

## Establish rule of law to check moral decay

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need for establishing the rule of law to protect the society from moral degradation.

They said as crime and corruption are increasing day by day in the society people are suffering from insecurity.

The roundtable titled 'Morality in society and people's security' was organised by Swadhinata O Nagorik Odhikar Forum at WVA auditorium in the city.

The speakers said corruption has engulfed the society and rule of law is a must to get rid of this situation.

They said now a days people have less faith in judiciary which itself has become controversial in dispensing justice.

The speakers also urged all especially the new generation to raise their voice against bad culture.

They said the youngsters are now puzzled by satellite culture which helps increase crimes in the society.

Speaking as chief guest AL presidium member Abdur Razzak MP called for immediate social reforms to stop further moral damage and ensure people's security.

"People from all strata of life will have to come forward to free the society from corrup-

tion by establishing rule of law in the country," he added.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury alleged that educated people are mostly responsible for damaging morality as they resort to corruption and illegal activities.

She said it is needed to correct oneself first to lead the society towards the path of development.

She also urged the media specially the electronic media not to air such advertisement which leads children towards consumerism.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the state is responsible for ensuring people's security through ensuring rule of law.

But there is no rule of law here and that's why justice is not ensured resulting crime and corruption, he added.

He also laid emphasis on establishing morality to ensure security and justice.

Columnist Faruk Hasan presented the keynote paper at the roundtable while Bulbul Mahalanish was in the chair.

Sector Commander Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafullah, Milli Rahman, wife of Birshrestha Motiur Rahman, and veteran politician Sardar Amjad Hossain also spoke on the occasion.



A fireman collapses after inhaling toxic smoke while trying to extinguish a fire at a chemical godown at Majhirhat in Chittagong yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

PHOTO: STAR

## Speaker hopes opposition will join budget session

BNP parliamentary party to decide on the issue: Zainul Abidin

UNB, Dhaka

As the bickering between the ruling party and the opposition over rearrangement of front-row seats in parliament is on, Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid yesterday hoped that the opposition would join the budget session to make it more effective and livelier.

"I do hope they'll change their mind and join the budget session being happy with the already allocated front-row seats," he told reporters after a

certificate distribution ceremony of an orientation programme for women MPs of the 9th parliament.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDWL) jointly hosted the three-day orientation course for women lawmakers.

Replying to a question whether the front-row seats for the opposition would be increased, the Speaker said there is room to discuss the issue.

"As there are many seats in parliament, no one can say for sure when the seat arrangement would be changed," he further queried.

Meanwhile, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque said they see a ray of hope over allocation of more seats in the front row for the opposition. "There is no last word in politics and I'm seeing a ray of hope about it."

He said there is still scope for discussion and both the parties need to reach a consensus to make parliament effective and lively. "I hope we'll be given respectable number of seats in the front row."

Asked whether they will join the current parliament session, Faroque said he

alone cannot say it. "It'll be decided in our parliamentary party meeting next week."

Earlier, Deputy Speaker Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali in his speech at the certificate distribution ceremony urged the women MPs to think about formation of a 'caucus' to serve the nation effectively and pledged that his office would provide all-out cooperation in this regard.

He said the lawmakers who participated in the three-day programme would be able to play more proactive role in parliament and the issues covered over the last three days would help them a lot in this regard.

US Ambassador James F Moriarty in his closing remarks said the US applauds the promising efforts to fully integrate women into the country's political governance as Bangladesh reaffirms its commitment to democracy.

"As Bangladesh moves into a new stage in its democratic development, the US government will continue to support improved governance here and we'll provide long-term support to parliament, political parties and the Bangladesh Election Commission," Moriarty said.

He also said women's participation and empower-

ment are integral part of all of development activities. "Women leaders are also making vital contributions to development at local level."

The recent parliamentary election in Bangladesh was a milestone in terms of women's participation in politics, he added.

## 'Ensure social security, provide basic needs to reduce poverty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Definition of the poverty line index should not be limited to 'Minimum Consumption Basket' or a calorie chart, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Complete social security and providing basic needs should be ensured in order to alleviate poverty, they said, adding that equal distribution of wealth and social justice is also crucial.

The Hunger Project organised the roundtable on 'Humanising poverty dialogues' at the National Press Club.

Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, former governor of Bangladesh Bank, said the idea of basic needs has to be reconsidered in broader perspective. It is biological as well as social, economic and political. All of these have to be ensured.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra and former advisor to the caretaker gov-

ernment, said women are the marginalised of the marginalised.

Although worldwide women work equally hard as men, they earn less. They also do not have control over their own income. So equity among men and women is a must, she added.

Dr Mahbub Hossain, executive director of Brac, stressed the need to increase the access to education. However, quality of education should be ensured, he added.

The speakers also stressed the need for agricultural reforms, skill development and employment generation in order to alleviate poverty.

Prof Anisur Rahman, member of the Planning Commission, presented the keynote speech.

Chaired by Prof Badiul Alam Majumder, global vice president of the Hunger Project, the roundtable was also addressed by Prof MM Akash, Salma Khan and Prof SR Osmari.

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### Imtiaz made envoy to Sweden

UNB, Dhaka

Imtiaz Ahmed, serving as Bangladesh ambassador to Nepal, has been appointed the envoy to Sweden.

A career diplomat, Ahmed joined the BCS (foreign affairs) cadre in 1986.

### 208 Phensidyl bottles seized

UNB, Savar

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a drug peddler with 208 bottles of Phensidyl syrup from a night coach at Niribili on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team raided the coach of 'Sohagh Paribahan' and recovered the contraband item kept in the baskets of mango and jackfruit.

The elite force also arrested drug peddler Mafizuddin.

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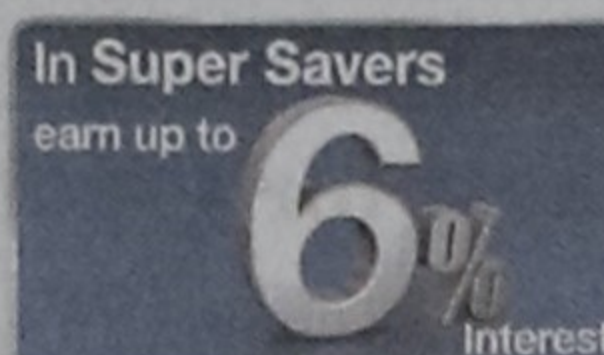
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