

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Everyone must join the fight

Speakers tell rally at TSC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Participants of a rally yesterday urged everyone to join the movement to stop repression and violence against women.

"The young generation has to be vocal against repression on women. Only protests by women will not be enough; men should also come forward. Equality means happiness and it should be brought among men and women, rich and poor, and among people of all identities. Only then it will be possible to build a beautiful Bangladesh," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), while speaking at the women's motorcycle rally, marking International Women's Day (IWD).

MJF and Bangladesh Women Riders' Club jointly organised the rally that started from the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University.

With the motto "Let us stop rape and killing of women and children now", around 50 women motorcyclists, took part in the rally that ended at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi.

Speaking at the rally, president of the club Ismat Kham Mojlish said, "We founded the club in 2012, with



Manusher Jonno Foundation and Bangladesh Women Riders' Club organised the rally. PHOTO: STAR

an aim to break the social taboo that exists centring women's bike riding. By organising such a rally, we wanted to show that women do not lag behind men in any sector. We also wanted to raise awareness among people from all walks of life against repression on women and children."

Shaheen Anam said violence against women and children could not be stopped as the mindset towards women at the core of our society has

not changed too much. "This attitude towards women has to change," she said.

"We, like men, want equality in all human beings. We dream of a violence-free and safe Bangladesh, which we have not yet been able to do," Shaheen Anam added.

"So I urge the new generation to stand against it. Not just women, but men will have to come forward for this."

Social change must to ensure women's rights

Say discussants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said a social change is necessary to stop violence against women and ensure their equal rights.

They also urged the country's women rights activists to continue their ongoing movement in this regard.

A section of students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), in association with four non-government organisations -- including Sajida Foundation -- arranged the day-long seminar on the BUET campus in the capital.

Speaking at the event, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) Prof Salimullah Khan said social identity of men and women are not only a matter of dignity; it is also about power.

"Our society doesn't have equal distribution of power among men and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



White-throated Bulbul and Oriental White-eye at the pond.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

At the Pond

In our age of multitasking, it is difficult -- perhaps inconceivable to some -- to sit still and silent for long. It goes against our notion of the times we live in. Yet, once in a while, we may find ourselves in a position of doing just that. How is that experience?

I found out when, in pursuit of bird photography, I sat by the pond for hours at a stretch without moving or speaking.

On a memorable day, at a pond deep inside Satchori National Park and surrounded by dense foliage of trees big and small, I discovered that I was actually capable of sitting still and silent while remaining alert for the entire afternoon. Further, I surprised myself by really enjoying the experience.

Since then, I have sat at the pond several times to watch and photograph birds.

It started two years ago when I went to photograph birds at Satchori (in Habiganj), about three hours' drive from Dhaka.) Soon after arriving there I complained to my guide Rahim that I was having difficulties finding birds up in the trees, hiding behind leaves. He thought for a moment and suggested we check out a pond inside the forest. There might be some birds there, he said.

We hiked well into the forest before taking a right turn from the main trail into a smaller one with thick vegetation on both sides. After another ten minutes, the trail rose several feet. Climbing up, we took an almost invisible turnoff to the left. This descended into a small pond -- perhaps

twenty-five feet on each side -- that sat hidden surrounded by plants on all sides. It had been dug there by forest officials as water supply for wildlife. I could have easily walked past without noticing it.

For the next few hours I sat by this pond, looking at the water and plants growing on its steep and muddy banks. Taller trees enmeshed with smaller plants in the background all around the pond. Branches and twigs grew this way and that along edges and across corners. Vegetal debris -- dried grass stalks, rotting leaves -- dotted the exposed soil.

Soon I lost track of time. Birds came and went. They jumped from weed to plant to tree, perched on branches and dived in for bathing. Smaller flycatchers darted from their perch in pursuit of minuscule flying prey. Some birds appeared on the larger trees with the intention of bathing -- but then flew away, perhaps seeing us.

But even when birds were absent -- which was most of the time -- it was almost a spiritual experience, completely surrounded by primitive beauty with minimal noise and interruptions. The earthy scent of decomposing leaves, the wet soil, the moisture coming off the pond, the flies, mosquitoes and ants all worked together to create this.

The time I spent at the pond not only revealed some wonderful birds. It also taught me something about myself that I had not known.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram.

RMG workers demand dignity at workplace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati yesterday demanded sexual harassment-free and fear-free workplace, where they can do their jobs with dignity.

The workers' organisation made a 10-point demand and rallied in Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital yesterday, ahead of International Women's Day.

Addressing the rally, Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati President Taslima Akhter said workers are often harassed by garments officials with an excuse of failing to fulfil production targets.

"Using swear words to women workers has become frequent nowadays, and it's being treated as sexual harassment. Incidents of other sexual harassment are also coming in different researches," Taslima said.

Women working in garment factories have been suffering from different health complications including malnutrition and anemia, she said, blaming their low wages for a lack of better healthcare.

The workers' leaders said the impact of automation is increasing factories, and many workers are losing jobs.

"There was a time when 80 percent workers were women; it has now come down to 60 percent," she said.

The organisation's demands include forming anti-sexual harassment cell in every factory; stopping harassment and using swear words at factories over failure to fulfil targets; setting up medical treatment facilities for workers at every factory; stopping forceful over-time duty at night and sacking workers due to over-time; ensuring proper leave facilities; suitable job training; day-care at factories; ensuring compensation for worker's death or illness; and ensuring workers' right to join trade union.

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati's General Secretary Julhasnain Babu, Organisational Secretary Aminul Islam Shama and Nari Sanghati's General Secretary Aparajita Chanda also spoke at the programme.

Khaleda Zia's release in gov't's hand: Moudud

UNB, Dhaka

Senior BNP leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday said their party chairperson Khaleda Zia will never be freed from jail without the "will" of the government, as the judiciary is now not 'independent'.

"Us lawyers are trying to free Khaleda Zia through legal process. But after the Pirojpur court incident, no one should have minimum doubt that she'll never be released on bail without the government's will," he said while speaking in a discussion at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Swadhinta Forum, a pro-BNP platform, arranged the programme demanding Khaleda Zia's release.

In his speech, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob) President ASM Abdur Rob said the government has annihilated the judiciary to hang on to power.

He said by taking action against the Pirojpur judge, the government sent out a message to other judges of facing the same fate if they go against it.

'Raise voice to awaken others'

Holy Cross, Notre Dame win Int'l Women's Day debate contest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Holy Cross College and Notre Dame College debate clubs won the USAID International Women's Day Debate Competition 2020 yesterday.

The two clubs beat the debating clubs of Saint Joseph Higher Secondary School and Viharunnisa Noon College respectively in competitions on "Families [societies' for opposing sides] play a key role in ensuring girl power" at The Daily Star Centre in the morning.

BGMEA President Rubana Huq and USAID officials handed over trophies to four teams at the closing ceremony.

In her speech, Rubana Huq said none can be successful without facing challenges in life. "So you [women] have to face challenges as there is no alternative or no shortcut way to change your life," she affirmed.

"I think, there is no difference between men and women, so lead your life fearlessly in line with a proper plan," she said.

USAID Mission Director Derrick Brown said women are the first teachers of their children. "We must understand this reality and come forward together to change our societies; if both men and women do better in Bangladesh, the country will obviously do better in the world," he said.

JoAnne Wagner, deputy chief of mission of the US embassy, said women have the ability to change the world. "Raise your voice against all sorts of discrimination; if you raise your voice, it will help others to awaken," she said.

Terming men and women allies, Wagner said, "If you think about empowerment, you have to exercise your own power; it doesn't matter what gender you belong to."

Among others, journalist Morshed Hassib Hasan and filmmaker Shameem Akhter were present at the event.

A 'revenge' gone too far

Teen admits murder of neighbour

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In yet another case of gang culture in the capital, a youth lost his life while a teenager has been held on charge of the murder.

The 14-year-old teen killed his 22-year-old neighbour Abdur Rob Pavel "to take revenge", as Pavel and his gang members were allegedly taunting him and disturbing his younger sister for the last eight months, said Detective Branch (DB) of police, after the end of the teenager's interrogation.

The accused would be placed before a court today, Jahidul Islam, an inspector of DB (north), told The Daily Star.

According to DB officials, the teenager was living with his parents and two sisters in a one-room house in Khilkhet area of the capital.

He had dropped out of school after fifth grade and used to work in a dyeing factory as well as restaurants to support his family.

A year back, Pavel's family moved to Khilkhet and started living in a flat close to the teenager's family. Pavel, a drug addict, formed a gang in the area with a dozen youths within a couple of months, according to locals and police officials.

Pavel often used to taunt the teenager, snatch away his money and cellphone, and harass his younger sister, said Kaiser Rezvy Koraisly, additional deputy commissioner of DB police, to The Daily Star, quoting the teenager.

"Pavel's gang member also used to taunt the teenager and slap him if he tried to protest their activities," the boy was quoted as saying during interrogation.

Pavel's unruly behaviour made the teen angry; he often used to complain to Pavel's family over it, said the police official.

At one point, the teenager planned to take matters into his own hand, said the police official.

He built a good rapport with Pavel and started hanging out with him, he added.

On February 22, the teen took Pavel to the Kawla graveyard, asking for help to recover a gold chain he had lost there.

They went to the graveyard around 8:30am, where the teen attacked Pavel with a kitchen knife as Pavel was busy searching for the chain. The teenager got injured by his own knife when Pavel tried to defend himself.

The teen then hit Pavel with a flowerpot he found near the graveyard, said police officials.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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