

Lack of coordination barrier to poverty reduction

Discussion told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lack of coordination among the government's different social safety net programmes and wealth's unequal distribution among underprivileged people create barriers to ensuring food security for all, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

The country has achieved successes on some development indexes, including food production and national growth rate, but poor people's access to food has not been ensured due to high poverty rate, they added.

Despite the incumbent government's electoral pledge to bring poverty rate down to 25 percent by 2013, the existing poverty rate is still 31 percent, they told the discussion on "Food for All" in the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

The programme was hosted by Anti-Poverty Platform, which consists of 31 non-government organisations working to address the issue of poverty.

Executive Director of Brac Dr Mahbub Hossain said the overall earning capacity of

people had been increasing but disparity was still prevailing. "That's why the poverty rate is not declining significantly."

He also said it was impossible to ensure sustainable growth of people's income only with relief programmes.

Noted economist Prof MM Akash said it was difficult to eliminate poverty with the direct supervision of bureaucrats or NGOs, as their activities were rarely transparent and accountable.

However, the government's target to bring poverty down to 25 percent from the existing 31 percent will be possible if the current poverty reduction rate, which is two percent per year, remains the same, he said.

Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam said the society was turning towards exclusive growth from inclusive trend but poverty could not be eradicated until inclusive growth was ensured.

Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad chaired the discussion.

Ghulam Hussain new NBR chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Secretary Ghulam Hussain was appointed chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) after the government transferred five secretaries yesterday.

He will succeed Nasiruddin Ahmed, whose tenure as NBR chairman will expire on Oct 30. Ghulam Hussain also received additional responsibility as secretary of International Resources Division.

Youth and Sports Secretary Mahbub Ahmed has been made commerce secretary while Secretary to the Bank and Financial Institution Division Md Shafiqur Rahman Patwary was transferred to environment and forest ministry as secretary.

Secretary to the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry M Aslam Alam will replace Shafiqur Rahman while Environment and Forest Secretary Mesbah-ul-Alam will take up M Aslam Alam's previous post, said a gazette notification.

Earlier in August, Finance Minister AMA Muhith restricted the NBR chairman from making any important decision, as Nasiruddin did not comply with the minister's recommendation.

Muhith issued a letter to Nasiruddin in which he said the NBR chairman would be transferred very soon.

He said Nasiruddin made some transfers at commissioner level despite the minister telling him not to take any step in this regard.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN Empowerment of women in decision making sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Good household income, good health, food security and nutrition can be better ensured if women are empowered to have more say on the decisions that affect them, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

Helen Keller International (HKI) and Save the Children jointly organised the "National Seminar on Gender and Nutrition in Rural Bangladesh" in the capital's Spectra Convention Centre, marking the International Day of Rural Women yesterday.

Erica Khetran, country director of HKI, stressed on empowering rural women that would help in the progress of the development sectors.

Speakers said, by engaging women in the field of agriculture, it is possible to reduce chronic malnutrition among them.

Sheela Sinharoy, technical advisor of HKI, while presenting a research paper, said improving the status of women in South Asia could lead to a 13 percent reduction in the underweight problem among children aged below five years in the region.

Anna Minj, director of community empowerment programme of Brac, gave a presentation on a Brac project on empowering women.

Asit Kumar Mukut Moni, additional secretary to disaster management and relief ministry, among others, addressed the seminar.

VIOLENCE ON BUDDHISTS AL trashes BNP probe report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League yesterday outright rejected BNP's investigation on the attacks on Buddhists in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, saying the opposition had presented its conspiratorial and puzzling statement before the nation.

In the name of so-called investigation, BNP is trying to put the liabilities of the incidents on the government and AL, which is a sheer lie, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told a press conference at AL president's office at Dhanmondi in the capital.

An eight member investigation team led by BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed in its report said law enforcers were inactive during the attack and it was pre-planned.

Hanif also said as a responsible political party it would not be proper for AL to make any comment which could hamper the investigation work.

At another programme yesterday, Hanif accused BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia of going on a tour to China to destroy its relations with Bangladesh.

"Khaleda Zia is in China to complain against the government with stories, cooked up by the corrupt, to destroy Bangladesh's relations with the predominant Buddhist country," he said.

Hanif made the comments at an extended meeting of AL Dhaka city unit at its Bangabandhu Avenue office.

4 women held for luring patients away from DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College Hospital authorities yesterday caught four women from the hospital's emergency gate while they were allegedly luring away patients from there to private clinics.

The four women - Moni Begum, Farida Begum, Jamuna Begum and Nasima Begum - were handed over to Shahbagh Police Station.

DMCH sources said some people have been cheating patients coming to DMCH by luring them to take treatment in some private clinics.

Getting carried away, the patients end up losing a big amount of money to bills for treatment, medicine and other hospital expenses while some patients receive low quality or even wrong treatment, DMCH sources said.

COMMENTING ON FACEBOOK Rab arrests doc for defaming Shaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a doctor from the capital's Ramna on Sunday night for posting defamatory comments about actress Meher Afroz Shaon, widow of litterateur Humayun Ahmed, and her family members on Facebook.

The arrestee Ehsanuzzaman Khan, doctor of Sunamganj Sadar Hospital, was produced at a press briefing at Rab headquarters where Shaon was also present yesterday.

Commander M Sohail, Rab's media and legal wing director, said a team of Rab-3 arrested Ehsanuzzaman from New Iskatan Road around 11:00pm following a complaint filed by Shaon.

In the complaint Shaon alleged that Ehsanuzzaman had introduced a Facebook group, "We Hate Meher Afroz Shaon", and been posting abusive and threatening comments and pictures about her and her family, he added.

In the press briefing, Ehsanuzzaman claimed that he did it because media reports led him to believe that Shaon was responsible for the death of his favourite writer.

Shaon said the group members even posted her residential telephone number on facebook and encouraged others to bother her over the telephone.

Sohail said they will file cases under cyber crime act against all the 1200 members of the Facebook group.

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