

'Lift emergency for free, fair elections'

Media urged to help achieve the goal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state of emergency should be lifted to create an environment conducive to free, fair and credible elections and the media would have to play a responsible role to this end so that all political parties can participate in the polls, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

They also said the electronic and print media have a greater role to play in resolving the current crisis and establishing sustainable democracy in the country through involving people.

Civil society members, politicians, media personalities, educationists and rights activists took part in the roundtable titled 'National Election: 2008 and the role of the media' organised by Bazlur Rahman Foundation at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Foundation member Abul

Hasnat presented the keynote paper at the roundtable presided over by Foundation Chairman Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled.

Speaking as the chief guest, former chief election commissioner Abu Hena said the state of emergency should be lifted to hold free, fair and credible elections.

Emergency is an unusual situation and free and fair elections cannot be held in such a situation, he said, adding that if it is not possible to lift emergency, the government can relax it in the run-up to the election.

Abu Hena also said that even the political parties holding dialogues with the government have doubts about whether the national election will be held by December.

He said the media can play an important role in ensuring free and fair elections through publishing reports on elections and candi-

dates. So, the journalists should be provided with training on electoral laws.

Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed said that if the national election is not held by December, the consequences would be disastrous.

"It has now been proved that only the politicians can run the country successfully. The people have also realised that it will take several years to recover the economic losses incurred in the last 20 months due to emergency," he said.

He also called on the government to lift the state of emergency immediately and not to hold any other elections before the national elections.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi said the governments should be made truly accountable in order to

improve the quality of democracy and that the media can play an important role to this end.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said that the media should publish the political parties' election manifestos in full to inform the voters of the commitments made by the politicians before the elections.

Although fair elections were held in 1991, 1996 and 2001, good governance could not be established due to corruption, he said, adding that honest and competent candidates must be elected in order to ensure good governance.

He also stressed the need to ensure the empowerment of women and their participation in the elections.

BNP leader Rizvi Ahmed said the 1/11 took place in order to undermine the politicians.

"If the media plays a positive role, the democracy in the country will be functional," he said.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu, Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor of The New Age Nurul Kabir, Editor of The News Today Reaz Uddin Ahmed, CPB leader Morshed Ali, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Dr Atiur Rahman, Dr Abul Barkat, journalists Nawajesh Ali Khan and Muniruzzaman and woman leader Ayesha Khanam also spoke at the roundtable.



Dhakabasi, an organisation of city residents, arranged a Jamdani Fashion Competition on the Public Library premises in the city yesterday on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. PHOTO: STAR

Bus conductor stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bus conductor was stabbed to death by a Chhotpoti vendor in the city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Amir Hossain, 20, a conductor of city service bus. Quoting witnesses, Officer-in-Charge of Pallabi Police Station Abdul Momen said Amir teased a girl who was eating chhotpoti at the shop of Sanaullah at Bauniabad of Lalmatia 7.00pm.

As Sanaullah asked Amir to restrain himself from teasing the girl, Amir rebuked the vendor leading to a clash between them.

At one stage Sanaullah stabbed Amir in the chest with a knife.

Locals rushed Amir to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Police arrested Sanaullah soon after the incident.

Teacher dies, 52 hurt in Sirajganj clash

UNB, Sirajganj

A schoolteacher was killed and at least 52 people were injured in a fierce clash over appointment of a teacher at Agbar village in Sadar upazila last night.

Shahjahan, 50, assistant teacher of Agbar non-govt primary school, died on the spot. A spear pierced through his chest.

Police and witnesses said the clash broke out between two groups -- one led by Jamsed master

and another by Yakub master, at about 9:15pm in dispute over appointing a teacher of the school. Shahjahan belonged to Jamsed Master group.

Two houses were damaged during the clash when both the groups used lethal weapons.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Of the injured, 27 people were rushed to Sadar Hospital and local clinics.

Use of tobacco kills 57,000 a year

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday said around 57,000 people die every year in the country due to smoking and use of tobacco products yesterday.

Citing a WHO-2004 report, they called for giving priority to public health, amending the existing Tobacco Act and introducing packets of bidi-cigarette and others tobacco products with warning messages, including pictures, inscribed on them.

Smoking has been reduced in many parts of the world due to display of health messages with pictures, they said while addressing the meeting with journalists at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

Bangladesh Consortium on Tobacco Control (BCTC) in collab-

oration with Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) jointly organised the meeting on 'Necessity of warning messages with pictures on the packets of bidi-cigarette and others tobacco products'.

CAB President Borhan Ahmed

was in the chair on the occasion. WHO National Professional Officer Dr M Mostafa Zaman accused media of playing silent role despite the deaths of huge number of people from smoking and use of tobacco products.

Smoking is a silent killer and it destroys people indirectly, he said expressing hope that BCTC's warning would play a significant role to stop the unwanted deaths.

Borhan Ahmed in his address called on the media to highlight information about the good effects of health warning messages for the interest of public health.



Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled addresses a roundtable at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Syed Manzur Elahi and on his right are Abu Hena and Rashed Khan Menon. PHOTO: STAR

432 Chinese babies have kidney stones from tainted milk powder

AFP, Beijing

China's health minister said 432 babies had kidney stones after drinking contaminated milk powder and vowed to punish those responsible as the country's latest product safety scandal escalated yesterday.

Gao Qiang said production had been halted at Sanlu Group after industrial chemical melamine, added by farmers and milk sellers to boost protein content, was found in the powder.

"As of September 12, there are 432 cases of kidney stones in the urinary systems of infants according to reports from health departments nationwide," Gao told journalists.

The number was sharply up from figures reported earlier which put the number of affected babies at about 150, with one dead. Kidney stones are rare in babies and can block their urinary tracts.

More cases were likely to come to light as the ministry had only issued orders for health departments to report kidney stones in babies on Friday morning.

"We will severely punish and discipline those people and workers who have acted illegally," Gao said.

Melamine, a chemical used to make plastics, glues and other products, was at the centre of a US recall of pet foods containing Chinese-made additives last year.

Dalai Lama cancels European tour on health grounds

AFP, Dharamshala

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has cancelled his tour next month of Germany and Switzerland for health reasons, his office said yesterday.

The Dalai Lama has been told by his doctors to rest after being recently hospitalised for with abdominal pains although "his general health condition is good," his office said.

"We are cancelling his tour to allow him more rest and so that he doesn't feel weak immediately again" after his hospitalisation, the Dalai Lama's secretary Tenzin Takha told AFP.

The Dalai Lama had been due to travel to Germany and Switzerland on October 10 for two weeks to give Buddhist teachings and lectures.

Hold talks to solve unrest in RMG sector Labour leaders urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour leaders yesterday called on the government to take steps to resolve the unstable situation that emerged from the decision of garment owners' to close 810 factories on security grounds.

They said peace and stability would not be restored if the government adopts a one-sided policy. It will have to resolve the problems by holding tripartite talks.

The leaders said this at a discussion organised by Jago Bangladesh Garment Workers Federation at Shaheed Asad Auditorium in the city with Md Baharane Sultan Bahar.

The main reasons behind labour unrest include irregular wage and allowance, denial of leave, violation of trade unionism, torture on workers and artificial discontent in the industries for the owners' goons, they added.

They demanded full implementation of industry law and increase in wage in consistence with the existing market prices. They also demanded full payment of wage and bonus by 25th of Ramadan.

Coordinator of Bam Morcha advocate Abdus Salam, former

president of BGMEA Shafikur Rahman Mohiuddin, INB and Tarun Peshajibi Parishad Chairman barister Jakir Ahmed, youth organiser Golam Rabbani Nayan and Jago Bangladesh Adviser advocate Emran spoke at the meeting.

JNU vacation from Sept 20

BSS, Dhaka

Jagannath University (JNU) will remain closed for 21 days from September 20 on the occasions of the holy Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr and Durga Puja.

Practical, semester and traditional examinations of all departments will be held till September 25, but all the classes will remain suspended from September 20 to October 11, said the registrar office of the university.

All the departments and the administrative office of the university will also remain closed between September 27 and October 5.

The university will reopen on October 12.

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Doctors said Prapti must go abroad for advanced treatment to save her life.

The treatment involves a huge amount of money which is not possible for her father Md Azharul Islam to afford.

So he has sought financial assistance from the well-off people of the society to save the life of his daughter.

Contributions can be sent to Md Azharul Islam, Savings A/C No 51819, Islami Bank Limited, Local Office, Motijheel, Dhaka.

Interested persons can also contact her father at 01711-301533, 01914-296434.

Khaleda condoles death of Alauddin

BSS, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday condoled the death of Alauddin Ahmed, assistant general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, who succumbed to his injuries yesterday.

"I am deeply shocked at the tragic death of Alauddin injured during jubilation soon after I was freed," Begum Zia said in a message.

Terming him a brave soldier of her party, Begum Zia said it is an irreparable loss to BNP at the death of Alauddin.

She expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain also condoled the death of Alauddin Ahmed.

Punish killers of Momen Demands BCL

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (JSD) yesterday demanded exemplary punishment to the killers of its leader Kamrul Islam Momen.

In support of their demand around one hundred activists formed a human chain at the base of Aparajeo Bangla at Dhaka University (DU) at around 12.00noon.

From the programme the leaders demanded immediate start of trial of Momen murder case forming a special tribunal.

JSD Chhatra League President Hossain Ahmed Tafsir and General Secretary Muhammad Samsul Islam attended the programme.

People to reply to sufferings with ballots Says Nizami

UNB, Pabna

Jamaat chief Matiur Rahman Nizami yesterday said people, who have been going through sufferings for last 18 months, would reply with ballots.

Nizami said 1/11 change over came as part of a conspiracy by the Awami League and a neighbouring nation, which had tried to make Bangladesh a non-functional state throughout the latest regime of the BNP-led four-party coalition.

He said this while he was addressing an Iftar mahfil by the party at Santhia upazila parishad auditorium in the district.

Nizami said the state of emergency has remained in place as part of an effort "to separate the Islamic force from nationalist forces".

Medicine-laden covered van catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A covered van of Aristo Pharma Ltd loaded with medicine caught fire at Purana Paltan last night.

Fire service officials suspected that excessive heat of engine or leakage of gas from the pipe of CNG Gas cylinder might have caused the fire.

Shariful Islam, station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the cylinder, however, did not explode.

He said the van caught fire as it had reached in front of its local office at 8:25pm.

Two fire fighting units from the fire service headquarters doused the fire after 25 minutes.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

The World Bank Office, Dhaka organises a seminar on 'Increasing access to rural finance in Bangladesh: The forgotten missing middle'. Venue: World Bank Office, Dhaka. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Journalist Forum for Communication and Environment organises a discussion on existing riverine transport system. Venue: Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust Bhawan. Time: 3:00pm.



Dr M Mostafa Zaman speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. On his right is Borhan Ahmed and on his left is Kazi Faruk. PHOTO: STAR

Pay salary, bonus before Eid Left parties urge RMG owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Gonotantrik Bam Morcha (Democratic Left Alliance) yesterday demanded of the owners of garment and other factories to pay salaries and bonuses to their workers before the Eid-ul-Fitr.

They made the demand at separate meetings in the city.

The CPB organised the meeting at its central office which was presided over by its President Manzurul Ahsan Khan.

The meeting urged the caretaker government to discard its compromising attitude and take stern action against identified corrupts to make politics, economy and society free from crimes.

The CPB leaders also called for holding a free, fair and meaningful election within the scheduled time to restore the democratic system in the country.

CPB General Secretary Muzahidul Islam Selim, president member Shahidullah Chowdhury, Md Shah Alam, Syed Abu Zafar Ahmed and Shahadat Hossain addressed the meeting.

The Gonotantrik Bam Morcha organised a discussion meeting titled '20 months of present government and democracy of Bangladesh' at Shaheed Tajul auditorium.

With its Coordinator Advocate Abdus Salam in the chair, the meeting was addressed by Tipu Biswas, Saiful Huq, Bazlur Rashid Firoz and Moshrefa Mishu.

DV LOTTERY-2010 Application forms available online from October 2

BSS, Dhaka

Application forms of the Diversity Visa (DV) lottery programme of the United States will be available online from October 2 to December 1 as the US government yesterday announced the DV-2010 registration programme for Bangladesh.

Addressing a function on the occasion at the Biam auditorium, chief of the Consular Section of US Embassy here Laurie Trost said the application forms would be available on the website www.dvlottery.state.gov during the period.

"Applications must be submitted through online and no written application will be accepted. Along with professional experience, educational qualifications for getting the citizenship is the US 12-year degree equivalent to HSC level in Bangladesh," she said.

"Madrasa student having no additional general degree will not be eligible for the DV lottery," she said.

Every year, as many as 5,000 Bangladeshi citizens are being awarded US citizenship through the DV lottery programme.

Protest against CA in front of UN headquarters on Sept 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Mukti Andolon (TMA), a platform for the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's elder son Tarique Rahman, will stage a demonstration against Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed in front of the UN Headquarters in New York on September 26.

This was stated by TMA President and Senior Joint General Secretary of BNP's US unit Akter Hossain Badal at an Iftar party on Friday to mark the release of Khaleda and Tarique, said a US-based news agency.

Badal said they will stage the demonstration as Fakhruddin is involved in eliminating the nationalist forces and torturing the family members of late president Zia.

He also alleged that Tarique was tortured so that he could not take part in politics.

The committee thanked the media for playing a positive role for the release of Khaleda and Tarique and held a function to thank the journalists.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Dewan Atiqur Raja Chowdhury, a freedom fighter, passed away at a hospital in Sylhet on Friday at the age of 85.

He left behind his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried with state honour at the graveyard close to the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) on Friday night.

Purnendu Chandra Das

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Purnendu Chandra Das, a freedom fighter, passed away at Shulla Upazila Health Complex in Sunamganj on Friday night at the age of 55.

He left behind his widow, four sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

His was cremated at his village with state honour.