

Need for reactivating village court underscored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a national roundtable yesterday underscored the need for reactivating village court system that can help bring justice to the doorstep of the rural people.

They were speaking at the dissemination of a baseline survey report on village courts under a project titled 'Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh' implemented by Local Government Division.

They said the judicial system is currently overburdened with pending cases delaying justice. Village court can ease this burden; at the same time provide justice to the rural people free of cost.

Speakers said to benefit from its services it is urgent to remove the shortcomings and at the same time it is necessary to promote a village court that will play a neutral role.

Government's plan to reactivate village court in rural Bangladesh on large scale was however differed by local government expert Prof Tofail Ahmed.

Speaking to The Daily Star after the roundtable, Prof Tofail said, "The structure and jurisdiction of village court under the

current law is quite weak to provide judgment on many serious issues. Besides providing judicial power to the elected representatives of Union Parishad (UP) might create scopes to misuse of power."

Instead, he suggests that the currently dormant village court can play an important role in arbitration among disputing parties outside formal court, however, not more than that with the current structure. Prof Tofail advocated expansion of lower court at upazila level.

The village court system first established in 1976 in Bangladesh to provide justice at the grassroots level has failed to achieve the objectives.

The village court is being revitalised in 500 union parishads in 17 districts with the assistance of UNDP under the project.

Village court will be expanded in all 4598 union parishads across the country, State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak told the roundtable.

"The government plans to ease the burden on judicial system to some extent by bringing the justice service at the grassroots level through village court, which will also

be free of cost", he said.

Chairmen of different union parishads said there are possibilities of politicisation of the village court system. Besides the UP chairman does not have any policing power to execute the judgment, which is a major shortcoming that needs attention, they said.

Tofazzel Hossain Mallik, chairman of Shankorpaha union parishad in Pirozpur said, "Considering the current political practice in Bangladesh there is a scope that the village court will be politicised. The members of the court can also be tempted to misuse the power bestowed upon them"

Mallik, however, thinks strict monitoring can overcome this shortcoming.

On the other hand he pointed out some other weaknesses of the current structure, one of which is the fund shortage or lacking of infrastructure. "Village court does not have a separate budget or designated office. UP runs its operation with money collected as holding tax. Village court pulls out its expenses from that fund meant for other development purposes"

He also pointed out shortage of manpower to run such justice system.



Farmers of Pirojpur union at Sonargaon stage a demonstration in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday in protest against setting up a resort on 2350 bighas of land in Sonargaon area.

Specialised bank for migrant workers, families on cards

Says state minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury yesterday said the government will launch a specialised expatriate welfare bank for migrant workers and their family members.

She was speaking as the chief guest at a roundtable on 'Impact of migration on families' at United Nations Information Centre (UNIC).

The government alone cannot solve all the problems of the migrants and their families, said the state minister adding that people from all walks of life should work together to help the families of migrant workers better utilise the remitted funds.

Razia Begum, secretary to the ministry, was present at the roundtable as a special guest.

The roundtable was chaired by UN Resident

Coordinator Arthur Erkin and moderated by Kazi Ali Reza of UNIC.

UNIC and Worldwide Family Love Movement jointly organised the roundtable.

Presenting the keynote paper, Rabab Fatima, regional representative of International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said that migration is an integral part of this globalised world. It has both positive and negative impact on family.

"Migration brings economic stability to the families, children of migrant workers get better education and improved health facilities. At the same time it has the emotional and psychological costs also that deserves consideration," said Rabab.

She stressed policy recommendations and awareness training of the migrant families on health and security issues and also urged for better utilisation of the migrant funds.

Hasina's homecoming day today

BSS, Dhaka.

Awami League will observe the homecoming day of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The party has chalked out an elaborate programme marking the day, an event which later appeared to be crucial in the subsequent political history of Bangladesh and restoring the spirit and values of the War of Liberation and the Bengali nationalist movement.

The programme includes placing of wreath at Bangabandhu's portrait at Dhanmondi Bangabandhu Bhaban at 7:30am and a milad and doa mahfil there while the party leaders and intellectuals will join a discussion at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue.

The AL and its front organisations will observe the day through similar programmes at the district and upazila levels.

Imam dies in rooftop fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Imam of a mosque at Hazaribagh in the city died after he fell from the rooftop of a four-storied building yesterday morning.

The victim, identified as Mohammad Shahidul Islam, was taking a shave sitting on the boundary wall of the four-storied building when suddenly he fell from the rooftop at around 7:45am.

Sub-inspector (SI) Azam Ali of Hazaribagh Police Station said Shahidul used to stay at a mess inside the Gabtoli Jame Mosque.

Police is investigating into the matter.

'Free media can help curb corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption can be reduced even in a situation of political competition if it is ensured that the media of a country is free and the financing of political parties is transparent, speakers said at a public lecture yesterday.

"Indeed, political competition does hinder corruption in a situation with the free media, through which political scandals can be discussed and brought to light," said Prof Ulrich von Alemann, renowned German scholar in the field of party financing and corruption.

"The abuse and evasion of rules are a very broad field when it comes to party financing. In order to avoid a limit, donations might be separated into several units," said the German professor.

Alemann, head of political science and current vice-president of Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf, Germany, was giving a public lecture on "Political parties, financing and corruption."

Political science department at Dhaka University (DU), German embassy in Dhaka and Institute of Government Studies (IGS) and Brac University jointly organised the programme at RC Majumder Auditorium at DU.

"In our country, political parties are hardly institutionalised. The parties must have specific sources of funds and use of black money in election campaign must be checked," said DU Pro-vice Chancellor Prof Harun-or-Rashid.

The lecture was presided over by Prof Shawkat Ara Husain, chairman of the political science department at DU.

Tk 74.9 lakh Saudi help for expansion

DU CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia donated Tk 74.9 lakh for the expansion project of the southern part of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque in Dhaka, says a press release.

Saudi Ambassador Dr Abdullah Bin Naser Al-Busairi handed over two cheques for the amount to the representative of the GBB Limited, responsible for construction of the first and third parts of the project, in the city on May 13.

The amount represents a part of the donation of the government of Saudi Arabia for the expansion and beautification work of the national mosque.



Participants of Fair and Lovely Foundation Television Journalism Training 2009 pose for photograph with the guests at a certificate distribution ceremony at a city hotel on Saturday. Former advisers Sultana Kamal and Geetara Safia Chowdhury, noted writer Selina Hossain and eminent media personalities were present. The Fair and Lovely Foundation and Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) jointly organised the training programme.

DU extends service age of FF staffs

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have extended the service age of freedom fighter teachers, officials and employees by two years.

The syndicate, the highest decision making body of the university, took the decision at a meeting on Thursday night.

As per the decision, service ages of teachers and officials have been extended from 65 to 67 and of employees from 60 to 62.

DU acting registrar Syed Rezaur Rahman told The Daily Star the university took the decision as per a government decision to extend the service ages of freedom fighters in public services by two years.

"After the government decision, the University Grants Commission sent us a letter asking to take necessary steps in this regard. The university administrators took the decision considering the overall situation," he added.

6 return from UAE after govt pays blood money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six Bangladeshi workers sentenced to death in a murder case in the United Arab Emirates have returned home recently after Bangladesh government paid blood money to secure their release.

The government paid 2 lakh dirhams (Tk 38 lakh) to the family of a Pakistani worker who they killed in 2007.

"Three workers returned home last week and three others two days ago," Labour Councillor Nasreen Jahan of Bangladesh embassy in Dubai told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

Three of them are identified as Farhad, Nazimuddin and Kajal, she said. Names of three others could not be known.

When contacted, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain said he was not aware of the fact that the workers have already come back.

"It is unfortunate that the workers returned home but did not bother to inform the minister," he said.

Nasreen Jahan said the six Bangladeshis and the Pakistani stayed in the same camp in Dubai. They killed the Pakistani worker in 2007 following an altercation.

A Dubai court sentenced the six to death. Later, the appeals court upheld the capital punishment against them in 2009, she said.

Blood money is paid to the victim's family in exchange for waiving their right to seek death penalty. Such practice is widely practised in the UAE, home to around 8 lakh Bangladeshi workers.

The family of the Pakistani worker first demanded 6 lakh dirhams in blood money. Following negotiations, the amount was fixed at 2 lakh dirhams. Thirty thousand dirhams were spent in lawyer's fees, Nasreen said.

World Hypertension Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About a quarter of the total population in the country are suffering from hypertension or high blood pressure, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) organised the press conference on the occasion of World Hypertension Day (WHD), which is going to be observed in the country today as elsewhere across the globe.

Some 150 crore people all over the world are suffering from high blood pressure and 70 lakh people die of it every year, said Prof Abul Hossain Chowdhury while presenting the keynote.

This year the theme for the day is 'Healthy Weight Healthy Blood Pressure'.

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FIXED PRICE

'Appointment of two judges still effective'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the appointments of two High Court judges, who were left out of oath, still remain effective, as the government did not cancel their appointments.

The allegations, which have been brought against judges Ruhul Quddus Babu and Md Khasaruzzaman, are not true, he claimed.

Talking to reporters at his secretariat office on his return from a two-week visit to England and Germany, the minister said the proceedings of the appointments were made in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, so they can take oath any time.

Replying to a query, he said getting third class in an academic career is not a bar to be appointed as a judge of the High Court, rather it depends on efficiency, honesty and performance.

He said the appointment of Abdul Matin, who resigned from the office of the chief investigator of war crimes, was not wrong.

"He resigned willingly when questions were raised against him for his role in student life," he said.

President Zillur Rahman appointed 17 new judges including the controversial two to the HC Division on April 11 for two years.

The chief justice on April 18 administered oath to 15 judges leaving the two in the wake of protest from a section of Supreme Court Bar Association leaders including its president and secretary.



Bangladesh Kindergarten Education Society organised a stipend and prize giving ceremony at the National Press Club in the city recently, with Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan as the chief guest. Kindergarten students who passed the scholarship examination 2009 and won the drawing competition 2010 received stipends and prizes.

DHAKA TODAY

Book exhibition

The annual book exhibition of University Press Limited will begin. Venue: Public Library seminar room. Time: 11:15am.

Lecture

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) organises a lecture on 'Party democracy and financing of political parties in Germany: Relevance for Bangladesh'. Venue: BEI conference room Time:

Conference

The CSR Centre in association with UKAID, International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) and International Development Enterprises (IDE Bangladesh) will organise a conference titled 'Inclusive business module innovation and action'. Venue: The Westin. Time: 10:00am.

Fair

Bangladesh Shishu Academy organises Shishu Ananda Mela 2010 beginning today. Venue: Academy premises. Time: 4:30pm.

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