

# Call to end discrimination against indigenous people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of indigenous communities and some noted personalities yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of indigenous people to end discrimination against them.

They also stressed the need for introducing radio services and using other mass media especially for the indigenous people to portray the real picture of their life and their sufferings in the face of discrimination and repression.

They made the remarks at a seminar on Media and Indigenous People organised by Journalism Training and Research Institute (JATRI) at its office in the city yesterday.

Raja Devashish Roy, Chakma circle chief and member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, was the chief guest of the seminar.

He urged the government to take necessary measures to end discrimination against the indigenous people.

The indigenous people should have the right to self-determination for their social, political, cultural and economic development, he said.

He also urged the media men to work for the betterment of indigenous communities deprived for years.

Presenting the keynote paper, Sanjeeb Drong, Bangladesh Adivashi Forum general secretary, demanded that the government ensure Adivashis' rights to land, formation of national commissions and implementation of CHT peace treaty.

Information Commissioner Prof Sadeka Halim said recognition of the indigenous people in the constitution is a must to restore the '72 constitution.

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts area, around 42 percent land is registered in the name of Bangalee settlers while only 30 percent in the name of indigenous people, she said.

She also suggested formation of a separate directorate or department for the indigenous people of plain land or the

renaming of CHT affairs ministry as Ministry for Indigenous People.

Describing the Bangalee settlers as criminals, The Daily Star Assistant Editor Shahnoor Wahid said the settlers are torturing the Adivashis and occupying their lands forcibly.

Radio ABC Head of News and Programme Sanaullah Lavlu urged young journalists to report on the sufferings of indigenous people due to discrimination against them.

Speaking at the function, Prodig Murmo, a member of Santal community and a student of Dhaka University, urged the government to introduce an education system in their native languages to reduce drop out rate of indigenous students.

Press Institute of Bangladesh Chairman Dulal Chandra Biswas moderated the discussion while JATRI Chief Jamil Ahmed, journalist and columnist Jaglu Ahmed Chowdhury, among others, spoke at the seminar.



This little girl clings to her pet bird's cage while others are busy removing their belongings during an eviction drive at Sat Tala slum in Mohakhali yesterday. PHOTO: STAR



Professional sweepers form a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## Harijans demand 80 percent quota

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professional sweepers, widely known as Harijans, yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city and other parts of the country demanding reservation of 80 percent quota in all recruitments as sweepers and cleaners.

They also protested recruitment of mainstream workforce at the city corporations and different government offices.

Referring to recent staffing the Harijan leaders said they are being gradually replaced from the occupation they have known for more than a hundred years.

According to the recruitment guidelines of the city corporations, Harijans will get preference for cleaner posts. However it is being violated regularly, said

Nirmal Chandra, secretary general of Bangladesh Harijans Oikya Parishad.

Recently the offices of Chittagong police super, Sylhet civil surgeon, Dhaka Medical College and Pirojpur civil surgeon recruited sweepers. Harijans were deprived in all these cases, claimed Nirmal.

Harijans keep the city clean and for this occupation they are considered as untouchable, which forces them to an isolated social status. For this isolation they cannot go out of their community and join the mainstream workforce, lamented the Harijan leader.

"Cleaning dirt is the only livelihood we have known over the years. As we do not know any other skill, this makes us incapable of moving on to alternative professions," said Nirmal.

Krishna Lal, president, Sham Lal, publicity secretary, Baiz Lal, adviser of the parishad, were present, among others.

According to parishad's assessment, there are about 5.5 million Harijans in the country.

Also known as the Jaat (professional sweepers, they are originally the descendants of immigrants from Kanpur, Nagpur and Andhra Pradesh of India. The British brought

them in 1830s and afterwards to provide all sorts of unskilled services for the colonial rulers, said the leaders.

Their job includes sweeping the streets and offices, clearing clogs in the sewerage lines, cleaning up manholes, water reservoirs, hospital wastes and handling carcasses. Many of them are employed in crematoriums.

## ENERGY, POWER SECTORS

# Govt working hard to bring back discipline

Says PM's adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Prime Minister's Adviser to Energy and Mineral Resources Dr Toufique E Elahi Chowdhury yesterday said the government is working hard to bring back discipline in energy and power sectors as these sectors remain worse since the four-party alliance rule.

The adviser said this while he was talking to the newsmen after a view exchange meeting with the officials of power and gas sectors and local leaders at the Sylhet Circuit house yesterday.

Power generation would reach 15,000MW by 2015, he said, adding that contracts for producing 2300MW of electricity have also been finalised with different companies so far. He said the

government is working sincerely to cope with the increasing demand of electricity and gas.

The adviser said steps are being taken to increase gas production in the Sylhet region and other parts of the country. State-run Bapex would soon start drilling in the new wells in the region for gas production, he said, adding that a new drilling rig had already been procured for the purpose while process is on for another.

He said the US company Chevron has completed its fresh seismic survey in Lawachhara of Moulvibazar. It is yet to be decided whether the company would be allowed to drill there, he said.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith at the meeting said electricity is supplied to the

national grid from the Sylhet region as the generation is higher than its demand here. He said the government is giving highest priority to allocating funds for the viable projects in the power and gas sectors.

State Minister for Energy Enamul Haque, Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, lawmakers Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury and Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury, Energy Secretary Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, Power Division Secretary AK Azad, PDB Chairman Alamgir Kabir, REB Chairman Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam and Upazila Chairmen Iqbal Ahmed Chowdhury, Ashfaqur Ahmed and Abdul Khaliq Mayon also spoke at the meeting.

## DEATH THREAT TO PM Ctg court summons 3 BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday asked three central leaders of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to appear before it on September 23 this year in connection with a sedition case.

The leaders are BNP Secretary General Khandoker Delwar Hossain, Standing Committee member Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia and Vice Chairman Shah Moazzem Hossain.

Court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Keshob Roy Chowdhury summoned them after taking into cognizance the complaint lodged by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Rangunia Upazila unit President Badiul Khaer Chowdhury Liton on Wednesday.

In the complaint, Liton alleged that the BNP leaders made speeches giving indirect death threat to the prime minister at an agitation rally organised by BNP at Muktangan in Dhaka on July 25.

## Free eye screening for students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 100 students of the city's Banani Model School got opportunity of eye screening free of cost under a programme held on its premises yesterday.

Old students' association of Adamjee Cantonment School & College and Islamia Eye Hospital, Dhaka jointly organised the eye screening test program, says a press release.

Freedom Fighter and Executive Director of Transcom Foods Ltd Akku Chowdhury who is a former student of the school inaugurated the programme as the chief guest.

The association president Ambassador Ashfaqur Rahman and senior vice president Nazmul Haque who is also the chairman of Janata Jute Mills Ltd and president of Bangladesh Jute Mills Owners' Association were present.

Ashfaqur hoped that the association, which was established in 1979 will continue such social work and create volunteers in the society.

Mesbaur Rahman of the association coordinated the program. Adamjee Cantonment School & College will celebrate its golden jubilee by the end of this year.



Different left-leaning political parties held a rally in front of the city's National Press Club yesterday demanding Tk 5,000 minimum wage for readymade garment workers. PHOTO: STAR

## HC asks police not to torture Montu Ghosh during remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the police not to torture Advocate Montu Ghosh, adviser of the Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, in any manner after taking him on remand in the cases filed against him.

An HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain also directed the police to provide Montu with all kinds of medical facilities during remand period.

The bench passed the order following a writ petition filed by Montu Ghosh challenging the remand order against him.

A Dhaka court on August 3 allowed police to take Montu, who is also the general secretary of Narayanganj district unit of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), on a nine-day remand in five cases against him.

The cases were filed with the Adabor and Tejgaon Industrial police stations on different dates on charge of creating unrest in the readymade garment sector and creating blockade on the street during recent demonstration by the garment workers.

He was arrested on July 31 for interrogation in connection with his alleged involvement in the recent RMG violence in Dhaka.

Barrister Sara Hossain appeared for the petitioner while Additional Attorney General Murad Reza and Deputy Attorney General Nazrul Islam Talukder represented the government.

## 32,000 primary teachers to be recruited by Aug

JS committee told

BSS, Dhaka

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Planning was informed yesterday that 32,000 government primary teachers would be recruited by this month.

Besides, appointment of 20,000 para-teachers for primary schools is under process, an official release said.

Committee Chairman Dr Ali Ahmed Bir Bikram presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban here.

The meeting also discussed the implementation of projects under the education, primary and mass education, power, energy and mineral resources ministries.

Besides, a recommendation has been made by the committee to send projects to the Planning Commission from the ministry in time.

The committee asked the ministry concerned to monitor the construction of educational institutions for ensuring the quality of works.



Carrying a coffin, doctors who passed the 28th BCS examinations take out a procession in front of the Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday demanding appointment. PHOTO: STAR