



Activists led by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) form a human chain in front of "Argha", a green space on a road island near Science Laboratory intersection, demanding its preservation and stopping construction of a multi-storey building. They alleged that the government has handed over this public space to a commercial organisation.

Ensure democratic space for civil society, media

Speakers say at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People's participation and inclusion of minority voices in policymaking are key to democracy and good governance, academics and civil society leaders said yesterday. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to create space for civil society and media to make democracy work and ensure rights of all citizens, they opined.

The observations came at a roundtable on democracy in Switzerland and Bangladesh, organised by the Embassy of Switzerland in association with The Daily Star, at the latter's conference room.

Swiss scholar Peter Niggli said people in Switzerland do not delegate political decision-making exclusively to the elected government, and can force a vote on parliamentary decisions.

Swiss Ambassador Rene Holenstein said people of Bangladesh -- who gained independence through a war in 1971 -- aspire for universal democratic practices that have intrinsic values such as power sharing, consensus building, citizens' participation, inclusion and gender equality.

Switzerland, as a long-standing friend of Bangladesh, will continue promoting the rights of the poor, disadvantaged and women, he said, adding that democracy cannot be exported, nor its model replicated; each country must find its own system of democracy.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the Swiss model of democracy demonstrates effective participatory social accountability.

The government needs to create and sustain a wide enough space for people to raise their voices, and people also need to

be aware of their rights and responsibilities -- having the ability to dissent and engage with power holders, he added.

However, he regretted that Bangladesh is getting used to "unqualified concentration of power, deep politicisation and dysfunctionality of key institutions in accountability and rule of law."

Also, there is intolerance of dissent, severe shrinking of space for civil society and media thanks to some draconian laws and policies, Iftekharuzzaman said.

"Politics is becoming the dominant factor in crime and corruption, and the key driving force behind systematic violation of fundamental rights -- including freedom of expression and association -- as well as behind pervasive impunity," he added.

Prof Dilara Chowdhury of North South University said people's participation in the policy-making process in Bangladesh is marginal. People nowadays do not even talk about politics because they are afraid and feel hopeless, the political analyst added.

There are also no opponents in the parliament or on the streets, she said, adding that democracy without opposition is dysfunctional.

Raja Devasish Roy, chief of Chakma Circle, said while the government does not interfere in the hill people's customary laws, there is discrimination in political and social spheres.

For example, Jana Sanghati Samiti, a political party of the hill people, was not registered by the Election Commission because there are some rules that require certain number of votes. He suggested proportional representation of small political parties in the parliament and government.

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Remove illegal structures from parking spaces: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to take necessary steps to remove unauthorised structures -- including shops -- from roadside car parking spaces in Dhaka, to ease traffic congestion.

Delivering a verdict on a writ petition, the court asked Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) to issue a public notice to owners of illegal structures to remove those within a month.

Rajuk was asked to circulate the notice through two widely-circulated Bangla newspapers and an English newspaper, and authorised officers of Rajuk will inform the matter to owners, as per the court order.

If the illegal structures are not removed by the deadline, then Rajuk, Dhaka north and south city corporations and Dhaka Metropolitan Police will demolish those in next six months, the court said.

The HC also asked authorities concerned to take legal action against those who constructed the unauthorised structures, and take the demolition cost from them in

accordance with law.

Dhaka north and south city corporations were also directed to submit progress reports before the court every three months.

The bench of Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the verdict following a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2015, seeking necessary orders to this effect.

During yesterday's hearing, the HC observed that the unauthorised structures have been built in violation of relevant laws, due to authorities' negligence.

According to a Rajuk report, 208 unauthorised structures have been built on car parking spaces in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara, which reflects the situation of Dhaka city, the court observed.

HRPB filed the writ petition as a public interest litigation on December 14, 2015 saying unauthorised structures are a cause of traffic congestion in the city. It also said owners had built shops and businesses on the ground floors of buildings which were supposed to be for car parking.

Rickshaws to be banned on 3 roads

DSCC mayor announces drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three roads of the capital will be made off-limits to rickshaws from July 7 to improve the traffic situation.

The roads are Kuril to Sayedabad via Rampura and Khilgaon, Gabtoli to Azimpur via Asad Gate, and Science Laboratory intersection to Shahbagh intersection.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon said this after emerging from a meeting of a special committee formed in this regard at his office yesterday. He also said that they will take steps to clear footpaths of the three roads from grabbers and remove unauthorised vehicles during a drive.

Talking to journalists, Mayor Khokon said the two city corporations of Dhaka will begin the weeklong drive on the selected roads to implement the committee's agenda. City corporation officials and traffic division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police will work together.

After one week, the committee will hold another meeting to evaluate the outcome of the drive and decide the next course of action. Rajuk will also conduct simultaneous drives to demolish illegal structures on the roads, he added.

Gradually streets of Dhaka will be freed from footpath-grabbers, Mayor Khokon said.

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Speakers at the roundtable.

PHOTO: STAR

DHAKA TODAY

- EXHIBITION**
Implicit
Venue: Kalakendra, Mohammadpur
Time: 4:30pm
- CHARITY SHOW**
Film screening for Jahangirnagar University student
Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani
Time: 6pm
- PERFORMANCE**
Open mic for young talents
Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi
Time: 4pm
- APPAREL SHOWCASE**
Collection by Indian fashion designers
Venue: Amari Dhaka, Gulshan 2
Time: 11am
- WORKSHOP**
Cyber Security
Venue: Creative IT Institute, Dhanmondi
Time: 2pm
- THEATRE**
Bhangabanga
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 7pm

'Please bring my father back'

Missing IT professional's son pleads to PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The son of missing IT professional Ataur Rahman Shahin yesterday pleaded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her direction on the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to rescue his father.

"Please bring my father back to me," nine-year-old Tashdeed Aan Nafee, a student of class four at European Standard School, made an emotional appeal at a press conference in the city.

His father remained missing since May 2, after unidentified men shoved him into a microbus in front of Akij House at Tejgaon Industrial area as he was waiting there for a ride-sharing service personnel to pick him up.

"My father was supposed to return home that evening. But he has remained traceless for two months... I want his safe return," a distressed Nafee said.

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'We don't want to tilt one way or another'

Dr Gowher Rizvi says about diplomatic, economic ties with India and China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has so far maintained traditional diplomatic relations, and also opened up to trade and economic relationship with China and other countries, Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi said yesterday.

The country cannot "remain aloof" from China's Belt and Road Initiative, because it has important opportunities to take advantage of becoming a developed nation by 2041, he said at a seminar on "Bangladesh-India Cooperation in the Changing Regional and Global Context". Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) arranged the seminar on its premises in the capital.

"That is not to say, we want to tilt in one way or another... In fact, it is not even a question. We are a sovereign state and we know how to maintain our independent position," he said.

A delegation of New Delhi-based think tank, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), took part in the seminar, alongside BISS researchers, officials from different ministries, representatives from foreign missions, businesspersons and academia.

Addressing the seminar's inaugural ceremony, Dr Rizvi said Bangladesh definitely wants to be a part of the Indo-Pacific initiative, which is a win-win opportunity.

"We have our priorities. Our priorities are elimination of poverty, literacy, prevention of food shortage, and ensuring a prosperous, peaceful, liberal, and secular democracy," he said.

Dr Rizvi said Bangladesh's relationship with India is at the "centre of its foreign policies".

"However, we also have other neighbours. We also have to take them into account and we cannot ignore them or we cannot turn our back to them," he added.

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Rein in air pollution immediately

Experts urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and city planners at a discussion yesterday urged the government to take strict measures to check air pollution in Dhaka immediately as it has become one of the biggest threats to public health nowadays.

They suggested that the authority should increase green coverage in the city through tree plantation and rooftop gardening, restrict pollution caused by vehicles and construction sites, and punish the people who are responsible for it.

Three non-government organisations -- Aranyak Foundation, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association and IUCN Bangladesh -- jointly organised the event at the Department of Environment auditorium in the capital, on the occasion of World Environment Day which was observed on June 5.

Citing recent studies, eminent environmentalist and water resources expert Prof Ainun Nishat said Dhaka has ranked second among cities with the worst air pollution, which is alarming.

"We can prevent the pollution through tree plantation. Infrastructures should be built keeping the greenery

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Green papaya: A powerhouse of nutrients

Green papaya, commonly known as *kacha pepe* in Bangladesh, is a common item in Bengali cuisine. It can be found in the form of a vegetable or a fruit. Unripe green papaya is consumed as a vegetable. Curries with shrimp and hilsha fish are among the popular food items made with green papaya. Dessert items like *halwa* are also made with green papaya. Green papaya is not only a favourite ingredient in Bengali cuisine but is also a powerhouse of nutrients.

Green papaya is a great source of Vitamin C, E and A. One of the most significant nutritional benefits of green papaya is its ability to cure menstrual pain. Consuming a mixture of papaya leaves with tamarind and salt along with water helps relieve women of menstrual pain. Green papaya is also beneficial for curing acne, skin infections and wounds as well. Green papaya controls flow of blood, and helps maintain proper blood pressure. It regulates harmful sodium effects in the body--thus providing protection against heart diseases. Green papaya is very useful for maintaining fitness. The presence of antioxidants in green papaya helps to burn calories and extra fat deposits. Green papaya contains two very powerful enzymes called papain and chymopapain, which help in the breakdown of fat, proteins, and carbohydrates, thus helping acquire a healthy metabolism.

Md Selim Hossain, a papaya farmer from Tirerhat, Jashore, shares his experience of growing this vegetable. He shares that green papaya grows well in a tropical, warm climate where the level of humidity and temperature is high. Though they can grow in a variety of soils, rich, sandy loam soil is usually ideal for papaya plantation. Initially, the saplings are sowed 15 days after ploughing the land. Fertilisers such as TSP, urea and potash are applied in the land



twice every month at an interval of 15 days. Pesticides such as antracol and indofil are applied once or twice a month. The fruits are collected two months after the plant's maturity, at an interval of three days. Only the green papayas are harvested. Md Selim says that good harvest of green papaya can be obtained for 8-9 months of the year.

Md Selim, along with many farmers of the area, provides vegetables for Shwapno under the Shuddho project. According to Selim, this initiative has helped him adopt the right agricultural practices for growing green papaya, especially in terms of learning about how much fertiliser or pesticide should be used. Farmers also have an opportunity to learn about the interval period between pesticide application and harvesting, known as the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI).

Green papaya is a very effective source of nutrients and vitamins that is good for health and wellness. So, the next time you catch a glimpse of green papaya in the vegetable section, do not forget to grab it and put it in your basket!

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

