

Form single regulatory body for all utility services

Suggests Dr Akbar Ali Khan

UNB, Dhaka

Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC) Chairman and former finance adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday suggested the government to form a single public utility regulatory commission (PURC) in the place of separate commissions for separate utility services.

He said there is no need for separate commissions for separate utility services as all the utilities could come under a single commission.

Dr Khan, also a former cabinet secretary, made the suggestion at the "Energy Consumers' Roundtable" organised jointly by USAID and Improved Capacity for Energy Access (ICEA) at Brac Inn auditorium in the city.

BERC Chairman Ghulam Rahman also spoke at the

function.

Acting Mission Director of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Carey Gordon and former power secretary Dr Fouzul Kabir Khan also spoke at the programme.

At present, a number of regulatory commissions are operating in the country as watchdogs for different utility services.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) is operating for power and energy sector while Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for telecom and information sectors.

Another regulatory commission was formed recently for local government bodies while there is a proposal for a regulatory commission for water supply agencies.

Each of the regulatory commissions has separate management with huge establishment cost.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, however, did not elaborate his suggestion for a single regulatory body.

He urged the government to delegate more independence to the existing regulatory commissions so that they could perform more independently.

"If they are given more authorities, it won't be harmful to the government."

The RRC chairman said the BERC was not given due independence during the last caretaker government.

Emphasising on increasing public access to electricity, he said electricity is more necessary than democracy for the people.

"Because, development cannot take place without

electricity and democracy is meaningless without development."

Dr Akbar urged the BERC authorities to protect the interests of both the consumers and the investors in the power and energy sector.

Ghulam Rahman said the energy and power sector watchdog body is trying to serve within its legal framework.

He said the BERC will always make efforts to ensure a "just and reasonable price" for the power and energy related products and services.

At the seminar, a number of presentations were made on the impacts of electricity to the people of rural areas.

It was said that electricity impacted significantly to increase the income and education in rural areas where electricity has reached.



Selina Begum, a victim of fire that ripped through a slum inside Janata Housing at Mirpur in the city on Monday, tries to protect her two children from the scorching sun with an umbrella yesterday as the fire left her homeless. At least 100 shanties were gutted in the blaze. PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Shahriar Kabir and on his left are Barrister Zakir Ahmad and Nur-E-Alam Lelin.

Remain vigilant to ensure trial of war criminals

Speakers urge people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To ensure the trial of war criminals, the countrymen should keep an eye on the activities of the government and the committee which will be formed to investigate the war crimes, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

The International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973 is enough for the trial of the war criminals and that the government can bring some changes to it, if needed, they added.

Shachetan Tarun Peshajibi Parishad, a forum of conscious young professionals, organised the roundtable on 'The role of the government and the people regarding the trial of war criminals' at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku said the people are now united in favour of the demand for the trial and they gave the mandate to the pro-liberation forces in the election to hold the trial.

But the people still have the responsibility to put pressure on the government regarding their demand, he said. "If my activities are not monitored by the people, I may become an autocratic leader," he added.

Journalist and columnist Shahriar Kabir said the Jamaat-e-Islami itself think that they are war criminals. Otherwise, they wouldn't have reacted the way they do whenever the demand for trial comes up, he added.

"The government is yet to name anyone accused of war crimes, but they (Jamaat) are opposing the trial of war criminals," he said.

He also said the Jamaat is hatching conspiracies against the country to create obstacles to holding the trial.

Shahriar Kabir called on the people to remain vigilant to ensure implementation of the trial of war criminals.

Presided over by forum President Barrister Zakir Ahmad, the roundtable was also addressed by Workers Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha, Awami League leader Nur-E-Alam Lelin, Shechchabek League leader Pankaj Debnath and journalist Harun Habib.

6 of a family sustain burn injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six members of a family sustained burn injuries in a fire that erupted from a gas burner at a house in the city's Darussalam area yesterday.

The injured were identified as Abdul Majid Chakladar, 55, his wife Helena, 45, sons Hemayet, 35, Suman, 26, Hemayet's wife Rita, 25, and daughter Suma, 1.

Police said at around 7:30am, when Helena fired a gas lighter to ignite the oven at the kitchen on the second floor of the building at Bardhanbari in the area, the blaze engulfed the entire floor, leaving the six burn injured.

Quoting locals, police said the gas oven might have been on for a while that emitted gas. When Helena fired the gas lighter, the fire spread immediately.

Noticing the smoke from the flat and hearing screaming of the victims, locals rushed to the spot and doused the blaze before firefighters reached the spot.

Darussalam police said local people took the injured to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

WORLD HEALTH DAY OBSERVED

Call to increase healthcare facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Health Day was observed in the country as elsewhere across the globe yesterday with a commitment to increasing health care facilities to provide utmost services for the disaster-hit people during emergency situations.

As ours is a disaster-prone country where flood, cyclone is almost usual circumstances, health facilities should be made available here and at the same time, health workforce should be trained to handle the patients in emergency situations successfully, speakers said at the inaugural function of the seven-day programme marking the World Health Day.

Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque inaugurated the programme at the Osmani Auditorium in the city. This year the slogan of the day is "Save lives: Make hospitals safe in emergencies."

Focusing the day, the government has taken a week-long programme in all the health facilities of the country to ensure best services with the existing resources, he said, adding that it has also taken steps to digitise the health

sector, including video conferencing for monitoring and service providing, internet connection at every upazila and district health complex and bulk SMS system.

With a view to developing the overall health services and providing patients with emergency services, the government is trying to make the community clinics functional for every 6,000 population and soon will grant additional ambulances to every upazila and district hospitals, he added.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative to Bangladesh Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, Director General of Disaster Management Bureau Farhad Uddin, Director General of Directorate of Family Planning Md Abdul Quayyum, DGHS Director General Shah Monir Hossain, Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali, Additional Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Joint Secretary Anwar Hossain Munshi also spoke.

"We need to ensure that health facilities and services are able to function in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters, protect the lives of

patients, serve the affected population and keep health workers safe," said Duangvadee Sungkhobol.

The theme of the World Health Day 2009 'Health facilities in emergencies' underscores the need to develop joint plan of action and response strategies so that health facilities are made more efficient, safer and capable of dealing with emergency health situations at all times in order to mitigate the sufferings of the people, she added.

Auto-rickshaw driver killed

UNB, Savar

A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver was killed by members of Agyan Party after abduction here Monday night.

The victim was identified as Abdur Razzak, 50, of Ershad Nagar in Tongi.

Police said Razzak was abducted by the Agyan Party men as he came out of his house in Tongi with his auto-rickshaw on Sunday. They left him on the road in front of Betar Center in an unconscious state at about 11:30pm on Monday.

FEE HIKE

Home Economics students boycott classes, exams

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students of the Home Economics College yesterday boycotted their classes and examinations protesting hike in their admission fee.

The agitating students said they did not participate in any of their classes and examinations and demonstrated on the college compound in the city since morning demanding cancellation of the increased fee and enrolling the college as a separate faculty of Dhaka University.

Earlier on Saturday, the agitating students put up a barricade on the road in front of the college for three hours.

They alleged that the admission fee has been increased by Tk 505 this year and the authorities have introduced some 'unacceptable' fees, including medical fee and charges for paying the salaries of the college night guards and peons. Students said the college does not have any kind of medical facilities.

The agitating students threatened that they would not go back to their classes and examinations until their demands are met.

College Principal Prof Laila Arjumand Banu told The Daily Star that the fee was increased following government instructions.



(From Left) Prof Mesbah Kamal, Prof Sirajul Islam, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and Jannat A Ferdous hold copies of a book titled 'Chimnir Mukhey Shuno Siren Sankha' at a publication ceremony at the Bangladesh Asiatic Society auditorium in the city yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

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8156122-4, 8153168-9, 9124161 Ext- 230, 114, 235

Head Office: 74A, Sattar Road, Dhaka-1205. Tel: 8156122-4, 8153168-9, 9124161. Fax: 880-2-483511
Siddhanta Campus: 51, Siddhanta Road, Dhaka. Tel: 8153512-14, 8154577, 8154721, 9540831. Fax: 880-2-8355313 (Ext 176)
E-mail: info@stamforduniversity.edu.bd, convocation@stamforduniversity.edu.bd
Web Page: www.stamforduniversity.edu.bd & www.stamforduniversity.info

Helal made BSS chief editor

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday appointed senior journalist Ihsanul Karim Helal as the new Managing Director and Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Prior to his appointment as head of the national news agency, Helal was working as managing editor of BSS. He joined BSS in 1972 and served in different capacities over nearly four decades at home and abroad. He succeeds Jaglul Ahmed Chowdhury as BSS chief.

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