

MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL CALAMITIES

Finalise draft law to face challenges efficiently

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the government to finalise immediately the draft disaster management act to face the challenges of recurring natural calamities more efficiently.

They said a legal instrument and regulatory framework is needed for efficient disaster management.

The roundtable titled 'The sustainable disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh: Opportunities and challenges for stakeholders' was organised by Nirapad (Network for Information, Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster), Brac University and Care Bangladesh at Brac Inn in the city.

The speakers underscored the need for building multi-stakeholders partnership and strengthening the local gov-

ernment for more effective and sustainable disaster risk reduction.

They said advance preparation and sustainable planning can help reduce the possible devastation of natural disasters and manmade hazards.

A disaster management policy should now focus more on pre-disaster risk reduction than to currently practised post-disaster response and recovery method, they added.

Fuad H Mallick, director of Post Graduate Programme in Disaster Management at Brac University, said repeated occurrence of natural disasters disrupts the development activities as funds are used for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Advance preparedness and coordinated rehabilitation activities can play a significant role in reducing future risk, he

added.

Outlining the duties of all concerned starting from the prime minister to union parishad chairman before and after natural calamities, he said a legal instrument and regulatory framework is needed for this.

Prof Mallick pointed out that the disaster management committees remain most of the time inactive and surface only before and after the natural disasters.

They will have to remain functional at all times, he said.

Speaking as chief guest Muhammad Syedul Haque MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food and Disaster Management, said after any natural calamities different sectors promptly come forward with relief work and the affected people welcome the efforts.

But to reduce the risk a long-term planning is necessary, he added.

The speakers suggested establishment of flood markers at every union and construction of roads and houses above those markers to avoid inundation.

They also suggested modernising the cyclone warning system, addressing livelihood and food security issues after the calamities, allocating funds at the union parishad level for immediate action especially on health issues.

Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, former minister of Food and Disaster Management, Abul Haseeb Khan, chairman of Nirapad, Dilder Ahmed, director of Disaster Management Bureau, Faheem Y Khan, chief of Souhardo Programme of Care Bangladesh, also spoke on the occasion.



Four JMB members, including the chief of its information technology wing, who were arrested on Sunday, were produced before journalists at Rab Headquarters in the city yesterday. (Story on page 1)

AL's 60th founding anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 60th founding anniversary of the ruling Awami League.

On this day in 1949, East Pakistan Awami Muslim League was founded at the historic Rose Garden in Old Dhaka.

Later, the word 'Muslim' was dropped from the name of the party to give it a secular colour.

The AL led all democratic movements of the then East Pakistan starting from the Language Movement of 1952 to War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

To observe the day, AL has chalked out a two-day programme including hoisting of national and party flags atop AL offices across the country at 5:30am, placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi at 7:00am and bringing out a colourful procession from Shikha Chirantan at Suhrawardy Udyan at 2:00pm.

In the evening, a cultural function will be held at Paltan Maidan.

Besides, AL delegation led by party presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim will place wreaths at the grave of Bangabandhu at Tungipara in Gopalganj and take part in a discussion.

On June 24, a discussion to be followed by a cultural function will be held at Paltan Maidan at 2:00pm.

AL spokesperson and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday urged all the party leaders, workers and activists to observe the day across the country in a befitting manner.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina and party General Secretary Abdul Jalil have given separate messages on the occasion greeting party leaders, workers, supporters and well-wishers.

In her message, Hasina said the AL, a glorious emblem of leading various movements including the liberation war since its inception has now become an institution.

Recalling the outstanding contributions of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, four national leaders and other previous AL leaders and workers towards establishing the party, she said AL has become an organisation of mass people due to their labour, merit and sacrifice.

Jalil in his statement said to build a digital Bangladesh is now the challenge before the party and the government.

"Only a disciplined political party which believes the principles of Bangabandhu can build Digital Bangladesh," he added.

The AL general secretary observed that the extremism and defeated forces of the liberation war are out to foil the landslide victory of AL in December 29 elections.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the third death anniversary of Alhaj M. Samul Alam Mokter, one of the organisers of the Liberation War and former vice-president of Pirojpur district unit of Awami League, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad will be held at his Mathbaria residence in Pirojpur.

JS to decide fate of CG system: Law minister

UNB, Dhaka

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the parliament will decide how the country's future elections would be held.

"The decision (on caretaker govt system) would be taken in parliament," he told reporters replying to a question whether the government would investigate the activities of the previous caretaker government.

He was talking to the journalists after the concluding ceremony of a two-day international conference on 'Right to Information: Law, Institution and Citizens' held at a city hotel in the afternoon.

The minister said the Constitution of Bangladesh has lost its original shape because of many surgeries over the years, hampering the march forward of democracy. The progress of democracy had also been widely hampered due to 'extrajudicial' capture of power since independence, Shafique said.

About the information commission, the law minister said the government has already formed a five-member selection body with two MPs from the ruling party and the opposition, one senior journalist, a cabinet secretary headed by a Supreme Court justice to form the commission.

"A gazette has been issued in this regard and the selection committee has started its work to form the information commission," Shafique said. He said the selection committee has been formed transparently and it will work independently to form the three-member commission.

Replying to a question, he said the government would be able to form the information commission within 90 days of passing the Right to Information Act passed in parliament on last April.

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MEMO TO SPEAKER

Garment workers demand Tk 5000 as minimum wage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Garment Sramik Sangram Parishad have demanded Tk 5000 as minimum wage for garment workers and a special allocation for them in the national budget for the fiscal year 2009-10.

"They made the demand in a memorandum to the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Earlier, hundreds of leaders and activists of the organisation gathered at the Muktangan in the capital at around 11:00am and started marching towards the Sangsad Bhaban.

But police put up a barricade in front of the High Court intersection to stop the proces-

sion. However, a six-member delegation led by Mokhlesur Rahman, coordinator of the organisation, was allowed to submit the memorandum to the Speaker.

In the memorandum they pointed out that their lowest salary of Tk 1662, which was fixed in 2006, needs to be increased due to price hike of essentials and increased transport cost and house rent.

"The prices of daily essentials are soaring continuously. The garment workers are facing severe difficulties to bear their livelihood with their existing salaries. So the government should increase their salaries for the sake of their survival," they noted.

MISCELLANEOUS CASE Ctg court denies bail to Rezzaqul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday denied bail to former director general (DG) of National Security Intelligence (NSI) in a miscellaneous case filed in connection with the seizure of 10-truckloads of arms and ammunition.

The court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Bhabani Prasad Singha denied bail in the miscellaneous case after hearing a petition made in this regard.

Ex-NSI DG Rezzaqul's lawyer Tarique Ahmed had filed the miscellaneous case with the session judge's court last week.

The case meant for paving the way for moving the arms haul case in higher court where the accused would have scope for making fresh bail petition, said the sources concerned.

In this regard defence lawyer Tarique said, "With bail petition, we may move the case in higher court if our client wants to but only after going through the court order that denied the bail petition."

Sources said Rezzaqul also sought bail in another miscellaneous case filed with the same court in connection with smuggling of the illegal consignment.

The court fixed June 29 for hearing of the bail petition.

Besides Rezzaqul, ex-NSI director wing commander (ret) Sahab Uddin, ex-NSI deputy director (mechanical) maj (ret) Liakat Hossain and former general manager (administration) of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) also filed separate miscellaneous cases with the same court and submitted bail petitions in connection with the arms haul case.

The court fixed June 28 for hearing Sahab Uddin's bail petition while July 01 for hearing bail petitions of both ex-CUFL General Manager Enamul and ex-NSI Deputy Director Liakat, said the sources.

BNP men burn FM's effigy in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi BNP yesterday burned an effigy of Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and demanded her removal for what they said "unrelenting false propaganda on Farakka and Tipaimukh Dam issues".

The local unit of BNP also demanded removal of Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen and deportation of Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty.

BNP staged the demonstration on chars of the river Padma near Bara Kuthi and demanded the government ensure proper share of water is realised from India.

They also demanded the construction of Tipaimukh Dam be stopped.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Prof Akhter Imam, a retired teacher of Department of Philosophy of Dhaka University and wife of Prof Ali Imam, passed away at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 92, says a press release.

She left behind her three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

She will be buried at Mirpur Intellectual Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Dhaka University Central Mosque today.

Akhter Imam was awarded with Rokeya Padak in 2002.

Md Abdur Rashid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Md Abdur Rashid, a former section officer of the Buet, passed away due to diabetes and old-age complications at his residence in the city on Friday at the age of 73, says press release.

He left behind his wife, three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard in the city.

Navy in need of logistics

FROM PAGE 1

"Bangladesh Navy today made a presentation before the committee highlighting their problems and possible solutions. The force is facing a dearth of equipment, modern ships and manpower in discharging its duties," M Idris Ali told reporters after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The navy made a set of recommendations that include formulating the defence policy and national maritime policy, taking measures for increased participation of navy personnel in the UN peacekeeping mission, ensuring representation of competent navy personnel in important policymaking bodies.

Idris said all members of the parliamentary body agreed that the navy should be strengthened in the national interest.

Idris, also former defence secretary, said almost all of the navy ships are very old. Two of

the four frigates of the navy are over 50 years old, he added.

"We will discuss whether the old frigates can be upgraded," the committee chief said. He said the past BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government decommissioned the modern frigate Bangabandhu due to their "narrow-minded" politics.

The last caretaker government, however, had re-commissioned the frigate, which is now one of two crucial ships for the navy, he said.

Without elaborating, the committee chief said there was a suggestion for purchasing new frigate. "We will be clear about the needs of the navy only when the defence policy is finalised," Idris said.

Bangladesh Navy was established in 1972 to keep secure Bangladesh's territorial waters, safeguard Bangladesh's economic interest and exercise maritime control within the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf and to protect

Bangladesh shipping lines and its merchant fleets.

A committee member quoting the navy's report said the process of modernisation of the navy is also in trouble due to shortage of fund.

On budgetary allocation, the navy in its report said it was allocated 16.10 percent of the total fund for defence forces in 2008-09 fiscal year. The army got 67.92 percent and the air force got 15.98 percent, a meeting source said quoting the navy's report.

The committee chief said they would discuss the navy's report in another meeting.

On drafting discussion on the draft defence policy, the committee chief said they could not begin the discussion yesterday due to time constraint.

"We will sit again in the next two weeks and discuss the draft defence policy. It is a very serious matter and we will try to seek public opinion on the policy," Idris Ali, also ruling Awami League lawmaker, said. He said public

debate might be held on the policy.

On demarcation of maritime boundary, the parliamentary body asked the government to initiate necessary steps by resolving disputes with the neighbouring countries - India and Myanmar.

Bangladesh will face difficulties in collecting resources if the maritime boundary is not demarcated, he said. Idris Ali said Bangabandhu's government in 1974 had opened discussion with the two neighbouring countries to resolve disputes over maritime boundaries. After 1975, successive governments failed to give due importance to continued dialogue, he said.

To beef up the navy's activities to conduct survey in the sea, the parliamentary body asked the government to set up a hydrographic unit under the defence ministry, he said.

He said in absence of the unit, the navy is facing difficulties in discharging its duties.

BASHUNDHARA CASE HC extends stay again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday for the third time extended till July 8 its earlier orders staying the conviction and sentence of Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam, his wife and their two sons in a tax evasion case.

The trial court on September 30, 2007 convicted and sentenced Shah Alam and three of his family members to eight years' imprisonment each in absentia in the case filed by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The HC also fixed July 6 for hearing the rules issued earlier by it (HC) on the writ petitions filed by the convicts challenging the verdict.

The HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Borhan Uddin passed the order upon a time prayer moved by additional Attorney General (AAG) MK Rahman.

The additional attorney general yesterday sought two weeks' time from the HC bench for making the replies to the rules.

MK Rahman told The Daily Star that the High Court has so far extended three times its orders staying the punishment of Shah Alam and his family members.

On September 15 last year, the HC upon the writ petitions stayed for three months their conviction and sentence.

The court issued two separate rules upon the government to explain why the conviction and sentence of the petitioners by the trial court should not be declared illegal.

The HC on March 25 this year extended the stay orders and directed Shah Alam and his family members to surrender before the trial court within three months in connection with the case.

On May 25, Judge Mozammel Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-3 issued an order saying that Shah Alam, his wife Afroza Begum, and their sons Sadat Sobhan and Sayem Sobhan will remain free till June 25 in the tax evasion case.

Earlier on July 8 last year, the same people were convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment each in a money laundering case filed by Gulshan police.

Special train on President's parade at BMA

UNB, Dhaka

The President's parade marking the commissioning of the gentlemen cadet of the 60th BMA Long Course and 31st BMA Special Course will be held at Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) at Bhatary in Chittagong tomorrow.

A special train will run between Chittagong and Bhatary railway station for the invited guests, said an ISPR press release.

The special train will leave Chittagong railway station for Bhatary at 7:30am on Wednesday and Bhatary Railway station for Chittagong at 3:00pm the same day.



Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid administers oath to Md Matur Rahman, who was elected a lawmaker in the by-elections in Sunamganj-4, at Sangsad Bhaban in the city yesterday.

TIPAIMUKH DAM

Menon blames govt for not protesting strongly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rashed Khan Menon, chief of Workers Party of Bangladesh, a component of AL-led ruling alliance, strongly criticised the government yesterday for what he said was not strongly protesting against construction of Tipaimukh dam.

"Bangladesh will be seriously affected once the Tipaimukh dam is constructed by India. Water flow will stop due to the dam. But we're not saying anything loudly. We're speaking in low voice," Menon said at a general discussion on the proposed budget.

He said the government should "strongly" raise its voice against construction of the dam. He urged the government to include lawmakers from the main opposition BNP to the parliamentary team scheduled to visit the dam site.

Menon also criticised the provision for whitening undisclosed money in the proposed budget.

"Credibility of the proposed budget has been destroyed thanks to the provision for whitening black money. The proposed provision also counters the Constitution," Menon

said. He added the proposed provision is also unethical and contradicts the Awami League's (AL) election pledges.

On persisting load-shedding, Menon raised a question as to who is running the power ministry.

"We know the prime minister holds the portfolio of the power ministry. It seems the state minister for power does not have any power. All power belongs to the energy and power adviser to the prime minister. Then who will blame for the sorry state of power?" Menon continued.

A number of AL lawmakers who took part in the budget discussion also criticised the provision for whitening black money.

AL lawmaker and chief of the parliamentary standing committee on women and children affairs ministry Meher Afroz suggested decreasing the timeframe for whitening black money from proposed three years to one year.

Another AL lawmaker Motiur Rahman proposed increasing tax rate to 30 percent from proposed 10 percent for whitening black money.

WEATHER TODAY logo with sun and cloud icons.

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Mild heat wave is sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Jessore, Dhaka and Tangail and it may continue, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:49pm today and rises at 6:13am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 38.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 23.1 degrees Celsius at Chuadanga.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.