



Involve retired officials in cleanliness drives in Dhaka

PM directs authorities

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities to involve retired government officials and senior citizens in neighbourhood-level cleanliness campaigns as part of his vision for a "Clean Dhaka, Green Dhaka".

The directive came at a review meeting on Dhaka's cleanliness activities, chaired by the prime minister at his office. LGRD State Minister Mir Shahe Alam disclosed this at a briefing at the PMO later in the afternoon.

He said around 39,000 retired government officials and employees live in Dhaka, and their experience could be used for public welfare.

"The prime minister has directed us to involve these retired officials in the programme in every neighbourhood across the

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Dinesh Chandra championed a pluralistic Bangalee identity

Speakers call for preserving his legacy at Star Itihas Adda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dinesh Chandra Sen's contributions to Bangalee folk literature have shaped the region's cultural identity, and preserving his legacy is essential to inspiring future generations, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They highlighted Sen's role in documenting folk traditions, challenging colonial and elitist biases, and promoting an inclusive and pluralistic Bangalee identity rooted in the shared heritage of Hindus and Muslims.

They said Sen brought rural voices, particularly those of marginalised communities, into mainstream literary history and helped preserve Bengal's rich oral traditions.

They stressed the need to take his work beyond academic institutions and make it accessible to wider audiences, noting that opportunities to discuss his contributions outside formal academic circles remain limited.

The remarks came at the 37th edition of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled "Dinesh Chandra Sen and Our Debt", held at The Daily Star Centre.

Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, joining virtually, said Dinesh Chandra Sen challenged the 19th-century Kolkata elite's prejudice against rural folk culture and recognised the contributions of both Hindu and Muslim communities to Bangla literature.

He said Sen's "Bangabhasha O Sahitya", published in 1896, broke with conventional literary histories by acknowledging Persian and Islamic influences on Bangalee writers and documenting rural folk traditions.

Despite opposition from sections of the educated Hindu elite, Sen collected folk songs, ballads and manuscripts, recognising them as expressions of Bangalee identity.



Participants at the 37th edition of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled "Dinesh Chandra Sen and Our Debt", held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

Sen viewed folk literature as an expression of ordinary people's philosophical wisdom and humanistic values, Chakrabarty said, adding, "Through collections such as 'Maimansingha Gitika', Sen highlighted the shared cultural heritage and communal harmony of Hindus and Muslims."

He also credited Sen with supporting emerging Muslim writers, particularly Jasimuddin, helping secure the publication of "Nokshi Kanthar Math" and its inclusion in the Calcutta University curriculum.

Sen's work, he said, reflected an inclusive vision of Bangalee identity that transcended class and religious divisions.

Researcher and essayist Prof Syed Azizul Haque said British colonial rulers portrayed Bangalees as lacking education, culture and tradition, while presenting Europeans as bringers of enlightenment.

This created an inferiority complex among the educated Bangalee elite, who often equated English proficiency with enlightenment and undervalued their own language and heritage, he said.

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IN FOCUS

Proposed cyber law could stifle govt criticism

Speakers demand removal of repressive provisions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 18 people were arrested for expressing their views, including criticism of the prime minister, ministers and government representatives, between February 17 and November 13 this year, after the BNP-led government took office, according to rights organisation Odhikar.

The organisation disclosed the figure at a discussion titled "Crisis of Freedom of Expression and Democratic System" in Dhaka yesterday.

Speakers warned that the proposed Cyber Security (Amendment) Act 2026 could criminalise online expression, restrict criticism of the government and allow arbitrary enforcement. They called for repealing its repressive provisions.

Jamaat MP Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem said businesspeople were complaining about worsening business conditions, their inability to pay workers' salaries and having to rent out their shops to survive.

He warned that anyone speaking publicly about such problems could face arrest on allegations of spreading misinformation or rumours under the proposed law.

He said even as an elected lawmaker, he feared arrest for criticising the government.

"Imagine the kind of fear this law could create among ordinary people."

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Local govt sidelined in urban planning

Speakers blame centralised decisions, bureaucratic control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local government institutions are being sidelined in urban planning and development, weakening city corporations and municipalities and worsening infrastructure problems and public suffering, speakers at a dialogue said yesterday.

They blamed unilateral decisions by development authorities, bureaucratic complexities and political interference for reducing city corporations largely to waste management and mosquito control agencies.

The dialogue was organised by the Urban Development Journalists' Forum Bangladesh (UDJFB) at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka.

Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of Institute for Planning and Development, said urban planning decisions were increasingly influenced by business interests and bureaucrats, leaving local government institutions with little say.

KEY ISSUES

- City corporations excluded from major decisions
- Poor coordination hampers master plans
- High-rises strain roads, utilities and services
- Over half of municipal posts vacant

He alleged that amendments to the Detailed Area Plan were sometimes made without transparency or public

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80% of new healthcare workers to be women

Says Zubaida

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is recruiting 1 lakh healthcare workers, 80 percent of them women, to provide preventive healthcare services at people's doorsteps, Dr Zubaida Rahman, vice-president of the Ziaur Rahman Foundation, said yesterday.

She made the announcement at a programme marking the 12th

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'She's still hurting the nation even after fleeing'

Says Shafiqur on Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Opposition Leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who has been sentenced to death, continues to cause suffering to the nation even after fleeing the country.

"Even after fleeing, she is causing pain to the nation. Remember, this nation does not wake up easily. But once it does, it does not let go," he said while speaking at a youth conference in Dhaka.

Without directly referring to Hasina's announcement that she would return home, he said Jamaat would hold a series of programmes throughout December and mobilise all its strength to make them successful. "It is not to stop anyone. There will be no need to stop her. If she is so good, she would not have left. None of our leaders left the country..."

Legal gaps hinder justice for custodial torture victims

Speakers call for accountability, stronger safeguards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Loopholes in the law on custodial torture and death are allowing accused individuals to escape punishment, rights activists said at a discussion yesterday.

They called for amendments to the law, an independent body to investigate allegations of custodial torture and death, increased compensation for victims, and protection for victims and their families.

The discussion, organised by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka, was attended by lawyers, rights activists, victims of custodial torture and families of those who died in custody.

Participants called for amendments to the law, an independent body to probe allegations, increased compensation for victims, and protection for victims and their families.

Supreme Court lawyer Qazi Zahed Iqbal said the Torture and Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act, 2013, has no provision for abetment.

"As a result, accused persons who are not members of law enforcement

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