

'Clash between MPs, local govt main barrier'

State minister for the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Mashiur Rahman Ranga said on Wednesday a clash between the Member of Parliament and elected local government officials is the main barrier to ensuring services to the people, reports UNB. He made the remarks while addressing a national conference on Local Governance Programme of Sharique project as chief guest jointly organized by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), HELVETAS Swiss Interco operation, Bangladesh and BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) in a hotel of the city. The day-long conference was organized to celebrate a decade of Sharique project's activities to share its learning and experiences through publication, speech and interactive panel discussions. He said "There is no clash between Members of Parliament and locally elected government representatives to provide good services to the people. These components should work complementing each other for the betterment of the country." "Our government is working to strengthen and empower the local government. We need more time to ensure the empowerment of the local government beyond the party interest. As part of our empowerment of the local government, we have already ensured accountability to finish the project in due time," said Mashiur Rahman Ranga. State minister for LGRD also said they will discuss the increase of the honorarium of the elected members of local government and create new posts for local government. He also advised to work for increasing revenue in their own way as they can spend more for the people. Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh Christian Fotsch praised Bangladesh for ensuring the rights of women to vote so early. Though his country gained independence almost 400 years ago, the right to vote for the women was ensured only in 1971. Former Member of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and member for the ministry of Panchayet Raj of India Mani Shankar Aiyar delivered his lecture on 'the State of local governance in India from the perspective of local economic development and inclusiveness'. He said "It's a big challenge to coordinate the root level

elected member with government. The successful government can manage this." The third phase of the project focuses on the strategic planning and fiscal autonomy of the local governments, as well as poverty reduction and social inclusiveness to contribute to the empowerment of local citizens to make and implement inclusive, gender sensitive and pro-poor collective choices about their lives and livelihoods through more democratic, transparent, inclusive and effective local government systems. A book launching ceremony of the Sharique Publication (Handbook) was held while a panel discussion was held with the presentation of three different papers. Country Director of HELVETAS Swiss Interco operation, Bangladesh Kaspar Grossenbacher and chairman of the parliamentary standing committee for the ministry of LGRD and Co-operatives Abul Hasnat Abdullah also spoke at the event.

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