

Effective parliament can make democracy stronger

Speakers tell debate competition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme said effective parliament with active participation of the ruling party and the opposition can make democracy stronger.

Active role of the opposition can also ensure accountability of the government and it is the responsibility of the government to ensure presence of the opposition in parliament, they added.

They said this at the semi-final round of the BSB-Cambrian Youth Parliament, a debating competition, at the ATN Bangla studio at Bashundhara City shopping mall in the city on Saturday.

Jointly organised by ATN Bangla and the Cambrian College, the parliamentary-style debate competition conducted by Debate for Democracy Chairman Hasan Ahmed

Chowdhury Kiran. As many as 160 students from 32 colleges across the country participated in the competition.

Two competitions took place in the semi-final round on the topics: 'Struggle for freedom is yet to end' and 'Only unity of the major political parties can strengthen democracy in the country'.

At one semi-final round, Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed said the opposition can always disagree with the ruling party in parliament, but the line of reasoning has to be constructive.

He lamented on the fact that the two parties fail to reach a consensus on the national issues and stressed the need to make the parliament more effective.

"In the mock debate, it was evident that both the parties wanted for parliament to be become effective, something that should also be reflected in our

national politics," said Tofail.

In the other semi-final, BNP development committee member Moudud Ahmed said parliament is the focal point of all activities where both the government and the opposition have equal responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of the opposition to make the government's activities accountable so that the ruling party fulfil its pledges, he said.

As debate is a big part of national parliament, this competition will surely produce capable member of parliaments and speakers in the future, he added.

SOS Hermann Gmeiner College and Shaheed Bir Uttam Lieutenant Shaheed Anwar Girls' College defeated Mirzapur Cadet College and Motijheel Ideal School and College to reach the final.



President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Fertiliser Development Centre (IFDC) Dr Amit H Roy makes a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday.

Round the year farming stressed

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday laid emphasis on cultivating several crops on the same land round the year and increased use of compost fertilisers to give a boost to farm output.

She said this when President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Fertiliser Development Centre (IFDC) Dr Amit H Roy made a courtesy call on her.

Hasina called upon the IFDC to invent drought-resistant environment-friendly fertilisers as part of efforts to adapt to climate change and protect the environment.

Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad, who was present during the meeting, briefed journalists after the meeting.

The PM told the IFDC president that her government has taken a massive programme for dredging the rivers to reclaim encroached lands and increase navigability of the rivers.

Terming her government as farmer-friendly one, Hasina said the government after assuming office has decreased the prices of fertilisers and diesel and ensured uninterrupted supply of electricity for irrigation with an aim to make the country self-reliant in food.

In this connection, she mentioned that the country has had bumper crop production as the government has taken various initiatives to help the farmers.

Hasina urged Dr Roy for research to invent new types of fertilisers, which will not have harmful elements.

She also put emphasis on building awareness against the contaminated fertilisers that harm the fertility of soil.

Introduce crop insurance for farmers

JS body asks agriculture ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary committee yesterday asked the agriculture ministry to introduce crop insurance for farmers to encourage them to increase their crop production.

The parliamentary standing committee on the agriculture ministry also said a tripartite meeting of the land, agriculture and environment ministries will soon hold a meeting to formulate a law to save the country's net cropland, which is reducing at an alarming rate.

The recommendation for introducing crop insurance will be sent to the finance

ministry from the agriculture ministry, Shawkat Momen Shahjahan, the committee chief, told reporters at the meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The crop insurance system would be the first of its kind in the country and farmers will get real benefits from it, Shahjahan, also a ruling Awami League lawmaker, said.

A delegation comprising members of the parliamentary body will also visit West Bengal in India to witness the benefits of crop insurance firsthand, he added.

The committee chief also said it has recommended the

ministries concerned to formulate a new law to protect the country's net cropland.

Shahjahan said that farm land is decreasing every day due to unauthorised construction on cropland and if the trend continues, there will be no farm land left.

If the law is enacted in this regard individuals or organisations will require the government's permission to build any structure on farm land, he said.

Last year Finance Minister AMA Muhith said the government will introduce crop insurance for the welfare of farmers.

LAND GRABBING CASE Developer sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent Ashiyani City Land Developer Ltd Chairman Nazrul Islam Bhuiyan to jail after he surrendered before it and sought bail in connection with an attempted land grabbing case.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order rejecting the bail petition of Nazrul on grounds that the charges brought against him were heinous.

But the court granted bail to 11 other accused in the same case.

They are Selim, Waliullah, Nurullah, Anis, Rashedul Islam, Rabbi, Jaman, Amir, Delwar, Osman Goni and Abbas.

The accused persons had surrendered before the High Court seeking anticipatory bail. But the court, without granting them bail on December 8 last year, directed them to surrender before the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court within eight weeks. Following the HC direction, they appeared before it and sought bail in the case.

Nazrul's cousin Anwara Begum filed the case against 17 people, including Nazrul Islam with Khilkhet Police Station on December 1, 2009.

In the case statement, Anwara alleged that Nazrul's musclemen attempted to grab her 10 decimals land situated at Dakshinpara Bhuiyan Bari in the city's Khilkhet area at about 11:30pm on December 1 last year. Anwara's brother Habullah who lived at that house was beaten mercilessly when he resisted them during the attempt, it says.

Implement pay commission suggestions Demands Skop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) yesterday demanded implementation of the recommendations of the pay commission and formation of a wage commission for the industries in the public sector.

At a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium, the SKOP leaders also demanded that the government announce Tk 5,000 as minimum wage and introduce full-fledged ration system for poor workers.

Skop leaders also demanded repeal of amendment to sections 307 and 306 of Labour Law 2006.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury read out a written statement at the press conference.

President of Jatiya Sramik Federation Abul Bashar, general secretary of Jatiya Sramik League Ray Ramesh Chandra, president of Jatiya Sramik Jote Abdul Kader Hawladar, general secretary of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, president of Jatiya Sramik League Abdul Matin Master, general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal Jafrul Hasan and president of Labour Federation Shah Mohammad Abu Jafar were present at the press conference.

UNOFFICIAL TRANSACTION OF MONEY Overseas jobseekers helpless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unofficial transaction of money in the overseas recruitment process makes a large number of jobseekers helpless and also damages Bangladesh's job markets abroad, speakers said yesterday.

Jobseekers have to spend a large sum of money to go abroad but receive no documents, they said.

Speakers said this at a national consultation on the role of informal facilitators in the labour recruitment process organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the auditorium of the Press Institute of Bangladesh in the capital.

When they cannot manage to get a job there jobseekers get involved in unsocial activities to recover the money they have spent, ultimately damages the image of the country abroad and spoils the overseas job markets, speakers added.

The government-fixed rate for a worker to go to Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries is Tk 85,000 but it costs jobseekers in between Tk 2 lakh and Tk 4 lakh.

The speakers suggested bringing unauthorised manpower brokers into a legal framework and introducing the practice of voucher for each money transaction of the aspirant migrants.

"After spending a lot of money, when workers are not paid during their job period, they become involved in unsocial activities and the market is damaged," said Elias Ahmed, secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Too many recruiting agencies competing in the market have hiked the cost of migration, he added.

Khurshed Alam Chowdhury, director general of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training said the crime in this sector would go unabated until and unless the migration cost could be minimised.

Khalequzzaman Chowdhury, UP chairman of Korotia in Tangail, said he dealt with many cases where he found brokers had taken money from jobseekers and then simply vanished into thin air.

As jobseekers usually do not keep money receipts, they

become helpless, he said, adding that many workers are benefited while others are cheated regularly.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit Coordinator Dr CR Abrar said unofficial brokers have become important part in the recruitment process, as jobseekers prefer to submit money to them because of their familiarity.

"But as the brokers do not have any recognition, they have to face a lot of problems from the recruiting agencies," he said, suggesting that these brokers could be registered with the recruiting agencies.

Workers should be compelled to consult only with registered brokers, he said, adding that this will make both the recruiting agencies and brokers accountable.

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training Director Nurul Islam, Expatriates' Welfare Ministry Deputy Secretary Kazi Abul Kalam, RMMRU Programme Coordinator Dr Rozana Rashid, and Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies Joint Secretary Shamim Ahmed Chowdhury also spoke at the event.

DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST MOEEN

Hearing on Feb 22

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The hearing on the petition filed by Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku seeking attachment of former army chief General Moeen U Ahmed's properties before judgment was not held as the conducting judge was on leave yesterday.

Judge (in charge) Ash Shams Joglul Hossain of the Third Joint District Judge's Court fixed February 22 for next hearing.

Earlier on January 10, the same court rejected Moeen's petition seeking dismissal of Tuku's Tk 100 crore defamation case.

Former state minister Tuku filed the defamation suit on July 12 last year accusing the former army chief of making derogatory remarks that damaged Tuku's reputation.

PWs saw no vandalism at SC on Nov 30

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five prosecution witnesses, including two lawyers of the Supreme Court (SC), of a sedition case, filed against two lawyers on charges of vandalism on the SC premises told a Dhaka court yesterday that they saw no vandalism on November 30 in 2006.

The witnesses are barristers Ruhul Kuddus Kajol and Nasir Uddin Ahmed Ashim, Deputy Registrar of the SC Mahfuzul Karim Akond, police inspector Imamul Haq Dulal and nayek Tarzan Khusha.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court recorded statements of the witnesses and later defence lawyers cross-examined them.

The court also closed recording statements of the witnesses and fixed today for arguments of the case.

The accused lawyers -- advocate Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman -- were present in the court during yesterday's hearing.

During the hearing, Kajol and Ashim told the court that they saw nothing about vandalism on November 30, 2006, as they were not present at the place of occurrence.

The rest three told the court that they saw no vandalism on the SC premises on November 30 of 2006.



Residents of Demra and Shyampur stage a demonstration in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding uninterrupted gas supply. (Story on Page 3)

Trial of war criminals to start soon

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trial of war criminals will start soon, as preparation in this regard is almost at the final stage, Home Minister Sahara Khatun said yesterday.

She also said a red alert has already been issued by the Interpol to nab the absconding killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and bring them back to the country.

The minister said this while speaking as the chief guest at a felicitation ceremony of young lawyers organised by Jubo Ainjibi Parishad at Dhaka Bar Association auditorium yesterday.

The home minister said the law and order situation is now better than any other time in the past.

Jubo Ainjibi Parishad president Touhidur Rahman presided over the function.

WEATHER TODAY

Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Night temperature may fall slightly over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions and it may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:45pm today and rises at 6:39am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 29.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 7.9 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	27.2	13.5	59	38
Chittagong	26.6	13.3	68	34
Rajshahi	26.7	10.4	89	58
Khulna	28.0	12.6	85	55
Barisal	27.5	11.0	78	71
Sylhet	29.4	13.0	63	50
Cox's Bazar	28.5	16.0	61	55

APPOINTMENTS AT PM'S OFFICE

HC asks govt to submit report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to submit a report on irregularities, if any, in the process of appointing housekeepers and cleaners for the prime minister's office and International Convention Centre.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why their appointments without clearance from the Special Security Force should not be declared illegal.

The secretary to the housing and public works ministry and the executive engineer of Public Works Department have to submit the report upon an enquiry and reply to the rule within two weeks.

The HC bench of Justice Mohammad Momtazuddin Ahmed and Justice Naima Haider passed the order after hearing a writ petition filed by AK Traders Ltd, a private housekeeping and cleaning service company.

It is stated in the petition that four companies including AK Traders Ltd submitted quotations for the government floated tender for appointing cleaners and housemaids at the PMO and ICC.

The government this month approved of two companies, M/s Sen and Company, and M/s Pacific Channel for the work order. By doing so, the government ignored the security concerns of the PMO and ICC, as both the companies did not participate in the tender process.

If the companies start working without taking no-objection certificates from the SSE, security of the prime minister may be hampered, the petition said.

According to the petition, AK Traders Ltd had been supplying housekeepers and cleaners after having clearance from the SSE.



Muneer Ahmed Khan, chairman of Unitrend Ltd., presents a crest to anti-British movement veteran Binod Bihari Chowdhury at an appreciation ceremony at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday while Managing Director and CEO of Unitrend Zulfikar Ahmed looks on.

Nation must get rid of war criminals, communalism

Says Binod Bihari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Independence cannot be protected unless the country gets rid of war criminals and communalism, said anti-British movement veteran Binod Bihari Chowdhury yesterday.

"We have independence. But this is not independence in the true sense, as communalism still exists in the country. We -- Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians -- are a single nation, a single soul. If we can work unitedly, we will achieve real independence," he said at an appreciation ceremony.

Unitrend Ltd has arranged the programme at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city in honour of the legendary patriot on the occasion of his birth centenary.

Binod Bihari vowed, "We will eliminate communalism from the country. We are a single nation, single soul, we are united."

"Those people who did not want our independence are Mirzafars. They are still living in our country. We have to put in all our efforts to punish those Mirzafars. We have to make sacrifices to move forward," he added.

"Be brave. Remove your weaknesses. Those who are cowards cannot work," he told the young generation.

\$50m Saudi help for quake-hit Haiti

METRO DESK

Saudi Arabia will provide 50 million US dollars in donation for humanitarian relief work in Haiti affected by a massive earthquake recently, says a press release of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia.

King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, the custodian of the two Holy Mosques, has issued an instruction in this regard.

The amount will be handed over to the fund of the United Nations.

IER admission test on Feb 5

UNB, Dhaka

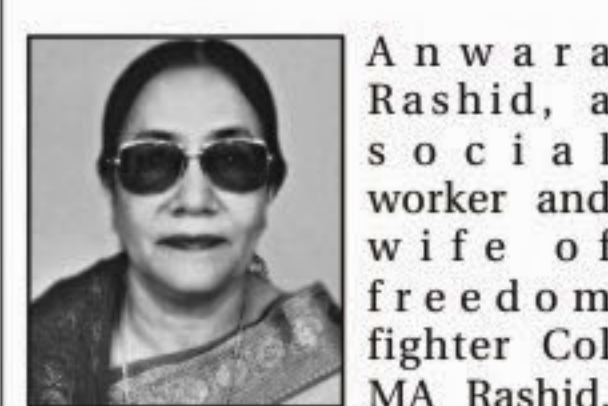
The first year admission test of Bachelor of Education (honours) of Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University for academic session 2009-10 will now be held on February 5.

The test was suspended earlier over leakage of question papers.

The test will be held at 10:00am as usual and seat plan of the candidates will remain unchanged, said a release.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Anwara Rashid, a social worker and wife of freedom fighter Col MA Rashid, passed away at Square Hospital in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Col Rashid was tried by 'farical' court-martial and hanged in 1981 on charges of involvement in the assassination of president Ziaur Rahman.

She was buried at her family graveyard after namaz-e-janaza yesterday.

Her qukhwan will be held at 20/5 West Panthapath in the city after Asr prayers on February 5.

Khaleda Khanam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khaleda Khanam Chowdhury, wife of late Shah Alam Chowdhury, former mayor of Senbagh Municipality in Noakhala, passed away, says a press release yesterday.

In a statement, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain expressed deep shock at her death. He also prayed for salvation of her departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.