

Repeal RPO Ordinance 2008

Speakers urge govt at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called upon the government to repeal the Representation of People's Order (RPO) Ordinance 2008 immediately saying that the ordinance is unconstitutional, undemocratic and unrealistic and it would push the nation into a new crisis.

"The RPO Ordinance 2008 prohibiting different professionals including the teachers from contesting the elections has created confusion among the people about the holding of national elections by the end of this year," they added.

The roundtable titled 'Representation of People's Order (Amendment) Ordinance 2008' was organised by Peshajibi Samannay Parishad (PSP), a forum of the professionals, at the National Press Club with its Convener

Principal Kazi Faruk Ahmed in the chair.

Kazi Faruk said it is the people who will choose their representatives at parliament, and a caretaker government cannot force them to make their choice.

"So, we are rejecting the RPO Ordinance 2008. The government with such a law has planned to keep the country's meritorious persons away from politics," he added.

PSP Co-convenor and former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said in democracy people have the full freedom to make their own choices, but the caretaker government is enacting such laws that will only limit their choices to elect their representatives at parliament.

"According to Unesco-ILO convention, teachers can take

leave for contesting elections and after the tenure as a lawmaker and other public representative one can rejoin his or her previous institutions. But the amended RPO has deprived the teachers from all facilities to contest the elections," he said.

Prof Arefin said as per the provisions of the RPO 2008, the teachers would have to resign from their offices and wait for three years to contest the elections.

"The University Ordinance 1973, which was passed by the then parliament, allows a university teacher to resign and contest elections right away. But the RPO Ordinance 2008 has snatched this opportunity," he said, adding that as per constitutional provisions, the caretaker government cannot take policy decisions like promulgating such ordinances.

"It is often said that politics in

Bangladesh is losing its merit. If this is the reality, then the RPO Ordinance 2008 will create more intellectual vacuum in the country," he said.

Awami League's Agriculture Affairs Secretary and former lawmaker Dr Abdur Razzak said instead of working for holding the stalled parliamentary election on time, the government is trying to hold upazila polls and such move would complicate the political situation in the country.

"The government has been enacting some peculiar and impractical laws bypassing the opinions of political parties. The army chief at a meeting said they would bring a new brand of democracy and stop family dynasty in politics. If so then is the RPO 2008 a step towards bringing the new brand of democracy?" he posed a question.

The government was scheduled to register political parties in line with the RPO by June 30, but till today there was no sign of it, said Dr Razzak.

"In fact, they are killing time and making the situation complicated to foil the parliamentary election," he alleged.

Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said there are at least six rules in the RPO Ordinance 2008 which are unconstitutional and these would be used as weapons to establish autocracy in the country.

"The rules were framed as a blueprint for foiling the next parliamentary election," he added.

PSP Member-Secretary Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan, Supreme Court Lawyers Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun and Dr Shirin Sharin Chowdhury, Prof Md Moazzem Hossain, Dr M Ohiduzzaman and Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.



Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan, middle, addresses a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and on his left are Principal Kazi Faruk Ahmed and Dr Abdur Razzak.

CHILD MORTALITY

Media can help achieve MDG-4

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said media as a platform can play a big role to save the lives of children by providing proper healthcare services information for the common people.

Media can also help policymakers set priority to ensure the pro-poor social safety net, they said, adding that it can help Bangladesh achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG)-4 to reduce the child mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015.

Styled 'Get on track to save the children's lives', the seminar was jointly organised by Save the Children-UK, Eminence, an NGO, and Editor, an online news agency, at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, National Prof MR Khan said under-five mortality rate in the country has declined from 151 deaths per thousand in 1991 to 62 deaths per thou-

sand in 2006.

Prof Khan termed the progress a great achievement and the trend would ensure achieving the target before the deadline, saying that exclusive breastfeeding rate in the country is very low which is comparatively very high in Sri Lanka.

"To save children's rights needs right intervention in right time," Prof Khan said, adding media and the civil society members can create pressure on the government for well-timed and feasible policymaking.

Dr Abu Muhammad Zakir Hossain of Eminence presented a keynote paper at the seminar with Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services Dr MA Faiz in the chair.

He said mass media campaign can influence the general people for the use of health services either directly or indirectly.

Dr Zakir said a large number of people in the country use mass

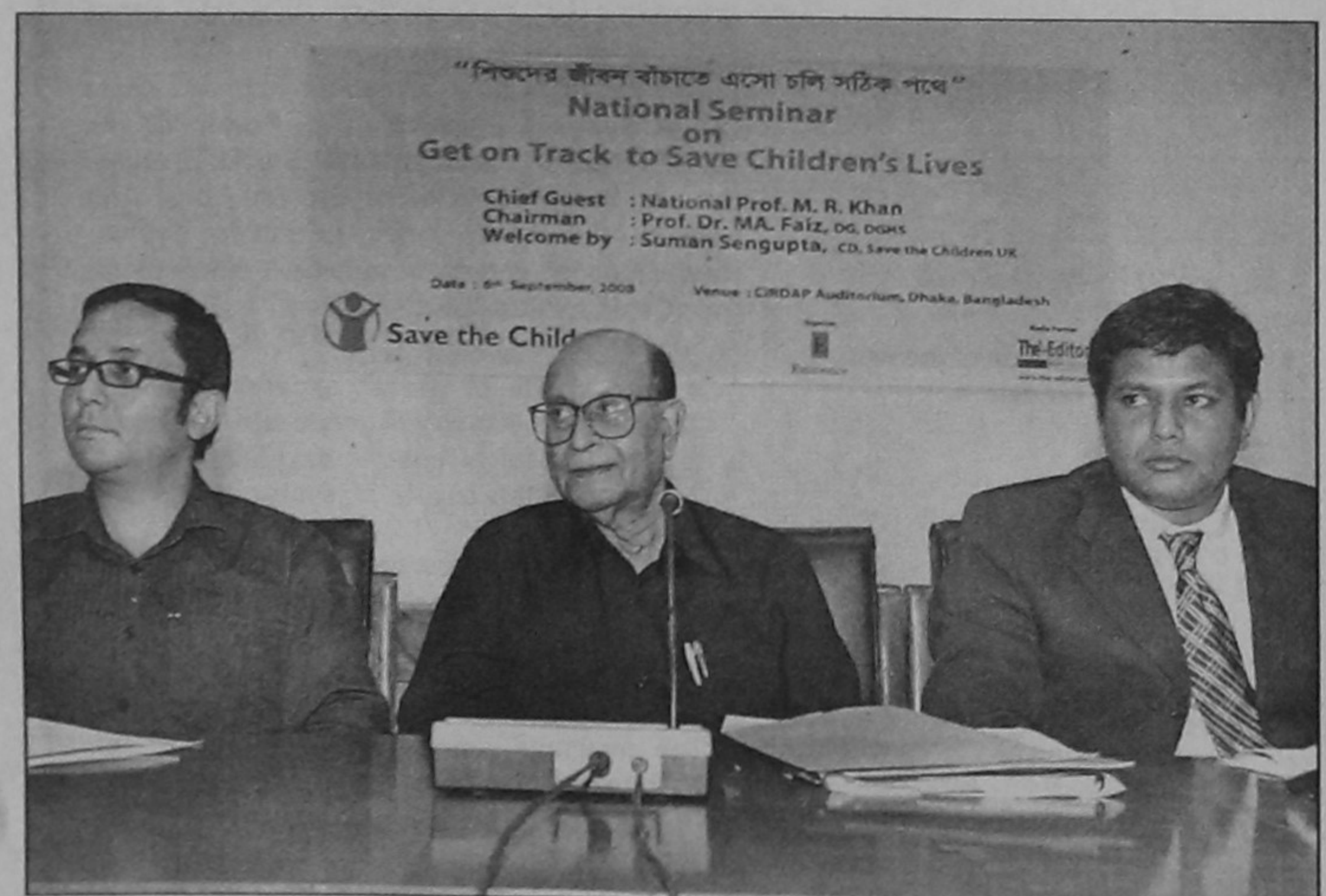
media. So, it can play a big role in sensitising people to save the lives of children.

Dr Faiz said the government has already attached a high priority to the health sector and encourages any initiative for its development.

Bangladesh has achieved success in cutting under-five mortality at a significant rate, he said, adding, "Nevertheless, it is not high to be satisfied, because there are distinct regional variations that need to be addressed. Urban slums, Chittagong Hill Tract, coastal belt regions and other ecologically vulnerable areas are falling behind."

Prof Faiz further said, "To overcome the challenges, we are badly in need of a big push that should be made combined, effective, pro-poor and target-oriented."

The seminar was also addressed by Dr Shamim Hayder Talukder of Eminence and Suman Sengupta of Save the Children-UK.



National Prof MR Khan speaks at a seminar at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Suman Sengupta and on his left is Dr Shamim Hayder Talukder.

Acute water crisis in Rajshahi city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Water crisis is turning acute in many areas of Rajshahi city despite the assurance of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) to maintain smooth supply during the month of Ramadan.

Discontent among the city dwellers is also brewing up for supply of contaminated water.

Residents of Shalbagan, Assam Colony, Shaheb Bazar and Baliaupukur area in the city complained of supplying contaminated water. They alleged that diarrhoea and skin diseases are spreading fast in the areas.

Similar complaints also came from Laxmipur, Helenabad, Meherchand and Binodhpur areas, Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) sources said.

In the last few days there were reports of water crisis in Baliaupukur, Koerdara, Sultanabad, Sastitala, Boallapara, Bulonpur, Helenabad, Budhpura, Meherchand, Laxmipur, Talaimari and Kajla areas.

The crisis in ward numbers 1, 2, 16, 17 and 30 are going on for several years. Many areas are still remaining out of water supply network and the authorities have turned a deaf ear to their problems.

However, RCC recently assured people of smooth water supply during the month of Ramadan.

Many of the city dwellers complained that they are facing water crisis as many households are pumping out water directly from supplyline.

M Ashraf Haque, acting chief engineer of RCC, said the daily demand of water in the city is nearly 11 crore liters. RCC supplies only 7.40 crore liters of water daily. The rest of the demand is met through tubewell.

Water pump operators said load shedding and low voltage are interrupting water supply.

Doctor held with phensidyl in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

Police yesterday arrested a physician and his car driver from outskirts of Champaknagar for possessing contraband phensidyl syrup.

Dr Nazrul Islam Shaheen, a skin specialist of Comilla Diabetic Hospital, and his car driver Ripon Chandrashil were sent to jail following a court order.

Police said Comilla Model Thana police seized the private car of Dr Nazrul from Champaknagar in the morning and recovered 15 bottles of phensidyl syrup from inside the car.



Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) Director Syeda Rizwana Hasan speaks at a press conference on rights to forest and livelihoods at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left is BARCIK Executive Director Sukanta Sen and on her right is Shahabuddin Dhali.

Hold referendum in Oct

Demands PDP

BSS, Dhaka

Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday demanded that a referendum be held in October to seek opinion of the people on maintaining a balance between the powers of the president and the prime minister.

PDP Chairman Ferdous Ahmad Quarishi made the demand at a press conference at the party office in the city.

He said referendum should be held to seek people's opinion on nullifying the Article 70 of the constitution. It is possible to overcome the impasse in national politics by seeking opinion of the people through a referendum, he said and called for holding the referendum before the national elections.

Quarishi also said the trial of a number of corrupt persons should be completed before the next parliamentary elections.

He said no meaningful changes would take place in politics without the creation of a third trend and that the PDP has come as a third trend.

Quarishi said the PDP has been supporting the 1/11, which would bring about qualitative changes in politics.

He also opposed the new electoral law prohibiting participation of teachers in the elections.

PDP leaders Noor Mohammad Khan, Maj Gen (ret'd) Rafiqul Hossain, Golam Sarwar Milon, Mosharraf Hossain Khan and Maj (ret'd) Reazul Islam were also present at the press conference.

VIOLENCE AT NITOR

'Withdraw cases against students'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students of physiotherapy department of the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) yesterday staged a demonstration on the Dhaka University (DU) campus demanding immediate withdrawal of cases filed against the students of the institute.

They also demanded cost of the treatment to the injured students, removal of director of the institute, proper investigation into the incident that occurred at NITOR on Thursday.

Physiotherapy students on Thursday morning went on a rampage at NITOR demanding a separate institute for them. The students locked into a violent clash with hospital employees that left at least 35 people, including 25 students, injured.

Police later arrested 15 students in this connection.

In support of their demand, students brought out a procession that marched different streets on the DU campus and held a rally in front of Aparajito Bangla.

Different left leaning student organisations including Bangladesh Chhatra Union and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF) expressed their solidarity with the demonstrating students.



DB police arrested four people along with 1600 phensidyl bottles and a huge number of Indian clothes at Motijheel in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

Establish physiotherapy college

Speakers say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Physiotherapy Students Union (BPSU) and Bangladesh Physiotherapy Society (BPS) yesterday demanded of the government to establish immediately a college of physiotherapy in the country.

They made the demand at a discussion organised by the Health Reporters Forum at the National Press Club in the city.

Speakers at the discussion said the health ministry approved a project worth Tk 30 crore in 1998 for establishing a separate college of physiotherapy recruiting manpower and purchasing equipment, but the project is yet to see the light.

They said the registration of physiotherapists is still stopped

although the government has recognised it as a professional course.

Even there is no post of physiotherapist in public hospitals except one at the National Institute of Traumatology, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation (NITOR), they added.

The BPSU also demanded immediate starting of internship programme, professional registration of the bachelor of physiotherapists, introduction of post-graduation course by the government and initiation of the post of physiotherapist in different specialised medical institutions.

The government has already taken a decision in principle to establish a college of physiotherapy, said Health Secretary Dr

Anwar Hossain Munshi, adding that the place for the college would be selected at a meeting on September 16.

Presided over by President of Health Reporters Forum Moniruzzaman Uzzal, the discussion was moderated by its Vice-president Prashun Ashish.

Forum's General Secretary Proteek Izaz read out the keynote paper.

Director of medical education Dr Khandaker Shefayetullah, Coordinator of Gonoshasthya Kendra Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, BPS General Secretary Mohammad Kamruzzaman, BPSU Convener Rasel Rana, and Pradeep Kumar Saha of Peoples University of Bangladesh also spoke on the occasion.

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