



Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, *middle*, inaugurates a cycle rally on the campus. Nirapad Development Foundation, Dhaka Cycling Club and Green Belt Trust organised the event marking the World Cycling Day yesterday with a demand to promote an environment friendly to cyclists. Lawmaker Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin was present on the occasion. Some skaters also joined the rally but none noticed the child, *inset*, who was asleep on the pavement, deprived of his basic necessities.

PHOTO: STAR

Met dept quake info misleading

Says expert

UNB, Dhaka

Information about earthquakes disseminated by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department was often misleading, says a seismic expert of Dhaka University.

"Seismic coverage of Bangladesh Meteorological Department is poor. As there is no seismologist in the department, meteorologists are doing the seismic job. As such, correct information is not available," said Dr Syed Humayun Akhter, professor of Geology Department at Dhaka University.

Speaking yesterday he said the origin of the two tremors on September 10 were in Chandpur and Matlab areas, not in Gopalganj and Madaripur as given out by the meteorological department.

The Dhaka University Earth Observatory (DUEO) recorded one foreshock and eight aftershocks of the September 10 main shock, claimed Prof Humayun, also the director of Seismology and Geodesy Division at DUEO.

Similarly, he said, the origin of the earthquakes of July 5 in 2008 and July 27 in 2008 were in Rajshahi and Mymensingh respectively but the met office gave out the origin in Sylhet.

Besides, the meteorological department disseminated incorrect magnitude of the recent earthquakes in Chandpur, he added.

When contacted, Deputy Director of Meteorological Department Shah Alam said they have seismologist but not competent like that of university teachers.

He said they disseminate information from what their equipments shows.

Prof Humayun said there should be a separate seismic section at the meteorological department with seismologists manning the section.

Suggesting that earthquake observatory

should be brought under the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), he said the United States Geological Survey (USGS) carries out monitoring all over the world.

Their data is acceptable to all as seismologists with geology background work there, he added.

He mentioned that Bangladesh Meteorological Department is under the Defense Ministry but met offices in other countries is under science and technology ministry.

Prof Humayun said Bangladesh Meteorological Department has four seismic stations across the country and these are not well distributed.

These seismic stations do not cover the western and south-west part of the country. As a result they cannot detect all earthquakes. And even when detected, the correct information is not available he said.

The four seismic stations in the country are now located in Chittagong, Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur.

Prof Humayun said DUEO has well distributed seismic coverage across the country.

It has six seismic stations located in Dhaka University, Khulna University, Rajshahi University, Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology.

The six permanent seismic stations cover all parts of the country, he said, adding that the DUEO also has six temporary seismic arrays.

He said the objective of the temporary seismic array is to deploy the six mobile seismic arrays in the region where earthquakes occurred as soon as possible. This reveals the behavioral pattern of the earthquake and assumes what type of earthquake may take place in future, he added.

'Include environment clauses in constitution'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Right to a healthy and pollution free environment should be fundamentally included in the constitution said speakers at a discussion meeting yesterday.

They said provisions in the constitution should be written in a way so that the state is bound to protect the environment and at the same time citizens are provided the right to a safe environment.

The speakers said this at the discussion titled "Inclusion of environment issues in the constitution of Bangladesh" organised by Save Environment Movement at the National Press Club.

Speaking as chief guest Abdul Momin Talukder, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry, said the parliamentary standing committee has finalised its report on environment act.

This act was placed in the parliament's last session.

The report will be placed on September 20 and after that the law will be passed, he said.

According to the act, industries are bound to set up effluent treatment plants. The maximum punishments for the law's violators are 10 years imprisonment and a fine of Tk 2 lakh, Momin said.

"The committee adjusted the extent of punishment in the law," he said.

"The government should be sincere in freeing the rivers from pollution and encroachment. If the government did so then the High Court does not need to direct anything in this matter," Momin said.

Chairman of Human Rights Commission Prof Mizanur Rahman said our prime minister (PM) is sincere about preventing environment pollution.

But the steps taken by the government in this regard cannot be implemented as the people around our PM are not that much serious about it, he added.

Awami League lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury said on behalf of the parliamentary standing committee, a proposal was submitted to the special committee to review the constitution about including the environment issue.

Presenting a keynote paper at the programme Abu Raihan M Khalid, a Supreme Court lawyer, urged the government to include the right of pollution free environment as one of the fundamental rights in the constitution.

Save Environment Movement Chairman Abu Naser Khan presided over the discussion.

Govt to introduce ADR to reduce case backlog

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Barrister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government is working to amend both civil and criminal laws for introducing alternative dispute resolution (ADR) system in order to reduce the huge backlog of pending cases.

If the ADR system is introduced, lots of cases will be disposed outside of the courts and the litigants will get rid of sufferings and costs, he said adding that lakhs of cases have been remained pending at different courts across the country.

The minister was addressing at the

inaugural session of a 25-day long training course for the newly appointed assistant judges and judicial magistrates at the Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI) in the city. Thirty-nine new judges of the lower courts have participated the training.

Shafique said the judges will have to discharge their duties in accordance with law, as the judiciary of the country is running independently.

Future of the country's democracy depends on the independence of the judiciary, he added.

The country's constitution has got the

previous shape as was before the 1975 military rule following the recent Supreme Court verdict on the 5th amendment, he said.

After the function, the law minister told reporters that president will appoint a new chief justice, considering his qualifications, as present Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim will retire on September 30.

Replying to a question, he said the government has not any political equation over appointment of the new chief justice.

Speeding up of justice stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday stressed on the need to change the old mindset alongside strengthening legislative, administrative and institutional measures to enforce alternative dispute resolution (ADR) system and speed up justice.

They said laws were amended several times in the past but all concerned including judges, lawyers and officials should change their mindset and be quicker in disposing cases to ensure people's constitutional right to justice.

Bangladesh Law Commission and South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies (SAILS) jointly organised the seminar titled "Enforcing court sponsored alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in Bangladesh" at Rajshahi Tennis Complex.

Attending the seminar as chief guest, Justice M Muzammel Hossain, appellate division of the Supreme Court, urged judges, lawyers and others concerned to discourage filing of cases that can be resolved through mediation and arbitration.

"Look over the faces of those seeking justice. Most of them are poor and destitute. Your prompt actions will reduce a lot of their sufferings," he said.

Internationally reputed lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain attended as guest of honour.

He said, "Delay in disposal, backlog of cases, people's attitude and environment toward justice remain. Laws were amended twice in the past, but we could not implement ADR due to our mentality and environment."

He said ADR could play a big role to speed up dispute resolution, as it has been a revolution in quickly disposing disputes outside courts in the subcontinent.

Justice SK Sinha said lawyers should give more importance on the matter of the cases rather than taking one up simply to earn quick money.

Law Commission Chairman Justice Muhammad Abdur Rashid presided over the event.

He said courts are already overburdened with cases. ADR would facilitate people with better access to justice and relieve them of prolonged trial procedures, he added.

Law commission's research officers informed some 15,25,889 cases were pending

at lower courts until January 2010 while 2,93,901 cases at the High Court and 9,375 cases at the appellate division.

And the number of cases at court is increasing daily, they added.

On the other hand, there are 80,000 prisoners in jails where the capacity is for only 30,000 they said, adding that 73 percent of the prisoners are detained without trial.

The discussants suggested for establishing mediation and arbitration centres in each district, establishing separate institutes to train individuals on mediation and introducing compulsory mediation and separate funds for running village courts.

Law commission members Shah Alam, Sunil Chandra Paul, Research Officers Akhtaruzzaman, Sharmin Negar, Atwar Rahman, Rajshahi District Judge M A Samad, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Moshir Rahman Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Delwar Bakht, Bar President Abul Kashem, Rajshahi University law teachers Anisur Rahman, Hasibul Alam Prodhana and Uttom Kumar Das of SAILS addressed among others.

NSU fall orientation held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The orientation ceremony of the students of fall 2010 semester of North South University (NSU) was held on its campus at Bashundhara in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Adviser to the Prime Minister HT Imam, Chairman of NSU foundation MA Azim Uddin and Vice-Chancellor Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi spoke on the occasion while Pro Vice-Chancellor Dr SAM Khairul Bashar, Dean Dr Golam Mohammad, Registrar M Rashedul Islam and Proctor Dr Gour Gobinda Goswami were present.

MA Azim Uddin said the university's responsibility is to produce highly skilled manpower to meet the expectations of the society.

Dr Siddiqi said the university meets all the requirements of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and assured that the faculties of the varsity is committed to ensure quality higher education.

Signal no-3 continues

UNB, Dhaka

The low over the Northwest Bay and adjoining area is persisting and deep convection is taking place over North Bay and adjoining areas.

Squally weather may affect the maritime ports and coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's bazaar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three, said a Met office bulletin.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay and deep sea have been advised to remain close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice.

Withdrawal of CNG pumps' 6-hour closure demanded

UNB, Dhaka

CNG pump owners at a meeting yesterday called on the government to withdraw the order to keep the pumps closed for six hours, as it is costing them a significant return on their investment.

The call was made at the executive committee meeting of the Bangladesh CNG Filling Stations and Conversion Workshops Owners Association.

The meeting decided to write a letter to the State Minister for Energy and Power Mohammad Enamul Haque conveying the pump owners' concerns and call for withdrawal of the order.

The meeting also decided to hold the associa-

tion's extraordinary general meeting on September 25 in Dhaka, where a final decision on future course of action will be made.

The association's President Shafiqul Islam Kamal presided over the meeting.

CNG pump owners are keeping their pumps closed for 6 hours everyday, from 3:00pm to 9:00pm, since August following a government order.

The government issued the order against the backdrop of nagging gas and power crisis. But the decision put thousands of CNG refuelling stations in dire straits as sales fell drastically.

Association's Secretary General Zakir Hossain

Nayon said all 25 executive members of the association were calling for a general strike.

"We wanted to convey our sentiments to the government and make a broader decision. That is why we have decided to write a letter to the state minister for energy," he said.

"If the government does not withdraw the order after this, the final decision will be taken in the extraordinary general meeting (EGM)," he added.

Sources in the meeting hinted that a strike program might be drawn up from the EGM, if the government does not consider withdrawing its former decision.



Local and foreign dignitaries see off Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Shahjalal International Airport in the city yesterday as she is going to attend the 65th United Nations General Assembly to be held in New York.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA