



Dhanmondi playground.

'Protect Dhanmondi playground'

Environmentalists to submit memo to PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading environmentalist groups along with local communities are going to submit a memorandum to the prime minister and stage demonstrations to protect Dhanmondi playground from being occupied by a limited company.

Dhanmondi Club, which was converted into a limited company with a new name 'Lt. Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Limited' at its general meeting on August 20, now intends to take over the playground by Road No. 8 to build a stadium and exclusive sports and recreational facilities.

Sharif Jamil, an environmentalist and member-secretary of a committee of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said they have decided at an executive committee meeting to launch action programmes to protect the playground.

"We are taking preparations along with the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh

(IAB) to submit a memorandum to the prime minister," he said.

"We will stage a demonstration in front of the playground along with IAB, Dhanmondi House Owners' Association and Dhanmondi Paribesh Unnayan Jote on October 16," said Jamil.

If the government does not come up with any remedial action, they will hold roundtable discussions and press conferences to press for their demand, he added.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, "We along with IAB are preparing to serve a legal notice on the club to explain their legal position."

In 2004, Bapa and IAB jointly filed a petition regarding the use of the playground. Following the petition, the High Court on April 24, 2004 issued a rule nisi upon Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the official custodian of the playground, not to use it for any purposes other than sports.

Bapa and IAB would now pursue the writ petition to obtain the final verdict. They held a meeting in this regard yesterday evening.

IAB President Mubasshat Hussain, also a sports organiser, said a group of eight people who identified themselves as founder members of Dhanmondi Club, came to his Dhanmondi house on October 4 and said that the president of the club would like to sit with him.

"They came with a bouquet and offered me to hold a top position of the club," said Hussain.

He also said Bapa and IAB along with others would also arrange a signature collection campaign to mobilise opinion among local people.

DCC, however, has been playing a dubious role in maintaining the playground.

Sheikh Jamal Club will be developed in the pattern of Dhaka Club Limited, Gulshan Club Limited and Uttara Club Limited, according to a top official of the club.

ALLOCATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE FUNDS

Clear commitment sought from int'l community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agriculture sector will be worst affected by the global climate change, two ministers said yesterday and sought clear commitment from the international community to ensure food security and disaster preparedness.

A clear commitment should be made at the international level to ensure that a significant share of the fund committed by the international community to cope with climate change is allocated properly, said Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque at a workshop at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

There have been gaps between commitments and actual delivery of aid and also in

the delivery schedule, he said and called for enhanced effectiveness of the international aid.

He also urged the international community to fulfil its commitment to aid.

The food and agriculture ministries in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) arranged the consultative workshop on 'Climate change impacts on agriculture and food security' ahead of the climate change summit in Copenhagen in December.

"The industrialised countries which contribute to the global warming must provide compensation," Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, adding that the prime minister in her address in the UN General Assembly

demanding US\$5 billion in compensation.

Increased foreign assistance is also important for large scale climate change adaptation programmes such as dredging of rivers and strengthening embankments, said Matia Chowdhury, who addressed the workshop as the chief guest.

"And this is our right," she said.

Experts at the workshop said Bangladesh has already been facing the impacts of climate change such as frequent cyclones, erratic rain, drought and increased salinity.

"This year, late monsoon has affected crops. We are also being dependent more on dry season crops," said Brac Executive Director Dr Mahabub Hossain.

Referring to a World Bank

prediction, Prof Zahurul Karim said the country would face a loss of 7.4 percent of rice production annually due to climate change. All other temperate crops are also susceptible to rise of temperature during January-February.

Increase in foggingness and relative humidity increases incidence of pest and diseases, causing devastating failure of potato and pulses, he said. Livestock production could also be affected due to reduction in quality and availability of feed and water.

FAO Representative Ad Spijkers said measures need to be strengthened to help farmers use irrigation water, fertilisers and other inputs more efficiently and economically.

The experts also suggested dredging rivers for preserving surface water for irrigation during dry season, increasing the heights of the homesteads in the coastal districts, large parts of which are likely to be inundated due to sea level rise, and developing stress tolerant crops to face the calamities.

FAO Senior Officer Caterina Batello, Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services Executive Director Giasuddin Ahmed Chowdhury also spoke at the workshop chaired by Agriculture Secretary CQK Mustaq Ahmed.

New USAID programme to support people with disabilities

METRO DESK

The US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has announced the launch of a new programme to promote the rights of people with disabilities in Bangladesh.

Handicap International will implement a two-year, \$300,000 programme titled 'Organisational Capacity Building to Advocate for the People with Disabilities in Bangladesh', says a press release.

Handicap International will work with organisations that work on people with disabilities in each division to enhance their capacity for rights-based advocacy.

The programme will strengthen networks for protecting and advancing the rights of thousands of people with disabilities.

It will provide strategic planning, financial management, advocacy, and networking training to organisations that protect and advance the rights of people with disabilities.

The programme will partner with the government to highlight this important issue and improve government policies and action plans in this area, said the release.

Plea to explore gas to meet increasing local demand

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said gas fields should be identified and explored preserving people's rights to meet the increasing demand of the country.

Viable economic development is not possible without ensuring uninterrupted supply of energies, they added.

Sammilita Samajik Andolon, a social organisation, organised the discussion on 'Exploration and distribution of oil and gas: Recent government initiative and international context' at Liberation War Museum in the city.

Former director of Petrobangla Mohammad Maqbul-E-Elahi made a slide presentation on different sections of the model production sharing contracts (PSCs) with foreign companies introduced by the government in 2008.

Elahi said it should be considered that which situation the country would face in future if the gas is not explored, adding that Petrobangla has already decided not to provide more gas connections.

Delay in signing contracts of gas exploration would be unexpected, he mentioned.

"If the government's planned contracts with foreign companies to explore gas are signed right now, it would take seven more years to supply gas to people," he added.

Elahi said according to the government's recent contracts on gas exploration in deep sea, the country would be able to buy gas according to its demand.

Rafiqul Islam Khan, former chief of Planning Commission, said the government must tell people what the contracts with foreign companies read.

Noted economist Prof MM Akash said in the present contracts, as claimed by Elahi, there are some improvements in different sections than the previous contracts.

It is true that without marketing guarantee, no companies would come to explore gas. So, the government should give guarantee of buying gas, as its principle is to ensure gas reserve till 2050 in the country, he added.

Prof Ajoy Roy and Ziauddin Tareq Ali also spoke.



Matia Chowdhury speaks at a workshop at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her left are CQK Mustaq Ahmed and Abdur Razzaque.

Call to recognise domestic violence as crime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an open discussion yesterday called on the government to recognise domestic violence as a crime in the country's existing laws, either in civil or criminal, to ensure fair trial in this connection.

Although 96 percent women become victims of domestic violence in different ways in the country, they do not get justice, they said, adding that it is urgent to enact a law to ensure respect and full protection of women from domestic violence.

The speakers said this at the discussion organised by the ministry of women and children affairs on the proposed draft law of Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act at Biam auditorium in the city.

Some hundred representatives from different organisations working with women or human rights issues took part in the discussion where two drafts were placed, one was on behalf of Domestic

Alliance, a platform of 35 rights organisations, and the other from the Law Commission.

According to the draft laws, torture of various forms, including physical, mental, economic, verbal and sexual, by the members with blood connection in the family would be considered as domestic violence.

Speaking as the chief guest, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury said after scrutinising different drafts, views and segmentations, the government would enact the law in order to protect women in family.

The act would help reduce violence against women especially in family as there allegation most of the women fell victims of violence in the family, she added.

Presenting the proposed draft of the act, advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) said it is needed to amend the Penal

code to recognise domestic violence as crime to implement the act.

On behalf of the alliance, she made some suggestions to ensure justice for the victims of domestic violence, including setting up magistrate court at upazila level, appointment of adequate judicial magistrates, allocation of specific budget, launching awareness programme and regular report by the government on the issue.

On inclusion of domestic helps in the act, barrister Sara Hossain said as domestic helps are entitled to the labour law, there is no need to involve domestic helps in the act.

Besides, domestic helps are not the members of the concerned family, they are just labourers or workers, she said.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana presided over the discussion which was also addressed by Dr Abul Hossain, project director of Multisectoral Programme on Prevention of Violence against



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