

Equal JS seats a must for gender parity

Speakers tell opinion exchange meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an opinion exchange meeting yesterday demanded equal distribution of parliamentary seats for both gender to ensure gender equality in politics.

They said this at the opinion exchange meeting organised by Steps Towards Development on 'Proposals to different political parties for incorporating issues in election manifestos to ensure gender equality in politics' at Cridap auditorium in the city.

Politicians and women rights activists participated in the meeting which was conducted by Executive Director of Steps Ranjan Karmaker.

Women Affairs Secretary of Awami League Dr Dipu Moni and Joint Secretary General of BNP

Selima Rahman unanimously said ensuring half of the general seats for women is more important than the reserved seats for ensuring participation in the crucial policy making.

"This practice would ultimately help women play their role as people's representatives and this would be the first step in ensuring equal rights of women in politics," said Selima.

Dipu Moni said, "The rise of fundamentalist force is also a hurdle to make women politically empowered." She called on all to resist this militant force.

She also criticised the negative description of politics, which is discouraging for new generation to play politics and it is a barrier on the way to develop good leadership.

Steps placed a 21-point pro-

posal to include issue of women in the election manifestos of the political parties.

Expressing solidarity with Steps, Awami League presidium member Tofail Ahmed said his party is always interested in women empowerment in the politics.

Women's rights activist Salma Khan recommended on the formulation and implementation of 'Parliamentary Gender Commission' and 'Equal Opportunity Act'.

She also demanded materialisation of different national and international documents, which Bangladesh has agreed with.

Dhaka University Prof MM Akash, Prof Zerina Rahman, Jatiya Party presidium member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu and CPB leader Mahubul Alam also took part in the programme.

Sharma assures help to revive CMDF

CJA team meets C'wealth secy gen

UNB, Dhaka

Secretary General of the Commonwealth Kamalesh Sharma said yesterday that he would use his good offices to revive the suspended Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CMDF).

The assurance came when a delegation of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) led by its newly-elected international President Hassan Shahriar met the Commonwealth secretary general at his hotel suite in the city.

Shahriar urged Sharma to persuade the Commonwealth leaders to reconsider the suspension and resume their contribution to the CMDF.

He handed to the secretary general a copy of the communiqué adopted at the CJA's 8th conference in Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, Malaysia last week.

The CJA president also briefed Sharma about the outcome of the conference that dealt with many issues, including climate change and the role of the media.

The CJA communiqué deplored the lack of funding commitment on the part of Commonwealth countries that has led to the effective suspension of the CMDF, set up by the Heads of Government to enhance Commonwealth-wide journalistic excellence.

Sharma, who is on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, agreed with the CJA president that suspension of the CMDF would jeopardise CJA's programme to train young journalists in developing countries.

"We'll need to find a solution," Sharma said. "Member countries can support such programmes."

Also present at the meeting were Farid Hossain, CJA Bangladesh branch president and a member of the central executive committee, and CJA, Bangladesh member Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, said a press release.



Newly elected CJA international President Hassan Shahriar hands over a copy of the communiqué of the CJA's 8th conference to Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma at his hotel suite in the city yesterday. CJA Bangladesh branch President Farid Hossain, extreme right, and CJA, B member Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, second from right, are also seen.

'Send Pankaj abroad for better treatment'

Staff Correspondent

A medical board headed by Prof Dr S Sirajul Karim of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) suggested to send detained Awami Swechhasebak League General Secretary Pankaj Devnath abroad for better treatment.

Pankaj was arrested by joint forces on February 4 last year from his Dhanmondi residence and has been undergoing treatment at a prison cell of BSMMU.

The patient need urgent Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of lumbosacral spine and cervical spine but in presence of ferro metallic body (splinter) in his spinal and abdominal region, MRI is not possible in the country, the medical board said.

Meanwhile, some 98 teachers of Dhaka University in a statement yesterday demanded release of Pankaj Devnath, also the former student of the department of Mathematics and general secretary of Jagannath Hall Students Union.

The teachers demanded immediate release of Pankaj for his better treatment as he has been detained for a long time though his physical condition is critical.

Those signed in the statement are Dr Harun Or Rashid, Dr Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Dr M Wahiduzzaman, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiqui, Prof Dr Kazi Shahidullah, Prof Dr SM Imamul Haque, Prof Dr Sekandar Hayat Khan, Prof Dr Azizur Rahman, Prof Dr Harun Kader Mohammad Yusuf, Dr Muhammad Samad, Dr KM Saiful Islam Khan, Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman, Dr Jinat Huda, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Prof Dr Neem Chandra Bhoumik, Dr AKM Golam Rabbani, Prof Dr Ajay Kumar Das, Dr AKM Jamal Uddin, Prof Dr Abu Sara Shamsur Rahman, Dr Shoumitra Shekhar, Dr Kajar Banarjee, Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman, Prof Dulal Kanti Bhoumik, Dr Firoza Yeasmin, Dr Emran Kabir Chowdhury, Dr MA Halim, Prof Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam, Dr GM Goljar Hossain, Prof Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Prof Dr Shiteshchandra Basar and Dr Afzal Hossain.

RAJBARI TRIPLE MURDER

Three to die, 8 get life term

UNB, Rajbari

A court here yesterday sentenced three people to death and eight others to life term imprisonment in a triple murder case.

The condemned convicts are Mujibur Molla, 35, Gani Molla, 25, and Abdul Mannan Khan, 40, who is on the run. They were also fined Tk 5,000 each.

The lifers are Kalam Molla, Taleb Khan, Abdul Latif Mandal, Omar Ali, Bablu, Momin, Akai and Nepal. The court also fined them Tk 10,000 each, in default, to serve two years more in jail.

According to the prosecution, the convicts attacked Mahubb, Habib and Abdul Quddus at Gobindapur village in Sadar upazila on June 4, 2003 over previous enmity.

The attackers first opened fire on them and then hacked them indiscriminately, killing Mahubb and Habib on the spot and injuring Quddus critically.

Quddus was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries four days later.

Victims' family members filed a murder case with local police.

After examining records and witnesses, the additional district and Sessions judge M Shahidullah Bakaul delivered the verdict at a crowded courtroom.

The court also sentenced eight others to life term imprisonment. They were also fined Tk 10,000 each, in default, to serve two years more in jail.

URDU-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

UN blamed for ignoring rights issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Urdu-speaking minority of Indian origin in the country criticised the United Nations (UN) for overlooking their rights issues at a meeting in the city on Sunday.

Following the 63rd UN General Assembly on October 23, the speakers urged the organisation to take necessary steps so that the Bangladesh government pays heed to their problems and works to ensure their rights.

Indian Origin Urdu-Speaking Minority Council Bangladesh organised the meeting where its Vice Chairman Hasnain, Secretary General Md Afzal Warsi and members Md Asgor Ali and Baby Parvin took part.

The speakers said after the liberation war in 1971, their properties were grabbed by the local people and still now a vested quarter has been trying to harass them, which should be taken care of by the government.

They demanded that the government should accept them as a minority group and set up a trust for them.

Quota system for the Urdu-speaking minority group in the parliament is necessary, they said, adding that a separate ministry should be set up and schools and colleges also be established for them.

The UN may help them by utilising its specific power and pressing the government to ensure the rights of the community.

'Allow Mohiuddin to resume mayoral work'

BSS, Chittagong

Leaders of different professional bodies yesterday urged the government to allow recently-freed Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury to resume his responsibilities as mayor.

They were addressing a rally at Chittagong Press Club auditorium after forming a human chain in front of the club.

Peshajibee Samannoy Parishad, Chittagong PSC - a conglomerate of different professional bodies, organised the rally and human chain to press home its demand for allowing Mohiuddin to resume his duties.

Mohiuddin was arrested by joint forces from his residence on March 7 last year and was released on October 4 following a bail order granted by the High Court.

A recent LGRD Ministry letter quoting the opinion of Law Ministry asked Mohiuddin to go abroad for treatment as the high court granted him bail on health ground.

The letter also urged the acting mayor M Manjur Alam to continue the current responsibilities.

Former pro vice-chancellor of Chittagong University Prof Abu Yousuf Alam, former BMA general secretary Dr AQM Serajul Islam, former Chittagong District Bar Association president Advocate Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul, former CUTA general secretary Prof Helal Nizami, IEB, Chittagong chapter leader Eng Delwar Hossain Majumder, Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) councillor Advocate Rehana Kabir Ranu and city Awami League general secretary Enamul Haq Danu, among others, addressed the rally.

The speakers said Mohiuddin is an elected mayor of CCC and there is no legal bar in discharging his duties as mayor.

Counselling needed to improve students' mental health, confidence

Speakers say at seminar

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said counselling in mental health is essential for students to improve mental health, self-confidence and working capacity.

They said this at the seminar on 'Primacy of counselling in mental health: Need for professionals in Bangladesh' was organised to mark the 'World Mental Health Day' at TSC auditorium on the campus.

Students' Counselling and Guidance office of the university and Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK) jointly organised the seminar with ASK Director Sultana Kamal in the chair.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz was present on the occasion as the chief guest.

The speakers said due to some specific reasons, students sometimes fall into mental illness that leads them to unexpected incidents, including suicide.

A proper counselling may help them overcome the problem and it may show them a new road for living, they added.

Noted therapist and ASHA India Director PK Saru presented a keynote paper on the mental health at the seminar.

Saru in her paper said when people lose mental health, they

may totally go out of the reality. So, counselling is very important at every level stage of the life, she added.

In the age of globalisation, competition is increasing in educational, political, economical and social life. Everyone has to cope with this situation to survive as it is creating mental stresses to the people, she added.

Saru further said counsellors are now needed not only for mentally imbalanced people as we think, but every busy citizen of the metropolitan society should visit the psychotherapists regularly to remove his/her stresses and strains as well as for being more skilled in their working sectors.

Counselling and Guidance Office Director Prof Shaheen Islam also spoke on the issue.

The VC in his speech stressed the need for providing proper counselling and guidance for the students at the university, saying that it can raise self-confidence among students.

One shot, another stabbed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A furniture shop staff was shot by the extortionists at Pallabi while a day labourer was stabbed by a gang of muggers at Badda in the city last night.

The victims -- Mohammad Alam, 25, a staff of Chuadanga Furniture and Mohammad Sohel, 22, a day labourer -- were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Alam told journalists at the hospital that a gang of four stormed into the furniture shop at around 8:30pm and were looking for its owner Abdul Aziz. He said the miscreants shot him in his abdomen as he could not say anything about the whereabouts of Aziz.

He said earlier the gang members demanded extortion from Aziz.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident a gang of three muggers waylaid Sohel on a road at Moddhya Badda at around 7:30pm and tried to snatch his cellphone set and Tk 500.

Sohel said one of the muggers stabbed him in the abdomen as he tried to resist them. The muggers decamped with the cellphone and money, he told the journalists.

Create mass awareness for democracy

US envoy asks journalists

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador James F Moriarty called upon the journalists to come forward in creating mass awareness to push Bangladesh towards democracy.

He made the call at a function in the city to mark the second founding anniversary of Radio Today on Sunday night.

The private radio channel

begin its third year of transmission on October 15, says a press release.

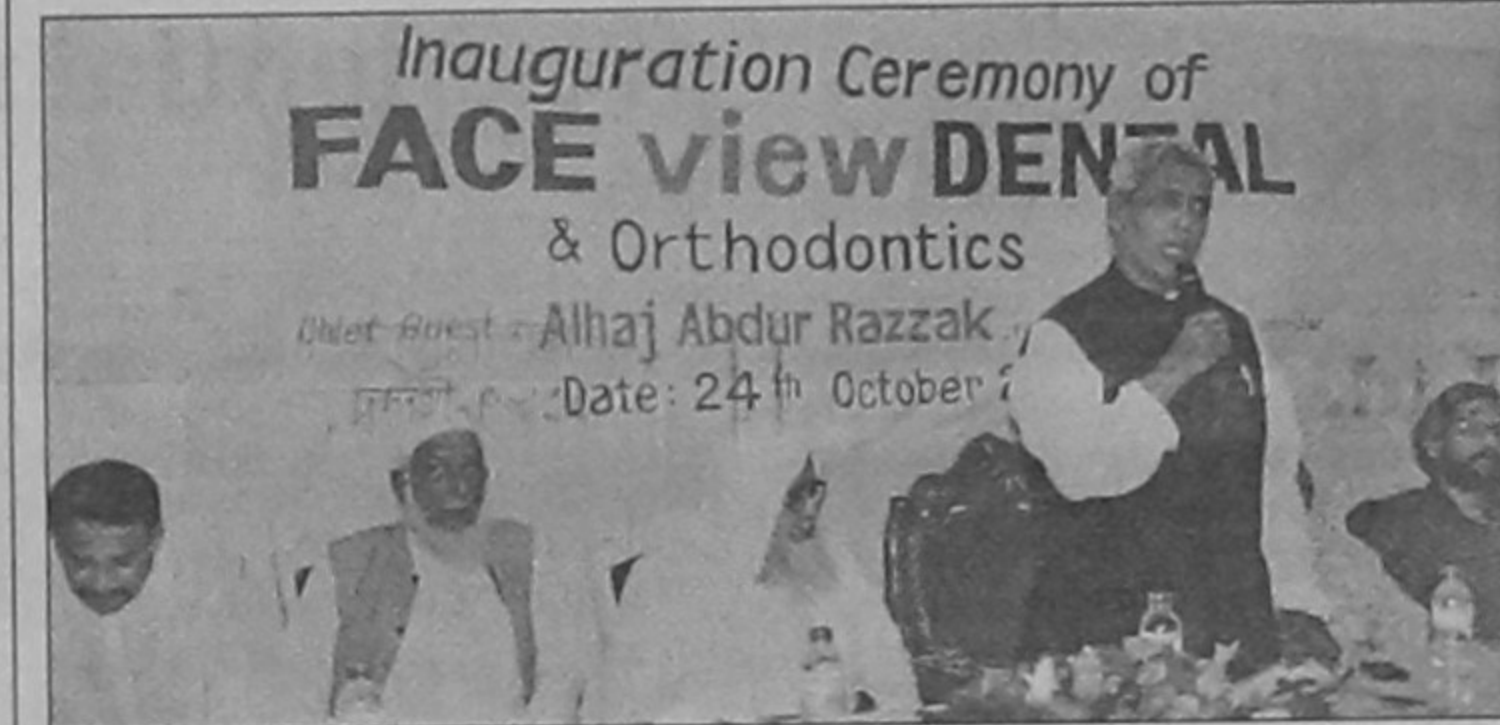
Planning Secretary Zafar Ahmed, Radio Today Chairman Mozammel Hossain and Managing Director Rafiqul Haque also addressed the function.

Speaking on the occasion, Moriarty recalled that Bangladeshi journalists have been playing important role in implementing the electoral roadmap. He said the United States, which believes in free media is and will always be beside Bangladesh.

The US Ambassador hoped that Bangladeshi media would work with greater commitment to reestablish democracy in future.

Praising Radio Today, Jafar Ahmed said the channel has set a good example by transmitting accurate, objective and transparent news bulletins.

Both Mozammel Hossain and Rafiqul Haque expressed their satisfaction at the challenging success achieved by them in establishing such a news and entertainment channel in private sector.



Awami League leader Abdur Razzak speaks as the chief guest at the inauguration ceremony of the second branch of Face View Dental and Orthodontics at Segunbagicha in the city recently.

Include workers' demands in election manifestos

Skop urges political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday urged major political parties to include workers' demands in their election manifestos.

They said during the last 22 months workers were suppressed by snatching their rights to trade union activities which led to indiscriminate termination and other problems in their work places.

The press conference was organised by Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad (Skop) in the city where its Convener Dr Wajedul Islam Khan presented the keynote paper.

The speakers said there are about four crore 80 lakh workers working in different mills and factories, and any real progress of the country is impossible depriving workers and leaving them under constant fear of losing jobs.

They said the present military-backed government has only protected the interests of the owners of mills and factories and helped them sack workers and close mills and factories without paying workers concerned their dues and salaries.

The speakers demanded cancellation of amended labour law of 2008 and some sections of labour law 2006 that go against the interests of workers, fixing of lowest salary at Tk 4500, and reopening of closed jute and sugar mills.

Dr Wajedul said social security of

the workers must be ensured and the government must take steps to protect export-oriented garment sector from global financial meltdown.

President of Bangladesh Labour Federation Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, President of Jatiya Sramik Jote of Bangladesh Abdul Kader Howlader, and President of Trade Union Sangha Khalilur Rahman attended the press conference.

Tk 10cr Shiva statue seized in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a 55-kg touchstone statue of Hindu god Shiva worth around Tk 10 crore and arrested two people in this connection at Lakhsmingar village in Fatullah in Narayanganj yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Nur Mohammad, 41, and Aminul Islam, 32.

Acting of a tip-off, a Rab team conducted a raid at the house of Arafat Ali at Lakhsmingar and recovered the statue.

The arrestees confessed that they kept the touchstone there for smuggling.

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Spanish envoy calls on DU VC

UNB, Dhaka

Spanish Ambassador to Bangladesh Arturo Manuel Perez paid a courtesy call on Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz yesterday at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban on the campus.

During the meeting they discussed matters of mutual interests especially the possibilities of establishing collaborative academic programmes between Dhaka University and the universities in Spain, said a press release.

The vice-chancellor apprised the ambassador of academic activities of Dhaka University and its glorious history in brief.

Director of Dhaka University Institute of Modern Languages Prof Anwar Hossain was present on the occasion.

Robbers loot valuables worth Tk 7 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers on Sunday night took away cash money, gold ornaments, mobile phone sets and other valuables worth around Tk 7 lakh from a house at Basabo under Sabujbagh Police Station in the city.

Sources said the gang comprising five members entered into the house of Sibab Uddin by pressing calling bell at about 7:30pm. They tied up all the members with ropes and confined them into a room.

Romei, son of Sibab Uddin, told The Daily Star, "The criminals committed the robbery for about 40 minutes and took away money three lakh in cash, 15 tolas of gold ornaments, two mobile phone sets and some other valuables."

After the incident, police and Rapid Action Battalion personnel rushed to the spot. A case was filed with the Sabujbagh Police Station yesterday.

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