

GRAMEEN BANK ORDINANCE AMENDMENT Pabna civil society slates govt move

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Speakers at a seminar yesterday condemned the government move to amend the Grameen Bank Ordinance, 1983 saying it would deprive its real owners, the 8.3 million poor women, of their say in the bank's management.

Although the board of the bank recommended that Prof Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, leads a committee to select the bank's managing director, the government did not pay any heed to it, they said.

Refusing to follow the recommendation of the owners of the bank will ultimately lead to its fall, they added.

The seminar was organised by a recently formed organisation, "Committee to Protect Grameen Bank and to Resist Opportunists", in Pabna Press Club.

Ninety-seven percent of Grameen Bank is owned by the 8.3 million poor women borrowers while the government owns the remaining 3 percent.

On August 2, the cabinet approved the amendment proposal to the ordinance that gave almost absolute powers to the government-appointed Grameen Bank chairman to choose a managing director for the microlender.

The post of the bank's managing director fell vacant after Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus was forced to step down as its chief executive in line with the central

bank's directive in May last year.

Under the amendment, the Grameen Bank chairman, instead of the board of the bank as originally provided, would form a selection committee in consultation with the board for selecting the bank's managing director.

The chairman will also be able to select a three-member panel for the appointment of the managing director.

Of the 12 members on the board, nine are women representatives of the borrowers of Grameen Bank and the other three including the chairman are government nominees.

The amendment denies the board of the bank its role in the decision making process of the bank, the lone Asian institution to have won the Nobel prize, said the speakers.

"Prof Muhammad Yunus was successful in empowering poor women across the country by funding their small businesses. There are many countries around the world which are now following his microcredit system," said veteran columnist Sadek Khan.

Prof Yunus was forcibly removed from the bank and the bank's image is being tarnished by the government. Such steps by the government must be prevented for the sake of the rural economy, he added, speaking as the chief guest.

Educationalist Mahataba Uddin Bishwas chaired the program. China-Bangladesh Moitree Samity Secretary F Delwar Hossain read the keynote paper on the occasion.



Police guard an empty passage on Buet campus. The university opened yesterday after a 44-day closure but no classes were held.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Journalists urged to follow Abdus Salam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists should follow prominent editor and scholar late Abdus Salam's path, which he has laid through his writings to strengthen democracy and uphold human rights, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They also demanded that the government gives due recognition to the editor's contribution to journalism and the country by naming a road in the capital after him.

They were addressing a meeting marking the 102nd birth anniversary of the renowned journalist, who was the editor of the now defunct Bangladesh Observer, organised by Sangbadik Abdus Salam Smriti Sangsad at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Salam's writings in the Observer allowed the political movements of the country to progress, speakers observed.

His articles made the then Pakistani rulers of Bangladesh worried as he wrote about oppression and irregularities of the dictators, said Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque.

The fearless editor never compromised when writing against autocrats and that is

why he was sent to jail, said Golam Kibria, former acting director of Press Institute of Bangladesh.

Abdus Salam was not only a journalist but also a scholar whose extraordinary intellect was reflected in his writings and thinking, said Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, chairman of University Grant Commission (UGC).

"Salam was an idealist and a fearless person who raised his voice against the dictators for establishing democracy and human rights," added Azad.

Expressing dissatisfaction, Rehana Salam, daughter of Abdus Salam, said the journalist community as well as the state has forgotten about the renowned journalist.

"If famed journalists and idealists like Abdus Salam are not appraised then the nation may not find any more intellectuals and patriots in future," she said.

Ruhul Amin Gazi, president of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Dr Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi, chairman of Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of News Today, and Alamgir Mohiuddin, editor of Nayadignata, spoke among others.

Animal farming helps char people

BSS, Rangpur

Expanding animal husbandry has brought fortunes to hundreds of extremely poor people living in disaster-prone char areas in ten northwestern riverine districts in recent years.

According to official and NGO sources, some 1,00,000 poor families living in char areas including Kurigram, Bogra, Gaibandha and Rangpur have achieved the success to overcome poverty.

Many of them have achieved self-reliance through rearing cows, goats, buffalos, sheep and other income generating activities while they struggled for survivals during seasonal lean periods.

Chilmari upazila Chairman in Kurigram Shawkat Ali Sarker, Bir Bikram, said the have-nots group char people achieved success through exploring the prospect of animal husbandry with the assistances of the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP).

According to CLP officials, plinths of 90,600 households were raised under CLP phase-I during 2004-2010 and 25,934 households so far under phase-II (2010-2016) aiming at raising 85,000 households on plinths by 2016.

Through implementation of the CLP, the poor char people have been improving livelihoods through animal husbandry and other income generation activities, said Taramon Bibi, Bir Pratik.

Project Coordinator of Climate Change Project of RDRS Bangladesh Marufuzzaman said these char people have achieved success in animal husbandry after escaping floods following raising plinths in recent years with CLP assistances.

BANGABANDHU KILLING

Zia knew about plan

Claims Prof Moinul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Late president Ziaur Rahman knew beforehand about the disgruntled army officers' blueprint for the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, said a Chittagong University teacher yesterday at this year's Bangabandhu memorial speech.

But Zia did not disclose the plot for it was his dream to be sworn in as president, said the economics department teacher, Prof Moinul Islam.

The speech, "Social Transformation and Political Change of Bangladesh", was organised by Bangladesh Foundation for Development Research in the capital's Bangladesh National Museum.

"...and after 1975, the autocratic ruler Zia changed the country's political ideology to cement his stay in power. For this he introduced the politics of religious fundamentalism and restored the ideology of communalism, like in Pakistan," said Prof Moinul.

After Zia's death, autocratic ruler HM Ershad and BNP, with some religion-based political parties, practiced the Pakistani ideologies for a long time, which ultimately gave

the ideologies a strong position in the country, he added.

"We have even seen the Awami League-led government retaining Islam as state religion and keeping secularism through the constitution's fifteenth amendment to attain political benefit," he said.

He said the two major political parties were internally still practicing autocracy each time they came to power.

"In every term, their party chief practiced a kind of dictatorship in and outside their parties. Even the ruling party lawmakers and senior leaders could not act by themselves or challenge any of the chief's decisions in running the government," he said.

Addressing the programme, Shamsuzzaman Khan, a Board of Governance member of the foundation, said, "Some parts of the speech do not match our foundation's ideology."

"As we usually do not interfere in the memorial speech we arrange every year, this speech cannot be counted as our opinion," said the director general of Bangla Academy, adding, "It would have been better if the speaker talked about political economy."



People not only risked their lives riding on rooftops of trains while going home to celebrate Eid, they are doing the same on the way back, and even at the end of the journey when getting off the trains. The photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Excessive ads frustrate TV viewers during Eid

BSS, Dhaka

Because of excessive advertisements, the television viewers have been frustrated during the Eid-ul-Fitr though the country's private channels aired special programmes on the occasion.

The television authorities, however, denied the allegation.

The television channels started six-day special Eid programmes on August 19, the day before Eid day, the biggest festival of the Muslims. The programmes ended yesterday.

The TV channels eared around Taka 5 crore from commercial advertisements during the special programmes, according to competent sources.

Channel 24 Head of Marketing Sayed Samad denied the allegation and said, "Our channel is new. We have tried not to annoy the views, even at the cost of our business [profit]."

Ranjan Kumar Dutta, head of marketing at the NTV, said in the first three days, they had aired advertisements for a total of 14 minutes during a 60-minute drama and none of the breaks were more than three minutes.

Nurul Islam Khan of Banglavisian said this time the duration of their advertisements was 78 minutes, which was less than the last Eid festival.

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Concord Centre, 43 North C/A, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212
Fax: 88-02-8823607, E-mail: sales@concordgroup.net
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