

Sexual harassment in workplace

Call to raise awareness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday called for raising awareness about sexual harassment in the workplace for its prevention.

They said it is a serious punishable offence and should be made an issue of comprehensive public discourse seeking preventive policies.

The Forum on Women in Security and International Affairs (FOWSIA) organised the dialogue at the CIRDP auditorium. Dr. Shahnaz Huda of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper on 'Sexual harassment and professional women: Perspectives, experiences and responses'.

"Sexual harassment is a behaviour with sexual connotations, which to the recipient is offensive, unwanted,

unwelcome, unsolicited, and non-consensual," Dr. Shahnaz said.

But in most cases, the victims do not protest for fear of reprisal, losing job, adverse reaction from family, and societal condemnation, according to the paper.

Prof. Habiba Khatun said, "Families must extend support to a woman in handling the issue. So, families should be enlightened through orientation in this regard."

Actress Subarna Mustafa said, "Awareness should be raised among the women even before they undertake their professions."

Salma Ali of Bangladesh Mahila Ainjibi Samity said, "Legally, it often turns out to be difficult or impossible to affirm an allegation of sexual harassment due to absence of witness."

She called on the media to play an

important role in addressing the issue.

"It's a matter of social attitudes towards women," said Assistant Commissioner of DMP Rasheda Sultana. "Sexual harassment and gender discrimination indicate the society does not show due respect to women."

Sheepa Hafiza of BRAC said, "In Bangladeshi cultural and social context, women are hardly allowed to voice their complaint against harassment."

Citing a number of incidents, Habibur Rahman of CARE Bangladesh said his organisation formulated separate policies in 1997 to prevent sexual harassment of professional women.

The dialogue was moderated by Farah Kabir.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote took out a procession yesterday as part of its programmes on the occasion of National Mourning Day. The Jote demands immediate execution of the verdict in Bangabandhu murder case.

Contraband goods seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Bangladesh Coastguard recovered contraband goods worth Tk 45.41 lakh and arrested 20 people at coastal areas in the last 15 days.

The contraband goods included Indian saree, colour television, VCD,

refrigerator, whisky of various brands and Urea fertilizer.

The coastguards also arrested seven pirates when they were trying to commit dacoity in the foreign vessels anchored at Chittagong port.

They also arrested six ocean pirates at Mongla and seven robbers in Sundarbans area.

