

Judicial accountability a must to establish democracy

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday said judicial accountability has to be ensured alongside the independence of judiciary for establishing true democracy in a country.

Expressing concern over excessive use of coercive power like contempt of court, the speakers also said that legitimate public criticism of judicial performance is a means of ensuring accountability.

"Because the judicial institutions have such important and wide ranging powers, including the power of judicial review, there is a growing

feeling that the judiciary must also be held accountable so that minimum standards of competence and ethical standards can be maintained," said Asad Jamal in his paper presented at the workshop.

Asad in his paper mentioned that the criminal law and contempt proceedings are not appropriate mechanisms for restricting legitimate criticism of the court performance, which is a means of ensuring accountability in judiciary.

The two-day workshop titled 'Right to transparent governance, South Asian perspective' organised by South Asians for Human

Rights (SAHR), ended at Brac Centre Inn yesterday.

The paper presented by Asad on 'Judiciary and Transparency' added that the judiciaries in the less developed countries are still not so-tolerant regarding criticism though judges in the developed countries have moved away from their earlier position of seeking immunity.

"The excessive use of coercive powers like contempt of court has been a concern in some countries," the paper added with reference to different South Asian countries.

"Irregular appointments, promotions and transfers of judges have an adverse impact on the entire institution and

its integrity. And judicial accountability is as important as the independence of judiciary," said JC Wellamuna in his paper on 'Manipulation of legal constitutional provisions by government on appointment, promotion and transfer of judges'.

"Judicial arm of the state should be more transparent both in their conduct and particularly in their administration," the paper added.

Lawmaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and human rights activist Hameeda Hossain were present at the seminar also attended by representatives from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offers prayers during umrah in Makkah yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Govt plans to set up schools at 2000 remote villages

Says education minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said the government wants to set up schools at around 2000 remote villages which lack presence of education institutions.

"There is no school in some 2000 villages which are basically located in the outlying areas of the country and we want to give extra care to the areas so that children feel more interested to come to schools," he added.

The minister said this as the chief guest at a national sharing programme of a report at LGED auditorium in the city.

"If necessary, we would provide 100 percent facilities to those schools in order to attract children to attend schools," he added.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in cooperation with Unesco Bangladesh organised the National Sharing of Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2009.

The minister said as per its electoral commitment, the government wants to ensure

enrolment of all children in school by 2011.

"We gradually want to reduce dropout rate and also want to impart standard and quality education," he said, adding that the government needs cooperation from all irrespective of party and opinion as it is a national responsibility.

Nahid also said that although 91 percent of children are enrolled in the primary school, 48 percent of them drop out before completing class five.

At the secondary level, 42 percent of students drop out before their SSC examinations, he said, adding that the main reason behind the dropout is poverty among other social problems.

The minister further said that the main task of the government would be to find out the reasons and address the problems.

The minister said there is no alternative to include local community in the education institutions to reduce dropout rate as well as increase enrolment.

Stressing the importance of quality and life-related education, Nahid said, "We want to

put emphasis on such education which will help the students compete in the highly competitive world. We want to establish a vocational institute in every upazila."

Though teachers are the main element of imparting quality education, they are getting fewer facilities, he said.

The government has started working to provide better facilities for teachers, he said and called on the teachers to play their role in improving the quality of education.

Underscoring the need for learning mother tongue, the minister said it is important to include issues of morality and patriotism in the curricula apart from regular subjects.

Presenting major findings of the EFA GMR report, Habibur Rahman, member of Education Watch Working Group, said there has been strong progress towards many EFA goals, but still a long way to go.

Malama Meleisa, director and representative of Unesco Bangladesh, Azizul Haq, acting director of CAMPE, Prof Quazi Afroz Jahan Ara, Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed and Md Muntasim Tanvir also spoke.



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding cancellation of eviction notice to Khaleda Zia. (Story on Page 1)

15 BSS journos, 5 staffs get back jobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen journalists and five employees of state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) have got back their jobs in line with a High Court (HC) verdict, as the management withdrew an appeal pending with the Supreme Court (SC) after seven years of their dismissals.

BSS sources said the journalists and staffs who got their jobs back informed the authorities that they will join the office on Thursday (today).

The four-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin yesterday allowed BSS authorities to withdraw its petition against the HC verdict that had directed the authorities concerned to reinstate the dismissed journalists and employees.

The then BSS management fired 27 journalists and seven employees citing no reason during the past BNP-led four party alliance government and appointed 76 new journalists and employees.

The terminated journalists and employees had filed separate writ petitions with the HC challenging the legality of the termination order.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Syed Mohammad Ziaul Karim in May 2007, declared their termination orders illegal and also asked the BSS authorities to reinstate their services within two months.

The journalists getting back jobs are Shamir Kanti Borua, Ajit Kumar Sarker, Ashiqunabi Chowdhury, Shahinaj Begum, Madhusudan Mandal, Afzal Hossain, Kanai Chakrabarty, AZM Sarwar Chowdhury, Swapan Bose, Halim Azad, Obaidul Gani, Mahfuza Jesmin, Noor-e-Jannat Sima, Bithi Zaman Chowdhury and Abu Naser.

The BSS management had filed an appeal with the SC against the HC verdict.

The news agency decided to withdraw the appeal to return the jobs to the dismissed news-men and the employees at the intervention of the present government, sources said.

Rashed, Enamul made ministers press

UNB, Dhaka

The government has appointed Rashed Chowdhury and Enamul Huq Chowdhury as ministers (press) to London and New Delhi respectively.

The two-year term contractual appointment will come into effect from the date of their joining, says an official release.

TRIAL IN ABSENTIA Hearing on bail petitions adjourned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday adjourned the hearing on 16 bail petitions of 12 persons, including politicians, who were convicted of various charges and sentenced to jail in absentia.

Former minister and Jatiya Party leader Anwar Hossain Manju, former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa, former Awami League lawmakers Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Haji Md Salim, Mokbul Hossain and Md Mohiuddin, and former BNP minister M Saifur Rahman's son Saifur Rahman Babu are among the petitioners.

A division bench of the HC on February 23 delivered split verdicts on their petitions. The petitions were sent to the chief justice for the final decision.

Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin last month constituted a special bench with Justice Imman Ali to dispose of the petitions.

The special bench yesterday issued the adjournment order following a prayer moved by the lawyers for the petitioners.

The lawyers prayed to the court to adjourn hearing of the petitions, saying that a case of

similar nature regarding the bail of former BNP state minister Shahjahan Omar was pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) for hearing. The apex court will hear the case on Thursday (today).

They also argued that the bail petitions filed by their clients should be heard after the SC passes the order on the petition related to the bail of Shahjahan Omar.

Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq, Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for the petitioners.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) M Enayetur Rahim, who appeared for the government, yesterday prayed to the court to hold the hearing of the petitions without any delay, since the issue is very important.

On January 14, an HC bench of Justice Mozammel Hossain and Justice Afzal Hossain Ahmed upon a petition granted three months' bail to Shahjahan Omar in connection with a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The ACC then filed an appeal with the SC against the HC order.

Why Mamun should not get bail

HC issues rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued separate rules on the government to explain within three weeks why businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun should not be granted bail in five extortion cases against him.

After hearing five petitions filed by Mamun, an HC bench of Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice M Shamsul Huda issued the rules.

The extortion cases were filed against Mamun, a close aide to BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, with Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Kafrul and Shahbag police stations under the emergency power rules (EPR) 2007 during the immediate past caretaker government.

His lawyer SM Sabbir Hamza Chowdhury yesterday told 'The Daily Star' that Mamun was accused in 17 cases and has already got bail in 12 cases from the High Court.

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for Mamun.

Saarc Federation of Oncologists to be launched on April 24

BSS, Dhaka

The newly formed Saarc Federation of Oncologists (SFO) would be launched at the annual general meeting of Oncology Club here on April 24.

At the international socio-scientific conference of the Oncology Club in Dhaka last year, Bangladeshi Oncologist Prof Emeritus of Vrije University, Amsterdam, ABMF Karim made the proposal to form the body. The proposal was highly appreciated by delegates from USA, European and the Saarc nations.

Accordingly, the SFO was formed and approved by the council of ministers of the Saarc member countries.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haq will be the chief guest at the conference at Hotel Sheraton. Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Prime Minister's Adviser Dr Modasser Ali and ex-adviser to the caretaker government Dr AMM Shaikat Ali will attend as special guests.

Founder president and adviser of the SFO Prof ABMF Karim will preside over the inaugural session. Renowned oncologists, including those from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan will attend it.

DHAKA TODAY

View exchange meet

NFOWD organises a view exchange meeting on expectation in national budget for people with disabilities. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry in cooperation with German Technical Cooperation organises a workshop on 'Green initiative: Way to go green'. Venue: DCCI auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Seminar

Campaign for Popular Education organises a seminar on life long learning. Venue: WVA auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

MONGLA SEAPORT

Govt considers employing private operator

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry yesterday said it is considering whether the Mongla seaport can be run by any private operator in a bid to bring pace in its activities.

It also directed the concerned authorities to complete the construction of Khan Jahan Ali Airport and Export Processing Zone in Khulna to expand activities centring the seaport.

"We are thinking whether Mongla seaport can be operated by any private operator to run the port effectively and skillfully," Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury told reporters at his office in the parliament after the meeting he headed.

"We want to bring tempo in the activities of Mongla seaport anyhow," he added.

"We have also directed

authorities to dredge Mongla channel for better navigability so that big vessels can enter

the port," he said, adding, "We have also asked the authorities to increase back-up facility of the port."

The parliament watchdog body also directed authorities to remove cost discrimination in using Chittagong and Mongla seaport to attract more users for the latter.

The committee chief also directed Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority

(BIWTA) to buy two rescue vessels with 250-tonne weight each. It also asked Chittagong port to buy another rescue vessel of the same weight.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on women and children affairs ministry at a meeting strongly recommend to increase the status of women officials working at upazila parishad levels to first class.

Saline-tolerant variety to help boost rice output

Says minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultivation of BR-47, a saline-tolerant rice variety, in the southern coastal region could bring about significant changes in rice production, Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

"There are around 2.8 million hectares of agricultural land in the coastal districts. If high yielding varieties like BR-47 are developed, there could be a dramatic change in rice production," he said.

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at the closing ceremony of a two-day seminar titled 'Stress Tolerance Rice for Poor Farmers in Africa and South Asia (STRASA)', at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) in Gazipur.

Farmers have already started cultivating the BR-47 variety in limited scale, which has shown huge success, he said at the seminar organised by BRRI.

"You cannot increase the yield of the existing varieties to a great extent. Therefore, development of stress-tolerant varieties, which can tolerate drought or submergence, is important," said the minister.

The developed countries need to invest more in advance agriculture research, he noted.

BRRI is on the way to develop submergence-tolerant and drought-tolerant varieties and will be able to release those in near future, said BRRI Director General Dr Firoze Shah Sikder.

Chairing the closing ses-

sion, Bangladesh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor Dr Abdus Sattar Mondal said it is necessary to seriously look into the nutritional standards and livelihoods.

Referring to the recent fall of rice prices, Mondal said the government must provide incentives to farmers to maintain better rice production.

International Rice Research Institute Program Leader Dr David Mackill, Liaison Scientist for Bangladesh Dr MA Hamid Miah and STRASA South Asian Regional Project Coordinator Dr Uma Shankar Singh also spoke.

Egg trader shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists shot an egg trader at his Rampura residence in the city yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Ayub Ali, 45, a resident of Ulon Road.

Ayub Ali said five to six criminals, including Pagla Jahangir, Tikka Jahangir and Chandan knocked the door of his residence at around 9:30am.

As soon as his wife Shahana Begum opened the door, the criminals opened fire on him.

With four bullets in his hands and legs, he was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Ayub said the criminals had been demanding Tk 3 lakh for the last three days.

DU 'Gha' unit still has vacant seats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are some vacant seats for the examinees of 'Gha' unit at Dhaka University (DU) under arts and social science faculties (session 2008-2009), a DU press release said yesterday to dispel the confusion over the interview on April 26.

Students from science background who stood first to 954th in the admission test but were unable to face the first interview and students who secured 955th to 1200th place will get the chance to face the interview.

Meanwhile, students from commerce background who stood first to 273rd in the admission test but were unable to face the first interview and those who secured 238th to 400th place will be able to take part in the interview.

However, there is no vacant seats under the business faculty of the university, the release added.

Microsoft holds workshop

METRO DESK

Ministry of Education and Microsoft Bangladesh jointly organised a workshop on 'Microsoft partners in learning impact study' at Teachers' Training College auditorium in the city recently.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid was present as the chief guest while Syed Ataur Rahman, secretary to the ministry, Ujjawal Bikash Dutta, additional secretary, and Feroz Mahmud, country manager, Microsoft Bangladesh, were also present.

The education minister appreciated the initiatives taken by Microsoft.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Dr A KM Fazul Kabir, former director of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute,

passed away on April 19 at the age of 75, says a press release.

Dr Kabir was the visiting professor of University of Nairobi in Kenya and an adviser of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

His kulkhwani will be held at his residence at 'Tectona' at 4 New Eskaton, Ghaus Nagar in the city after Asr prayers on Friday.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 25th death anniversary of former speaker of Pakistan National Assembly Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, says a press release.

The speaker passed away in 1984 at his Gulshan residence in the city.

Born in 1901 in Barisal, Jabbar practised law and joined judicial service as a judge.

After his retirement, he joined the Muslim League and was elected president of the party. He took retirement from politics in 1969 and founded a number of education institutions.

A doa mahfil will be held at his village home on the occasion.

Syed Mozammel Huq



Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha (BSS), says a press release.

Mozammel Huq, who hailed from Beshnal village in Tongibari under Munshiganj, also worked for the Time Magazine and oil and gas journal.

On the occasion, Quankhwani will be held and foods will be distributed among the poor.

Satyanarjan Dasgupta

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 7th death anniversary of Satyanarjan Dasgupta, father of journalist Ajoy Dasgupta, says a press release.

Satyanarjan, who hailed from Barisal, played a significant role during the democratic movement and the liberation war.

On this occasion, a special prayer will be held at the residence of Goila Das.