

Corruption creates obstacle to poverty alleviation

Irene Khan tells launching ceremony of her book

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been a "classic case of successive, democratically elected governments promoting 'kleptocracy', a system that runs on greed and corruption," said Irene Khan, former secretary general of Amnesty International (AI), yesterday.

Such a culture of corruption has led to misappropriation of huge amount of funds came to Bangladesh for development purposes and thus deprived the poor of their right to come out of the vicious cycle of poverty.

"Greed, corruption and patronage thrive under the veneer of democracy among self-serving political and business elites," Irene said at the launching ceremony of her book titled 'The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights' at Brac Centre in the city.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Brac Founder and Chairman Fazle Hasan Abed, former advisers Akbar Ali Khan and Hossain Zillur Rahman and Director of Brac Development Institute Syed M Hashemi also spoke.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Chairman Rehman Sobhan chaired the launching ceremony of the book. It was also launched in countries such as the US and the UK.

In her book, Irene said, "From petty bribery to grand larceny of government funds, corruption has deprived the poor, and driven resources into the hands of the rich in my country [Bangladesh]."

Those who are in power keep everything such as property under their control here, she told the media.

According to Irene, poverty has a lot of causes, which include corruption and misuse of power. "If the ruling class misuse power and tolerate corruption, it will be tough to eradicate poverty."

Evaluating the performance of the government in fighting corruption, she said, "There is not so much progress in fighting corruption. No case has been filed against corruption while some cases have been dropped."

The former AI secretary general blamed the present and past governments for not taking adequate steps

against corruption.

"The governments did not take steps against these practices in the past. Even now, this matter has not got adequate attention of the government," said Irene, suggesting that corruption should be eliminated through a systemic manner, not through ad hoc means.

In her book, she argued that poverty is not primarily about economics and income levels but about the powerlessness which should be viewed from the lens of human rights.

"People are poor because of discrimination, exclusion, state repression, corruption, insecurity and violence. These are human rights problems."

She asserted that poverty remains a global epidemic because it is seen as an economic problem.

"Economic analysis does not capture the full dimension of poverty and economic growth alone cannot resolve the problems of people living in poverty," argued Irene as she cited the examples of Bangladesh, which has seen a

steady rise in national income between 1990 and 2006.

Citing studies, she said there was in the same period rising child malnourishment and a decline in access to clean water in urban areas.

Pointing to cyclone Aila-hit area Koira and Sathkira, she said hundreds of families are living on embankments; their fields and homes still remain under water because of the embankments having been breached.

"The government has made no effort to repair the breaches in the embankments. So people live in destitution and desperation. What can be more stark than powerlessness of the poor and non-accountability of the state."

"What I want to say in the book is that if we want to reduce poverty, we will need to empower them," she said, adding that unity of poor people helps bring about changes.

Prof Rehman Sobhan said the government must be made accountable for protecting human rights through the judiciary and public litigations.



Residents of New Paltan Line form a human chain at Azimpur in the city yesterday demanding extension of the road to the west side of the old graveyard to ease traffic congestion in the area.

Fifth amendment was a historical necessity

Moudud tells court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fifth amendment to the constitution of Bangladesh was made in order to maintain the continuity of the acts of the republic, Barrister Moudud Ahmed told the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday.

This amendment was brought to the constitution for the historical necessity of the country and the nation, Moudud said while placing his arguments before the apex court during the second day's hearing on the leave-to-appeal petitions challenging the High Court verdict declaring the fifth amendment illegal and void.

It had legitimised all governments that had been in power following the coup of August 15, 1975 till April 9, 1979, including late president Ziaur Rahman's ascension to the presidency.

On August 29, 2005, the HC in a landmark verdict declared illegal and void this amendment, rendering illegal the regimes of Khandaker Moshataq Ahmed, Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem, and Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman between August 15, 1975 and April 9, 1979.

Moudud said the fifth amendment has now become a part of the constitution, since the people and the parliament have accepted this amendment, and that is why this amendment cannot be cancelled.

He placed the arguments on behalf of three

SC lawyers Tajul Islam, Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan and Munshi Ahsan Kabir, who filed one of the leave to appeal petitions with the SC against the HC verdict on May 25 last year.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain also filed a similar petition on the same day.

The six-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Md Tafazzul Islam started hearing on the petitions on Tuesday. After concluding yesterday's hearing, the Appellate Division bench fixed January 24 for further hearing.

Moudud argued that the seventh amendment to the constitution had legitimised the rule of martial law by HM Ershad and its 11th amendment legitimised the government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmad.

The nature and effect of all the fifth, seventh and 11th amendments to the constitution were almost similar, but the HC has nullified only the fifth amendment, he added.

Earlier in the day, advocate TH Khan, counsel for the BNP secretary general, told the apex court that the parliament has passed the fifth amendment to the constitution but the constitution has not empowered the HC to interfere in the parliament decision.

The HC verdict that declared illegal the constitution's fifth amendment was an extra-judicial adventurism, he added.



Guests hold copies of a book titled 'The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights' by Irene Khan at its publication ceremony at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. From left are Akbar Ali Khan, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Fazle Hasan Abed, Finance Minister AMA Muhith, author Irene Khan, Syed M Hashemi and Hossain Zillur Rahman.

US encourages peaceful debate between AL, BNP: Moon

UNB, Dhaka

The United States stresses peaceful debate between the quarrelling opposition BNP and ruling Awami League for a "vibrant democracy" in Bangladesh, visiting US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Patrick Moon said.

The US emissary made the remarks to reporters replying to a question after paying a courtesy call on BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleeda Zia at her Gulshan office yesterday.

Moon, who is here on his maiden visit to Bangladesh, said they talked about the relations between the two political parties and stressed the importance of peaceful debate on democracy in Bangladesh, as peaceful debate is part of a vibrant democracy.

"We encourage such peaceful debates," he told the reporters.

Moon hoped that the opposition BNP and ruling Awami League - now at loggerheads in a latest parliamentary stand-off - could find ways to work together in the parliament.

He said the US always wants to maintain good and strong historical relations and partnership with Bangladesh for developing a better future of Bangladesh people.

Moon said he is looking forward to coming back again to Bangladesh in the near future.

Abducted Dhaka schoolboy rescued from Ctg, 1 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued an abducted schoolboy from the port city's Muktiyoddha Colony on Wednesday and arrested one of the abductors.

The schoolboy was identified as Emam Hossain Tipu, 13, son of one Golam Mustafa of East Bashabo in the capital and a class VIII student of Kadamtala High School and College.

The arrestee was identified as Alamgir alias Mohin, 22.

Sources said kingpin of the abduction plot Miraj Uddin, 30, son of Abdur Rahim, was a tenant at Mustafa's house in

the capital.

On several occasions, he invited Tipu to go to Cox's Bazar over cellphone.

On Monday night, Tipu rushed to Chittagong alone.

Miraj and one of his accomplices took him to a rented house at Muktiyoddha Colony under Bayezid Police Station and keeping him hostage, demanded Tk 6 lakh from Mustafa as ransom, said Tipu at a press conference at Rab-7 Headquarters in Patenga yesterday.

Mustafa informed the matter to the law enforcement agencies in Dhaka.

Rab men in Chittagong asked Mustafa to continue bargaining over the amount with the abductors.

As per the plan, Mustafa sent Tk 15000 in advance to the abductors through Sundarban Courier Service at Agrabad.

A squad of Rab-7 led by Major Shahriar Javed Chowdhury caught Alamgir when he rushed there along with Miraj to draw the money at around 5.30pm, said Rab-7 Deputy Director Major Abdus Samad. However, Miraj managed to flee.

Acting on Alamgir's confessional statement, the Rab men rescued Tipu, but the rest members of the gang Borhan Uddin, Nurunnabi and Rahul managed to flee.

Dhaka won't allow corridor to India

Dipu bins BNP allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has not allowed corridor to India and will not do so in future, but the main opposition BNP is making false allegations about it with malicious intentions, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said yesterday.

"When they allege that we have allowed corridor, we have to understand that it is a deliberate propaganda," she said at a roundtable on 'Bangladesh-India Summit' organised by the daily Bhorer Kagoj at the National Press Club in the city.

Referring to BNP's allegations that the government "sold out the country", Dipu said: "A country cannot be sold out, but such story has been being manufactured since Ayub Khan's regime."

It (BNP) said the government has signed secret deals, but now none can find out any such deal anywhere, she added.

"They are trying to create some debate on corridor, transit and trans-shipment irrationally. This is not the way things are dealt politically, because politics is not so mean," Dipu said as the chief guest.

Ziaur Rahman first signed a deal to give transit facilities to India in 1980, she said, adding that Joint Rivers Commission in 1978 decided to study the assessment on controlling flood and potential benefits of Tipaimukh dam. There was no mention of adverse impacts of the dam on Bangladesh.

"Was the transit deal signed to cheat people?" Dipu Moni posed a question, saying that Bangladesh cannot be isolated in the age of connectivity.

Referring to BNP's opposition to the agreements on cooperation to fight terrorism, she said: "It (BNP) wants to help terrorism. There is similarity between their statement and the rise of militancy during the party's last rule."

Former ambassadors Muhammad Zamir and Syed Moazzem Ali, economist Prof QK Ahmad, transport communication expert Rahmatullah, senior journalist Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, business leaders Dewan Sultan Ahmed, Shekil Chowdhury and SM Zaman Romel also spoke.

UP chairman forced to provide actual share of VGF rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lemshikhali union parishad chairman of Kutubdia Upazila in Cox's Bazar was forced to distribute 9.5 kilogram of rice to each VGF card holders recently after the recipients staged an angry demonstration demanding actual allocation of rice.

The queuing cardholders became angry when the UP chairman said that each is going to receive 7 kg of rice.

However, Rafiqul Islam, an inhabitant of the union, earlier informed the people that actual allocation of rice was 10 kg per head instead of 7 kg as per the government decision.

Rafiqul, making use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 in November last year, came to know that the government will distribute rice free of cost to the poor people of Lemshikhali Union under the VGF programme.

He came to know about the RTI during a sensitisation meeting in his union organised by Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) and supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

To justify the information, he later contacted the project implementation officer (PIO) of Kutubdia and wanted to know more.

The PIO informed Rafiqul

that 10 kg of rice per head has been allocated for 2,725 poor people of Lemshikhali Union.

He soon spread the information among the people. The cardholders raised protest against the UP chairman's decision of distributing 7 kg of rice per head instead of 10 kg.

The UP chairman argued that it is not possible to distribute the actual share to each card holder as he needs to make up for his carrying costs and other expenses from the distribution.

Amid protest, finally, the chairman was compelled to distribute 9.5 kg of rice to each cardholder.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 4th death anniversary of Shamsul Islam Khan (Naya Mia), a former industries minister, says a press release.

Shamsul Islam, also an industrialist, was elected a member of parliament four times from Manikganj-4.

Mahmud Hasan
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Mahmud Hasan, one of the organisers of the Liberation War and founder president of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad, says a press release.

Bir Muktiyoddha Mahmud Hasan Smriti Parishad will arrange a milad mahfil.

Azizul Hoque Bhuiya
METRO DESK

Today is the 4th death anniversary of Azizul Hoque Bhuiya, a former editor of the daily Sukhabor and weekly Charampatra, says a press release.

He was also the convenor of the steering committee of the action committees for the liberation of Bangladesh in the United Kingdom in 1971.

Jamuna TV petition sent to CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sent to the chief justice a writ petition that challenged the government's action forcing Jamuna Television to be off the air.

The HC bench of Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mamnoon Rahman sent the petition to Chief Justice Md Tafazzul Islam for an order following Attorney General Mahububey Alam's submissions.

During the hearing of the petition, the attorney general told the HC bench that he had no time to appear in the court to place arguments for the case, as he was busy with other urgent cases.

The attorney general also prayed to the court for dropping the petition from the cause list of this bench since the bench has no jurisdiction to regularly hear writ petitions.

The chief justice recently reconstituted the bench for hearing the petition for three days that expired yesterday,

the lawyers said.

On October 15 last year, Jamuna Television went on test transmission.

On November 19 the same year, Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission halted the transmission of the private television channel and stated in a letter to the channel that their permission for broadcasting had been cancelled.

Following the cancellation, Jamuna Television Ltd Chairman Nurul Islam Babul filed the writ petition with the HC on November 22.

The HC on December 7 last year in a rule asked the government and BTRC to explain why their actions of cancelling allocation of frequency to the channel should not be declared illegal.

During the hearing, barrister Rafique-Ul Huq appeared for the petitioners.

Nurul Islam Babul along with a number of his staff was present in the court.

ATTACK ON JCD LEADERS

Delwar demands punishment to attackers

DU CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday urged the Dhaka University authorities to find out the 'culprits' who launched an attack on Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists on the university campus on Monday.

"It's the responsibility of the university authorities to identify the criminals and ensure that they are awarded punishment," Delwar said speaking at a protest rally in front of party's central office in the city.

Normalcy will return to Dhaka University when the responsible persons would be punished. Or else, the university authorities and the government will be responsible for any kind of untoward incident on the campus, he added.

Delwar termed the case filed against the JCD leaders false and urged the government to withdraw the case and stop harassing JCD leaders.

BNP organised the programme to protest the incident on Monday.

Two factions of JCD men engaged into a fierce clash at

Hearing on Zia Orphanage, Jamuna Park petitions Jan 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday fixed January 24 as the date for hearing the petitions filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman seeking stay on the proceedings of Zia Orphanage Trust embezzlement case.

The same court also fixed the same date for hearing a writ petition challenging the notice issued by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) asking the Jamuna Future Park shopping complex authorities to demolish the unauthorised floors of the complex.

ZIA ORPHANAGE CASE

The HC bench of Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Md Abdur Razaque was due to hear the petitions of Khaleeda Zia and Tarique Rahman yesterday, but it deferred the date of hearing on a time prayer by Attorney General Mahububey Alam.

The attorney general sought time from the court since he was busy with other cases yesterday.

JAMUNA FUTURE PARK

Another HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Chowdhury and Justice Borhan Uddin deferred to January 24 the hearing on the writ petition challenging the Rajuk notice issued on January 13 for demolition of four unauthorised floors of the Jamuna Future Park shopping complex within seven days.

Another BDR member dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) member died at Pikhana BDR Hospital yesterday.

With the death of Sepoy M Helaluddin, a total of 68 BDR members have died due to various reasons since the BDR mutiny on February 25-26.

Helal, who hailed from Baufal upazila in Patuakhali, had been suffering from liver cancer for the last few months, BDR Public Relations Officer Muhasin Reza said.

He was admitted to BDR Hospital on December 24, said a BDR press release.

His body was sent to his village home at Kathikul village for burial.

