



SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

#### Women must take rightful place in world's decision-making

The theme of this year's International Women's Day -- the role of women in decision-making -- is central to the advancement of women around the world, and to the progress of humankind as a whole. As the Beijing Declaration tells us, "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace"

The international community is finally beginning to understand a fundamental principle: women are every bit as affected as any man by the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century -- in economic and social development, as well as in peace and security. Often, they are more affected. It is, therefore, right and indeed necessary that women should be engaged in the decision-making processes in all areas, with equal strength and in equal numbers.

The world is also starting to grasp that there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health and education than the empowerment of women and girls. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended. We do have achievements to celebrate in women's representation around the world. In January of this year, the proportion of women in national parliaments reached a new global high

There are now 11 women Heads of State or Government, in countries on every continent. And three countries - Chile, Spain and Sweden now have gender parity in Government. But we have far, far more to do. The rate of progress overall is slow.

Let us remember that in individual countries, the increase in the number of women in decision-making has not happened by itself. Rather, it is often the result of institutional and electoral initiatives, such as the adoption of goals and quotas, political party commitment and sustained mobilization. It is also the result of targeted and concerted measures to improve the balance between life and work. Those are lessons every nation -- and the United Nations -- need to take very

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders declared that "progress for women is progress for all". On this International Women's Day, let us rededicate ourselves to demonstrating the truth behind those words. Let us ensure that half the world's population takes up its rightful place in the world's decision-making.

## monitor



### Report on violence against women in Bangladesh in 2006



In the last five year two month women were the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh that witnessed an alarming increase in human rights violations. From 1 January 2001 to 28 February 2006 a sum of 5217 women and children were raped across the country. Among them 614women were killed after raped and 61 women committed suicide after being violated. Besides, a total of 1575 women found to be victimized of dowry related violence. Of them 1009 women were killed, 420 were brutally tortured, 55 found acid burns. 84 committed suicide and 7 were divorced due to dowry. Odhikar, a human rights organization, prepared a press release on violence against women on the occasion of International Women Day 2006 on the basis of reports published in 14 National leading dailies and Odhikar's own network.

According to Odhikar report regarding violence against women, in the last two-month 115 women were raped and 21 were killed after rape. Odhikar reports that a total of 907 women and children were raped in 2005. Among them, 126 were killed after rape, 14 allegedly committed suicide after the rape. In the year 2004, a total of 886 women were raped. Among them 116 killed after the raped and 13 women committed suicide due to rape. Similarly, 1336 women were raped in 2003. Among them 142 were killed after rape and 17 committed suicide after being violated. Meanwhile 1350 women were raped in 2002. Of them 114 were killed after rape and 12 women took their life after being raped. In the year 2001 623 women were raped. Among them 95 were killed and 3 committed suicide

Odhikar's report on women's human rights situation in the country also express that a total of 1073 women were victimized of acid violence. Among them 113 women in 2005, 222 women in 2004, 212 in 2003, 318 in 2002 and 192 women were victimized of acid in 2001 respectively. Another 16 were attacked with in the month of January-February 2006. Furthermore, a total of 1575 women were victimized due to dowry related matters during the same period. Among them, 1009 were brutally killed, 420 tortured, 55 victimized by acid violence, 7 women was divorced and 84 committed suicide due to unremitting dowry demands.

In 2005, 227 were killed, 123 were heartlessly tortured, 15 victimized by acid violence and 19 women committed suicide due to constant dowry demands. In the year 2004, 165 women were killed, 77 tortured, 13 women acid burnt, one was divorced and 11 committed suicide due to dowry. Similarly 261 women were killed. 85 were tortured, 1 was divorced and 23 women committed suicide due to dowry related violence in 2003. On the other hand, 191 women were killed, 90 tortured, 14 women acid burnt, one was divorced and 28 committed suicide due to dowry related violence. In the year 2001, 160 women were killed, 31 tortured, 3 women were given divorce and 3 were committed suicide due to constant dowry demands.

Source: Odhikar.

HUMAN RIGI*analysis* 

FACILITATING THE FULFILLMENT OF STATE OBLIGATIONS

# Towards women's equality

#### Background and international context

During the last two decades, many global initiatives had been taken to promote and enforce women's rights. They include the Declaration of the Decade for Women (1975-85), the adoption of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 (ratified by

Bangladesh in 1984), four World Conferences on Women, the adoption by consensus of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). In spite of all these initiatives, progress in the achievement of women's rights has been slow world-wide.

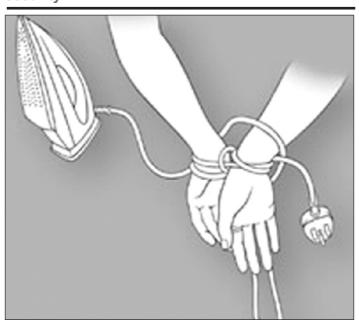
When the assessment of the implementation of the forwardlooking strategies was carried out for the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was acknowledged that a decade after Nairobi, equality between and men has not been achieved. The Fourth World Conference on Women has brought fresh commitment to the realisation of women's equal rights. This conference again emphasised that State actions at national level in fulfilling their obligations to women have yet to be systematically monitored and used as a base by women for advocacy.

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality with men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom, in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. Article 1)

Also worldwide there is increasing recognition of the prevalence and magnitude of violence against women. It is increasingly seen as a violation of women's rights and a barrier to women enjoyment of other rights. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to eniov rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men "Gender-based violence, which impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms under general international law or under human rights conventions, is discrimination within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention." (CEDAW GR 19, para 7)

The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivaInternational Women's Day

The driving force behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) International Women's Day, 8 March, was marked for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland in 1911. As part of the peace movement brewing on the eve of World War I, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. In December 1977 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. International Women's Day is celebrated to recognise that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women, and to acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and



tions of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence". (CEDAW GR 19, para 6)

By ratifying the Convention, the Bangladesh Government binds itself to implementing its provisions. Article Two on State obliga-tions states that "State parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women". This includes abolishing all existing laws, customs and regulations that are discriminatory, establishing legal protection for women's rights, and taking "appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise.

The platform of action elaborates

the Platform has delineated institualso sees a role for nonorganisations in creating a social, economic, political and intellectual the Platform for Action and the

#### Situation of women in Bangladesh

on a number of strategic objectives and actions toaddress certain critical areas of concern. Moreover, tional arrangements that lay down guidelines for government action and accountability. The Platform governmental and grass-roots climate necessary for change. Such organisations also play a key role in monitoring the implementation of action taken by governments to achieve equality between men and women (IWRAW, Concept paper,

Following the declaration of UN Decade of Women (1976-85), the Government of Bangladesh and

some NGOs have undertaken several programmes for the advancement of women. Simultaneously the women's movement has played an important role in enhancing women's participation in every sphere of life in order to achieve equality. As a result, over the last two decades, women in Bangladesh have gradually become more visible in the labour force, in

development programmes and local

institutions such as local govern-

ment bodies

The Bangladesh Constitution and the general laws of the country entitle women to equal rights and status to those of men in public life, but non-discrimination in the private sphere is not guaranteed. Consequently there are significant disparities between men and women in all realms of life. Lack of equal access to economic opportunities, education, health services and their lesser role in decision making perpetuate women's subordination to men and susceptibility to violence. All sources of information

violence against women. Since the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Government of Bangladesh has also identified violence against women as a priority issue. Given this recognition, incidences of violence against women today receive greater attention than they did a decade ago. All

be it news reports, records from

State institutions or research show

that there is an increasing trend of

State records show an increased incidence of violence but this may due to the fact that special legal provisions ensure that such cases are now recorded more precisely than they were two decades ago Some argue that there is a rising trend of all forms of violence but until more reliable longitudinal data is available, one cannot confidently conclude that in general violence against women is increasing (Azim,

Culturally and socially the family is still seen as the rightful place for women and yet it is within this arena where power relations are often played out. It is on the one hand, a source for positive nurturing and caring where individuals bond through mutual respect and love. But on the other hand, in many cases, it becomes the site for discrimination, deprivation and exploitation. It is where discriminatory socialisation processes occur, which in turn result in promoting and justifying violence against women (Sultan, 1997).

Source: A base line report on violence agains women in Bangladesh, prepared by Naripokkho and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

## Biggest arms haul in CHT in 3 years



the biggest arms haul in the last three years in this hilly area close to Myanmar border, an army spokesman said. The cache includes sophisticated firearms including five AK47 rifles, two M16 rifles, one M1-A1 heavy machinegun, one 21-A1 machinegun, one German-made G3 light machinegun (LMG), one G3 rifle, one 7.62 bore rifle, one heavy SBBL gun, two SBBL guns and one Russian-made sub-machine carbine. Besides, 18 rocket shells, one two-inch mortar, 12 grenades, 47 anti-personnel mines including 27 US-made ones, 31 explosives-charged rocket launchers, one 40mm rocket launcher, 19 SMG magazines, eight M16 rifle magazines, three G3 LMG magazines and 7,000 bullets were recovered from the spot. -The Daily Star, March 5.

ever could not capture any of the criminals during the operation. This was

#### EC to wait for publication of voter list as appeal pending

The Election Commission (EC) will have to wait for some more time to schedule publication of the draft and final voter rolls as its appeal against the High Court's (HC) January 4 directives is still pending. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday deferred for the fifth time the hearing on the appeal against the HC directives for revising the existing electoral roll. It fixed March 12 as the date for hearing. Work of preparing the draft voter list that began on February 21 too is scheduled for completion by the same date. The EC Secretariat had informed the field level officials that they would be issued with the dates for publication of the draft and final rolls later as per the commission's decision and the Appellate Division's ruling on the appeal. "Whatever it is, we must comply with the court's decision. We hope we will still be able to complete preparation of the voter list," Election Commissioner SM Zakaria told journalists at his office. The EC began the task of preparing a fresh voter list on January 1 amid controversy and litigation over the chief election commissioner's (CEC) unilateral decision to go for a fresh roll. -The Daily star, March 6.

#### Tyrant Bangla Bhai finally captured

Bangla Bhai, the tyrant who once spread Islamic militancy with the administration's protection, was captured wounded from a remote Mymensingh nideout after skirmishes with the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). As the splinter-hit and explosive-burned militant top gun was carted along the rutted roads of Rampur village in Muktagachha, the curtain dropped on his reign of terror in the northern Bangladesh where he killed and tortured scores amid the government's denial about his existence. Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai was flown to Dhaka by a helicopter and admitted to BDR Hospital after treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. Despite having splinter wounds in the abdomen and burns almost all over his body, his condition is now stable, the state minister for home said. Bangla Bhai's arrest came four days after the dramatic surrender of JMB supremo Shaekh Abdur Rahman. Five months ago the government announced Tk 50 lakh bounty on the head of Bangla Bhai, the operations commander of banned Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). -The Daily Star, March 7.

#### World wants strong probe, open trial

Foreign diplomats in Dhaka at a meeting with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan strongly advocated vigorous investigation and trial of Islamist militants in a "transparent and open" manner. The US envoy also expressed Washington's willingness to assist Dhaka in investigating the cases involving the recently captured top two JMB masterminds--Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai. The foreign diplomats highly appreciated the government and the law enforcement agencies for their efforts in capturing the most-wanted militant leaders and called for bringing the perpetrators to justice so that the crimes are not repeated. Terrorism is never defeated: it needs continued efforts to combat terrors and religious extremists, the diplomats told the media, after an extensive briefing by Morshed at the state guesthouse Padma about the progress in "war on terror" in Bangladesh following the captures of the JMB linchpins. They said the "war" is not yet over. They also urged the government to make further efforts to arrive at a compromise with the opposition to institutionalise the country's democracy. -The Daily Star,

#### Dr Kamal asks govt to sack JIVIB-IINKEA MINISTERS

Dr Kamal Hossain has demanded the dismissal of ministers, including the Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Hague, who are accused of providing shelter to JMB militants and instigating militancy. "Suspend and hand over the identified ministers to the police immediately," the Gono Forum and Jatiya Oikya Mancha president asked the prime minister in a written statement at a press conference on "Terrorism, National Security: What needs to be done" at the Jatiya Press Club. Citing statistics and information on militant activities of Bangla Bhai, he said the tyrant leader and his men killed 16 people and disabled hundred others during April 2004 to January 2005. He demanded immediate formation of an independent national inquiry commission comprising three retired chief justices and experts for a neutral investigation on militancy and all militant bomb attacks in the country. "Unless the prime minister takes action against the ministers and orders the immediate investigation into the charges which are reportedly confirmed by Abdur Rahman, national security will continue to be in grave danger," he said. -BD News, March 8.

#### Fire Service Act Babar orders action against lawbreaking factories

Lutfozzaman Babar, state minister for home, has directed the director general (DG) of Fire Service and Civil Defence to take steps against the factories that are not following the code of conduct of Fire Service Act. "I will monitor the drive against those violating the laws and if necessary I will amend the Fire Service Act," Babar said. He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Fire Service and Civil Defence Week-2006 at Mirpur training complex. He said there have been casualties in fire incidents as many factories lack the necessary firefighting equipment and are violating the code of conduct. According to the fire department, there were 7,135 fire ncidents across the country last year. These incidents left 54 people dead and caused an estimated loss of Tk 273 crore. Admitting the lack of modern emergency equipment, the state minister said the home ministry would formulate a proposal within a month to buy modern equipment for fighting fires and facilitating salvage operations in emergency situations like building collapse incidents. He said the proposal would be sent to the planning commission for approval. -The Daily Star, March 8.

### Kibria Killing

ing a plea for further inquiry into Kibria murder. After hearing both sides for an hour, a four-member Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain ordered the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Sylhet, to submit records of the murder case within a week. The court adjourned the hearing for a week by extending the stay on operation of the HC verdict until the next hearing on March 14. Within three hours of charge framing by the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Sylhet, against the 10 accused of Kibria killing, the Supreme Court on February 7 stayed for three weeks the proceedings of the case following a leave to appeal filed by Advocate Abdul Majid Khan, complainant of the case. Kibria and four others were killed in a grenade attack at Boiddyer Bazar in Habiganj on January 27 last year. Dr Kamal Hossain and Advocate Mahbubey Alam appeared for the petitioner while Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzaque Khan stood for the state. -UNB, Dhaka, March 8.

#### SC adjourns hearing on re-probe The Supreme Court (SC) adjourned the hearing of a leave to appeal petition

against a High Court (HC) verdict that affirmed the lower court's order reject-

### Corresponding with the Law Desk

Please send your mails, queries, and opinions to: Law Desk, The Pailly Star 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215; telephone 8124944,8124955,fax 8125155;email <dslawdesk@yahoo.co.uk,lawdesk@thedailystar.net</pre>

### LAW events

#### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2006

# 'Love in family, not violence'

CTION Network to Combat Violence Against Women (ANCVAW) has observed the International Women's Day 2006 with due solemnity and respect. The ANCVAW and its members organized different colorful events including rally, cultural Show, signature campaign and Candle light vigil at Dhaka. Celebrity performers from mass media, singer, writer participated in the day's programs.

Rally, Discussion session, Signature campaign and other programs has also been organized n 30 other districts all over the country with the participation of different organizations, civil society and people from all walks of life.

In Dhaka, the day's programs kicked of through a colorful rally from Manik Mia Avenue to Robindra Sorobor at Dhanmondi. Participants from ANCVAW Member organizations i.e. Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS), Rupantar, Odhikar, Padakhep, Samata, Steps Towards Development, Uttaran, and South Asia Partnership-Bangladesh (SAP-BD) attended the rally along with members from AED/BHRAP, USAID, mass media people, and other different development and cultural organizations

and people from all walks of life. The rally was followed by a cultural Show organized at

Cultural Program starts with the song by Street Children Theatre Group of Padakhep. The Chairperson of ANCVAW and Executive Director of SAP-BD. Sved Nurul Alam welcomed the audience and participants. In his speech, the ANCVAW Chairperson reiterated the need to protect women from domestic violence and all forms of violence. He also urged to all to bring women in the main stream of the development pro-The statement of ANCVAW was

read out by Ms. Upama Dasgupta, Assistant Program Coordinator, Samata, a member of ANCVAW. The ANCVAW statement claimed that right of decision-making is one of the important human rights. But women all over the world including Bangladesh are being deprived of this right. Lack of women's equal narticipation in decision-making is not only violating their human rights but also resulting into disproportionate representation of women and family issues in public policies. The root of women's marginalized position in public decision making lies in her marginalized position in family decision making. Under the existing patriarchal social structure, women are deprived of proper participation in family level decision-making. So they cannot gain knowledge, efficiency, and experience necessary for decisionmaking. In such vulnerable situation, women easily fall prey to

domestic violence. Physical, psy-

chological, sexual, economic and violence by husband and other family members gradually make women rightless or incapable of decision making even as an individ-Information provided by mass

media and various researches show that domestic violence is very high in Bangladesh. According to a research of AED/BHRAP, 67% married women of Bangladesh are victim of domestic violence. Domestic violence not only endangers human rights and human security of women but also obstruct their growth as a person who is confident, full of self-respect and capable of decision-making. Therefore, on the occasion of

ANCVAW would like to call upon all, let us prevent domestic violence through ensuring women's equal participation in decision making of family. The Signature Campaign also organized at the premise of the

international women's day 2006,

venue. Celebrities and other people in the audience signed on a long cloth to support the demand of separate law against domestic violence. A candle light vigil also observed in the program to stop the domestic violence and in solidarity with the women victim of domestic

-- Law desk