

NAT'L CONVENTION TOMORROW

Call to establish democratic rights of people with disabilities

DU CORRESPONDENT

A national convention on 'Democratic rights of people with disabilities' will be held in the city tomorrow with a view to establishing democratic rights for the physically challenged people in the country.

Action on Disability and Development (ADD), a UK-based international organisation that works for the people with disabilities, National Council of Disabled Woman (NCDW) and National Grassroots Disability Organisation

(NGDO) will jointly organise the 4th national convention at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

ADD Country Director Mosharaf Hossain at a press conference in the city yesterday said President Iajuddin Ahmed is expected to be present at the inaugural session of the convention as the chief guest, while Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda will address the concluding session.

The convention aims at making sure of setting up polling centres with entry facility for the people with disabilities, ensuring privacy during their voting and managing transport facilities for them in the next general elections.

"We hope political parties would include the vital issues of the people with disabilities in their election manifestos and express their solidarity with them to preserve their democratic rights," Hossain added.

He said money and use of muscle power in the politics create obstruction on the way of partici-

pation and representation of the people with disabilities in the politics, which is like a threat to the democratic practice and the free and fair election.

ADD Human Rights Officer Fazlul Azim said, "We want to ensure representation and increase participation of people with disabilities in the next elections through the convention".

NCDW President Umme Kulsum Ranjana and Coordinator Feriza Akhter Sima also took part in the conference.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed holds talks with the leaders of Islami Oikya Jote at his office in the city yesterday as part of ongoing dialogue with the political parties.

GOVT-POLITICAL PARTIES DIALOGUE

IOJ proposes polls in October

UNB, Dhaka

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) yesterday called on the caretaker government to hold the general election in October, not in December, so that Hajis can cast their votes.

The holy haj will take place on December 7 and Eid-ul-Azha on December 9, the Jote leaders said during its dialogue with the caretaker government.

The IOJ took a strong stand against the politics of militancy and called for its elimination.

The IOJ leaders said, all parties should come forward casting off arrogance and with an attitude of giving concession to restore peace and democratic politics in the country.

The government side assured the IOJ that haj pilgrims hopefully would be able to cast their vote after performing haj.

The government also reaffirmed that the general election would be held as per the announced timeframe.

The caretaker government is optimistic about successful conclusion of the ongoing dialogue between the government and political parties with the participation of all parties as they believe major political parties are responsible parties and have interest in transitioning to democratic politics through peaceful and democratic way.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman and IOJ Chairman Mufi Faizul Huq Aminee expressed the views at a post-dialogue joint press briefing held at the Chief Adviser's Office to disseminate the outcome of the dialogue.

Aminee, a former lawmaker of the BNP-led coalition, led an 11-member delegation to the dialogue that continued for around two hours from

10:00am. He put forward a 21-point demand in writing.

The demands include holding general elections before the local government polls, release of political leaders and workers, including BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who are detained in harassment cases, stopping politics of atheists and heretics and declaring them ineligible for election, cancelling the initiative to amend the constitution and formulating national charter, scrapping anti-Quranic and anti-Sunnah sections of the National Women Development Policy, decentralisation of power to grassroots level of administration and stopping false reporting by a section of newspapers branding Islamic institutions and Madrasas as places of militancy.

Other demands are immediate lifting of state of emergency and restrictions on indoor politics, inviting observers for monitoring the general election, removing doubt over holding the election in due time and ridding the nation of a sense of doubt over any initiative being taken.

Replies to a question as to whether Sheikh Hasina's release is part of reported 'minus-two' policy, Education Adviser Hossain Zillur said it is the responsibility of you (media) to analyse it. "We only will disseminate information available."

Regarding the doubts over the general election, the adviser said the government is advancing towards its goal through specific steps and following the electoral roadmap to hold the polls in a fair and peaceful atmosphere.

On upazila elections, he said there is an obligation as per court verdicts to hold the upazila polls.

He said the caretaker government is determined to hold local elections and the general election according to the new budget.

Tax-free ICT sector up to 2011 sought

BSS, Dhaka

Noted economist M Shoaib Chowdhury yesterday called for keeping software and information and communication technology (ICT) sector free from tax in the proposed budget for fiscal 2008-09 up to 2011.

Shoaib Chowdhury, who is secretary general of International Institutes of Business Analysis (IIBA), said the tax-free ICT sector would bring a revolutionary change in the country.

The IIBA secretary general, representing the Canada-based organisation IIBA, also said reducing duty on computer hardware by two percent is a good sign for quick growth of the ICT sector.

The economist urged the government to increase the allocation of Tk 300 crore in the revised budget, instead of Tk 100 crore proposed in the new budget.

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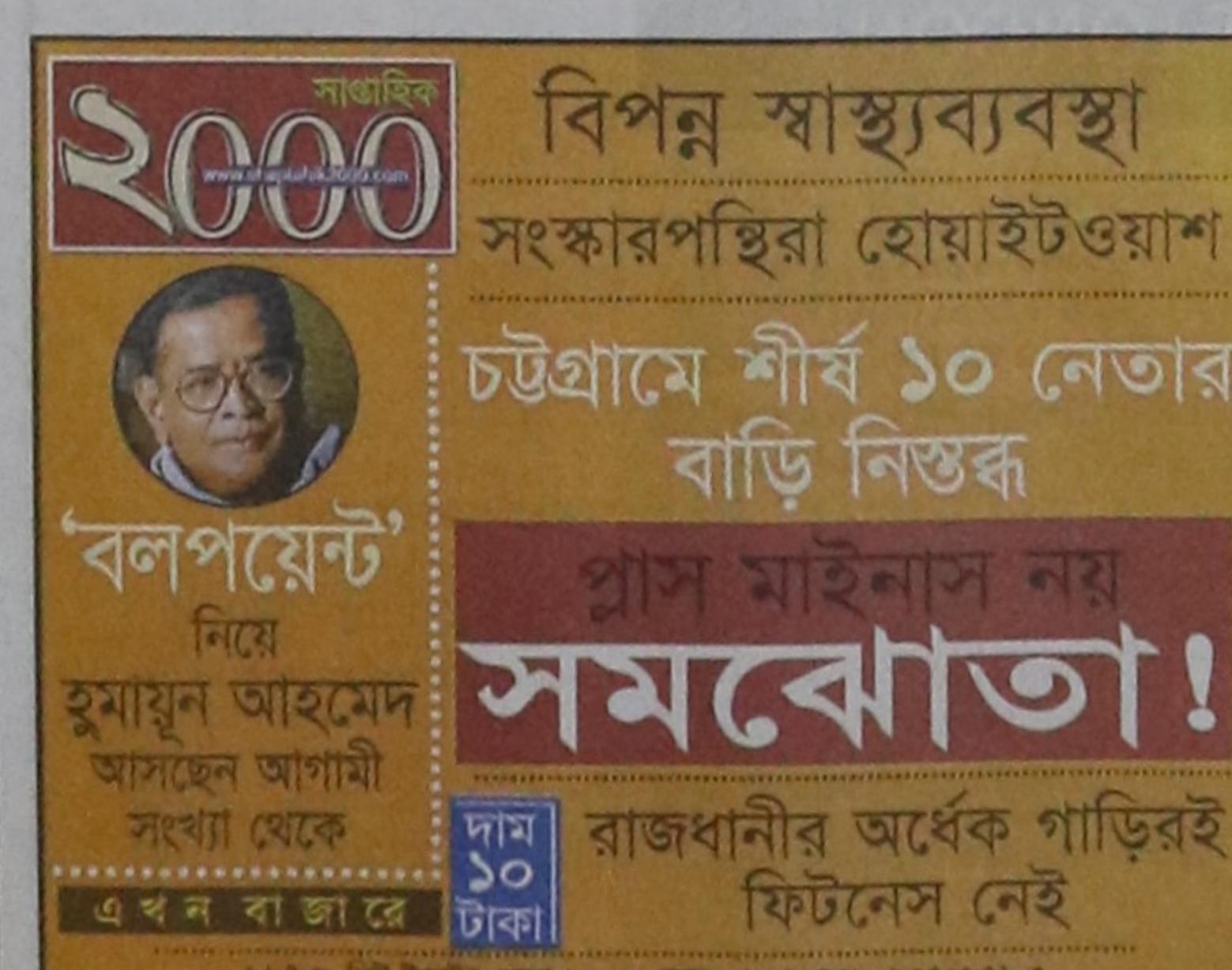
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Baira clarification

President of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) Ghulam Mustafa has sent a clarification to a report held by Manpower Export: Bangladesh suffers from image problems published in The Daily Star on June 8.

In the report, Baira president was quoted as saying that many of the officials of the ministry of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment are dishonest.

In the clarification, Ghulam Mustafa said, "What actually I have said is that most of the officials of the ministry are of negative approach. They suffer from inaction and take much time in disposing of files."



A large number of cars have been imported ahead of the budget 2008-09. The photo was taken in Chittagong Port area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

OFFSHORE OIL, GAS EXPLORATION

Verdict in writ petition against tender process today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver its order today in a writ petition challenging the legality of the government action of inviting tender from international oil companies for oil and gas exploration in the Bay of Bengal.

An HC bench of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Md Emdadul Hug fixed the date after a hearing on the petition yesterday.

Petrobangla floated the tender on February 15 for exploration of oil and gas in 28 blocks in the Bay of Bengal.

Barister Munshi Ahsan Kabir, a Supreme Court lawyer, and Shah Abdul Hannan, former energy secretary, jointly filed the writ petition with the HC on May 4.

In the petition, they stated that as per article 58(D) of the constitution, the caretaker government could not take any decision for exploration of natural resources like oil and gas. The petitioners also prayed to the court to direct the government to stop the tender process.

The energy secretary, law secretary and Petrobangla chairman were made respondents in the writ petition.

Barister Abdur Razzak, the counsel for the petitioners, submitted before the court that the caretaker government is an unelected interim government, which has no jurisdiction to take any policy decisions like exploration of the mineral resources.

As per the provisions of the constitution, only the elected governments can take such policy decisions, he added.

He also said that oil and gas are exported, not only the current generation, but also the future generation would be affected.

Additional Attorney General Salauddin Ahmed opposed the writ petition and told the court that oil and gas should be explored in order to increase the production of electricity and fertiliser.

"Gas is the only raw material for energy and power production. There is an acute shortage of electricity supply in the country. Oil and gas should be explored for the interest of the nation," he said.

The order was issued by the police headquarters in Dhaka. The concerned OCs handed over their charges immediately after receiving the order, said CMP sources.

However, nothing could be known about the reason behind the stand release.

The stand-released police officers were OC Nurul Alam of Kotwali Police Station (PS), OC Mujibur Rahman Majumder of Pahartali PS, OC Kazi Matiul Islam of Bayezid PS and OC Md Jahangir Alam of Port PS.

4 OCs stand released in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Officers-in-charge (OC) of four police stations under Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) were stand released at a time here yesterday.

The order was issued by the police headquarters in Dhaka. The concerned OCs handed over their charges immediately after receiving the order, said CMP sources.

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The stand-released police officers were OC Nurul Alam of Kotwali Police Station (PS), OC Mujibur Rahman Majumder of Pahartali PS, OC Kazi Matiul Islam of Bayezid PS and OC Md Jahangir Alam of Port PS.

Democratic values suggest that people should have the feeling of ownership for the public properties, he said, adding "Rule of law cannot be established unless these democratic values are widely practised."

Academicians at a discussion yesterday called for framing stringent laws and spreading the teachings of tolerance in the educational institutions to check anarchy and establish a disciplined society.

Students played very significant roles during different turbulent democratic movements of the nation, but sometimes their violent reactions to cases like road accidents and some other incidents cause greater losses to innocent people, they added.

The Weekly Economic Times organised the discussion on "Students reaction on any incident or accident" at Institute of Diploma Engineers in the city with former vice chancellor (VC) of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed in the chair.

The energy secretary, law secretary and Petrobangla chairman were made respondents in the writ petition.

Violent actions by workers or students in cases of any accidents are part of the political culture of the country, he said, adding that the authorities concerned that issue licences to the drivers are also responsible for accidents because they often do not check whether the drivers are well-trained.

"The tendency of smashing or setting fire to vehicles following death of a student or a worker will go if authorities can assure that the people responsible for the accident will be punished," Dr Shamsher Ali added.

Speaking as the guest of honour, Home Secretary Abdul Karim said emergence of young students is a common phenomenon, but it turns into problems when it crosses the limit.

Referring to last year's chaos that followed a small incident between students and law enforcers on the Dhaka University campus, he said that particular incident caused serious damages to the nation.

Comilla University VC Dr Golam Maola, in his keynote, said some quarters misuse students or some other groups who sometimes feel they are deprived of their due rights.

"We must be aware of ill motives of such vested quarters."

Joint Editor of the Prothom Alo Abdul Qayyum said various disparities in the society and unemployment create feelings of resentment among people which are expressed in reactions to accidents.

Dhaka University Prof Dr Aminul Islam also spoke at the discussion moderated by Editor of the Weekly Economic Times Shawkat Mahmud.



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