

## Bureaucratic tangle disrupts EC activities, says Sakhawat

DU CORRESPONDENT

The bureaucratic pressure on the activities of the election commission is higher than that of the political parties, said Election Commissioner M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday.

"It is not the politics rather bureaucratic tangle behind the disruption of the activities of the election commission," he said while addressing a roundtable



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable organised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in the city's Brac Centre yesterday. On his right are TIB Trustee Board Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan, Election Commissioner M Sakhawat Hossain and TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

in the city's Brac Centre.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) arranged the discussion on participation and expectation of locals in the process of nominating candidates for the national elections.

Speaking as the chief guest, Sakhawat said political parties considered the election commission as a post office for most of the time in the country's history. This excludes the period of the present commissioners, he added.

"The election commission could not be structurally strong as political parties, most of the time, considered it a post office and the people who worked there during those periods ran it that way," the commissioner added.

He said now the commission is facing difficulties to come out of the concept of post office.

Despite order from the chief executive of the state, the EC could not set up server stations at district level in the country because of bureaucratic tangle,

Sakhawat claimed. He said the server stations would be necessary for digitising commission's activities.

Presiding over the session, TIB Trustee Board Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan said exercise of democracy is still absent within the political parties.

He said nothing productive would come out without practicing democracy within political parties.

Civil society personality Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said proper role of media is important during national elections. He said the election commission should concentrate more closely on the election expenditure of candidates.

Badiul Alam Majumder, member secretary of Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan), said it is tough to establish good governance unless democracy within the political parties is exercised.

He stressed the need for practicing professionalism within the political parties, more participation of civil society members and media and strengthening of the election commission.

These are essential to ensure locals' participation in selecting their candidates for the national elections to establish democratic practices, he added.

Awami League lawmaker Hafiz Ahmed Mazumder criticised a section of lawmakers and bureaucrats for not strengthening the local governments.

Dhaka University Prof Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman, former secretary Abdul Latif Mandal and Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive officer of Brotee spoke on the occasion. TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman moderated the discussion.



Anthrax affected 7-year-old boy Amir Hamja from Baleshwar village in Sirajganj is undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Now he can open one of his infected eyes after treatment and another is expected to be cured within 4-5 days, physicians said yesterday. (Related story on Page 1)

## Violation of Law Ema Sintex fined Tk 30 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined the Ema Sintex Limited at Kashimpur under Jaydevpur thana in Gazipur Tk 30 lakh for violating environmental law.

The dyeing factory was found discharging untreated liquid waste into a canal that leads the waste to the river Turag. It has no effluent treatment plant (ETP).

The enforcement and monitoring unit of DoE led by Director [Enforcement] Mohammad Munir Chowdhury asked the factory authority to set up ETP immediately and threatened to disconnect the electric, gas and water supply lines and seal the factory, otherwise.

Later the authority of the factory promised to ensure pollution free environment through setting up of an ETP, said a press statement of the DoE.

DoE earlier issued notices to the factory four times to set up an ETP, environmental monitoring system and own retention area for wastes since 2007 but those were never heeded.

## Bela notice to stop three Savar canals' pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) yesterday served a legal notice on different ministries and government offices asking them to stop pollution of Dholaibil, Bilbaghil and Karnapara canals in Savar.

Industries mostly dyeing, spinning and textile, and dairy farms situated by these three canals dump toxic wastes in the canals polluting their water, the legal notice read, adding that locals are suffering from various diseases and the agriculture and fish production are being hampered seriously as a result of the pollution.

The legal notice gave the authorities a seven-day deadline to respond before Bela takes legal action against them.

Respondents of the legal notice are the secretaries of the ministries of land, environment and forest, fisheries and livestock, local government, rural development and coopera-

tives, director of the Department of Environment, deputy commissioner of Dhaka and upazila nirbahi officer of Savar.

The three canals run through the Savar upazila on the outskirts of Dhaka. Of the 10 lakh people living in 12 union parishads under the upazila, nearly one lakh depend on these canals for their livelihood, a Bela press release said.

Many among the residents of the area are farmers and fishermen for whom the water of these canals is very crucial for irrigation and fishing purposes.

Industries of the area did not obtain environment clearance certificate or establish any effluent treatment plant, which is a violation of existing laws, said the press release.

The Dholaibil canal is located in Ganakbari, Bashbari, Dehora, Kamalshi and Nalam mouja; Bilbaghil is in Bilbaghil mouja while the Karnapara canal stretches across Khalitakhali, Sherpur, Karnapara and Baroigram mouja.

## Ban diclofenac to save vultures: Zoologists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zoologists yesterday demanded immediate banning of the diclofenac that has brought vultures to the brink of extinction as the scavengers die after feeding on carcasses of cattle treated with the anti-inflammatory drug.

Forest department, Wild Life Trust of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Bird Club organised the meeting in the capital.

Speaking at the meeting, noted ornithologist Enam Ul Haque said, unlike any other animal, vultures have the capacity to digest the microbes which cause anthrax, foot-and-mouth disease, locally known as *khura* and tuberculosis.

Environment Secretary Mihir Kanti Majumder said the Environment and Forest Ministry would send a letter to the government to deregister the drug.

"If India and Nepal can ban the drug, why shouldn't we?" he asked.

He also said the forest department will be taking initiatives to conserve taller trees which are the habitats of vultures.

Vultures show symptoms of "neck dropping" after eating carcasses of cattle formerly treated with diclofenac, and die within a few days, said experts.

Diclofenac is widely used in human medicine globally, and was introduced to the veterinary market in the Indian subcontinent in early 1990s.

Experts said oriental vultures are disappearing so fast that their population dropped by 95 percent in Bangladesh in the last two decades.

India and Nepal banned the drug and opted for a safe substitute, meloxicam.

Professor Anwarul Islam of Zoology department of Dhaka University read out the keynote paper at the meeting chaired by Chief Conservator of Forest, Ishtiaq Uddin.

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