Empower common people for true democracy, prosperity

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said the country will never attain true democracy as well as economic prosperity unless the common people are empowered by breaking a vicious cycle between the politicians and the rural elite and traders.

The next political government, therefore, must pledge to bring major reforms in agricultural and rural socio-economic sectors that include distribution of khas (fallow) land among the landless, establishing rights of fishermen on the water bodies and providing farmers with credit to revamp rural economy, they added.

The speaker said this at the seminar titled 'Rural socio-economic reforms' organised by Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) at Cirdap auditorium in city where economists and politicians took part.

Prof Anisur Rahman said, "Today the number of big property owners dwindled, but the bulk of rural masses are tied with a class of rural 'maliks' in a patron-client relation that inhibits them from taking independent initiatives and also to vote freely in the local and national elections."

Liquidation of such patron-client relation is a necessary precondition for establishing genuine democracy as well as for pro-people development of the country, he added.

Prof Anisur Rahman, also former member of Planning Commission, said, "Whatever land and water space is available today for redistribution must be redistributed, khas land which is legally the right of the landless must be genuinely given to them."

Prof Rehman Sobhan said the landless are the majority people of the country and the political parties will be the ultimate gainers if they work in favour of them by taking initiatives to empower them.

"Two major political parties should take the land reform issue into account to create opportunities for the millions of farmers," he said, adding that programmes could be taken to make strategies on how the distributed land is best used.

Prof Sobhan, also the chairman of CPD, said, "These issues must be debated in the concerned committees and parliament."

In a keynote presentation, Prof MM Akash said besides distributing land to poor rural people, they also should be provided with agriculture inputs and ensure fair price of products.

Development of non-agricultural sectors also should be developed in the rural areas, he said, adding that there are around 72 percent landless people in the rural areas.

Prof Abul Barakat said a research in 2001 found 1.5 crore bighas of khas land, while the amount of khas land is 1.8 crore bighas according to a parliamentary committee report in 2005.

The tragedy is that those engaged in production based on the natural resources do not own the resources, he said, suggesting establishment of their ownership on land, forest and water bodies.

Awami League leaders at the seminar said they support the land reform issue as proposed one and will work to establish the land rights of the indigenous and the landless people if they are voted to power.

BNP leader Shamsul Islam said the existing laws of the country favour the land grabbers. The laws, therefore, need to be changed to make those pro-poor.

AL presidium member Abdur Razzak and agriculture secretary Dr Abdur Razzak, Shamsul Huda of Association for Land Reform and Development, women leader Ayesha Khanam, Shushashoner Janney Nagorik Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder and RIB Chairman Dr Shamsul Bari also spoke at the seminar moderated by Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir.

PHOTO: STAR

Small traders of city's fish and kitchen markets form a human chain in front of the secretariat yesterday to press home their demands.

Call to ensure cent percent sanitation by 2010

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at the 'National Convention for the Grassroots People' yesterday called for political commitment to ensure cent percent sanitation across the country by 2010.

Water Supply & Sanitation, WaterAid Bangladesh, WASH, Sanitation and Food and Nutrition Science Alliance (FANSA) organised the convention at the Engineers Institution, Bangladesh in the city.

The speakers also questioned a report of the last PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) in 2005 that mentioned of 88 percent sanitation coverage across the country.

Country Representative of WaterAid Bangladesh Dr Khairul Islam denying this PRSP report said, "The authorities who disclosed the information are not aware of the real scenario."

According to base assessment of 2003, 67 percent people of the country are still outside the sanitation coverage.

"Government allocation has been gradually reducing in water and sanitation sector since 2005," Dr Khairul Islam said.

Noted economist Prof Abul Barakat urged the political leaders to incorporate the issue of cent per percent sanitation coverage in their election manifestoes.

"The political parties should give the outline how they are going to do it," he said.

Representative of Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) Jeneva Caroline Vander Vorden termed the convention as 'very important' and said, "Around 260 crore people around the world is out of sanitation coverage."

Prof Mohammad Mojibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said, "Disparity between rich and poor is the main obstacle to address any problem."

He suggested using indigenous and sustainable technologies rather than the ones that don't suit the environment and ecology of Bangladesh.

WSSCC,B organised 175 grassroots level dialogues on sanitation at 25 wards and 35 unions.

People from both urban and rural areas at the convention said that they do not know anything about the government's budget for the sanitation sector and how the fund is spent.

They demanded effective measures and participation of grassroots people to achieve cent percent sanitation.

Councilor of Ward no 2,3 and 5 Meherunnisa Haque chaired first session while Executive Director of Dustha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) Dr Dibalok Singh delivered the welcome speech. Director (human rights) of Manusher Jonno Foundation Rina Roy was also present.

Germany hopes for peaceful power transition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

German Ambassador to Dhaka Frank Meyke yesterday said Berlin hopes next month's elections will usher in a peaceful and successful transition to parliamentary government in Bangladesh.

He said the lack of a political climate congenial to investment has been the biggest obstacle to foreign investment in Bangladesh.

The ambassador was speaking at a discussion organised by Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), at a city hotel.

"We expect and hope that after the elections Bangladesh will achieve sustainable democracy free from the confrontational politics of the past," he said.

Ambassador Meyke said the political development is required to boost investment from German businessmen.

"Constructive parliamentary work, renouncing and banning hartals, corruption curbed, building on the structural reforms and achievements of the caretaker government--these would be positive signals for German investors and for tapping the full potential of our bilateral trade."

Germany is the second biggest destination for Bangladeshi products. Bilateral trade between the two countries doubled between 2002 and 2006, with Bangladesh currently enjoying an estimated trade surplus of 1.3 billion euro.

Despite the trade growth, German investment in Bangladesh is still poor.

"The assets and potentials of the country are concealed behind a number of negative perceptions, including image problem and confrontational politics," the ambassador said.

He however added that he has seen some changes in German investors who are now seriously thinking of Bangladesh as an investment destination.

He pointed to some of Bangladesh's positive sides: huge domestic consumers, massive workforce and a good legal framework for investors.

"It (Bangladesh) is considered to be among the best in Asia in terms of tax holidays, repatriation of profits and fiscal incentives of various kinds," Ambassador Meyke remarked.

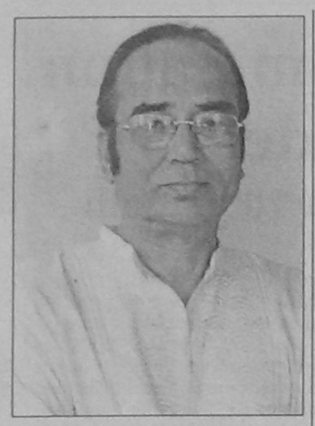
He said investors still dig in their heels because of a string of negative factors ranging from non-transparency to corruption, unaccountability to severe infrastructure constraints.

Noting that Bangladesh has come a long way since January 2007, he said the structural reforms and corruption-busting drives of the caretaker government did not go unnoticed abroad.

"However, investors will wait to see how these initiatives will be implemented and built upon in the future, under parliamentary government," he added.

FICCI president Wali Bhuiyan chaired the monthly luncheon programme attended by diplomats and businessmen.

He presented a crest to Hossain Khaled, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for successfully organising an international conference on the chamber's golden jubilee recently.



Third anniversary of Enayetullah Khan's death today

METRO DESK

Today is the third death anniversary of Enayetullah Khan, founding editor of The New Age and editor-in-chief of the weekly Holiday, says a press release.

A titan of Bangladeshi journalism of regional and international repute for his fearlessness for more than four decades, Enayetullah Khan passed away in Toronto, Canada, at the age of 66. He had been suffering from cancer of the pancreas.

Having begun his career as a journalist as a cub reporter for the then Pakistan Observer in 1959, Enayetullah Khan went on to found the weekly Holiday in August 1965, before taking over as editor of the paper in 1966.

He founded the daily New Age as its editor and publisher in June 2003. He was also the editor of the Bangladesh Times between 1975 and 1977. He was awarded the Ekushey Padak for excellence in journalism.

He also served as a minister and as an ambassador to China, North Korea, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Known for his democratic activism, Enayetullah Khan was at the forefront of the Buddhijibi Nidhan Tathyanusandhan Committee instituted on December 18, 1971 to investigate murders of intellectuals by Al-Badr and Al-Shams -- the two wings of Jamaat-e-Islami -- in the terminal days of the war of independence.

He was also an organiser of the Civil Liberties and Legal Aid Committee that defended the political victims of Rakkhi Bahini; the Famine Resistance Committee; the Farakka March Committee led by Moulana Bhasani; and the Committee Against Communalism.

He was a president of the National Press Club and the Dhaka Club.

In his student days, he held leadership positions as general secretary of Ananda Mohan College Students' Union in Mymensingh, member of the Dhaka University Students' Union, and vice-president of Dhaka Hall (now Shahidullah Hall) Students' Union.

Born on May 25 in 1939 in Mymensingh, Enayetullah Khan was the third son of late Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, a former speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly.

Dr Mohammad Mostafa

BSS, *Dhaka*

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Dr Mohammad Mostafa, a freedom fighter.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his Sonagazi village home in Feni and at his younger son journalist M Enamul Haque's Shantinagar residence in the city after Asr prayers.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

27TH BCS RESULTS

Unsuccessful candidates demand appointment

DU CORRESPONDENT

The unsuccessful candidates in the 2nd phase result of the 27th BCS examinations at a tripartite meeting with the PSC authorities yesterday formally demanded immediate appointment as per the 1st phase viva result of the exams and their immediate recruitment.

In support of their demands, over 100 candidates, who came out successful in the first result of the exams and were dropped out as per a fresh viva result of the exams, have been observing a hunger strike unto death programme at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city since November 1.

They declared a self-immolation programme for November 7 at the same venue to press home their demands.

However, they withdrew the programme as per the assurance of holding a discussion with the PSC authorities over the issue from Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz on Thursday night.

In the latest development, a five-member team on behalf of the candidates sat with the PSC authorities led by its Chairman Dr Saadat Hussain at the latter's office in the city.

Three DU teachers -- Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Prof Ahmed Kamal and Prof Borhan Uddin Khan -- also took part in the meeting as the negotiators.

After the meeting, Dr Saadat told only television and radio reporters that it was not clear to the commission on what demands the candidates have been demonstrating.

Stressing the need for government initiative to resolve the row over results and appointment, he said PSC would think if there is any chance of taking partly initiatives beyond the declared result. But there is a necessity of government's initiative, he added.

The PSC also sought specific demands from the agitating candidates and suggestions from the teachers to resolve the crisis.

Prof Ahmed Kamal, also the chairman of History department, told reporters that they wanted to hold a discussion between hunger strikers and PSC authorities for a fruitful outcome.

The candidates told newsmen that they have formally demanded the immediate recruitment as per the results of 1st viva voce. PSC chairman did not give them any specific assurance, but he said the commission would review its own issue and the government would review its issue.

Replying to a question, they said they do not want cancellation of the 2nd phase result, saying that it would bring a humanitarian disaster on candidates of other group, adding that they want an integrated result comprising both the results of the viva voce.

Meanwhile, the candidates, who came out successful as per the fresh result, staged a demonstration on the campus demanding their immediate appointment.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, *Dhaka*

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 32.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 14.6 degrees Celsius at Srimangal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:14pm today and rises at 6:11am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.8	20.0	57	61
Chittagong	30.5	19.5	73	69
Rajshahi	31.2	17.8	80	88
Khulna	31.5	21.8	72	79
Barisal	31.0	20.0	76	91
Sylhet	30.3	17.2	68	74
Cox's Bazar	32.7	21.7	77	74

Obituary

BSS, *Dhaka*

Yasin Ahmed, an elderly journalist, leader of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and permanent member of National Press Club, passed away due ton gangrene on Saturday night at the age of 64.

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

President of the National Press Club Shawkat Mahmud and General Secretary Kamal Uddin Sabuj in a condolence message expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Fariduzzaman Bablu

BSS, *Sonatola, Bogra*

Fariduzzaman Bablu, a freedom fighter and social worker of Sonatola upazila in Bogra, passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Saturday at the age of 60.

He left behind his wife, three sons, three daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried with state honour at his family graveyard at Velurpara village under the upazila.

Local elites, political leaders, socio-cultural activists, teachers and freedom fighters expressed profound shock at his death.

Shukur Ali

A CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

Shukur Ali, president of Jessore Road Transport Laborer Union and treasurer of southwestern committee of Bangladesh Road Transport Laborer Federation, passed away due to kidney diseases at a hospital in the city yesterday, says a press release.

He will be buried in Jessore today.

Amla ton crushes Tigers' hopes

FROM PAGE 16

rate quickly reached over ten an over. Bangladesh skipper, who made 73 runs in the first match, offered a low return catch to offspinner Johan Botha after making five.

Before that, Botha broke the resistance of the second wicket partnership when Imrul Kayes was bowled by a flighted delivery for a 39-ball 14 in the 42-run stand with fellow left-hander Zunaed Siddiqui.

The 53-run ninth wicket partnership between Abdur Razzak (20 not out) and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (34) however reduced the margin of defeat.

Earlier, in overcast conditions and in 15 degree Celsius, Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful decided to give his bowlers some advantage on a batting track but Hashim Amla along with his fit-again skipper Graeme Smith warmed the local crowd on the embankments surrounded by willow trees with flurry of shots.

Amla struck his maiden one-day international hundred and added 136 runs with Smith, who returned with an assertive knock of 65, to set a platform for making 358 for 4 in 50 overs, the highest total in this ground after Sri Lanka made 288 against Pakistan in 1998.

But right-hander Amla must thank Mashrafe Bin Mortaza for giving him a second chance to prolong his innings as the Tigers' fielding were far below their high standards of the first match in Potchefstroom.

Amla, who smote all over the park to strike eight boundaries and four sixes during a 135-ball 140, was put down by Mashrafe at deep square-leg on 15 off left-arm seamer Syed Rasel and it ultimately proved costly for the visitors.

Captain Ashraful himself dropped Smith on 53 off Shakib Al Hasan at point though it was not as costly as Amla, who had a brisk 100-run second wicket stand with Jacques Kallis.

The all-rounder hit a run-a-ball 40 that contained four boundaries and a six.

And then it was the AB de Villiers and Albie Morkel show. The duo punished the bowlers heavily to take the total away from the reach of the Tigers. de Villiers clobbered four sixes and two fours to make an unbeaten 27-ball 54 while Morkel was unbeaten on 37 that came only from 13 balls aided by three fours and as many sixes.

Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak was the most expensive bowler, giving away 88 runs in nine overs, in far contrast from his first match performance while Rasel gave away 75 runs in 10 overs.

After this mammoth total it was all but confirmed that this venue's record -- in eleven previous matches the team batting first lost on nine occasions -- would not speak in favour of Mohammad Ashraful's decision at the toss.

Bangladesh will travel to East London today to play the third and final match of the series on November 12.

EC warns BNP for violating electoral code

FROM PAGE 1

visited Chittagong on November 7. As she arrived in the city some party leaders seeking nominations joined her motorcade with their supporters at different junctions.

Traffic in the entire area around the rally venue came to a standstill, as the attenders spilled over on to the streets from the vast field. Several groups of honking motorcyclists were disrupting traffic on the city streets since morning as it turned into a city of processions and slogans.

The electoral code of conduct issued by EC on September 18 imposes restrictions on motorcade or pasting colourful posters regarding election on walls.

Besides, according to the code of conduct, any registered political party or a candidate nominated by the party or any independent candidate or any person on behalf of them cannot organise any election campaign before the last three weeks preceding the election date.

For violation of the code of conduct, EC may fine a political party or even cancel candidature of a candidate.

In the letter sent to the BNP secretary general, EC said a reception was accorded to Khaleda with motorcade rally and severe traffic congestion disrupted city life, resulting in sufferings to commuters.

Besides, colourful posters of the party's aspirant candidates were pasted on the walls, it continued.

"The reception was actually turned into a showdown, violating the electoral code of conduct," said a source quoting the letter.

The EC last week also said the AL has violated the electoral code of conduct as its supporters pasted posters on windowpanes of vehicles and brought out a procession holding AL's election symbol "Boat" in the welcoming reception of Sheikh Hasina on November 5.

It said the reception turned into an election campaign, which was also violation of the code of conduct.

Myanmar worked in that area for before?

FROM PAGE 1

geologists say.

This spot is located 55km southwest at 227 degrees from St Martin's Island while 180 degrees from St Martins marks a southward straight line, which should be Bangladesh's maritime boundary. The location is marked as deep-sea oil and gas exploration blocks 8-13 of Bangladesh.

But Myanmar claims the area to be part of its economic zone and marked the area as some of its own oil and gas exploration blocks.

In August last year, Daewoo declared that it discovered 7.7 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas in three offshore blocks close to Bangladesh, says AP.

According to Xinhua, Myanmar's autocratic military regime highly depends on oil and gas exports to Thailand and China to earn foreign currency. Gas export in 2006-07 fetched Myanmar over $1 billion.

Almost all the offshore gas discoveries are close to Bangladesh maritime territory. With three main large offshore oil and gas fields and 19 onshore ones, Myanmar has proven recoverable reserve of 18.012 TCF out of probable reserve of 89.722 TCF offshore and onshore gas. The country is also estimated to have 3.2 billion barrels of recoverable crude oil reserve, according to official statistics.

Myanmar's latest oil and gas explorations are being conducted by China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) of China, Daewoo and South Korea Gas Corporation, ONGC Videsh Ltd, Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) and Essar of India under various Production Sharing Contracts (PSC). In the past, US company Unocal (now Chevron) discovered and developed a number of oil and gas fields.

CNPC signed the PSC with the Myanmar Ministry of Energy in January 2007 covering crude oil and natural gas exploration projects in three deep-sea blocks off western Myanmar, which is close to Bangladesh maritime border.

A consortium of Korean and Indian companies led by Daewoo owns stakes in blocks that include the Shwe, Shwephyu and Mya fields off western Myanmar, also close to Bangladesh territory. Daewoo has 60 percent stakes in the consortium, South Korea Gas Corporation has 10 percent, ONGC 20 percent and GAIL 10 percent.

The Shwe field holds a gas reserve of 4-6 TCF while Shwephyu 5 TCF and Mya 2 TCF with a combined reserve of 5.7-10 TCF estimated by experts.

In May this year, Daewoo and CNPC signed a deal for join exploration in Myanmar.

Statistics reveals that foreign investment in Myanmar's oil and gas sector has reached $2.635 billion as of March since the country allowed foreign investment in late 1988.

Shaheed Noor Hossain Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shaheed Noor Hossain Day will be observed across the country today.

On this day in 1987, Noor Hossain, a young pro-democracy activist, sacrificed his life to oust the autocratic regime of HM Ershad.

Noor Hossain was killed in police firing near Zero point in the city while participating in a pro-democracy procession.

He had a slogan 'Swairachar Nipat Jak, Gonotantra Mukti Pak' (Down with autocracy, let democracy be freed) inscribed in white paint on his chest and back when a bullet pierced through his body.

His death strengthened the movement, expedited the fall of the autocratic ruler and restored democracy in the country.

In a message on the occasion, Awami League President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said the mass movement against the autocratic regime took a new dimension with the sacrifice of Noor Hossain.

The democratic movement was intensified and turned into a mass upsurge in 1990 ousting the autocratic government, she added.

"We would be able to pay highest honour to the memory of the martyrs including Noor Hossain only by building a prosperous and exploitation-free country," the former premier said.

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia in her message said the dream of Noor Hossain is yet to be fulfilled, the democracy freed 1990 is once again chained now.

She said a conspiracy was going on against the country's democracy.

She urged all to be united to resist the conspiracy.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain also gave a message to mark the day.

Different political and student organisations have chalked out various programmes to observe the day.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Democratic Left Alliance, Bangladesh Awami Jubo League, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote and other organisations will place wreaths at the Noor Hossain Square in the morning.

Tangail road crash kills 2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Two people were killed and six others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Mirzapur upazila yesterday.

The victims were identified as day labourers Shahed Ali and Golam Mostafa of Bogra district.

Police said the accident took place at around 5:00am when a Dhaka-bound goods-laden truck from Bogra collided head-on with another speeding truck.

Police recovered the dead and sent them to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The injured were rushed to Jamurki Health Complex and Mirzapur Kumudini Hospital.

Time

FROM PAGE 1

its alliance partners dismissed those as 'mere eyewash'.

According to the new timetable, nominations for the general election will be scrutinised on November 23 and 24, and those for upazila election on November 25-27. In the original plan, the dates for scrutiny were November 16 and 17 and November 19 and 20.

The last date for withdrawal of nominations for the parliamentary polls now is November 29, instead of November 24. The ROs will allocate electoral symbols on November 30.

The contestants will be allowed to start electioneering once they are allotted the symbols.

Had the deadline for withdrawal of nominations remained unchanged, the candidates could launch campaigns on November 25.

Now they will have to wait till November 30.

According to the rearrangements, the last date for withdrawal of candidature in upazila election is December 3 in place of November 27.

The candidates will not be able to start campaigns until the ROs allocate them symbols on December 4.

As per the earlier schedule, they could begin canvassing on November 28.

Asked if the upazila polls would be deferred in response to the political parties' demand, the EC secretary replied in the negative.

Despite the changes in polls schedules, the commission has apparently failed to cheer the BNP-led four-party alliance.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said, "They [EC] have announced the changes at whim. We don't accept those. This all is juggling of figures."

Abdul Latif Nezami, secretary general of Islami Oikya Jote, told The Daily Star yesterday that since the alliance's seven-point demand has not yet been met, the elections ought to be put back.

Contacted, Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleev Rahman Partha said these changes do not make much of a difference.