



NO GREATER LOVE... A newborn takes centre-stage in her parents' first Valentine's Day celebration since her birth. The parents say they married out of love, and the child is their biggest treasure.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Govt drafting law to ensure clean air

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is drafting a law to ensure clean air -- keeping provisions to hold polluters, including companies and public agencies, accountable.

A draft copy of the proposed Clean Air Act says a convicted person can receive less than two years' imprisonment for first offence, and between two and 10 years' imprisonment for repeated offence.

The draft law, which incorporates 32 sections and some sub-sections, was shared with the media during a workshop at Hotel InterContinental Dhaka yesterday.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change arranged the workshop to consult several aspects of the law with different stakeholders.

Sultan Ahmed, director general of the Department of Environment (DoE), said they are hopeful about enacting a timely law which will help ensure "clean air -- a necessity for good health".

The draft copy has been discussed at different levels with stakeholders, he said, welcoming participants at the workshop.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association -- which is a stakeholder in preparing the draft law -- said several countries have given emphasis on air pollution and also enacted extensive laws.

The law will be instrumental in safeguarding environment in Bangladesh, she hoped while presenting a paper on it.

A final copy of the draft law will be prepared within March. Before that, further opinions from stakeholders will be sought, she added.

As per section 25 (3) of the draft law, the DoE may order relocation, closure, suspension of development, construction or operation of stationary sources of air pollution until proper measures to protect the environment are put in place.

A stationary source punished by the DoE under section 25 (3) shall face permanent closure if it's found guilty for a third offence.

Section 7 of the draft law says the government may, by notification in the official gazette, declare an area "critical (non-attainment) or special control area".

An Air Pollution Control Advisory Council comprising of 29 members will be constituted by the government with the environment, forests, and climate change minister as its chairperson, says section 11 (1) of the draft law.

The DoE shall be the primary agency responsible for implementing measures concerning air quality and the implementation of the act, says section 14 (1).

As per section 15, an annual National Air Quality Status Report will be prepared by DoE.

As per section 26 (1), where an offence under this act has been committed by a company, every person who was directly in charge of the conduct of business of the company shall be deemed guilty.

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DU CSU POLLING CENTRES Left students issue 4-day ultimatum to VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, yesterday gave Dhaka University (DU) administration a four-day ultimatum to set up polling centres outside dormitories for Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) election, to be held on March 11.

They also demanded that democratic environment be ensured on the campus in order to hold the polls peacefully.

The Jote declared to lay siege to the Vice Chancellor's office on Monday if their demands are not met.

To press home their demands, Jote activists brought out a procession at 12:30 pm on campus which ended in front of the VC office, after parading through Arts building and Faculty of Business Studies area.

Speaking there, coordinator of the Jote, Iqbal Kabir alleged that dominance and occupation of the ruling party's student front prevails in dormitories and it might manipulate the election.

"Most student organisations, including ours, have been demanding that polling centres be set up in academic buildings, but the administration has not paid heed to our demands --

giving advantage to Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). We think that this step would push the university towards an undemocratic situation," he added.

Meanwhile, Sammito Shikharthi Sangsad, a platform comprising of 22 socio-cultural organisations of Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) extended their support to the administration's decision to hold the polls inside halls yesterday at a press conference in Madhur Canteen. BCL formed this platform before December 30

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Books for valentine

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Just a day after Pahela Falgun, the Amar Ekushey book fair was once again bustling with young couples yesterday, this time clad in red instead of yellow on the occasion of Valentine's Day.

Many were seen buying books as gifts for their loved ones.

"Our first marriage anniversary is this month. It is truly a lovely feeling to visit the book fair on this special month, particularly with the person who loves to read," said Natasha, nudging her husband Raju.

"I have bought my favourite collection of Humayun Ahmed's short stories for my husband," she said.

Some couples visited the fair in matching outfits, and enjoyed their

time browsing books at different stalls.

Hridita Ahmed and Md Faizul were visiting Somoy Prokashon's stall, both wearing red.

"We are looking for books to gift each other. We met three years ago, and since then we have a tradition of buying each other books from the fair," said Faizul, adding that they are planning to get married this year.

With the month-long book fair at its midpoint, book sales have increased since the early days of February. According to publishers, fiction was a popular seller on Valentine's Day.

Monirul Hoque, publisher of Ananya, said, "All sorts of books are

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