

Provide alternative fuel for Rohingyas

Greens urge govt, int'l organisations; warn of adverse effect on environment due to cutting of trees for firewood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indiscriminate felling of trees to use those as firewood for cooking in the Rohingya camp areas will have an adverse impact on the environment, said green activists yesterday.

They urged the government and international organisations to provide the Rohingyas with alternative fuel.

The environmentalists were speaking at a discussion organised by Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) at its office in the capital.

Abu Naser Khan, chairman of Poba, said, "If the Rohingyas continue to cut down trees, soil erosion and landslides might occur. The government and international organisations have to be cautious about this."

He also demanded that the Myanmar government take back the Rohingyas.

Abdus Sobhan, general secretary of Poba, said several lakhs of refugees are already living near forest and hilly areas and each family needs a huge amount of fuel for cooking. He suggested alternatives such as gas cylinders and solar power.

Dr Lenin Chowdhury, its joint general secretary, said if the environment where people live is unhealthy, many diseases might spread. There are already reports of water-borne diseases in the camps due to the unhealthy environment, he said.

Poba members Saleh Ahmed, Raziya Samad and Amlaya Kumar Boidya also spoke.



With an attempt to set a Guinness World Record for the "largest human image of a hand", more than 11,000 students form a "human hand" yesterday. Lifebuoy organised the event at Residential Model College in the capital to spread awareness of washing hands regularly with soaps to save lives. Today is Global Handwashing Day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Govt goodwill must for fair election

Roundtable told
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A strong Election Commission (EC) as well as goodwill of the government is necessary for ensuring fair polls, said civil society representatives yesterday.

The EC should play a strong role and use its full power and capacity. Also, the government must have goodwill to create a level-playing field for political parties and assist the EC for a neutral and acceptable election, they said.

The remarks were made at a roundtable titled, "Election and Democracy in Bangladesh", organised by The Dhaka Forum (TDF) in the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

M Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, said fair polls will not take place if the government does not want it. An interim government is necessary to resist the influence of the ruling government in this regard.

He also voiced for deploying army during the national parliamentary elections, expected to be held early 2019.

Salehuddin Ahmed, former Bangladesh Bank governor, said if the EC does not work effectively, fair polls will not be ensured.

"Also, political parties should send a strong message to the government that they will not accept a one-sided election," said Salehuddin, also the president of TDF.

Progress will be hampered if good governance, accountability and transparency cannot be established through the election, he added.

Asaduzzaman Ripon, international affairs secretary of BNP, said, "The international observers and civil society members should play an important role in ensuring fair polls."

CHIEF JUSTICE ISSUE

Probe graft allegations

Demands Khasru of AL; Anisul to brief media today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The corruption allegations brought against Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha must be investigated, said ruling Awami League presidium member Abdul Matin Khasru.

"We have found proofs of some of the allegations... Law will take its own course," Khasru, also chairman of parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs, said yesterday while addressing a function in Burichang upazila of Comilla.

Khasru said Justice Sinha sought leave from the president on health grounds. "Now, he is saying he is not sick. Which one will we believe?"

While addressing various seminars, Justice Sinha said that the country's judiciary is completely independent, Khasru said. On the other hand, he told some people that there is no independence in the judiciary, he added.

Justice Sinha has failed to stay rigid on his stance, said Khasru.

Meanwhile, AL presidium member Mohammed Nasim alleged that BNP's conspiracy on the issue of the chief justice's leave has been foiled.

"The BNP leaders' speeches that the government is trying to control the judiciary by sending the chief justice on a 'forced leave' is incorrect. It is clear

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Govt 'real intention' revealed: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha's statement, which he gave before leaving the country, has unmasked the government's "real intention".

"The chief justice has told the truth. After his speech, it has been proved what the government's intention is and what the government wants to do," he told reporters at BNP's Nayapaltan office in the capital.

"Can we call Bangladesh a state where the custodian of the judiciary is barred from speaking freely?" he questioned.

BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed alleged that the government's decision to send the CJ abroad had completely tarnished the Supreme Court's image.

"We talk about Supreme Court's image, pride and honour. The government has completely tarnished those," he told reporters at the SC premises.

Meanwhile, two factions of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday arranged separate press conferences over the issue related to CJ's statement.

The pro-BNP faction, led by SCBA President Zainul Abedin, held a press conference in the association auditorium in the morning.

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AL wants fair polls

PM tells ALCWC meeting

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Awami League wants to see the next general election to be held in a free and fair manner to give democracy an institutional shape.

Hasina, also the ruling party chief, said this in her introductory speech at a joint meeting of AL central working committee (ALCWC) and advisory council at her official residence Gono Bhaban, reports UNB.

The meeting was arranged to finalise the proposals of Awami League to be placed to the Election Commission (EC) in its dialogue with the commission, scheduled to be held on October 18.

She said, "We're in favour of establishing people's voting rights... We want to assure that people will exercise this right freely, neutrally and without fear." If that can be ensured there will be transparency and accountability.

Hasina also said electronic voting machines are being used in many countries. In Bangladesh, she said, those were used on an experimental basis. "If this system takes place, we want that as well."

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With the slogan "Bodybuilding is better than smoking", anti-drug organisation Pratyasha forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday to create awareness about the adverse impact of smoking.

PHOTO: STAR

Redesign of Old Dhaka the way out

DAP project director shares ideas with DSCC mayor citing examples of Singapore, Japan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents in the old part of Dhaka city can attain a modern urban life through implementation of urban renewal concept, said Md Ashrafur Islam, project director of Detailed Area Plan (DAP) of Dhaka, yesterday.

"It is just rearrangement of the available land incorporating modern civic amenities with...keeping social character intact," said the project director, citing the examples of the urban planning concept in Singapore and Japan.

He was sharing the idea with Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon at DSCC office.

Lanes in old Dhaka are very narrow; as a result, people living there are highly vulnerable to any disasters like earthquake or fire incidents as there is a little scope for rescue and evacuation, he said.

Moreover, there is a lack of storm drainage system, open spaces and

playgrounds, said the project director of DAP.

An estimated 1,100 people live in per acre area in the Old Dhaka dotted with chemical warehouses, which may turn devastating any moment, he said.

So the concept of redevelopment with rearranging the existing spaces is the way out for a planned urban development in the Old Dhaka, he said.

For instance, he said, in a 2.2-acre area in Bongshal, there are 77 structures with 316 dwelling units. If rearranged, the same area can accommodate eight 24-storey buildings with 768 apartments ensuring wide road, car parking facility, commercial spaces, community centre and mosques.

In another example, he said as per current building rules, an owner of a three-katha land beside a 20-foot wide road in the old part of the city can erect a six-storey building with a 1,296-square-foot floor each. In case of a

narrower road, it will be a three- or four-storey building.

But by merging adjoining land plots, the same landowner will get share of the collective benefits of car parking, commercial spaces and some green space, he said, adding that the redevelopment will increase the value of the property.

However, some residents of the old part of the city attending the meeting said they had no trust in Rajdhani Unnyan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) as to how sincerely they would do the complicated job, and called upon them to replicate the idea elsewhere first.

DSCC Mayor Khokon said Rajuk could replicate the idea on a seven-acre land owned by the city corporation in Tantibazar to encourage Old Dhaka residents.

Rajuk Chairman Md Abdur Rahman along with senior officials of Rajuk and the city corporation was present.

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