

# 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 in judiciary.

"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 Weliamuna 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.



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



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) stages a demonstration at Muktagan 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 Khalil 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 Shamim Kanti Borua, Ajit Kumar Sarker, Ashiqun-nabi Chowdhury, Shahraj Begum, Madhusudan Mandal, Afzal Hossain, Kanai Chakrabarty, AZM Sarwar Chowdhury, Swapna Bose, Halim Azad, Obaidul Gani, Mahfuz 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 newsmen 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 Sufiur 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 Mamun.

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.

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