

Democratic atmosphere a must for human rights

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eliminating poverty alone cannot ensure human rights in a country, rather bodies like judiciary, national human rights commission (NHRC), and anti-corruption commission (ACC) must be made functional with full independence to ensure human rights, said the speakers at a discussion in the city yesterday.

They urged the government for a time-bound promise to implement Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace treaty, and ensure rights to women and minority people in the country.

The discussion was organised by Human Rights Forum at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium to discuss the outcome of universal periodic review (UPR) meeting held in Geneva on February 3.

A 15-member delegation led by Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni represented

Bangladesh at the meeting.

"At the Geneva meeting, the government did not mention anything about its promises made in election manifesto concerning human rights, and the government did not reply to questions regarding Chittagong Hill Tracts treaty," said Barrister Sara Hossain.

However, different member countries of the United Nations made 33-point recommendation for Bangladesh to ensure human rights.

The speakers urged the government to discuss the recommendations of UPR meeting for Bangladesh in parliament and make time-bound pledges to implement them.

"It must be discussed in parliament how to make bodies like human rights commission, judiciary and anti-corruption commission functional and it is a must to ensure human

rights in the country," said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekhar Zaman while taking part in the discussion.

"The government must have time-bound pledges over matters like bringing war criminals to justice to ensure human rights. Unless war criminals are punished for their crimes, only eliminating poverty cannot ensure rights to people," said Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Sultana Kamal.

She said the human rights issues should be dealt by law and justice ministry, rather than the foreign ministry as it makes the issue a diplomatic one rather than a human concern.

The speakers said unless a comprehensive democratic atmosphere is ensured, human rights cannot be established in the country.

MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD 'Announce election date'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unit commanders of 64 districts of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad command council yesterday demanded announcement of an election date for the council as soon as possible.

Speaking at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium, they also demanded scope for Abdul Ahad Chowdhury to continue his activities as its chairman until the next election.

According to the organogram, the existing committee will hand over the power to the newly elected committee. As Ahad was the last elected chairman, he should get the chance of continuing the activities of the council until the polls, said Abdul Rab, commander of Mymensingh district unit.

The commanders ruled out any involvement of Ahad in corruption of Tk 74 crore as he was in power only six months out of three years tenure.

Rab said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government captured the council illegally and former state minister of liberation war became its chairman violating the organogram.

The commanders said the people, who are now protesting the chairmanship of Ahad, most of them joined the then government and it is their conspiracy against him.

Pro-AL C&F agents clash at ZIA: 10 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 people were injured in clashes between two factions of the pro-Awami League (AL) workers of Clearing and Forwarding Agents' Association in Zia International Airport yesterday.

Police said supporters of Shajahan Ali Mondal, former secretary of the association, and Maksudur Rahman Masum, secretary of Airport Police Station unit of AL, locked into a clash in front of the office of the association at around 12:00 noon leaving at least four people of Shajahan group injured.

Following the clash supporters of Shajahan Ali regrouped and swooped on the supporters of Masum leaving six supporters of Masum injured, sources said.

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

Police sources said both the groups were preparing to file cases in this connection when this report was filed yesterday.

Sources said Shajahan Ali, who is also adviser of Jamalpur district unit of AL, wants to contest in election of the association which is scheduled to be held on March 5, but Masud, AL secretary of Airport Police Station unit, opposed it causing a tense situation for the last few days in the office.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lutfun Shams, wife of Colonel Shamsuzzaman Chowdhury, passed away last night at Aiyasa Memorial Hospital at Mohakhali in the city.

She left behind her husband, one son and two daughters.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at DOHS, Mohakhali Jame Mosque in the city after Zohr prayers today.

Rizia Chowdhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rizia Chowdhury, mother of former parliament member Elen Bhutto, passed away at the combined military hospital on February 13 at the age of 80, says a press release.

She left behind her five daughters and seven sons to mourn her death.

She was buried at Banani graveyard. Her qulhwani will be held at Uttara after Asr prayers today.

Titas Employees' Union executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Motaleb Howladar and Md Saiful Islam were elected president and general secretary of the new committee of Titas Gas Employees' Union, says a press release.

Other officer bearers are: vice-presidents -- Md Delwar Hossain and Md Nurul Huq Molla; organising secretary -- SM Abdul Hannan Mustafi; joint secretaries -- Md Mozammel Huq and Md Shahidul Huq; finance secretary -- Md Kamruzzaman; office secretary -- Md Azizul Huq; publicity secretary -- Md Jahangir Hossain Tipu; and social welfare secretary -- Md Mamun Ar Rashid.



Cartoonist and litterateur Ahsan Habib launches a book titled 'Priyo Sakha Hey Bandhu Amar' by Kamrun Haque at Bangla Academy in the city yesterday. It is the second book of the writer published on the occasion of the Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

REAL ESTATE DEV, MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE 2008

Make ordinance a law for people's interest

Organisations urge minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Real Estate Development and Management Ordinance 2008 must be ratified into law to preserve people's interests, a number of different organisations called upon the government and parliamentary special committee yesterday.

The previous caretaker government promulgated the ordinance in an attempt to support consumer interest.

In a joint letter addressed to the state minister for housing and public works and chairman of the parliamentary special committee, the organisations demanded the ordinance to be made into law, said a press release.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Association for Land Reforms and Development (ALRD), Nijera Kori, Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and economist Dr. Abul Barakat were the signatories to the letter.

The letter mentioned that the real estate firms have long been making money by means of grabbing land and deceiving the consumers in absence of a legal framework.

The ordinance is quite necessary and pertinent to bring such deceptive real estate businesses to book.

The specific penal provision in the ordinance will reduce the scope for real estate development firms to deceive public by unauthorised activities.

The letter also clarified that there is no alternative to ratifying the ordinance into law considering the grievances and miseries narrated by the victims of such fraud.

The organisations mentioned that the null ordinance of any systematic pretext

Court orders to return passports of BD Foods chairman

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court on Thursday ordered to return the passports of BD Foods Limited Chairman Badruddoza Chowdhury Momen for going abroad for treatment that were earlier seized in connection with trafficking of 22.5kg heroin to the UK in December 2004.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a criminal revision filed by Momen's lawyers against the rejection order of the lower court issued on November 19 last year.

In his order, the judge mentioned that the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) of Dhaka would hand over the seized passports in the custody of the accused subject to furnish a bond of Tk 1 lakh by his (accused) son Mohammad Badrul Haider Chowdhury along with other liabilities to take in his shoulder in case of the accused not surrendering the passports for a period of four months from the day of delivery.

Momen was arrested on May 14, 2006 after two other arrestees in their confessional statements before a magistrate named BD Foods Limited chairman as the mastermind behind the trafficking of 22.5kg of heroin to the UK. He was later taken on a seven-day remand for interrogation. But he was granted bail on August 10, 2006.

CONFESSION
Nazmul Haider Bhuiyan Bulbul, a former official of BD Foods Limited, and his cohort Moklesur Rahman Nayan, a cargo handler, in their confessional statements told a magistrate they had carried out the smuggling in the directive of the top authorities of the company.

Hearing on power plant case stalled till Apr 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday adjourned the hearing on its earlier ruling until April 19 asking for explanation of the proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant corruption case against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Rezaowan Ali and Justice Md Rais Uddin also dropped from hearing the petition filed by Sheikh Hasina for quashing the proceedings of the Niko graft case against her.

The HC bench passed the orders upon a prayer moved by Attorney General (AG) Mahbubey Alam praying for making both of the matters out of the cause list of that bench for a time being.

The attorney general told the court that his (AG) office was not prepared enough to proceed with these two cases at this moment as he has taken over the charge of the office recently.

It is necessary to take the two cases out of the list for the time being and government will later take these cases for the hearing, he said.

Hasina's counsel Advocate AFM Mesbahuddin told The Daily Star that the HC fixed April 19 for hearing the rule regarding the proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant case, as the matter was earlier heard partly by this court.

Hearing of the HC rules on the proceedings of the two corruption cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others were due to be held yesterday. On January 7, the HC extended the time of its earlier orders for not harassing or arresting Sheikh Hasina in the cases and fixed February 15 for the hearing.

Upon separate quashment petitions, the HC on July 2 last year stayed all proceedings of the corruption cases and issued the rules asking the government and the ACC to explain why the cases should not be quashed.

Appeal for help

METRO DESK

Wally, a brilliant student of biochemistry and molecular biology department at Dhaka University, has been suffering from tubercular meningitis, says a press release.

He is now under treatment at the paying bed of Ward No 3 at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Doctors have suggested one year's antibiotics course for his treatment which will cost at least Tk 5 lakh.

But his old and poor parents cannot afford such a big amount of money.

So the students and teachers of his department have appealed to well-to-do people of the society for financial assistance to save his life.

Contributions can be sent to Chairman, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, A/C-S-61165454, Sonali Bank Ltd, Dhaka University Branch, Dhaka-1000.

Interested people can also contact the chairman over cell phone: 01716399372.

Tarikul Hasan (Milon)

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarikul Hasan (Milon), a poor and helpless man, has been suffering from various complications after he met an accident with a running bus of Dhaka University on September 24 of last year, says a press release.

He needs a surgery and other treatment which will cost him at least Tk 2 lakh.

He has already spent a large amount of money, and is now unable to continue his treatment.

So he has appealed to generous people of the society for financial assistance to save his life.

Contributions can be sent to Savings Account No 1371017040, Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd, Bangladesh.

Orientation for MPs begins Feb 22

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate a four-day orientation programme for members of the 9th parliament at Sonargaon Hotel on February 22 to provide a forum to discuss the challenges facing the current parliament.

Current and former senior Bangladeshi MPs and experts, as well as a selected number of distinguished international guests at the programme, will share experiences regarding good parliamentary practice.

Lord John Alderdice, a life peer of the UK House of Lords and former speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, will play an important role in the orientation programme to be inaugurated by the prime minister at about 10 am, said a National Democratic Institute (NDI) press release.

Other invited international guests include Sebastian Geddy, chair of the Internal Affairs Committee of the German Parliament and chair of the German Parliamentary Friendship Group for South Asia.

The MPs orientation will include a luncheon with invited members of the diplomatic community. US Ambassador James F Moriarty and UK High Commissioner Stephen Evans are also scheduled to address the orientation programme.

NDI Senior Resident Director Jacqueline Corcoran said, "We are honoured that the prime minister will inaugurate this important event. We also acknowledge the strong support we have received from the offices of the speaker and the chief whip."

She added: "We are also very pleased with the commitment of the opposition to participate in this program, which is designed to assist all members of parliament."

Cooperating organizations with NDI in this event include Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership, BRAC University Institute for Governance Studies, World Bank Institute, Canadian International Development Agency, International Republican Institute, and Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency, and Integrity.

USEF students block road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 150 students of a technical school yesterday put up a barricade on Dholpur Road at Jatrabari in the city as the house owner of the school locked their school yesterday morning.

Police said when the students of USEF Technical School found their school locked at 10:00 am, they blocked the road near the school for around half-hour causing traffic congestion in the area.

On information, police rushed to the spot and talked to the house owner of the school and agitating students to settle the matter.

Agitating students lifted

the barricade at 10:30 am when the law enforcers assured the students of opening the school, they added.

OC Azizur Rahman of Jatrabari Police Station said the school is housed in a rented house for the last 10 years, but for the last six months house owner Delwar Hossain asked the school authorities to evacuate his house as he wants to build a multi-storied building there.

The school is now housed in the tin-shed house with seven rooms, he added.

He further said that the school will be conducted in the house for the time being and then the authorities will shift it to a new place.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00 pm today.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met office said.

Night temperature may rise slightly over Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Highest temperature 32.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 11.2 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:54 pm today and rises at 6:30 am 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 | 28.9 | 15.6 | 60 | 35 |
| Chittagong | 30.0 | 17.4 | 69 | 48 |
| Rajshahi | 28.8 | 12.5 | 83 | 51 |
| Khulna | 29.0 | 15.6 | 86 | 68 |
| Barisal | 30.0 | 14.6 | 70 | 58 |
| Sylhet | 30.3 | 15.7 | 67 | 50 |
| Cox's Bazar | 31.4 | 19.0 | 55 | 55 |



Osmani's 25th anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 25th death anniversary of General MAG Osmani, commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces during the war of liberation.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and leader of the opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia gave separate messages on the occasion.

Sheikh Hasina in her message paid respect to Osmani for his contribution in the war of liberation and as a lawmaker after independence.

Khaleda Zia also paid respect to Osmani and said he was a true democratic person.

Jatiya Janata Party organises a discussion at 9:00 am marking the day. Bangabir Osmani Samaj Sheba O Gobeshona Sangsad will lay wreath at his portrait at 08:00 am. Bangabir Osmani Smriti Parishad organises a discussion at Osmani Memorial auditorium in the city 3:30 pm. Sylhet Division Development Action Council will also organise a discussion at Muktangan.

GRAFT CASES

Ex-CCF Osman, DCC commissioner Chy Alam get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad-interim bail to former chief conservator of forest (CCF) Osman Gani and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Ward Commissioner Chowdhury Alam in two separate corruption cases filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The special courts earlier sentenced them to imprisonment of different terms in the cases for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in wealth statements submitted to the ACC.

Upon separate appeals filed by Gani and Alam against their convictions, the HC bench comprising Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Mohammad Azizul Haque granted them bail.

The court granted four months' bail to Osman Gani and six months' to Chowdhury Alam.

On June 5 last year, a special court sentenced Osman Gani to 12 years' imprisonment in the corruption case filed with Uttara Police Station on July 26, 2007.

Joint forces arrested Osman from his Uttara residence in the city on May 29, 2007, and seized Tk 1 crore in cash that he had hidden in the house.

Another special court on June 26 last year sentenced Chowdhury Alam to 13 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth worth Tk 4.97 crore illegally and concealing wealth information to the ACC.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed appeared for Osman Gani and Advocate Ahsanul Karim argued for Chowdhury Alam while Advocate MA Aziz Khan stood for ACC.