

Finalise MPO list in a week

Nahid urges adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday requested Prime Minister's Education Adviser Alauddin Ahmed to finalise the list of MPO within a week.

He made the request to the adviser in a letter sent to the adviser's office yesterday, said highly placed sources.

Reiterating his commitment to providing all-out support, the minister in the letter said around 14,000 teachers and employees on the new monthly pay order (MPO) list will be deprived of financial benefits from the government's portion if the list is not prepared in time.

On Sunday, Nahid sent all necessary documents and papers to the education adviser and asked him to take the responsibility to prepare the list.

'OIC can help ensure peace in Islamic world'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign ministers of OIC member states yesterday began a three-day gathering in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe to discuss ways to improve its efficiency and problems of the Muslim community living in non-Muslim countries.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni is leading the Bangladesh delegation at the 37th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

At the council, Bangladesh will raise issues concerning poverty alleviation and collaboration in the field of science and technology as well as the issue of economic cooperation.

Addressing the inaugural session, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon said the OIC could play a significant role in ensuring peace and stability in the Islamic world.

OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu presided over the inaugural session.

Hearing in tax evasion case against Jalil June 15

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed June 15 for hearing on charge framing against former Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil in a tax evasion case filed by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Judge FM Aminul Islam of the Special Judge Court-1 passed the order after Jalil's lawyers submitted a petition saying that their client could not appear before it due to his illness. So, they prayed for adjournment of the hearing.

Hearing on charge framing against Mahmudur Sept 22

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed September 22 for hearing on charge framing against acting editor of the daily Amar Desh Mahmudur Rahman and two others in a defamation case filed by energy adviser to the prime minister Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

First Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman passed the order after Towfiq's lawyers submitted a petition seeking adjournment of the hearing.

The other accused are publisher of the daily Alhaj Mohammad Hasmat Ali and reporter M Abdullah.

Case against HT Imam

Another Dhaka court will give an order on June 2 whether the charges of making defamatory statements against Mahmudur Rahman by prime minister's adviser HT Imam would be taken into cognizance.

Case against Gayeswar Hearing on July 5

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court re-fixed July 5 for hearing of the corruption case filed against BNP Standing Committee Member Gayeswar Chandra Roy following a time petition seeking adjournment of the hearing.

Judge Mozammel Hossain of the Special Judge Court-3 adjourned the hearing after Gayeswar's lawyers submitted a petition saying that their client had earlier filed an appeal with the higher court for quashing the case.

Korea to increase dev aid for Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

South Korea plans to increase its development aid for Bangladesh to help stimulate economic growth and modernise industrial infrastructure and energy facilities, diplomatic sources said.

In a joint statement issued in Seoul yesterday following a summit held at president's office at Cheong Wa Dae, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Korean President Lee Myung-bak agreed to boost economic ties and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

High on the agenda were Seoul's plan to strengthen diplomatic and economic partnership with its Asian neighbours by raising development aid and Bangladesh's efforts to become a major industrial power in South Asia.

President Lee pledged to share Korea's growth experience and cooperate in transfer of shipbuilding, construction and IT technologies to Bangladesh.

Hasina welcomed Korean investment in her country, saying that she wants more firms to take part in the establishment of power plants, exploration of oil and gas, construction of roads, highways and bridges.

On the sidelines of the summit, the two governments signed agreements on the provision of Korea's Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF) to Bangladesh for next three years and boosting cooperation in energy, culture and the environment.

Last year, the Lee administration pledged to triple its official development assistance to underdeveloped nations to 0.25 percent of gross national income by 2015 to help achieve more balanced global growth.

The two countries designated 2013 as the Year of Korea-Bangladesh Friendship in celebration of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations and agreed to hold joint cultural events.

Full text of the joint statement: At the invitation of Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh paid an official visit to the Republic of Korea from 16 to 18 May 2010. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her entourage were received by President Lee Myung-bak and senior officials and were accorded a warm welcome reflecting the close friendship and ties between the two governments and peoples. President Lee Myung-bak and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held official talks in a cordial atmosphere and exchanged views on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues.

01. The two sides reviewed the development of bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties 37 years ago, and noted with satisfaction the active cooperation and partnership between the two countries in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. The two sides agreed that consolidation and enhancement of Korea-Bangladesh friendship and cooperation serve the fundamental interests of both countries, meet the common aspirations of the two peoples and are conducive to peace and development in the Asian region and the world at large.

02. The two sides agreed to continue exchange of high-level visits and contacts between the two countries to intensify friendly exchanges between government agencies, parliaments, political parties, armed forces and non-governmental

coverage both under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) and through the Korean duty-free quota-free scheme for LDCs under the WTO. The Korean side agreed to explore ways to accord further duty-free market access to more Bangladesh products.

b) The Bangladesh side expressed its deep appreciation for the grant assistance provided by the Korean government and requested for increased grant assistance on human resource development projects, including the establishment of more vocational training institutions, as well as nursing and IT training institutes. The Korean side expressed its commitment to continue to offer assistance in support of the economic and social development of Bangladesh. The Korean side also expressed its willingness to favourably consider increasing the amount

Bangladesh under the Employment Permit System (EPS), and both sides agreed to explore ways in which Bangladesh workers can further contribute to the economies of both countries.

f) Both the sides agreed to further expand defence cooperation including training, exchange of visits, and collaboration in the defence industry.

g) Both the sides agreed to intensify cultural exchange activities and further broaden people-to-people contact with a view to promoting mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of the two countries. In this context, both the sides welcomed the designation of the year 2013 as the 'Korea-Bangladesh Friendship Year' in celebration of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

h) The Korean side will continue to provide scholarships and training

regional cooperation in South Asia. The Bangladesh side expressed its appreciation for the constructive role of the Republic of Korea as an observer country in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

06. The two sides agreed to continue consultations on international and regional affairs, including the global financial crisis, trade liberalisation and facilitation, climate change, energy, food security, and counter-terrorism. In this regard, the Bangladesh side expressed its appreciation for the Republic of Korea's intention to act as a bridge between developed and developing countries at the next G-20 summit.

07. The Following agreement and MOUs were signed during the visit:

(i) Framework arrangement concerning Loans from the Economic Development



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak hold a bilateral meeting at Cheong Wa Dae Presidential Palace in Seoul yesterday.

groups of the two countries and enhance the consultation mechanisms including Annual Foreign Policy Consultations.

03. Both sides shared the view that economic cooperation and trade constitute an important part of the comprehensive partnership between the two countries. In this regard, the two sides agreed to intensify cooperation in trade, investment, transfer of technology, energy and infrastructure development on the basis of equality and mutual benefit through the following measures:

a) The two sides will take active measures to expand bilateral trade and work together to achieve trade balance. The Bangladesh side expressed its appreciation to the Korean side for according duty-free market access to a large number of Bangladesh products and requested for the further expansion of duty-free

of EDCF loans.

c) The Bangladesh side welcomes the active involvement of Korean enterprises in the energy, communications, transportation, industry and infrastructure sectors of Bangladesh. In this regard, both the sides agreed to support and facilitate the mutually agreed cooperation projects such as Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ). Both the sides also agreed to support the joint venture between Petrobangla and Korea Consortium in energy sector including coal mining and coal-based power plants in Bangladesh.

d) In response to Bangladesh side's request, the Korean side agreed to explore ways to support capacity building, including on-site training, in the emerging shipbuilding industry of Bangladesh.

e) The Bangladesh side expressed its deep appreciation for increasing the quota for workers from

opportunities for Bangladesh students and researchers in its academic and training institutions.

04. Both sides underscored the importance of working closely for environmental protection and sustainable development at the bilateral, regional and international levels. The Bangladesh side noted with appreciation the 'Low Carbon, Green Growth' strategy of the Republic of Korea. Both the sides will strengthen cooperation in the areas of technology for increased food production, development of renewable energy sources including solar, wind and hydroelectricity, waste management and restoration of rivers in order to enhance the capability in tackling climate change.

05. The Korean side expressed its appreciation for the active effort made by Bangladesh to promote

Cooperation Fund (EDCF) for the year 2010 to 2012

(ii) MoU on Cooperation in the Energy Sector

(iii) MoU on Cooperation for Environmental Protection

(iv) Cultural Exchange Programme for the years 2010-2014

08. The Bangladesh side expressed its condolence and sympathy for the loss of 46 officers and sailors on the Cheonan, the Navy corvette of the Republic of Korea.

09. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep appreciation for the warm and friendly hospitality accorded to her during her visit, and extended a sincere invitation to President Lee Myung-bak to pay a visit to Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time. The President of the Republic of Korea expressed his appreciation and accepted the invitation with pleasure.

7pc increase in budget demanded for women's empowerment

DU CORRESPONDENT

Women leaders and development workers have demanded seven percent increase of allocation in the upcoming national budget for the development of women and establishment of a full-fledged separate ministry for the community.

The demands were placed at a press conference titled 'Want women-friendly national budget' organised by Bangladesh Nari Pragoti Sangha and Institute for Environment and Development (IED) at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Reading out a written speech, Deputy Director of Nari Pragoti Shahnaj Sumi said the emergency needs for achieving the target of reducing the rate of maternal mortality in the millennium development goal is removing weakness in the budget about the issue and restoring the community-based clinic system.

Other demands include secure accommodation and transportation for women in educational institutions, keeping women-run institutions away from taxation, giving tax incentives to the bank which offer loans to women without mortgage and providing tax incentives for encouraging fund to set up separate bank for women.

Rokeya Kabir, executive director of Nari Pragoti Sangha, Dr Pratima Pal Majumder, senior researcher, Shipa Hafiz, director of gender studies and diversity programme of Brac, and Numan Ahmed Khan, executive director of IED, spoke at the programme.

Their demands also include taking up effective work plan for implementing national women development policy, allocating fund for reducing physical pressure on women who are engaged in agricultural activities and arranging training for government officials to aware them of women empowerment.

AL course of action after BNP grand rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) will decide its course of action seeing the main opposition BNP's next anti-government agitation programmes to be announced today from a grand rally at Paltan.

"First, they [BNP] declare their programmes, then we will decide as to whether we will take any programme to face them," AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star.

Party insiders said AL would face the opposition politically on the street if it tried to create anarchy in the name of anti-government movements. However, AL won't go for any programmes if the opposition announces or observe peaceful political programmes democratically.

"We have repeatedly said that the government has no objection if the opposition organises political programmes in a democratic way. They can criticise the government in a constructive way for the overall development of the country and point out its mistakes and weak points through their programmes," said Hanif, also special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

About the allegations made by few BNP leaders in last few days that their party workers are being obstructed centering today's grand rally, he vehemently rejected it saying the opposition is trying to mislead the countrymen by spreading falsehood.

"Can they [BNP leaders] show a single proof of obstruction? Where are they being obstructed? It's a total lie. We condemn their falsehood and hate the liars."

AL Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the countrymen would give a befitting reply to BNP if they try to create any anarchy in the name of movements.

Dhaka City unit AL General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, who plays a crucial role in city politics, said when AL used to announce any programme while in the opposition, the then ruling party BNP resorted to mass arrest, threat, obstruct and attack their party workers to thwart their programmes.

Matia slams donors for arsenic menace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday blamed donor agencies for arsenic menace, a growing threat to the public health in the country.

"Indiscriminate installation of shallow tube wells for irrigation caused desertification in one hand and increased the magnitude of arsenic on the other," she said.

The donor agencies are responsible for the arsenic menace that has taken a serious turn, she said while addressing a workshop at Spectra Convention Centre at Gulshan in the city.

Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) organised the workshop titled 'Paradigm shift in agriculture: an energy saving perspective'.

She said many seminars and workshops are being held on it, people from the government and non-government agencies are going abroad while overseas experts are coming to this country to address the issue.

"But, we should take our decision in our own and set our duties as per the capacities," she said suggesting that the problem should be addressed on the basis of local knowledge.

Two researchers of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology found presence of up to 0.3 milligram of arsenic in per kilogram of paddy grown in their research site in Munshiganj district due to extraction of underground water for irrigation.

At the workshop, Matia came down heavily on the country's water management system and said the rivers of the country were killed over the

years in the name of river training and all the governments are too responsible for it.

The minister emphasised producing all varieties of rice that cut dependency on dry season boro rice that requires more underground water for the irrigation.

It is possible to get good amount of aman rice on uplands if supplementary irrigation can be put in place, she said.

The speakers emphasised using surface water for irrigation to reduce dependency on underground water.

They called for improving irrigation management system, saying farmers now use around 3,000 litres of water to produce a kilogram of rice while it is possible by 1,000 litres of water if proper management is ensured which eventually saves energy.

Ehsan Hafiz Chowdhury, modeller and director, Database and IT Division of the CEGIS, and Ahmadul Hassan, water resources planner and director of Research and Development of the CEGIS, presented two separate papers on efficient use of water and energy in rice production.

Shaikh Md Wahid-uz-Zaman, secretary to the water resources ministry; Habibur Rahman, director general of the Bangladesh Water Development Board; Dr Wais Kabir, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council; Ad Spijkers, country representative of FAO Representation in Bangladesh; and Giasuddin Ahmed Choudhury, executive director of the CEGIS, among others, spoke at the workshop.

Manpower bureau staffs blamed for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday blasted the top officials of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) for "massive corruption" in different activities of the government organisation.

Citing an example of corruption, Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry, said they identified a number of anomalies and corruption in construction of the 14-storey BMET building at Eskaton in the city.

"Besides, we have formed a sub-committee which too found irregularities in building a multi-storey housing complex for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB) at Vatara of Baridhara in the city," Mahmud, also a Jatiya Party lawmaker, told The Daily Star after a meeting of the committee at the parliament.

"The bureau was established to assist people intending to go abroad for work. But unfortunately it is riddled with enormous corruption and irregularities," said the committee chief.

He said they asked the authorities concerned to take stern action against the corrupt officials of the BMET.

"The committee asked the ministry to identify corrupt officials without any delay and take legal and divisional actions against those," Mahmud said.

He said, "We've also asked the authorities to identify the BMET officials who during the past BNP-Jamaat coalition government deposited Tk 20 crore of NRBs' to Oriental Bank, which was a loosing concern at that time."

On exporting manpower through missions abroad, the committee chief said, "The ministry has given a proposal to export manpower using labour wings of Bangladesh's missions in different countries."

"We've asked the ministry for further discussion on it and also to formulate a policy to this end," the committee chief said.

"The proposal includes that the respective officials of the labour wings will be given incentives for performance in exporting manpower," Mahmud said.

Illegal tobacco traders active

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An international gang of illegal tobacco traders is very active in Bangladesh and they are playing a key role in smuggling foreign cigarettes into the country.

Speakers said this at a seminar on 'Combating illegal trade of tobacco products and their duty-free marketing' organised by Dhaka Ahsania Mission in association with American Cancer Society at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday, said a press release.

In Bangladesh, 57,000 people die of tobacco-related diseases annually and 4.30 crore people are affected due to indirect smoking, they added.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) President Kazi Rafiqul Alam chaired the seminar where Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Kader, World Health Organisation National Professional Officer Dr M Mostofa Zaman and Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance General Secretary and Manosh President Dr Arup Ratan Chowdhury were present.

GM Kader said the government would take necessary steps to stop selling duty-free cigarettes at duty-free shops.

He stressed the need for launching a social movement alongside necessary laws to make a tobacco-free society.

The DAM president said cigarette worth Tk 40.5 billion dollars are sold across the world annually through illegal trading.

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