

Ruling-opposition cooperation a must for development

Says top USAID official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cooperation between ruling and opposition political parties after the national election is a must for the development of Bangladesh, said USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Mangot Ellis yesterday.

"Free, fair and credible polls are a critical first step that must follow the cooperation between ruling and opposition parties so that Bangladesh's government can successfully enhance development for its people," she said.

Ellis made the remarks at a media roundtable at American Club in the capital.

She is now on a three-day visit to Bangladesh to review the progress of development and rehabilitation projects, including recovery and reconstruction activities supported by the US government in Sidra-affected areas.

Ellis will also meet with the

officials of the organisations providing trained election observers to assist in preparations for parliamentary elections and visit USAID-funded projects.

She hoped that the national elections slated for December 29 would be held in a free and fair manner and Bangladesh would witness a successful transition to democracy.

Asked if the US assistance to Bangladesh would decline due to global financial turmoil, Ellis said they don't expect so.

US President-elect Barack Obama had pledged to double the development assistance worldwide, she said, adding, "We want to expand the assistance. But it is the Congress that will decide finally."

USAID Bangladesh Mission Director Denise Rollins said, "We have a strong relations with Bangladesh. We

always argue for more money. I don't expect there is any possibility for decline in US assistance to Bangladesh."

"It is very important that when the Congressmen come to Bangladesh, we show the development needs here, so they make recommendations," she said.

Denise Rollins said the USAID focus would be on safe motherhood, sustaining school enrolments, cutting neonatal deaths, and other areas that help economic growth.

She said high prices of essential in recent times have contributed to the increase of poverty and decrease of nutrition level and therefore increasing productivity and growing various kinds of crops to get more protein would be necessary to ensure food security.

Asked about US plans for assisting Bangladesh, which is

to suffer from the consequences of climate change, USAID official said adaptation would be the best way for it.

The development agency has also undertaken a programme on environment involving communities.

USAID is providing \$176 million in development assistance and food aid to Bangladesh in 2008.

From 1971 to 2007, the aid agency provided over \$5 billion in development aid to Bangladesh in different sectors including population and health, small business and agribusiness, natural resources management, energy, food security, disaster management, education, democracy and human rights.

Press and Information Officer of the US Embassy in Dhaka Harvey W Fernovitz was also present at the roundtable.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed inaugurates Banani-Gulshan Link Bridge in the city yesterday.

Dhaka to be habitable city

Hopes CA, opens Gulshan Bridge

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday hoped that Dhaka would be turned to a better habitable urban city through the united efforts and ideas of government-private sectors and the stakeholders.

"Combination of the 15-year Strategic Transport Plan (STP) and Detailed Area Plan (DAP) for Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDDP) would make the capital city modern and better livable," Fakhruddin said while inaugurating the newly built Banani-Gulshan connecting bridge over Gulshan Lake.

He unveiled a plaque on the 306 meter-long bridge which began from the earlier dead-end of Road No 11 of Banani and gave an alternate access to Gulshan across the lake.

The new bridge is expected to greatly lessen the heavy traffic pressure on existing Mohakhali and Kemal Ataturk Avenue connecting roads.

The bridge, costing Tk 22 crore, connects road number

11 of Banani with road numbers 41, 43, 35 and 34 of Gulshan.

The construction of the connecting bridge project was completed about six months ahead of the targeted 18 months.

The LGRD and Cooperative Ministry initiated the project while implementing agency is Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

LGRD Adviser M Anwarul Iqbal, Secretary Local Government Division Secretary Khurshid Alam and LGED Chief Engineer Nurul Islam also spoke at the function which was attended by advisers, special assistants to CA, local elite and senior government officials.

Briefly addressing the function, the chief adviser said that introduction of easy and smooth mass transportation system, new recreational facilities and solving the existing waterlogging problems would make city life much better.

He said his government has

taken short and long term plans and projects to remove traffic jams and easy and smooth transportation of commuters in the capital city.

Construction of small bridges and link roads are under short-term projects like the Banani-Gulshan bridge. Some of the projects have almost been completed while others would be ready next year.

Fakhruddin said construction of elevated highways in Dhaka city and underground train are on the consideration of the government under long-term measures.

He, however, informed the function that feasibility work for elevated highway has started and hoped that it would be implemented in the future.

Regarding city's ongoing Hatirjheel project, Fakhruddin said on completion it would help protect the environment and also minimise waterlogging in the city.



Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh President Badruddoza Chowdhury visits Shyambazar area in the city yesterday as part of election campaign.

Attack on UK Envoy Deposition of IO recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Deposition of the investigation officer in the case concerning the grenade attack on the then British high commissioner Anwar Choudhury was recorded at Sylhet divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday.

All the five accused, including Mufti Abdul Hannan of Harkat-ul-Jihad Al-Islami (Huji), were in the dock when Inspector Mohammad Zohayer of CID gave his deposition.

Judge Shamim Mohammad Afzal recorded the deposition of the IO who had submitted supplementary charge sheet against the Huji operative Mufti Main Uddin alias Abu Zandal.

The court also fixed December 14 as the date for recording the deposition of other prosecution witnesses.

Charges were framed in the Speedy Trial Tribunal on November 27 against Huji operative Abu Zandal for the grenade attack on the British envoy at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA).

The Bangladesh-born British high commissioner along with 70 others were hurt in the grenade attack and three others were killed in the grenade attack on May 21 in 2004. The dead are Special Branch Assistant Sub-Inspector of police Kamal Uddin, college student Zohayer Ahmed Rubel and Habibur Rahman Habib.

Work for alliance candidates

Ershad urges party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad has called upon party leaders and activists to work in favour of grand alliance candidates.

At a meeting at his residence in Rangpur on Saturday, he hoped that the seat sharing with the grand alliance partners would be settled soon.

Ershad said JP demanded 47 seats from the alliance and his party will win in at least 40 constituencies.

"JP is and will be with AL-led grand alliance to form the next government. Otherwise, the people will have to suffer a lot," he added.

Ershad will celebrate Eid-ul-Azha in Rangpur.

Three killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Three people were killed and 35 others injured in separate road accidents in Barisal, Faridpur and Bagerhat yesterday.

Our correspondent from Barisal reports: One person was killed in a road accident on Barisal-Dhaka highway at Bejgati under Gournadi upazila in Barisal yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rab Fakir alias Nayon, 11.

The accident occurred when Nayon was crossing the road a private car crushed him under its wheels.

BSS from Faridpur adds: One person was killed and 20 others were injured when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus from Mongla fell into a road-side ditch at Jhaturdia under Nagarkanda upazila on Dhaka-Khulna highway in Faridpur yesterday.

The dead was identified as Saleha Begum, 52.

Police said the bus fell into the ditch as the driver lost control of the vehicle leaving one dead on the spot and injuring 20 others.

UNB from Bagerhat reports: One passenger was killed and 15 others were

injured when a Khulna-bound bus from Mongla tumbled into a roadside ditch at Rampal in Bagerhat yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mizanur Rahman Khan, 28, of Khamkata village of Rampal.

Pankaj released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami Swachhasebak League General Secretary Pankaj Debnath was released on a High Court bail yesterday.

Jail sources said Pankaj was released from the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital at about 7:00pm. A number of party men gathered at the hospital to welcome him.

Pankaj, who was arrested on February 4 last year, was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and three years' simple imprisonment in a graft case filed against him for amassing ill-gotten wealth.

His wife Monika Debnath was also sentenced to three years' imprisonment for aiding her husband in accumulating ill-gotten wealth.

Meanwhile, the government released 441 prisoners on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha and the Victory Day.

Main Eid congregations in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main Eid jamaat (congregation) of the Eid-ul-Azha will be held at the National Eidgah on the High Court premises in the city at 8:00am. In case of inclement weather, the congregation will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at the same time.

Furthermore, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) will organise and manage Eid congregations at 361 mosques of 90 wards in the city and at Dhaka University playground.

Five Eid congregations will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, and 10:45am.

The Eid congregation at Bashiruddin Road, Jame Mosque at Kalabagan will be held at 8:00am while two congregations will be held at Dhaka University Central Mosque at 8:00am and 9:00am.

Eid congregations will also take place at the field adjacent to the main gate of Shahidullah Hall at 8:00am and Shahidullah Hall lawn at 8:30am.

The congregations at Pallima Sangsad premises, Tejgaon Government High School premises, Lakshmi Bazar Noorani Jame Mosque, Mia Shaheer Maydan, Shah Shaheb Bari Jame Mosque will be held at 8:00am.

A total of four congregations will be held at Mashjide-Gausul Azam Bara Peer Hazrat Abdur Quadir Zilani (RA) Complex at 7:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am and 10:15am respectively.

Three congregations will be held at Darbare Mahubia Dewanbagh Sharif, Baitul Moazzam Jame Mashjid (Boro Mashjid).

Eid congregations will also be held at Gulshan Central Mosque and Eidgah Maidan at 8:30am, SOS Shishu Polly Jame Mashjid at Shyamoli, Mirpur road at 8:15am, Sabujbagh Jame Mosque at 7:30am, East End Club Maidan at Gendaria at 8:15am and at Sir Salimullah Muslim Orphanage field at Azimpur at 8:15am.

The last congregation at Azimpur Dayra Sharif Dayamia Shahi Jame Mosque will be held at 11:30am.

Minu released on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Mizanur Rahman Minu, former mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation and BNP lawmaker, came out of Rajshahi Central Jail yesterday after one and a half years.

He was freed as the high court on Thursday granted him bail in two corruption cases.

His family members and some 50 leaders and activists of local BNP welcomed him at the jail gate when he was released at around 6:35pm.

Minu, the BNP candidate for Rajshahi-2 constituency, was released five days ahead of official beginning of polls campaigning. His release made BNP activists hopeful for having a strong fight in electoral race.

Minu will fight against the grand alliance candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha who has already started voicing against militancy.

Amended Town Improvement Act okayed to revamp Rajuk

UNB, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers at a meeting yesterday approved in principle major amendments to the Town Improvement Act 1953 with an aim to bring dynamism, transparency and accountability in the activities of Rajuk, ridden with alleged wrongdoings over the years.

With Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair, the meeting also approved in principle the Non-government Educational Institutions Management Committee Ordinance 2008 to streamline the managing committees of non-government schools, colleges and madrasas under a unified law.

Under the amended act, the governing council of Rajuk would be recast to revamp the city developer so that it can cater the needs of changed times.

After the council meeting, CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told newsmen that the meeting also gave final approval to Dhaka Shishu Hospital Ordinance 2008, meant for upgrading another important but underper-

forming government institution.

In another major step, the meeting approved proposed amendment to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act 2003 to set qualifications of the chairman and members of the watchdog body in the potential sector.

A proposal for signing memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Bangladesh and Thai governments on cooperation in agriculture sector was also approved by the council for sharing technology for boosting farm production, cooperation in agriculture and land reforms, joint-venture agribusiness and exchange of agriculture-research results.

"Following the signing of the 5-year-term MOU both the countries, particularly Bangladesh, would be benefited," it was stated in the objective of the accord.

The meeting gave the final nod to the Financial Reporting Ordinance 2008 aimed at "protecting public interests, protection of investment and attracting investment from home and abroad."

Under the new ordinance, an 11-member Financial

Reporting Council headed by a chairman would be constituted.

Transacting yet another important business, the interim cabinet approved amendment to section 5 of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board Ordinance 1983 to increase the number of members of the board to four from the existing three.

It also discussed the draft of the Road Fund Board Ordinance 2008 for proper maintenance of the roads and asked for further examination in the light of the discussion.

The meeting also discussed increasing the existing monthly financial assistance to the members of armed forces and other forces who got awarded for their heroic acts.

The meeting asked for again placing the proposal of the defence ministry along with the proposal of the home ministry together for final approval.

The meeting sent back for further vetting the proposal for signing the Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Water Courses 1997 formulated by the UN General Assembly.

Hasina ready to work on nat'l issues unitedly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her readiness to work unitedly sinking all political differences on national issues after the election.

The former premier made the remarks when Norwegian Ambassador in Dhaka Ingebjorg Stofring called on her at her Sudha Sadan residence in the morning.

"After the parliamentary election, we will work together on national issues forgetting all differences," former Ambassador Mohammad Jamir quoted Sheikh Hasina as saying this while briefing newsmen.

He said the AL chief expected that a level playing field would be created during the polls for all and the parliamentary polls would be free, fair and credible.

Sheikh Hasina also hoped that Norway will continue its cooperation with Bangladesh in energy, good governance, culture and environment sectors.

Earlier, talking to the reporters, the Norwegian Ambassador said Norway is hopeful about a credible election in Bangladesh.

She also hoped to see peaceful environment during and after the general election.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Dr Muhammad Ishaque, former chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies of Dhaka University, passed away at his Dhanmondi residence in the city yesterday, says a press release.

He left behind his ten sons, many students and admirers to mourn his death.

Dr Ishaque was a pioneer in the movement of Tabligh Jamaat in Bangladesh.

He joined in Dhaka University as a lecturer in 1943 and retired as chairman of the department in 1982. He also played a key role in the formation of the Arabic Department at Dhaka University.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Kakrail Mosque and Baitul Aman mosque in Dhanmondi.

Dr Rezaul Haq

METRO DESK



Dr Rezaul Haq Khandker, an economist and former teacher of Rajshahi University, passed away at a city hospital on Saturday at the age of 82, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four children and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard.

His quikhwani will be held on December 11.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

Mehrab Ali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur



Mehrab Ali, a historian, researcher and life member of Dinajpur Press Club, passed away

due to old-age complications at his residence yesterday at the age of 83.

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

He was buried at his family graveyard at Golapbagh.

Alhaj Masuda Samad

METRO DESK



Alhaj Masuda Samad, wife of former Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh Naeb-e-Ameer late Dr Abdus Samad Khan Chowdhury, passed away at her Dhanmondi residence in the city yesterday at the age of 80, says a press release.

She left behind her four sons, one daughter and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Govt plans night shelters for 4 lakh street children in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Special Assistant Brig Gen (ret'd) MA Malek yesterday said the government aims to provide night shelters for around four lakh street children living in the city to ensure minimum safety for them.

Highlighting the plight and insecurity facing the street children, he said these groups are more vulnerable and Bangladesh is yet to establish a comprehensive legal framework for them.

Malek was speaking at a seminar on 'Towards restorative justice for children in conflict with the law: Promoting a diversion strategy in Bangladesh by adopting alternative to deprivation of liberty' jointly organised by social welfare ministry and Unicef in association with Legal Education and Training

Institute (LETI) at a city hotel.

The speakers said rehabilitation and reintegration is needed for the children in conflict with the law rather than punishment.

Under no circumstances, a child can be sentenced to death and Bangladesh is obliged to take care of the children in conflict with the law as per the United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC), said Unicef Bangladesh representative Carel de Rooy.

"Children of poor families are more vulnerable and more prone to see their rights denied. They often cannot understand the effect of their action for their immaturity that leads them to commit crimes. So, they should be treated properly instead of giving punishment," he added.

The speakers said in Bangladesh, the justice system for both children in conflict with

the law and children in need of protection are governed by the Children Act, 1974 and the Children Rules, 1976.

However, in recent years, there has been significant impetus for juvenile justice reform. The government has appointed a high-level 'Juvenile Justice Task Force' and has identified priority areas for action. A new 'National Policy on Models of Care and Protection for Children in Contact with the Law' has been drafted to address both children in conflict with the law and children in need of protection, they added.

Barrister M Amir-ul-Islam, chairman of LETI, presided over the programme, while Justice Imman Ali presented a keynote paper.

Social Welfare Secretary Dewan Zakir Hussain also spoke.