."

Prince Richard is the second son of the late Duke of Gloucester and the late Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. He is a grandson of George V and a first cousin to the Queen.

BSS adds: The Duke also inaugurated a technical school at Kashipur in Barisal.

The UCEP School Complex is built at a cost of Tk 3.56 crore under the assistance of DFID.

UNB from Pirojpur adds: The British government will provide 60 million US dollars to Bangladesh for establishing embankments and multipurpose cyclone centres, as the country's coastal belt is being hit frequently by natural disasters caused by climate change.

"The UK has already provided 22 million US dollars to Bangladesh for rehabilitating the victims of Sidr-hit areas and the trend of providing such assistance will continue in the future," Anwar Choudhury told newsmen at cyclone-hit Majher Char in Mathbaria upazila yesterday.

ATTACK ON POLICE PBCP cadre Bachchu remanded for 7 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bachchu, a notorious member of banned Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), was remanded yesterday for seven days for more interrogation.

After his arrest, Bachchu alias Nishan revealed sensational information which led to recovery of five looted arms from a pond at Naldanga in Natore on Wednesday.

Bachchu has been haunted by Rajshahi police for last four years. Natore Detective Branch assisted by a Special Branch team from Dhaka caught Bachchu from Haybatpur on Tuesday night tracking his mobile phone.

He said Nayek Mizanur Rahman was killed on May 2 as he refused to hand over the arms.

Jahangir alias Jalal was leading the killing team of about 13 outlaws, he added.

Bachchu said the attack was planned at a meeting in the house of a peon Sajir of Taherpur College.

Meanwhile, police were searching the pond, where the looted arms were found, for 49 bullets that the outlaws looted during the attack leaving one policeman killed.



Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus hands over MDG3 Torch to former adviser Geetara Safiya Choudhury at Grameen Bank office in the city on May 7.

Pakistan keen on close ties with Bangladesh: Gillani

UNB, Dhaka

Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani has said his government is keen on developing close friendship and cooperation with Bangladesh.

Gillani said this when Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury called on him at the Prime Minister's Secretariat in Islamabad on Wednesday.

He also stated that the two nations have much in common, and this linkage should be translated into greater cooperation in the fields of trade, education, culture and people-to-people contacts, according to a release received here yesterday.

Iftakhar handed over a letter to the Gillani conveying the greetings and good wishes of Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed as well as a warm invitation to visit Bangladesh, which Gillani accepted with thanks.

Earlier, the adviser held a meeting with Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad.

They discussed ways and means to widen and deepen the traditional relations between the two countries, which they saw as both "special and strategic."

They agreed to create more congenial atmosphere for the

growth of bilateral trade.

The foreign adviser requested for duty-free access of some Bangladeshi products into Pakistani market, such as jute, jute goods and pharmaceuticals.

They discussed the principle of zero-tariff to each other's export

items and agreed that the Joint Economic Commission should meet soon.

It was also agreed that structured foreign office consultation should take place at an early date to address all issues of mutual interest and concern.

Try war criminals to establish justice

Sector commanders tell Bogra meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) President Air Vice Marshall (Retd) AK Khandker yesterday said justice and democracy would not be established in the society until the war criminals are brought to justice.

The war hero said this at a view exchange meeting of SCF leaders with cross section of people, including freedom fighters, teachers, students and journalists, at Muktiyoddha Dulal Auditorium at Bogra.

AK Khandker, also the deputy chief of the liberation war, urged the caretaker government to form a special tribunal and start the process of trying the war criminals

without delay.

Lt Gen (Retd) Harun-Ar-Rashid, Maj Gen (Retd) KM Shafiqullah, Maj Gen (Retd) CR Dutta, Maj Gen (Retd) Jamil D Ahsan and Masudur Rahman also spoke at the meeting with Saiduzzaman Tarai in the chair.

During the meeting, SCF leaders called on all to send list of local war criminals and anti-liberation forces to the SCF headquarters.

Speakers said it is unfortunate that the government has so far failed to try the war criminals that worked against the birth of the nation and killed freedom fighters.

The SCF leaders went to Bogra on the last leg of their visit to three northern districts to mobilise public support against war criminals.

'Strict laws needed to check abuses of migrant workers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said laws and regulations of the country relating to overseas employment require thorough review and modification to check fraudulent practices and exploitation of migrant workers.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury, meanwhile, said non-ratification of international treaties on migrant workers by the labour receiving countries contribute to the abuses of migrant workers.

These observations were made at a consultation styled 'Review of Legal Framework relating to Migration in Bangladesh' organised by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with the expatriates' welfare ministry at Brac Centre Inn. The consultation was sponsored by USAID Bangladesh.

"The government of Bangladesh believes in consultations before revising any legislation," Kazi Habibul Awal said, adding that the government will be happy to consider review

of the laws linked to labour migration if recommendations are put forward in the form of draft law.

"The review of the laws is demand of time," he added.

Apart from loopholes in the regulations, Abdul Matin Chowdhury said, there is a lack of strong enforcement of laws on labour migration.

"One ministry in isolation cannot fully address the complex issue of migration management," he said, emphasising on collaboration with other related ministries and national and international organisations working in the sector.

More partnerships between the labour receiving and sending countries and among sending countries will contribute to the establishment of migrants rights, Abdul Matin Chowdhury said.

Dhaka University Prof Mizanur Rahman, who in collaboration with IOM is conducting the legal review on emigration, said the rules of the land linked to emigration do not address the rights of the migrant workers.

"The laws must be rights-based,"

he said at the concluding session of the consultation and suggested vigorous monitoring of the recruiting agencies, ensuring accountability of the government agencies and Bangladesh labour attaches abroad.

The legal expert recommended framing pro-women rules and creating space for female workers to go abroad. Local government bodies of the country will play a vital role to ensure that workers willing to go abroad are not cheated.

IOM Regional Representative for South Asia Rabab Fatima said the growing number of abuses in labour migration process justify that the existing laws and regulations are not entirely conducive to a viable migration management system in Bangladesh.

She emphasised on critical review of the emigration-related laws and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Migrant Workers and Members of their Families by the Bangladesh government.

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training Director General Abdul Malek and IOM officials also spoke at the consultation.

MDG3 Champion Network launched in Denmark

To make a special effort to promote the Millennium Development Goal-3 (MDG3 to promote gender equality and empower women) Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Ulla Tørnæs has established a MDG3 Champion Network, says a press release.

The network consists of internationally prominent politicians, public and private sector leaders and civil society representatives.

Besides advocating for women's empowerment and promoting the creation of a Global Coalition in support of the MDG3, the network also launched the global MDG3 Champion Torch Campaign.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Muhammad Yunus is one of the several Global Champion Torchbearers.

The campaign was kicked off by the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Ulla Tørnæs on March 7 in Copenhagen where Dr Yunus lit the first torch from Bangladesh. In his commitment to do something extra, Prof Yunus will continue to empower women by providing more opportunities for women to benefit from the micro credit.

Now more than 100 MDG3 torches are travelling around the world to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

From Bangladesh former adviser of caretaker government and Managing Director of an advertising firm in Dhaka Geetara Safiya Choudhury is also participating in the Global Network of prominent individuals who are ready to do something extra for the empowerment of women.

Together with the rest of the network, Geetara has committed to do something extra by advocating for women's rights all over the world including Bangladesh.

As a part of the MDG3 Champion Torch Campaign, Prof Yunus was handed over the first torch to support the initiative and commit to "Do Something Extra."

In an informal occasion, Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen handed over the MDG3 Torch to Prof Yunus at the Grameen Bank Office in the capital on May 7.

Later, the MDG3 Torch was also handed over to Geetara by Prof Yunus in the presence of the ambassador in Dhaka.

A UN high level MDG meeting regarding the MDGs will be the target for the MDG3 campaign in September next when the torch will be carried forward.

Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Abdus Sobhan, a social worker and BNP leader of Deviduar upazila unit in Comilla, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at his residence (103/1, South Mugdipara) in the city.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Chehlum

Chehlum of Jahaed Khanam, a poet and wife of Engr Md Rafiqul Haque, will be held at her residence in the city today, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Syeda Sayera Khatun

Chehlum of Syeda Sayera Khatun, elder sister of Syed Abu Abbas, a social worker of Brahmanbaria, will be held at her village home after Zohr prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives and admires are requested to attend the programme.

No bar to try Hasina for extortion under EPR

FROM PAGE 1

Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin yesterday started proceedings at 9.35am.

As the government appeal against the HC verdict was on top of the list of the day's proceedings, the CJ delivered the judgment just saying, "appeal allowed."

After announcing the judgment the court also stayed nine other stay orders on nine different cases similar to Hasina's case.

The nine cases were against former BNP minister Mirza Abbasuddin Ahmed, former premier Khaleda Zia's sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, BNP ex-MPs Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Aman Ullah Aman and A Qudus Mandol.

The HC stayed proceedings of the nine cases following their separate petitions.

Though the government filed leave to appeals against the HC orders, those were pending in the SC for decision after judgment of the government appeal in Hasina's case as legal issues of the nine cases are similar to her case.

However the SC asked parties of the nine cases to dispose of the matters pending in the HC.

HASINA'S CASE AND REACTION

After delivering the judgment chief

counsel for Hasina Barrister Rafique ul Huq in his instant reaction told journalists minimum rule of law and fundamental and constitutional rights of the people has been ruined.

"The fight we fought since the liberation all went in vain," he said.

"It is very sad for all who work for minimum protection of the people," said Barrister Rafique.

He also said, "It was back of my mind that the Appellate Division will wake up. But that hope was also shattered. I have never thought of such a slide."

Hasina's counsel also said this judgment is the "blackest law" in the judicial history of the country.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, newly elected Supreme Court Bar Association president and one of Hasina's counsels, said in his reaction, "It has created a blackest part of the legal history."

Replying to a question regarding the remarks of eminent jurists and the SCBA president, Additional Attorney General Salahuddin Ahmad said, "They made the comments as Sheikh Hasina's lawyers. Perhaps they will realise after one or two years that it should not have been said."

SCBA President Barrister Shafique said the SC judgment is a

"bad" precedence.

"It is against the jurisprudence," he observed.

He said lawyers are not ignorant. "Many of the lawyers in the Supreme Court are practising for decades, so it would not be wise to consider them ignorant."

"This judgment is against the rule of law. It cannot be a precedence of law," Shafique added.

He also said the judgment proves that trial proceedings are not being conducted in accordance of the law and the constitution.

He said after receiving the copy of the SC judgment they would apply to the SC for reviewing the judgment.

BACKGROUND

On June 13 last year, Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd Managing Director Azam J Chowdhury charged detained Hasina and her cousin and former minister Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim with extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him in exchange for awarding the contract of setting up the Siddhirganj Power Plant in Narayanganj.

On July 16, the home ministry directed the police to bring the case under EPR.

On July 24, investigation officer of the case Obaidul Haque indicted Hasina along with her sister Sheikh

Rehana and cousin Sheikh Selim, but did not include the relevant sections of EPR.

Following Hasina's writ filed on July 29 last year, an HC bench of Justice Nayeem and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury issued the rule on the caretaker government, asking it to reply why its approval for bringing the case under EPR should not be declared illegal.

After hearing on the rule, the HC bench of Justice Nayeem and Justice Shahidul Islam delivered judgment on February 6 saying "since in the rule the sanction for bringing the case under EPR has been challenged and we [the judges] have found that the sanction was given without lawful authority as the offence was committed by the accused prior to promulgation of the emergency, the rule is absolute."

The proceedings already taken and under process are without lawful authority and quashed, the HC said.

The government filed the leave to appeal with the SC within an hour of the delivery of the judgment, seeking stay on the HC judgment and a few days later the government filed a regular appeal.