



Discussants at a roundtable, “Turning the Future: Mobile Services and its impact in Health and Development Sectors in Bangladesh”, jointly organised by EATLApps.com, a concern of Advanced Technology Ltd, and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

3 killed, 5 injured in road accidents

METRO DESK

Three people were killed and five policemen injured in separate road accidents in Rangpur, Dinajpur and Gaibandha on Friday and yesterday.

Our Rangpur correspondent reports, a father and his son were killed instantly when their motorbike collided head-on with a soil-laden tractor on Nagerhat-Fulbari road at Badarganj upazila in Rangpur yesterday afternoon.

The dead are Abul Kalam Azad, 55, and his son Liton Mian, 20, of Dangolpara village in the upazila.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports, a teenage boy died on the spot as he lost control over his motorbike and hit a roadside tree while he was learning to ride in Chiribandar upazila of Dinajpur around 6:00pm on Friday.

The dead was Latifur Rahman 15, son of Lutfar Rahman of Jamtoli village in the upazila.

UNB from Gaibandha reports, five policemen were injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Rangpur highway at Pantapara in Gobindaganj upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, four constables of Gobindaganj Police Station were admitted to Ziaur Rahman Medical Hospital in Bogra.

Police said a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction rammed into a pickup van carrying a team of police, including a sub-inspector, leaving them critically injured in the area.

Police detained the truck but its driver managed to flee.

HOUSE RENTS IN CTG CITY

Arbitrary hikes leave tenants struggling

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Two days before the end of the year 2012, Dipankar Barua, a tenant in Aturar Depot area of Chittagong city, received an envelope from his landlord.

He took it for a new year's greeting card, but to his utter surprise he found that it was a letter of notification for a rental hike of Tk 2,000 on his small apartment.

Dipankar, a senior chemist at a refined edible oil company, earns no more than Tk 30,000 a month. He now wonders how he could afford Tk 9,000 every month only on house rent from January.

With the year end, many tenants have received either a written or a verbal notice from the landlords for increased house rents from January.

According to various sources, three fourths of the 50 lakh people living in Chittagong city are believed to be tenants. And arbitrary and indiscriminate hikes in home rents, with the excuse of end of year, have left this struggling mass in disarray.

SM Nazer Hossain, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), Chittagong, said house rent in the port city has increased by 342 percent in the last 20 years. He viewed that there should be stricter regulations from the authorities to look into the interests of the harassed tenants.

Students and other working professionals are compelled to rent homes in the city as commuting from suburban areas on a daily basis is tedious and expensive.

A good number of people come to the city to enrol their children in reputed educational institutions. All these add up to the accommodation crisis in the city.

In most cases, accommodation seeking people are helpless to the demands of the greedy house owners. The house owners take full advantage of the situation.

Many tenants alleged that a section of owners increase rent twice a year while others said the owners increase the rent even up to 50 percent at a time.

A resident of West Bakalia area, Tanvir Hasan, said the owners on one hand increase house rents illogically, and on the other they refuse to give any receipt against the payments to evade income tax.

They just threaten with some words like "you pay the increased rent or vacate the

house immediately," he said.

Residents of Chawk Bazar area alleged that some of the owners of the colonies in this area have increased house rents by up to 50 percent although they had pledged last year that the rise would be limited to 10 percent.

In a similar instance, Shah Jamal, a resident of Sugandha Residential Area, said his flat's owner has served an unsigned notice on him to pay Tk 500 more monthly though according to the agreement the rise was supposed to be Tk 250.

Jamal, also general secretary of Tenants Welfare Association, Chittagong, said the house owners bother little about the tenants.

He said Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) can play a vital role in addressing the problem. "They take holding tax from the house owners where most of the owners submit false statements of assessment to evade tax," he added.

Shital Babu, owner of the building that Jamal resides on rent, however, said he does not increase the rent arbitrarily rather he increases it as per the deeds with the tenants.

Asked about Jamal's complaint about increasing of the rent violating the agreement, he said, "I will not put any pressure on him, if he does not want to pay so."

CCC's Chief Revenue Officer Dipak Chakraborty said they have nothing to do with house rent as it is not the authority to look into it. If any tenant is harassed, he may go to court seeking legal action against the owners, he told The Daily Star.

General Secretary of District Bar Association Adv Ashok Kumar Das said the harassed tenants can seek legal action against the house owners under "House Rent Control Ordinance."

Many such cases are pending in Chittagong courts as these are not pursued by the tenants, he said, adding that tenants are not organised against "greedy landlords".

When asked, Jasim Uddin, owner of Bilkis Manjil in East Sholashahar area, said prices of everything including the daily necessities have shot up. "So I have no way but to increase the house rent. But I increase the rent in a reasonable way."

Digital police protection system launched in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Digital Police Protection System (DPPS) "Watchman" was launched in Chittagong city yesterday. Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Shafiqul Islam inaugurated the system at a programme at CMP headquarters.

Earlier in 2011, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), for the first time in the country, set up the system designed to monitor and instantly respond to emergency situation such as robbery, fire and other criminal activities.

CMP Assistant Commissioner Abdur Rauf said the system can be installed at different locations including public and private establishments.

Easy Group gave technological support to install the system in CMP headquarters, he said.

The device is linked through a networking system with the police control room, he said.

It will send signal to the control room if any unauthorised person enter any premises, he added.

CMP Commissioner Shafiqul said the system can automatically send alarm and short message service (SMS) and multi-media service (MMS) both to the monitoring centre at the headquarters of CMP and any 10 predefined mobile numbers.

It sends MMS and image of the intruders and alarms to subscribers' mobile instantly.

Police could then reach the spot within five to seven minutes as instructions would be sent immediately to the nearest police patrol team, he said.

The CMP commissioner hoped that it would be possible to control crime in Chittagong to a great extent after installation of the digital security device.

Shahnul Hasan Khan, a director of Easy group, said the device will cost around Tk 50,000 and the monthly rent will be Tk 500.

People to assert free will during polls

Dr Kamal tells Shujan convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's people are going to assert in the next general elections that they are not mere subjects of the two political parties, said eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday.

"It is not the people but unhealthy politics that is divided," he said at the fourth national convention of Shujan, a civic movement for good governance, in the capital's Bangladesh Shishu Academy.

People are united and will hold their heads and dignity high this time with their right to vote. They own the country and those in the government can not castigate them for criticisms, said Kamal, also president of Gono Forum.

Youths who had a glorious political past, like those who took part in the language movement and movement against military dictatorship, have now turned their faces away from amoral politics. Dirty politics devoid of morality turn its followers into mere slaves, he said.

ASM Shahjahan, former adviser to a caretaker government and executive member of Shujan, said the current politics was moving only around material gain. "It is all about selfishness and greed for power."

Former Chief Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman said good governance would remain empty words unless consti-

tutional institutions, like election commission, comptroller general, public service commission and the judiciary, were allowed to function independently.

The state's executive body has the unique power to withdraw any case in an extraordinary context for the sake of justice. But this foils the state's sovereign judicial power if applied in a wholesale manner, he said.

Local government institutions have consistently been ignored since the country achieved independence as central government representatives have been sidelining the elected representatives, said the former chief adviser to a caretaker government.

Benefits of good judgments of the higher judiciary for environmental protection often do not reach people due to a lack of good governance, said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Good governance is not in place, as political leadership and public opinion are absent, she said.

Former adviser to a caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan said Shujan was independent and uninvolved in government processes so as to protect civic rights against state aggression.

Shujan Acting President M Hafizuddin Khan chaired the convention.

UMA to provide Scottish diploma to cadets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

United Maritime Academy (UMA) yesterday launched the Higher National Diploma programme of Scottish Qualifications Authority with a view to producing skilled and efficient marine officers.

Under this three-year programme, around 100 to 120 students will get the opportunity to receive marine education per annum, said a press release.

Addressing the launching ceremony as chief guest, Navy Chief Vice Admiral Jahir Uddin Ahmed, said this programme would create a better opportunity for providing trained marine officers in a large number to the global shipping community and earning foreign currency.

Bangladesh Coast Guard Director General Rear Admiral Kazi Sarwar Hossain, Department of Shipping Director General Commodore Jobair Ahmad and UMA's top officials were present in the event at the UMA campus in Dhaka.

IN APPRECIATION

We - my family and I - would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the doctors, nurses, customer care personnel, the staff and the management of Square Hospital, Dhaka for the extra-ordinary care and attention they provided to us, during my recent stay at the hospital.

Rumee Ali
Irum, Rumaan & Tamara Ali



Jatiya Shishu O Nari Nirjaton Protirodh Committee forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday protesting the gang rape of a schoolgirl in Tangail for four days from December 6 last year.

PHOTO: STAR

Pro-liberation forces must unite to resist militants

Book publication ceremony told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the pro-liberation and progressive forces should join hands together and build strong resistance against militants and fundamentalists to establish a secular and prosperous Bangladesh, said discussants at a book publication ceremony yesterday.

They also emphasised raising awareness among the common people against fundamentalism and militancy.

Sammilito Samajik Andolon and Samprodayekata-Jongibad Birodhi Mancha jointly organised the programme at TSC, Dhaka University.

The covers of two books "Nirjatoner Dalil-2011, Jongibadi Tandob-2012", and "Sangkhaloghu Nirjaton-2001, Gonotadonto Commission-er Protibedon"

were unveiled at the programme.

Deputy Speaker of Parliament Shawkat Ali called for training for all political leaders and activists to exercise non-communalism.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui said the evil force is getting support from different corners. So, the pro-liberation forces should jointly resist them.

He also demanded a ban on religion-based politics in the country and scrapping the constitutional provision that declares Islam as a state religion.

Chaired by the mancha Coordinator Ajoy Roy, the function was addressed, among others, by Gono Oikya Convener Pankaj Bhattacharya, academician Syed Anwar Husain, Prof Hayat Mahmud and left politician Bimol Biswas.