

Govt tricked people Prof Anu Mohammad says about unveiling foundation plaque of Rampal plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has tricked people by hastily unveiling the foundation plaque of the Rampal power plant, said noted academican and environmental activist Prof Anu Mohammad yesterday.

"They (government) know it will not be possible to unveil the foundation plaque at Rampal on the scheduled date as people will resist it. That's why, the prime minister has done it through 'a remote control' staying far away from the spot," he said.

Anu Mohammad was addressing a roundtable on "possible impacts of the power plant on the Sundarbans" organised by National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans (NCSS) at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Through a video conference, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh unveiled the foundation plaque of the Rampal power plant yesterday, disregarding environmentalists' fear of a disastrous impact on the Sundarbans.

The premier was scheduled to lay the foundation stone of the coal-based power station at Rampal, Bagerhat, 14 kilometres off the Sundarbans, on October 22 but she unveiled the plaque at Bheramara, Kushtia after Singh expressed inability to join the ceremony that day.

Anu Mohammad said the people would not allow setting

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CPD SURVEY ON CITY CORPORATIONS, MUNICIPALITIES Two-thirds of respondents unhappy with services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two-thirds of respondents are dissatisfied with the services provided by municipalities and city corporations, reveals a survey of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

In the four-month study, the private think tank found that 40 percent of respondents in municipalities and 35 percent in city corporations were satisfied with the services.

The rest are discontented, mainly because of poor quality of service delivery, says the report, "The unheard voices: Citizens' perception on the state of governance and service delivery in municipalities and city corporations in Bangladesh."

A high level of politicisation in municipalities' affairs is another reason, said CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya, sharing the findings at a dialogue on local government financing at Brac Centre in the

capital yesterday.

He added, "Municipalities and city corporations cannot provide services properly because of financial constraints."

Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway and the CPD jointly organised the dialogue chaired by Member of CPD Board of Trustees M Syeduzzaman.

Between December 2012 and March 2013, the CPD interviewed 110 people in nine municipalities and two city corporations through structured questionnaires.

The findings show that poor services are also resulted from lack of commitment of mayors, councillors and municipality officials, corruption of contractors and elected representatives, and political consideration in implementing development projects.

CPD found that 63 percent of respondents heard about corrupt practices in development projects led

by their municipalities and city corporations.

The respondents highlighted problems like sanitation, drainage, water supply, insufficient lighting, construction and maintenance of roads, and poor waste management.

At the dialogue, speakers blamed lack of autonomy of the local government bodies in spending for poor services and inadequate tax collections for financial constraints.

Prime Minister's adviser HT Imam favoured real devolution of power instead of decentralisation, saying decentralisation did not help when power remained centralised.

"Give authority to the local bodies so that they are themselves responsible for their areas...give them the authority to collect. They can collect funds and resources."

Amirul Islam Chowdhury, former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar

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Spread of religious extremism threat to S Asia's progress International conference told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even if the misuse of religion in politics is not considered, Jamaat-e-Islami should be banned for genocide, opposing Bangladesh's Liberation War, not recognising the constitution and creating the recent violence, said eminent scholar Shahriar Kabir yesterday.

"Jamaat still has not sought forgiveness for what it did during 1971," he told the concluding session of a two-day international public lecture series and conference, "Religion and Politics: South Asia", in the capital's Cirdap.

Bangladesh Itihas Sammilani, a forum of historians, organised the programme.

Shahriar said the secularism Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman put in Bangladesh's constitution was meant to "recognise all religions in harmony, not denying those".

"This differs from the idea of secularism generated by the founder of modern Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk or former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein," he said.

He, however, observed that banning religion-based politics in Bangladesh and around the globe might not be possible considering the present state of world politics.

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JU teachers burn effigy of VC

JU CORRESPONDENT

With no sign of solution to the ongoing deadlock at Jahangirnagar University in sight, the teachers demanding resignation of Vice Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain brought out a silent procession carrying black flags and burned his effigy on the campus yesterday.

Over a hundred teachers joined the procession under the banner of Sadharon Shikkhak Forum. The march started from VC's residence and ended at the administrative building.

The agitators also circulated a statement signed by 395 teachers, saying their movement would continue till he resigned and assuring students of making up for their classes.

In the meantime, Shikkha Odhikar Mancha, a students' forum, at a press conference at JU Journalist Association, demanded a permanent solution and restoration of academic atmosphere, urging intervention of Chancellor and President Abdul Hamid.

Separately, the confinement of Registrar Abu Bakar Siddique and Deputy Registrar Abu Hasan has been going on since Monday, while Prof Anwar along with his wife Ayesha Akter and teachers opposing him continued their sit-ins near the VC's residence for the fifth day.

Protesting the registrar's confinement, JU Employees Association has been on a work abstention indefinitely since Wednesday. These demonstrations have brought academic activities to a halt. The teachers have been demanding the VC's resignation since April 27.

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