

Coalition to protect rights of indigenous people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to protecting the rights of indigenous people a coalition was formed in the city yesterday.

The National Coalition for Indigenous People was formed at the CBCB Centre with the representatives of around 70 organisations working for the development of indigenous people as an umbrella organisation.

"To ensure the rights of indigenous people and their development the coalition will advocate at national level. It will also work for good governance and empowerment of indigenous people and to bring attitudinal changes among the greater community towards indigenous people," said Director of Arsay Syed Ul Alam Kajal.

"Regulatory reform is needed to ensure equal rights of indigenous people and establish their dignity alike," said Prof

Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University, adding that it was necessary to be united to draw the attention of the policy makers.

Raja Debashish Roy, a former special assistant to the chief adviser, said the caretaker government tried to amend the Land Commission Act, which has already been sent to land ministry, and the new government should consider it.

"The government should reform the judicial structure and device a mechanism to activate quota systems in different sectors," said Raja, adding that an institutional reform of Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman is also needed while the coalition will have to raise target-oriented clear-cut issues to the government.

"I have three demands to the newly elected government that include a separate ministry for indigenous people, an

academy to develop the culture of indigenous people and a department in every university to study the indigenous languages," said Justice Golam Rabbani as chief guest.

He also stressed the need for establishing a secular country where religion will not interfere with politics.

Speakers at the meeting also highlighted the discriminations against indigenous people that include absence of constitutional recognition and the laws to protect their lands.

Presided over by language veteran Yu Sue, the morning session of the daylong meeting was also attended by Nirola Tongsong, litterateur Selina Hossain, Dr HKS Arefin, Proshenjit Chakma of UNDP and Kirti Nishan Chakma of Danida.

Later papers on different issues facing the indigenous people were presented at the meeting.



Policemen try to pacify the agitating garment workers of Prince Group who blocked the Tongi Diversion Road in the city yesterday demanding payment of their wages. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: STAR

85m at risk of arsenic poisoning

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an international conference yesterday urged the government to implement the national arsenic mitigation policy and action plan to reduce the risk of arsenic.

A total of 62 districts, out of 64, are affected with arsenic, of which, 85 million people are at risk, said Prof Quazi Quamruzzaman, chairman of Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH), at the 8th international conference on 'Water source management, its risks, benefit, affordability, sustainability' at DCH.

He said only 14 percent of the arsenic policy has been implemented so far.

The scientist and experts after months of deliberation came up with an arsenic mitigation policy and action plan about nine years ago that was later approved by the government, said DCH Prof Mahmud Rahman. He said the government agencies particularly DPHE are yet to



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Community Hospital Chairman Prof Quazi Quamruzzaman speaks at the 8th International Conference on Arsenic Contamination on the hospital premises in the city yesterday.

take this policy seriously.

"We are yet to witness any comprehensive plan by government agencies to motivate the communities for a change from tube-well to surface water or dug-wells or for rainwater harvesting," he said.

He said even after so many years, the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) could not implement a regular programme for arsenic

test for 'safe' tubewells, particularly in the highly affected 270 upazilas.

Thousands of tube-wells are being sunk both by private and public sector agencies since the policy is approved without proper monitoring system by government agencies either centrally or locally, he said.

He underscored the need on ground water act and a national 'Arsenic prevalence survey'.

He also called for a comprehensive plan of action for safe water, involving the DPHE field workers and the local community (union parishad) to test the tube-wells (shallow and deep) and other water options on a periodic basis and keep a comprehensive record for appraisal.

Prof Dr Depankar Chakraborty of Jadavpur University said awareness, education on arsenic toxicity and arsenic contaminated water are important to the villagers to combat the arsenic.

Depankar who conducted a study in Kustia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Pabna, Narayanganj and Jessore since 1996 found around 20 percent of the arsenic-hit people died in about one decade.

Of them, 31 out of 127 effected people died in Meherpur and 32 out of 200 died in Jessore due to other diseases like cancer, he said.

Prof Richard Wilson of Harvard University, USA also addressed the conference.

Cut relations with Jamaat

Sangskritik Jote urges BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, a platform of cultural activists, yesterday urged BNP to cut all ties with Jamaat-e-Islami, the party crammed with Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams, who committed war crimes during the liberation war.

General Secretary of the organisation Golam Kuddus said, "Not only BNP, we call on the people from all walks of life to cut all the relations with the anti-liberation elements who committed war crimes in 1971."

Replying to the questions of reporters, he said this at a press conference on 'Parliamentary elections and people's aspirations' at the Liberation War Museum in the city where cultural activists also spoke.

Kuddus demanded steps to start the process of trying the war criminals by setting up a special tribunal as soon as possible, saying that they would not compromise with anybody on the demand.

"We are waiting for the auspicious start of the trial as the government had promised in the election manifesto. We would not compromise with it on the demand," he added.

Cultural activists also demanded punishment to those responsible for demolishing the Lalou sculptures at

the airport roundabout and Balaka sculpture at Motijheel.

They also called on the government to restore the constitution of 1972.

Their other demands include autonomy of Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar and environment conducive to free practice of art and culture.

Reading out a written speech, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote President Nasiruddin Yusuf said cultural education

should be incorporated in the education system.

Cultural personalities M Hamid, Mamunur Rashid and Fakir Alamgir also spoke at the press conference.

Congratulating the countrymen for voting out the war criminals in the December 29 elections, they said the win in the elections was not of any party rather it was the victory of the countrymen who were repressed during the BNP-Jamaat regime.

Exam centres to be free from unfair means

Says edn minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said necessary steps will be taken to stop leak of question papers and make the examination centres free from all kinds of unfair means ahead of the SSC examination.

"Stern action will be taken against those officials involved in question paper leak and students involved in adopting unfair means," said the minister at a meeting with chairmen of 10 education boards at the auditorium of the education ministry.

Nahid laid emphasis on reducing the gap between urban and rural areas through providing quality education and additional opportunities in the remote areas.

Additional Secretary to education ministry M Mozammel Haq Khan, chairmen of Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal Boards, Bangladesh Technical Education Board and Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board, joint secretaries and some teachers of renowned schools were present at the meeting.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a meeting with the officials of the power, energy and mineral resources ministry at its conference room in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: PID

1,261 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police in separate raids arrested 1,261 people on various charges from different parts of the country in last 24 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

Four firearms and 19 rounds of bullet were also recovered during the country-wide drive, said a release of police headquarters.

9th JS to be rubber stamp

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said opposition parties will have no scope to play any vital role in the ninth

parliament as it will be a rubber stamp one.

"As part of a grand conspiracy, Awami League (AL) won 230 seats by dint of vote rigging so that the upcoming parliament can be made a

rubber stamp parliament. The AL will implement its blue print conspiracy in parliament where opposition parties will have no significant role to play," said the BNP secretary general at a protest rally in the capital.

Delwar said the AL leaders themselves became surprised when the result of the parliamentary election was announced.

"How can it be possible to cast over 90 to 105 percent votes? But it happened in many constituencies," he said while addressing the rally as chief guest at Muktagong.

Jatyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) organised the rally protesting the attacks on BNP activists by the AL cadres across the country.

The BNP secretary general also claimed that a total of 14 BNP activists were killed and many others injured due to post-election violence.

He urged the new government to stop logging of cases against BNP activists for the greater interest of democracy.

Delwar also expressed his concern over the killing of Rajshahi Tanor upazila JCD Joint Convener Matiar Rahman Babu.

The AL cadres killed Matiar but law enforcement agencies did not arrest any one, he added.

BNP leaders Amanullah Aman, Fazul Haq Milon and Nazimuddin Alam, and JCD President Azizul Bari Helal and General Secretary Shafiqul Bari Babu also addressed the rally.

Shykh Seraj honoured

METRO DESK

Sir William Beveridge Foundation, an international charity, has honoured media personality Shykh Seraj with special recognition for his contribution to the development of agriculture and rural economy, says a press release.

Foundation Chairman Prof Alan Lee Williams presented the accolade to Shykh Seraj at Dhaka Club on Wednesday.

Executive Director Rahman Jilani and Head of Operations Maj Gen (retd) Jiban Kanai Das of the foundation and other eminent personalities were present at the ceremony.

In his speech, Prof Williams described Shykh Seraj as the 'Hero of the Revolutionary Development'.

He also said that Shykh's work has functioned as the main regulator of economic development in Bangladesh where agricultural and rural development was also ensured at the same time, which he thought as a rare instance, not only in Asia, but all over the world.

"Shykh's media mission could act as the model for the least-developed and developing countries all around the globe," Prof Williams added.

Speaking on the occasion, Shykh Seraj said, "I don't know whether my deeds are revolutionary or not, but as a citizen of Bangladesh, I have always thought that for the welfare of the nation, I will have to work in favour of agriculture and the economic development."

The world has now concentrated more on the issue of 'food security', he said, adding that considering the context of Bangladesh, it is undeniably true that the economic advancement of the country is never possible without proper evaluation of agriculture and farmers.

Shykh Seraj thanked Sir William Beveridge Foundation and hoped that the foundation will hugely expand its public welfare and public service activities.



Sir William Beveridge Foundation Chairman Prof Alan Lee Williams presents an accolade to media personality Shykh Seraj at Dhaka Club on Wednesday. Executive Director Rahman Jilani and Head of Operations Maj Gen (retd) Jiban Kanai Das of the foundation were also present.

Know Bangladesh Better

Read Star Insight, a fortnightly publication of The Daily Star. It's coming out twice a month every alternate Saturday along with our regular issue. The current issue (January 17, 2009) covers stories from Sirajganj, Sunamganj, Jhenidah & Pabna. Coming out Tomorrow. Ask your hawker for your copy.

ASA UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH (ASAUB)

(Government & UGC Approved)

ADMISSION SPRING-2009

Application Deadline 1st February, 2009

Special Features of ASAUB

- Special tuition fee waivers are offered from 15% to 100% on the basis of Undergraduate result, semester result and need (conditions apply)
- Job opportunities within ASA (Leading Microfinance Institution in the world) for the graduates of ASAUB
- Corporate waiver for LLM & MA students (if at least 3 candidates from the same organization apply)
- Classes held on Fridays & Saturdays for the LLM & MA students
- Internship opportunities in ASA at home and abroad
- Western standard physical/classroom (centrally air-conditioned) facilities and academic standards at an affordable cost
- Highly qualified, full-time and efficient teaching staff
- Quality higher education is the mission and to be a centre of excellence is the vision
- Situated at a convenient point of well connected road network in Dhaka
- 10% tuition fee waiver for LLM & MA female candidates
- Advocates with two years' experience is eligible for one year Master of Laws (LLM Regular) Program
- Hostel arrangement facility for female students

MA in English 2-yr (Preli & Final)

- ★ 1-yr MA in English (Literature)
- ★ 1-yr MA in Applied Linguistics & ELT

LLM (1 yr, 2 yr)

Other Programs

- LLB (Hons) 4-Year Program
- BA (Hons) in English 4-Year Program
- BBA
- MBA (Regular & Executive)

Prof. Md. Muinuddin Khan
Vice-Chancellor, ASAUB.

Former Dean
Faculty of Business Studies
Professor & Former Chairman
Dept. of Accounting & Information Systems
University Of Dhaka
Former Adviser, Caretaker Govt.
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Prof. Dr. Tareq M. R. Chowdhury MA, LL.D
Dean, Faculty of Arts, Social Science & Law, ASAUB
Former Faculty, University of Stockholm, Sweden.

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Sirajul Islam
Prof. & Chairman, Dept. of English, ASAUB
Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Chittagong.

Dr. Abu Daud Hasan
Professor of English, ASAUB
Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Rajshahi.

ASAUB, 23/3, Khilji Road, Shyamol, Dhaka-1207
Tel: 8130283, 8122855, 01713148578, 01916031857
www.asaub.edu.bd