

# Place alternative to CG system

## Suranjit urges BNP-led alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Minister without portfolio Suranjit Sengupta yesterday urged the BNP and its alliance partners to propose an alternative model of caretaker government system in parliament.

The House will discuss the issue within constitutional limits as the government cannot exceed the bounds, he told at a commemorative meeting at Nizam Uddin Auditorium of Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The government will even consider amending the constitution, if there is an alternative proposal to erstwhile caretaker model to hold a free and fair election, he added.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote organised the programme to pay tributes to late Awami League leader Bahauddin Chowdhury, a Language Movement hero and one of the organisers of 1971 Liberation War.

Suranjit, however, rejected outright any possibility of holding the next general elections under a caretaker government.

An elected government cannot coexist with an unelected government and the present government will not allow an undemocratic government to run the country again for two years like the last caretaker regime, he mentioned.

Though Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia recently made a nearly two-hour long speech in parliament, she did not raise the caretaker government issue. Instead, she brings up the matter outside parliament, complained Suranjit, also a member of AL advisory council.

Responding to criticism from BNP leaders about not granting bail to its 33 leaders in an arson case, he said BNP had enacted speedy trial act with provisions for not allowing bail after submission of charge sheet in a case.

Though AL protested the law at that time, the then government did not pay heed to its complaints, he maintained.

President of Workers Party Rashed Khan Menon said all the players of 1/11 are back in the field now.

Holding elections is necessary to move democracy forward in our country, he observed.

Vice-president of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote Golam Kuddus, central leader of Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote Farid Ali and politician Pankaj Bhattacharya addressed the meeting, among others, with noted actor ATM Shamsuzzaman in the chair.

Former railway minister Suranjit took a break from active politics after the last month's railwaygate scandal involving the seizure of Tk 70 lakh from the microbus of his assistant personal secretary.

As a departmental probe found him not involved in the incident, the minister recently declared his return to politics.



Guests at a sharing session, 'Dhaka Urban Eye Health: Experience of DUCECP', organised by Dhaka Urban Comprehensive Eye Care Project (DUCECP) with support from Sightsavers and Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Stand by poor eye patients

## Speakers urge well-off people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a sharing session yesterday urged the society's well-off section to extend help for the treatment of poor eye patients, as every year around 1.5 lakh people of the contract cataract, a major contributor to blindness.

More than 7.5 lakh people are blind in the country, and of them 6.5 lakh have lost sight due to the category of cataract, which is fully curable, said M Nurun Nabi, project coordinator, Dhaka Urban Comprehensive Eye Care Project (DUCECP).

Over 80 percent of the total blindness in the country is caused by curable cataract, he said, while making a presentation at the sharing session on "Dhaka Urban Eye Health: Experience of DUCECP", organised by DUCECP in association with Sightsavers and Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, at The Daily Star office in the capital.

Cataract is a medical condition that involves the clouding or opacification of the natural lens of the eye, causing impairment of vision or blindness.

Nurun Nabi also revealed a disturbing fact that 90 percent of the country's eye specialists

and their assistants live in towns and cities, leaving the vast urban people without eye care.

To help eye patients, the speakers also urged coordinated effort from public and private sectors.

Sanjida Khanam, a lawmaker from Dhaka-4 constituency, assured that she would raise the issue in parliament to increase the allocation in the next budget for eye care.

In his speech, Prof Dr Deen Mohammad Noorul Huq, director of National Institute of Ophthalmology, stressed the need for conducting fresh surveys on the country's blind.

For the first time, such survey was conducted in 2000, which found over 7 lakh people blind in Bangladesh, but no survey has been done afterwards, he said.

Dr Deen Mohammad also said the country lacked sufficient number of surgeons for performing eye operations, so more doctors should be trained on this skill.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, who presided over the session, pointed at the prospective role of banks in treating poor eye patients.

If over 40,000 people are treated with the help of one bank (like Standard Chartered), 10 more banks could help four lakh people

restore their eyesight.

Mahfuz Anam, also honorary chairperson of the project advisory committee of DUCECP, put forward some proposals for the implementation of DUCECP.

This eye care project can inform business chambers like FBCCI, BGMEA and managing directors or chairmen of banks how cheaply they could return vision to people, he said.

For creating awareness, the project can take the help of television channels and editors of different dailies, he said, adding that The Daily Star would host the programmes.

Stressing public private partnership in DUCECP, lawmaker Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the government could not undertake many projects due to lack of budgetary allocation.

Eye care is a mammoth task, so efforts only from the government and NGOs are not enough, Dr Wahidul Islam, country director of Sightsavers, said, laying importance on the role of corporate social responsibility in this connection.

Zahida Ispahani, chairperson of DUCECP, said it was a matter of regret that people remained without eyesight, although in most cases, blindness was preventable.

But due to financial constraints, many blind people cannot regain eyesight, she said.

Brig Gen M Mofizur Rahman, psc, P Eng (ret'd), lead consultant of R&G Group, pointed out that some people were neither solvent nor beggars. They cannot afford expensive eye surgeries though they are not poor, he said, adding that those people should be offered treatment.

Prof Khaleda Khanam, general secretary, Bangladesh National Society for the Blind (BNSB), observed that DUCECP was required to extend to rural areas, as some blind people spent their whole life without even knowing that their blindness was curable.

Launched in 2005, DUCECP will continue till 2013 in Dhaka.

With the support from Sightsavers and Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, DUCECP has been operating with four implementing hospitals--Islamia Eye Hospital, Bangladesh National Society for the Blind, Ad-din Hospital, and Salauddin Specialised Hospital Ltd.

DUCECP has so far conducted more than 40,000 surgeries on poor eye patients.

# Rickshaw-puller murdered in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some unknown criminals killed a rickshaw-puller in the capital's Pallabi yesterday.

On information, police recovered the body of Asad, 30, from the first floor of an under-construction building at Baigar Tag at around 2:00pm.

The body bore marks of injuries in the head.

Police suspected that he might be killed with non-lethal weapon.

However, they could not ascertain the motive behind the murder immediately.

# Shafique for curbing cyber crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday underscored preventive measures to thwart the increasing cyber crimes.

He made the call while addressing as chief guest a roundtable on "Cyber crime and information security" at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhawan, Dhaka University.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) and Journey jointly organized the roundtable.

The law minister said cyber crimes were taking place through technology. So, it takes some time to become acquainted with the nature of the crimes.

The laws relating to the cyber crime should be incorporated into the syllabus of law in different institutes, he added.

Prof Dr Khandaker Bazlul Haque, BTRC Vice Chairman Giasuddin Ahmed, Rab Communication Director Saifulah, Maasranga TV CEO Syed Fahim Munaim, among others, also spoke.



Opposition party lawmakers form a human chain at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhawan in the capital yesterday demanding withdrawal of cases filed against the BNP-led 18-party leaders, including BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

PHOTO: STAR

# Political parties to decide poll nature

## Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The country's political parties will decide the nature of administration under which the next general election will be held, said Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday.

The Election Commission, as a constitutional institution, will hold elections as per constitutional provisions, he said. Rakibuddin was speaking as chief guest at a workshop, organised to evaluate the last upazila parishad elections, at the divisional commissioner's conference room in Sylhet.

The parties will reach a consensus over holding a free and fair election since there is no alternative towards the continuation of democracy, he hoped.

The EC already started updating the voter list to ensure such elections. The officials concerned must play their due role neutrally, he said.

EC Secretary Dr Mohammad Sadique, Additional Secretary Sirajul Islam and Divisional Commissioner Zeaul Alam also spoke.

# Bangladesh, Belarus sign MoUs on agriculture, food

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Minsk yesterday inked two deals, one on cooperation over agriculture and food and another on formation of a foreign ministry-level joint commission, to strengthen bilateral cooperation in education, culture, agriculture, investment and trade.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, in the first-ever visit by a Bangladeshi leader to Belarus, signed the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) at the end of her three-day visit.

Dipu Moni, before returning to Bangladesh, called on Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko yesterday morning and discussed on ways to deepen bilateral cooperation, says a foreign ministry press release.

She told the press that there are a number of areas where Bangladeshi business and industry would find Belarus very convenient, especially in sourcing materials in terms of cost, technology and global standard.

Belarus, part of the Russia-Kazakhstan led Customs Union, can afford to let in frozen food, pharmaceutical products, jute goods, ready-made garments and textiles, she said.

This would provide Bangladesh a new market and help secure a strategic foothold in the neighbouring EU, she added.

Earlier, Dipu Moni also held discussions

with Belarus Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich and her counterpart Sergei Martynov.

During these discussions, the Belarus side expressed deep interest in engaging with Bangladesh in forming joint ventures, with participation from the private sector.

They agreed to make the Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2007, critical legal instruments on investment protection and promotion and double tax avoidance, effective by the end of 2012.

They also agreed that the existing MoU between the two apex chambers should be implemented to complement the agreement and expedite the conclusion of MoUs/agreement on cooperation in education, culture, science and technology.

Agreeing that both countries can benefit from cooperation in the tourism sector, they welcomed Bangladeshi students who want to go for higher studies at universities in Belarus.

The prime minister proposed Bangladeshi investors to set up an agromachinery plant by the world-famous Minsk Tractor Factory, establish a university through joint cooperation and pharmaceutical plants in Belarus.

On Bangladesh's invitation, the prime minister confirmed to come on a visit around November.

# Factory fined Tk 14 lakh for not setting up ETP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined a dyeing factory in Gazipur Tk 14 lakh for not setting up Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) even 21 months after the factory owner promised to set up the ETP.

The DoE fined the owner of the factory, Ema Cintex Ltd, and also ordered to keep its production shut. It also rebuked its owner Modabber Hossain, said a DoE press release.

The factory has been dumping untreated chemical wastes into the river Turag and polluting the river severely, it added.

The owner has been promising to set up ETP since October 5, 2010.

DoE director (enforcement) Mohammad Munir Hossain said a severe damage has been done to the environment by this period.

The owner has also been warned of imprisonment and snap gas and power supply to the factory if the factory is run without ETP.

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