

UNICEF REPORT ON CHILDREN RELEASED

Gender equality brings 'double dividend' to women, children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women themselves are the most important catalyst for change and men can play a vital role in eliminating discrimination against women, reducing poverty and ensuring their empowerment, said a Unicef report issued on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the UN agency.

Gender equality in all spheres -- household, empowerment, politics and government -- produces the "double dividend" of benefiting both women and children, according to the report titled 'The State of the World's Children 2007'.

The Bangladesh national launch of the report was held at a city hotel yesterday.

The report showed that 62 percent of women in a region in Bangladesh have experienced physical or sexual violence by their intimate partners and that the rate of selective abortion of female foetus and infanticide remained high in Asia, especially in India and China.

A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute found that there is a clear link between regional differences in children's nutritional status and women's decision-making power, the report said, adding that over a

third of Bangladeshi women feel excluded from household decisions.

In South Asia, between 40 percent and 60 percent of women are underweight and approximately 45 percent of children were born with low birth weight in 2005 -- the highest incidence of underweight births in the world.

It further explained that the prevalence of under-nutrition among children under five in female-headed households compared with male-headed households was significantly lower in Bangladesh.

Although significant progress in engaging women in labour force was witnessed in recent decades, there has been considerably less advance on improving the conditions under which they work, the report said, emphasising the need to ensure equal opportunities to generate and manage income, which is a must to establish women's rights.

The report reveals the lack of awareness among women about their employment rights. "Fifty percent respondents from South Asia, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan agree or strongly agree that when jobs are scarce men should have more right to job."

Women's parliamentary representation has increased in recent times that reinforced, the rights of women and children in Egypt, France, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, South Africa and Sweden, the report said.

But in most cases women are underrepresented -- only 17 percent in parliaments worldwide, 14 percent of ministries and just 6 percent of the world's heads of government. In Bangladesh, 50 percent of women respondents think men make better political leaders than women.

Zafin Chowdhury, senior communication officer of Unicef Bangladesh, presented the report.

Appreciating the present ratio of gender parity in primary education, Unicef Representative Louis George Arsenault said discrimination against women in the household and in politics has a direct and positive effect on children.

Prof Ferdous Azim of Brac University lauded the holistic approach of the report and urged the people to put pressure on the government to implement international conventions to establish women's rights and ensure gender equality.

EDUCATION FOR ALL
DAM, EC sign
Tk 77cr deal

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has signed a contract with European Commission (EC) to contribute to the national programme in achieving UN MDG goals for Education for All Programme.

Ambassador Stefan Frowein, Head of the Delegation of the EC and DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam signed the contract on behalf of their respective sides at the office of the Delegation of the European Commission in the city on Sunday.

The project will be implemented in four years with a total investment of 8.86 Million Euro, equivalent to Tk 77 Cr. DAM will implement the project with five other national NGOs-- viz.-Plan- Bangladesh, CCDB, DOROP, PMUK and SUROVI-- in 68 upazilas under 24 districts.

It will specially cover coastal islands, haors, remote hilly areas in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), including slums in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur.

Under the project, 88,000 children, who do not go to school and dropout children, will be brought under non-formal primary education and 36,000 slow learners of the schools will receive remedial lessons.

Besides, 36,000 minor children will be covered under a pre-school programme.

Lifer goes
missing after
jumping
from ship

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One of the three life-sentenced prisoners in a bid to flee away jumped into the river from the rocket steamer on Sunday night while the police escort who also jumped immediately to nab him was rescued in unconscious state from a shoal in the morning.

Police Super Mashrur Rahman, Assistant Police Super Shakluzzaman and District Inspector of Police of Barisal Rezaul Huq acknowledged the fact.

They said Safiuddin Mridha, his brother Akbor Ali Mridha alias Liton and cousin Abdul Goni Sannayamat of Hoshnabad and Dhulia villages under Baufal upazila in Patuakhali district were sentenced to life in cases filed with Kaurul and Khilgaon Police Stations in Dhaka and serving their punishment in Dhaka Central Jail.

In order to appear before Barisal Speedy Trial Tribunal on January 18 to face the trial in two other cases, the convicts under armed police escort left Dhaka for Barisal on Sunday evening by boarding MV Shela.

At around 3:00am, Safiuddin who was in chain wanted to attend nature's call and while advancing towards the toilet he suddenly jumped into Gazaria river at Mehendiganj.

To nab him Constable Delwar also jumped into the river and both of them went missing.

Delwar was rescued in unconscious state yesterday morning by local people from a shoal at Darichar Khazuria and sent to Barisal in critical condition.

The other two convicts were handed over to Barisal Central Jail and a police team with speedboats and divers of fire service was sent to the spot in search of missing Safiuddin.

Prof Cravioto
new executive
director of
ICDDR, B

release.

Prof Terence H Hull announced this on behalf of the Centre's Board of Trustees.

He will replace Prof David A Sack, who has been in Bangladesh for more than 13 years.

Prof Hull stated, "The Board of Trustees believes Prof Cravioto is the right person to lead ICDDR,B in its continuing mission to develop and promote realistic solutions for the major health, population and nutrition problems facing the disadvantaged people of the world especially Bangladesh."

Prof Cravioto is a pediatrician with degrees in microbiology and public health from the University of London, who has been involved in research and teaching activities in his distinguished career. He has conducted research on the impact of diarrhoea due to E Coli and its effect on the growth and nutrition in the poor children in different areas of the world.



BNP Nomination Board headed by party chief Khaleda Zia interviews nomination seekers of Dhaka at her Banani office in the city yesterday.

Study links bird's brain cells to singing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Formation of brain cells in male birds is different than in female birds, which makes it possible for the male birds to sing, according to a scientific research by Timothy DeVooged, a professor of Cornell University, USA.

The research found that the male birds start practising sounds while young and their brains become matured in a different way than the female one. On the other hand, the brains of female birds are developed in such a way that they can judge the quality of songs of the male ones before choosing their mates.

Prof Timothy DeVooged, who has been studying the singing in songbirds and the brain regions responsible for learning, remembering and expressing song, revealed

the findings at a presentation at the zoology department of University of Dhaka yesterday.

"In baby birds' brains, song production areas are the same in both males and females. However, brain cells in these areas die in young females, thereby creating a difference with males. These cells remain in male birds throughout their lives," said Timothy.

When a young bird is one or two months old, it hears the songs of its father and other adult birds and memorises many of the sounds, he said.

If baby male birds are raised by females and never hear or learn a song, neurons in a major song production area only grow about 80 percent of their normal quota of synapses.

Timothy and his team have studied many birds, including tiger

finch and black-capped chickadees.

Prof Timothy said the level of male hormone goes up in adult male birds in the spring, causing neurons in the song production areas to grow more synapses, but these are lost when the breeding season is over.

Adult female birds of many species can compare the songs of different males and finally chooses its mate whose song is very attractive, he said.

As females keep choosing males on the basis of quality of songs, the males gradually sing better and better songs, which not only thrill the female birds but also enthrall the people, said the professor.

Presided over by Prof Latifa Gulshan Ara, the lecture session was also attended by Prof Anwar Hossain and Prof Kazi Zaker Hossain.

DU CONVOCATION
BCL ransacks
makeshift
construction

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of Awami League (AL), yesterday allegedly vandalised and set fire to makeshift construction for holding the convocation of Dhaka University (DU).

The 43rd Convocation of the DU is scheduled to be held at the central playground of the university on December 24.

Two BCL leaders claimed over phone that a group of BCL men led by DU unit President Sohail Rana Tipu and General Secretary Sazzad Saqib Badsha conducted the vandalism and set fire to the construction at around 6:00pm.

They did this so that the convocation is not held with the present controversial President as well as the Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government in the chair, sources said.

However, university employees at the playground told reporters that a group of unruly youths vandalised some chairs and a number of electric lights and tried to set fire but police barred them.

Proctor Prof AK Firoz Ahmed said the incident was unwarranted and he did not believe that the BCL had done it.

He said the convocation will be held on schedule and all is set for the convocation.

Security will be tightened to avert any further untoward incident, the proctor added.

Khulna Girls'
College student
succumbs to
burn injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A student of Khulna Govt. Pioneer Girls' College who tried to commit suicide by setting her on fire at the college hostel succumbed to her injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

Shampa Nandi, 18, had suffered severe burn injuries when she set her on fire after pouring kerosene on her body at the toilet of the hostel on Sunday morning.

She was brought to Dhaka from Khulna Medical College Hospital on Sunday night.

The police seized an empty small bottle of kerosene found in the toilet and a hand-written letter found under the pillow of her bed.

Police have launched a probe into the incident, said the principal of the college.

Obituary

Barrister Salimul Huq Khan Milky, constitution expert and chairman of National Awami Party (NAP-Bhasani) passed away at Holy Crescent Hospital in Chittagong yesterday at the age of 82, says a press release.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan expressed deep shock at the death of Salimul Huq.

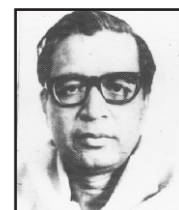
Md Shamsuddin Ahmed

Md Shamsuddin Ahmed, a former officer of General Insurance Corporation and Muslim Insurance, passed away in the city at the age of 80, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four sons, three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Shamsuddin hailed from Gidari Village of Gaibandha district.

Death anniversary



Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Nurul Islam Patawari (Nuipa), former editor of the Dainik Bangla and the Ittefaq,

says a press release. On the occasion, relatives and admirers are requested to attend a milad mahfil at his residence at 1133/a Baitul Aman Housing Society at Shyamoli in the city.

Abdul Khalek



Today is the 5th death anniversary of Abdul Khalek, a freedom fighter and founding president of Agrani Bank Employees' Union, says a press release.

On the occasion, central committee of the union will hold milad mahfil and discussion at its office in the city today.

Family members will also organise similar programme at his residence at Maniknagar in the city tomorrow.

Colleagues and admirers have been requested to attend the programmes.



UNICEF Bangladesh Representative Louis-Georges Arsenault launches UNICEF's flagship publication 'The State of the World's Children 2007' at city hotel yesterday.

Victory Day
celebrated
in Sydney

The enduring lesson of the Victory Day is that Bangladesh can achieve anything when the people are united for that cause, says a press release.

The Bangladesh community in Australia can also contribute both to Australia and to Bangladesh if they stand united.

Bangladesh High Commissioner M Humayun Kabir made this comment during a function for the Victory Day celebration organised by the Bangladesh Association of Australia in Sydney on December 17.

Termining the victory as a continuous process, he said Bangladesh, during the course of last 35 years, has remained engaged in its fight against poverty, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition and natural disaster, and has been able to achieve success in a number of areas, which has been recognised by the international community.

The recent example is the award of Nobel Peace Prize to Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank, he added.

Presided over by Farooque Ahmed Khan, president of the Bangladesh Association of Australia in Sydney, the meeting was addressed among others, by Michael Daley, MP and Christina Kenally, MP, Honorary Consul General of Bangladesh in Sydney Anthony Khouri and the former President of the Association Gama Abdul Quader.

Earlier the High Commissioner attended the "Bijoy Mela" organised by the Lakemba Bangla School and Bangladesh Community Council in Sydney on December 16.

Around 3000 people participated in the daylong Mela, which was rounded off with an attractive cultural programme in the evening.

Annual picnic

The annual picnic of the Siddheswari Boys High School (1967 batch) Old Students Association will be held in the Roads and Highways rest house compound near Narayhar Bridge on December 22, Friday, says a press release.

Interested members have been requested to contact Khilgaon office of the Association or Nasir, member-secretary, over 01715150552.

2m euros to fight human
trafficking

EC, UNDP sign agreement

UNB, Dhaka

The European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement yesterday to contribute two million euros (equivalent to Tk 15.20 crore) to boost the fight against human trafficking as a pivotal part of the Police Reform Programme in Bangladesh.

The home ministry and Bangladesh Police are implementing the programme. The anti-trafficking component will be implemented from 2007 to the end of 2008.

The agreement was signed at the office of the Delegation of the European Commission in the city.

"I am delighted that the European Commission and UNDP are working together to tackle human trafficking," said Ambassador Stefan Frowein, Head of the Delegation of the EC, at the signing ceremony.

He said: "It is a crime that has destroyed the lives of countless women and children in Bangladesh. The police force is in the front-line of efforts to fight trafficking and it is therefore vital that the

police are well-resourced and well-trained in this field.

This project with the UNDP will contribute to ensuring that this is the case."

The purpose of "Anti trafficking of Human Beings" component is to substantially reduce the trafficking of human beings by developing a well-trained and responsive police force.

The EC-supported component will focus on various areas which include development of national trafficking of human beings strategy and action plan, building policing capacity to analyse trafficking networks and operations, improving investigative capacity and prosecution effectiveness, developing effective victim support mechanisms and building community-police partnership to combat human trafficking.

Although the exact scale of human trafficking is unknown in Bangladesh, stakeholders agree on its significance, the gravity of the offence and the necessity to treat it as a crime, and to prevent and combat it.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country, having chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Mymensingh, Tangail, Jessore and Kushtia in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Met Office said in a forecast. It said night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 29.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 13.0 degree Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:15pm today and rises at 6:36am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.5	17.0	80	68
Chittagong	28.0	16.6	84	79
Rajshahi	27.4	15.2	79	72
Khulna	27.0	15.6	84	69
Barisal	27.6	15.6	--	79
Sylhet	28.5	18.4	69	60
Cox's Bazar	29.2	17.7	77	80