

NATIONAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS DAY TODAY

Enact law to strengthen disaster preparedness programmes

Speakers say at mock debate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a mock parliamentary debate session yesterday stressed the need to formulate a Disaster Management Act to strengthen disaster preparedness programmes in Bangladesh.

At the debate, they also identified some loopholes in the draft Disaster Management Bill 2008, which need to be considered before final approval.

On the eve of National Disaster Preparedness Day 2010 today, Uddipan and Debate for

Democracy jointly organised the mock debate on 'Enactment and proper implementation of disaster management act will strengthen disaster preparedness in Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city.

The government party debated on passing the bill immediately as there are lapses in the continuity and coordination in disaster management programme. As it is an urgent issue, they debated strongly to pass the bill before another disaster like Aila or Sidr hits the country.

The opposition party, however, said the provisions of punishment to the offenders are very insignificant. Furthermore, the bill does not explain what would be the action against those who commit crimes by felling trees and grabbing rivers in the name of housing projects.

They also talked on keeping provisions on allocation of fund for disaster committee, steps for some 72,000 risky buildings, distribution of allocated money in the more disaster-prone areas, involvement of media and training of the representatives.

After the debate, Shamsul Alam Bakul, deputy country representative of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, said the discussion in the parliament often does not take place considering the national interests, rather it concentrates more on party politics.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque as the chief guest said disaster management issue has been taken care of by Standing Order on Disaster (SOD).

"There are clear guidelines on which steps should be taken and by whom at different stages of disaster. If we can follow SOD, it will be possible to reduce harm of any disaster. Still we need to make it a law," he said, adding that SOD will be placed in the parliament soon.

Highlighting vulnerability in the disaster-prone areas, he said there are many such unions in the disaster-prone areas where there are only five cyclone centres at a union for 40,000 people.

The government has taken the disaster management issue with utmost seriousness, he added.

Hassan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, chairman of Debate for Democracy, moderated the session while Nafisa Hasan of Bir Uttam Lt Shaheed Anwar Girls' College, Sakib Mahmud of Sir Salimullah Medical College, Anjali Sarker and Newazul Kabir of IBA, Dhaka University, Rehana Parveen of Holly Cross College and Waseka Afreen took part in the mock debate.



Participants of the mock debate pose for photograph with the guests at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.



Karmojibi Nari stages a demonstration in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding quick trial of the war criminals.

All set to hold HSC exams tomorrow

736,373 examinees this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said the government has completed all necessary preparations to hold the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations in a peaceful and free of cheating environment.

"This examination is a crucial chapter for a student's life. So, we want to ensure such an environment where students can take exams in a peaceful atmosphere and without hindrance and fear," he told a press briefing on the examinations, beginning from tomorrow, at the secretariat.

A total of 736,373 examinees from 7,202 educational institutions across the country are participating in the HSC and its equivalent examinations.

This year the number of examinees is around 1.15 lakh more than the last year. A total of 621,332 students took part in the HSC exams last year.

Some 400,464 male and 335,909 female students will sit the exams at 2,037 centres under 10 education boards this year.

Besides, exams will also be held in five overseas centres in Jeddah, Riyadh, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli where a total of 146 students will take the exams.

Seeking cooperation from all to ensure peaceful atmosphere, the education minister said the government wants cent percent elimination of copying in the exam halls.

"Copying is a menace and we want total elimination of the menace from the country," he said, adding, "It's not like we are taking strict measures during the exams only, we have been running campaigns against the menace round the year in order to stop it."

Nahid warned educational institutions,

teachers and examinees of stern actions, including suspension and cancellation of the monthly pay order facilities.

"Though the tendency of copying is getting close to an end, still the menace is happening," he said, urging all, including local representatives, not to enter the exam centres without any reason.

Meantime, around 18.24 percent of the registered students have dropped out this year as they failed to fill in the exam forms.

However, the dropout rate came down this year, which was 19.92 in 2009.

According to statistics from the education board computer centre, a total of 702,708 students were registered as regular students during 2008-09 session after passing their SSC exams.

Of them, 128,205 students are not taking their 2010 exams, revealed the statistics.

However, some 574,503 regular students and 161,870 failed students from previous years will take part in this year's exams.

The highest number of students taking this year's exam is from Dhaka Board while the lowest number is from Sylhet Board.

A total of 196,197 students will sit under Dhaka Board, 83,715 under Rajshahi Board, 54,525 under Comilla Board, 80,080 under Jessore Board, 43,256 under Chittagong Board, 35,656 under Barisal Board, 20,125 under Sylhet Board, 73,986 under Dinajpur Board, 74,413 under Madrasa Board, 70,504 under Technical Board.

Besides, 3,916 students of Diploma in Business Studies (DIBS) will sit under Dhaka Board.

Asked about the dropout, the minister said the government has taken many steps, including formation of a poor aid fund, for poor students to provide them with the examination fees.

G4S ranked 7th among UK's top employers

METRO DESK

G4S plc has been ranked seventh out of 56 UK-based companies in a programme that identifies some of the smartest and most forward-thinking companies in the country, says a press release.

Run annually by CRF UK, the 2010 Britain's Top Employers project offers incisive and compelling insights into what it's like to work for some of the bests.

By combining comprehensive and independent company profiles written by leading journalists with in-depth research conducted by CRF, the results of the project show just what makes a top employer.

Top Employers project aims to highlight best HR practice.

The participants were judged on the basis of their scores in the areas of pay and benefits, training and development, career development, working conditions and company culture.

G4S plc, a FTSE 100 company, employs more than 595,000 people in 110 countries. It is the second largest private employer in the world, added the release.

Remove obstacles to trying war criminals

Karmojibi Nari urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari (KN) yesterday urged the government to take initiatives to remove all obstacles to trying war criminals as early as possible, says a press release.

Karmojibi Nari, a women's rights organisation, made the call at a human

chain programme in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city.

In her speech KN President Shirin Akhter said the war criminals are threat to the country and gave birth to militancy and fundamentalism.

During the War of Liberation they committed crimes against humanity and collaborated Pakistani occupation forces

in committing brutal crimes, she said.

She urged the people to be united on the government's move to try those war criminals.

KN Director Mahmuda Imam, organiser Arifa Akhter Anu, Kazi Siddiqur Rahman, Rokeya Sultana Anju and SM Masud were present at the programme.

Call to increase social safety net coverage for elderly people

The aged will increase up to 17pc by 1950 in the country: RIC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday urged the government to increase the coverage of social safety net for the rapidly growing aged population, including enhanced medical services, social pensions and insurance coverage.

Increased life expectancy reflects that the proportion of the population aged 60 or above will increase up to 17 percent by 1950 in Bangladesh. Currently, the ratio is around six percent, they said.

Within 1950, younger population around the world will decrease up to 21 percent from the current 31 percent whereas the ratio of aged population will increase up to 19 percent from the current eight percent.

These changes in the demographic pattern will create a new set of challenges for the government in future, which needs preparation, the speakers pointed out.

This information was shared at the dissemination of evaluation findings on the project 'Realising the rights of older population' by Resource Integration Centre (RIC) at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, also former adviser to a caretaker government, said: "For their wisdom gathered through lifelong experiences, elderly population should be considered as social resources, not as disadvantaged groups, but sadly there is very little focus on their issues."

"The state must increase the coverage

of support mechanism for them."

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said: "We must remember that all of us will experience that phase one day. So, we must change our cultural attitude towards the elderly."

Kabir focused on elderly women who are even more vulnerable in the society.

AKM Masud Ali, executive director of INCIDIN Bangladesh, presented the findings of the project. He recommended community-based intervention and strengthening ties with the local government bodies to ensure sustainability of support system for the aged.

Syed M Hashemi, director of Brac Development Institute of Brac University, and Abul Haseeb Khan, director of RIC, also spoke.

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