

SAARC LAWMAKERS' WORKSHOP BEGINS IN NEW DELHI

Call for effective, transparent governance in S Asian states

ANI, New Delhi

A two-day workshop on government performance management (GPM) for senior lawmakers of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries began in New Delhi yesterday.

Indian Cabinet Secretary KM Chandrasekhar inaugurated the programme, which is being attended by Saarc Secretary General Sheel Kant Sharma and senior officials of India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The workshop faculty comprises a mix of practitioners and academicians, including Arun Maira, member of Planning Commission, Prof Raghuram and Prof Pangotra of IIM Ahmedabad.

Among the senior government officials, secretary, performance management, cabinet

secretariat and joint secretaries in the ministry of power and rural development are participating along with senior representatives of National Informatics Centre.

The workshop, which is being organised by India, aims to share the knowledge and experience on GPM practices in the Saarc countries.

It has been reported that the brainstorming session will focus on building mechanisms towards effective, efficient and transparent governance.

It will also seek to provide an overview of international trends in public-sector management and tools and techniques for implementing a results-based management framework in the governments of Saarc countries.

The workshop is also expected to explore institutional arrangements for sharing the best practices in GPM across the Saarc countries on an on-going basis.

The workshop is being organised in response to a decision taken at a meeting of cabinet secretaries of Saarc Countries in November last.

It is the result of considerable interest shown on India's swift implementation of a sophisticated performance monitoring and evaluation system (PMES) for government departments.

Origins of India's widely acclaimed GPM system can be traced to the announcement made in the president's address to both houses of the parliament on June 4, 2009.

Pursuant to this announcement, the prime minister approved the outline of PMES for government departments on September 11, 2009.

The essence of PMES is as follows: At the beginning of each financial year, with the approval of the Minister concerned, each department prepares a results-framework

document (RFD) consisting of the priorities set out by the ministry concerned and the minister-in-charge decides the inter-se priority among the departmental objectives.

In order to achieve results commensurate with the priorities listed in RFD, the minister-in-charge approves the proposed activities and schemes for the ministry/department.

The ministers in charge also approve the corresponding success indicators (Key Result Areas-KRAS or Key Performance Indicators-KPIs) and time-bound targets to measure progress in achieving these objectives.

The deliberations over the next two days are expected to go a long way in learning about the best practices and the experiences in the government PMES for the benefit of Saarc member countries towards effective, efficient and transparent governance.

Acute water, power crises at DU hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

The resident students of Bangladesh-Kuwait Moitri Hall at Dhaka University have been suffering from acute water and power shortages for the last few weeks.

The students said at least seven to eight hours of load-shedding hit the hall daily, causing huge suffering to them. They even cannot drink tap water because of its acute bad odour.

To get rid of the problems, several hundred students of the hall staged a demonstration in front of the hall provost's residence in the early hours of yesterday.

They urged the provost to resolve their problems immediately.

Nishi, a resident student of the hall, said: "Our study is being badly hampered because of frequent load-shedding. Besides, we cannot drink tap water even after boiling it because of bad odour."

Some students alleged that Moitri Hall and Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall are badly hit by load-shedding and water crisis as the two halls are situated outside the main campus.

Load-shedding is increasing day by day at the hall where some 800 students stay, they said.

"Few days back, we had to face two to three hours' load-shedding a day. But the trend is increasing and now we have to face at least eight hours' power cut in a day," Nishi told The Daily Star.

Resident students faced such water and electricity crisis at the hall during summer season last year too.

Following the demonstration, Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique went to the hall around 12:00 noon and gave the students a patient hearing.

The VC assured the agitating students of taking effective steps to resolve the crisis soon.



Outgoing Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh Sakir Ozkan Torunlar calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, left, at her office and Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, right, at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: PID, BNP

Survey on different languages stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday recommended that a survey be conducted to know the status of different languages in the country.

They also suggested publishing a dictionary on different indigenous languages.

The seminar styled 'Linguistic diversity of Bangladesh: Use and Preservation' was co-organised by Bangladesh Unesco National Commission (BNCU) and International Mother Language Institute at the conference room of the IMLI. It was the first ever seminar organised by the institute.

"There is no exact data on number of languages used in the country and their situation," eminent academician Prof Anisuzzaman said, adding "We don't know which indigenous languages have their own

alphabets and which don't." Speaking as the chief guest, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the present government is committed to ensuring the rights of education of the indigenous people.

Speakers also stressed the need for setting up a research cell on indigenous languages under the education ministry.

They also recommended that the culture of every ethnic community should be brought in the curriculum along with the mainstream culture of Bangladesh for the indigenous children.

Presided over by Education Secretary Syed Ataur Rahman, the seminar was also addressed by Vice-chancellor of University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh Dr Rafiqul Islam, renowned ICT personality Mustafa Zabbar, Sanjib Drong and Mathura Bikash Tripura.

EXHIBITION ON CROSSFIRE Hearing on writ petition not held

UNB, Dhaka

The hearing on a writ petition challenging the validity of the law enforcers' action barring a photography exhibition on much-talked-about extrajudicial killings at Drik Gallery in the city could not take place before the High Court yesterday following a time petition moved by the government side.

On March 22, law enforcers closed a photography exhibition on extra-judicial killings around an hour before it was scheduled to begin on the pretext that it had no permission for holding such an exhibition from the authorities concerned.

However, in the face of police interference, the exhibition was inaugurated by Indian rights activist Mahashweta Devi on the road in front of Drik Gallery at the scheduled time.

As Barrister Sara Hossain, the counsel for the writ petitioner, stood to argue her case before a vacation single

bench, Additional Attorney General Murad Reza prayed for time.

Endorsing the plea of the government attorney, Justice Shahidul Islam adjourned the hearing for today.

Shahidul Alam of Drik Gallery who set up the exhibition filed the writ petition.

Meanwhile, Drik Picture Library has extended the exhibition period to April 14 amid public demands, says a press release.

The exhibition by Drik Managing Director Shahidul Alam was scheduled to be closed on March 31.

While Gono Sanghati Andolon in a statement yesterday protested the police intervention.

They said the move was an obstruction to the rights of the freedom of expression and free speech.

It clearly reveals the position of the government on 'crossfire', they said.

They also urged countrymen to be united against extrajudicial killings.



Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samiur Rahman Khan, son of former prime minister and chief minister Ataur Rahman Khan, passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Monday at the age of 60, says a press release.

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

He was laid to rest at Banani graveyard yesterday after namaz-e-janaza at the mosque beside Dhanmondi Lake in the city.

His Qulkhani will be held at his residence at 500/A, Road 7, Dhanmondi in the city after Asr prayers on Friday.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the doa and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Ctg UK visa centre closed from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The UK Border Agency yesterday announced the closure of the UK visa application centre in Chittagong with effect from tomorrow, said a press release of British High Commission in Dhaka.

All customers in Chittagong are invited to apply for UK visas at the visa application centres in Dhaka or Sylhet. Full contact details and addresses for both visa application centres are to be found on the VFS website at www.vfs-uk-bd.com

The visa application centre in Dhaka has recently moved to new, bigger premises and offers customers greater capacity and improved facilities, the release added.

Customers who normally reside in Chittagong and submit their visa applications in Dhaka or Sylhet may request that their documents be returned to the VFS office in Chittagong for collection. The VFS office in Chittagong will continue to provide UK visa application forms and information.

BNP out to foil war crimes trial Says state minister for law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite repeated calls to cooperate with the government for trying war criminals, BNP is hatching a conspiracy to foil the process of trying war criminals by making audacious remarks, said State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam yesterday.

The government would certainly try the war criminals within its tenure despite all kinds of obstacles, he said firmly.

"Initially, we have set up a tribunal to try the identified war criminals. Later, the number of tribunals may be increased in phases."

Quamrul said this as the chief guest at a roundtable styled "Trial of war criminals, politics of Jamaat-Shibir and present perspective" organised by Amra Muktijoddhar Santan at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

"Our party's General Secretary Syed

Ashrafur Islam has repeatedly called on BNP to come forward with documents and information to help try war criminals but they are making different audacious remarks intentionally to foil the process."

He strongly criticised the activities of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury for making audacious remarks in the presence of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and alleged that the BNP leader had burnt and looted thousands of residences of minority communities during the liberation war in 1971.

"We have no political motive. We would certainly maintain international standards in the trial process and it would be transparent," the minister added.

He stressed the need for brining all the organisations, which are the financial sources of the anti-liberation forces, under the government's control to monitor their activities.

Quamrul said the government would

take action against those who call Ziaur Rahman as the proclaimer of independence, violating the High Court verdict.

Addressing the roundtable, Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, former chairman of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad, demanded banning of the politics of Jamaat forever and urged all to stay alert to resist any conspiracy to foil the trial.

Presenting a keynote paper, Syed Ashrafur Islam Nayan, general secretary of Amra Muktijoddhar Santan, called on the countrymen to boycott the war criminals socially.

President of the organisation Humayun Kabir chaired the roundtable while journalist Shaheen Reza Noor, National Awami Party (NAP) presidium member Amena Ahmed, Sammilita Samajik Andolon President Prof Ajoy Roy and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader Shahidul Islam also spoke.

Prof Fyzenessa's anniversary of death today

METRO DESK



Today is the 6th death anniversary of Prof Noorun Nahar Fyzenessa of IER, Dhaka University, former provost of Rokeya Hall, first woman member of DU syndicate, first woman member of Pay Commission, president of Dhaka City Mahila Parishad, says a press release.

She was also a Fulbright Scholar and a Faculty Member of London University.

On the occasion, foods will be distributed among the inmates of Bhasantek orphanage and at Dr Noorun Nahar Fyzenessa School in Dhamrai.

WEATHER Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Khulna, Rangpur and Dinajpur in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country, Met Office said, adding that day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:51am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 38.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.8 degrees Celsius at Syedpur.

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

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

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