



PHOTO: STAR

Nikunja (South) Residential Area Welfare Samity and Save the Environment Movement (SEM) form a human chain at Nikunja gate no. 1 in the city yesterday protesting filling of the Nikunja Lake.

# RTI can help eradicate poverty

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Right to Information (RTI) Act can be utilised to eradicate poverty along with curbing corruption in the country, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

"The RTI is a law that preserves the right of common people to know the information that concerns their lives," said Dr Shamsul Bari, chairman of the Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). "It gives people access to information, and availability of information guards people from deprivation."

The discussion on 'The Experience of Marginalised Communities in the Application of Right to Information Act 2009' was organised by the RIB at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

The RIB chairman said most of the laws mean to regulate people's lives and society, but this very RTI Act means to monitor government activities to serve people's interest, and availability of information slims the possibility of corruption.

Taking the advantage of the law, a few people have already brought changes in their lives and look forward to see changes in the attitude of government officials, he said adding that the spirit should be spread all over the country to all levels.

Five representatives from different communities including ethnic Munda, Beday, Robidas, Horion and Rishi shared their experiences at respective locality while asking government officers for information.

Drawing examples from their experiences,

they demanded information officers at district and upazila levels to provide grassroots people with information.

Lauding the RIB initiative to bring marginalised people up to date with the RTI law, Chief Information Commissioner Md Zamir said only formulating a law will not work for the common people if attitude is not changed. "Often power and authority hold back information from flowing. Implementation of the law can open a new door of change."

He urged the government, NGOs and citizens of the country to come forward and lend a hand in implementation of the law.

Sadeka Halim, one of the commissioners of the Information Commission, described the hindrances to full implementation of the law. She said, "We are going ahead and we can ensure the supply side but ensuring the demand side is in the hands of the public. Above all they should get aware of the legislation and its utilisation."

Information Commissioner Abu Taher emphasised the significance of good relation between government servants and common people in the country.

Sohini Pal, senior project officer at the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives, New Delhi, Aslamshah A Diwan, a RTI activist in Gujarat, shared their experiences in India regarding public awareness about the RTI and its utility.

Information Commissioner Abu Taher and RIB Programme Officer Suraiya Begum made their presentations in the programme.

## COMMUNITY CLINICS Guidelines finalised to ensure health service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government finalised the National Community Group Management Guideline yesterday to ensure health service and accountability at community clinics.

The Awami League-led ruling coalition reintroduced around 10,000 community clinics since September last year, which remained closed during the past BNP-led four-party government.

The guideline was finalised following a workshop at the Sasakawa auditorium of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) in the city.

Representatives from the health service and family planning directorates, development partners and community group members were present at the workshop organised by the Revitalisation of Community Healthcare Initiatives in Bangladesh (Community Clinic Project).

To make the community clinics effective and accountable, the community groups are a must, said the speakers adding that each group will consist of nine to 13 members with the respective union parishad chairman as the head of the group.

Project Director Makhduma Nargis of the Community Clinic Project said the challenges of running the community clinics properly are manpower shortage, lack of coordination among the health care providers at the community clinics and bureaucratic tangles.

Speaking at the workshop as the chief guest, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mozibur Rahman Fakir said it is not possible to provide health service to 20,000 people through a union health complex. So, reaching the health service to the doorsteps of the grassroots people, the government initiated the community clinic service.

President of Bangladesh Medical Association Prof Chowdhury Mahmud Hasan and World Health Organisation representative Dr Frank Paulin, among others, spoke at the workshop.

## Work for welfare of common people

President urges all

UNB, Brahmanbaria

President Zillur Rahman yesterday urged all to work for the welfare of the common people and build a happy and prosperous country.

"The aim of my life and politics is to work for the welfare of the people. Pray for me so I can work to this end till the last day of my life," he said this while he was speaking at a gathering at the local Town Hall.

Zillur, who made his maiden visit to his maternal grandfather's home town, said: "I'll never be able to repay the love and affection you showed to me during my early childhood here. The lesson I got to love people and do their welfare still lurks in my heart."

Paying tributes to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the president said Bangabandhu Mujib often used to say that aim of his politics is to do people's well-being. "Let us work for the well-being of the common masses and to build a happy and prosperous country."

Awami League General Secretary and LGD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (Retd) AB Tajul Islam and local MP Shah Alam were present.

## New admission system for varsities on cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided, in principle, to introduce a single admission test for some public universities in the next academic session with a view to reducing admission hassles for the students.

Under the new system called 'cluster system', universities will be brought under various clusters and a single admission test will be arranged for each cluster of universities. For example, science and technology universities will be brought one cluster and agriculture universities under another cluster. Currently, all the universities arrange separate admission tests.

Initially, this system would be introduced for agriculture universities, science and technology universities and newly established general universities.

However, some reputed universities, including Dhaka, Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar and Comilla universities and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), will not switch to the new system.

A committee has been formed with Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology as its head to finalise details of the cluster system.

The decision to introduce the new system

came at a meeting of the vice chancellors (VC) of public universities yesterday, with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid in the chair.

"We want to ease the admission process and reduce hassles, thereby saving time of the students," said Nahid.

Although many universities want to be a part of the cluster system, it is not possible to involve all of them right now, he added.

"We don't want to impose anything. You [vice chancellors] all sit together and decide how the system can be introduced properly," he said.

Many universities have already introduced online admission system, the minister said and urged all the university heads to expedite the admission process online.

At the meeting, many vice chancellors preferred using online admission system rather than cluster system.

Dhaka University VC Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said they have discussed the issue in the meetings of the universities academic councils and admission committees and that most of the teachers do not want to introduce the new system.

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam and Education Secretary Syed Aatur Rahman and high officials of the education ministry were also present at the meeting.

## Defamation case against Mahmudur, 3 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A defamation case was filed with a Dhaka court yesterday against acting editor of the daily Amar Desh Mahmudur Rahman, its publisher Hasmat Ali and two reporters for publishing a report terming the family members of state minister for law Advocate Qamrul Islam 'razakars'.

Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Emdadul Huq took the case into cognisance and issued summons asking the accused to appear before it on June 10.

The reporters are Rakib Hossain and MA Noman.

Morshedul Islam, younger brother of Advocate Qamrul, filed the case with the court earlier in the day as the daily published an item terming the family members of Qamrul 'razakars' on May 27.



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