

Dhaka Day by Day

Being Res Rep in Laos

By Rahat Fahmida

"I cannot believe that a Bangladeshi woman holds a position as high as an UNDP resident representative in another country! Are you serious?" exclaimed a person who certainly does more than underestimate women in general, but he is totally taken over by chauvinism. It is a fact! At last they have made it! Ameerah is the first woman in Asia to hold such a high post as this! Ameerah Haq-Perera from Bangladesh is the resident representative of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and resident co-ordinator of the United Nations System's Operational Activities for Development, in Vientiane, Laos. She is also the Secretary General's representative for all the development activities.

Quite guarded about what she says about her job and responsibilities, while talking to 'The Daily Star' she said as an exciting job. "It is an exciting job." She had to be coaxed tactfully for more information, on not only her job, but also the issues that she often faces and deals with.

Ameerah always wanted to be with the international development work, and this made her sign up through the campus, while she was studying in New York. She ultimately joined UNDP in 1976. She said that many of us have a wrong impression that it is difficult for women to deal in responsible positions. "People accept you as a professional as you present yourself as a professional." She did not come across any gender bias at the three countries that she has worked in. Talking about the recruitment of women in UN or UNDP she said, that at the UN there has been a concerted effort to provide opportunity for women in serious position. UNDP is a technical programme and they are themselves the administrators. They are committed not only to increase women employees but also to promote them. But definitely there is no compromise in standards when compared to the men candidates.

Ameerah regretfully said that with all this opportunity, women still find it difficult to work for such international organisations, more so if they are married. She is caught in between her career and her family. In this respect 'status', however it is approached and whatever its constituents, is a crucial indicator of the balance of power between women and men. Husbands rarely want to make adjustments of any sort. Although the significance of position or status is a commonplace in class analysis and basic to a materialist interpretation of social phenomena, little systematic attention has been directed to this factor in the analysis of women's position.

A similar set of conceptual issues must be faced with 'women' as a focus for analysis. As



Ameerah: Promising and confident.

Ameerah, a mother of two young children, stressed, that women cannot be treated as an undifferentiated group. Women's biological characteristics present a deceptively 'natural' set of criteria around which social distinctions are marked, but even these are culturally specific. Although 'women' as a category provides a convenient catch-all term, 'women' should be subjected to analytical scrutiny. While recognising their dynamic and critical nature, one should not jump to conclusions about patterns of change, or assume a level of universality said Ameerah. Each social situation reveals the specific historical circumstances in which women's access to resources affects their relationships to one another, to men, and to their children.

The composition of the household group and the organisation of its functions have a direct bearing on the degree of independence which a woman may have, said the UNDP resident representative, in Laos. She also said, within it she may enjoy considerable authority in the allocation of resources. Sadly enough the ideology of male super ordination prevails and each conjugal household is accorded autonomy under its male head.

Ameerah Haq-Perera said in her concluding remark, "I hope people will out grow this mentality, that women are the only ones who should adjust or give up. The understanding and adjustments should be mutual. As for me I will be in Laos for another two-three years. And I get to see my husband only about thrice a year. He stays in USA."

Corruption charges 256 officials, employees convicted

A total of 256 government officials/employees were convicted on corruption charges in 752 cases instituted during the period of the past government. Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister A Salam Talukder told the Jatiya Sangsad Tuesday, reports BSS.

Answering a question from A Matin Khasru (AL-Comilla), the minister said 23 government officials/employees against 142 cases were convicted under the present government. He said 78 cases were pending. There is no provision of blacklisting any government official/employee, he said.

Asia Society President arrives Friday

The President Emeritus of Asia Society in the United States, Phillips Tabot, arrives in Dhaka Friday on a 4-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Officials said Tuesday during the tour, the former Assistant Secretary of State (Near East and South Asia) would call on Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman. He is also likely to meet Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and Planning Minister Zahuruddin Khan.

Asia Society, a prestigious organisation, contributes to developing bilateral relations between the US and the Asian nations through seminars, publications and research work.

World dignitaries feel honoured in lecturing at its functions.

75.2 pc illiterate : JS told

The rate of illiteracy in the country is 75.2 per cent, according to the 1991 census, said the State Minister for Education in Parliament Tuesday, reports UNB.

The government plans to undertake literacy programme in all upazilas from next year. Principal Yunus Khan told the House in reply to a question from Shahawat Hossain Bukul of the same bench.

He informed that the rate of male illiteracy is 60.3 while female 81.2 per cent.

Replying to a supplementary question from the ruling party member (Bukul), Yunus Khan said Non-government Organisations (NGOs) had undertaken literacy programme in 175 upazilas of the country.

The Minister told Shahjahan Khan of Awami League that the government had introduced compulsory primary education and coordinated informal education in a bid to raise the rate of literacy.

Special literacy programme was also undertaken at 750 centres to bridge the gap between male and female literacy rates. Replying to Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury of the Jatiya Party, Yunus Khan said girl students upto class VIII had been exempted from school fees in rural areas for increasing the percentage of female education.

Constable stabbed

Constable Saifur Rahman (29) of 7th Police Battalion was stabbed by hijackers at Dhanmondi late Monday night, hospital sources said, reports UNB.

Saifur, a sentry at the residence of Judge Habibur Rahman, was stabbed twice on his right waist near the house when he challenged the hijackers at about 11 pm.

One crushed under wheels of train

An unknown youngman aged about 20 was crushed under the wheels of a train at Kamalapur Tuesday afternoon, hospital sources said, reports UNB.

Wednesday

- 5.00 Opening announcement Al-Quran
- 5.10 Programme Summary.
- 5.15 News in Bangla.
- 5.20 Recitation from the Gorta.
- 5.30 Tarunya.
- 6.00 Sports programme.
- 6.30 Gana Shikshar Asar: Mass education programme.
- 7.05 Programme of new artists.
- 8.00 News in Bangla.
- 8.30 Ritter tale tale: Dance programme.
- 9.00 Film: MacGyver.
- 10.00 News in English.
- 10.25 Parliament round up.
- 10.35 Bahun dekhi.
- 11.30 Khabar/The News.
- 11.40 Thursday's programme summary.
- 11.45 Closing.

April '91 cyclone made 3,998 children orphaned

A total of 3,998 children became orphans following the cyclone and tidal bores of April 29, 1991. Social Welfare Minister Tariqul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad Tuesday, reports BSS.

Answering a question from Kazi Abdur Rashid (AL-Gopalganj), the Minister said the government is making necessary arrangement to rehabilitate all these who have none to look after them.

The orphans were shifted to 20 temporary centres for two months, he said.

Subsequently many of them were handed over to their relatives.

The minister said at present there were 37 government orphanage having houses of their own.

Answering a question from Mashur Rahman (Jhenaidah-BNP) the minister said the orphanage in Jhenaidah was in a rented house.

The minister said there were seven vagrant homes for the rehabilitation of vagabonds. The government, however, has

no plan for rehabilitation of beggars, he said.

Answering a question from Begum Farida Rahman (women seat-10 BNP) the minister said beggars of the Dhaka city are being produced before magistrates as per Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943. Later, they are shifted to vagrant homes which are one each at Godnail (Narayanganj), Kashimpur (Gazipur), Pubail (Gazipur), Betila (Munshiganj), Dhaka (Mymensingh), Mirpur (Dhaka) and Kanabari (Gazipur).

ILO official in city

Dr Iftikhar Ahmed, a senior official of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Headquarters, Technology and Employment Branch, Geneva, Switzerland arrived in Dhaka Tuesday on a ten-day technical monitoring mission, a press release said, reports BSS.

During his stay here, Dr Ahmed will meet Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam and State Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Sarwar Rahman.

1,055 illegal power lines snapped : 20 arrested

Four mobile courts of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) Tuesday snapped 1,055 illegal power lines and arrested 20 persons for illegally using power at Mirpur area in Dhaka, reports BSS.

The courts also realised on the spot Taka 22,010 as fines from the illegal power users of Rupnagar Housing Estate Colony and Mirpur Shah Ali

Government Market and adjacent areas.

67 cases were instituted against the illegal power users.

Besides, six mounds of wires and 20 heaters were seized and destroyed on the spot during the drive.

Nearly 500 illegal power users left their houses and shops at the appearance of the mobile court personnel.

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Govt college lecturers postpone gherao programme

Bangladesh Government College Lecturers Samity has announced the postponement of token gherao on January 19 and continues gherao and strike from February 10, according to a samity press release in Dhaka Tuesday, reports BSS.

The decision for the postponement was taken by the Samity following satisfactory discussion of leaders of the Samity with Education Minister Jamrudin Sircar on 12-point demand.

During the discussion, President of the Samity Kamal Ataur Rahman, Vice-President Momtaz Begum, Secretary General Omar Faruq, Treasurer Mahub Jalal, Joint Secretary General Fazlulnussa, Organising Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed and Publicity Secretary Asrat Ara Begum were present.

Ramkrishna Mission opens X-ray unit today

Ramkrishna Mission in Dhaka will open an X-ray unit at its medical today (Wednesday) as part of its various welfare activities, a press release said Tuesday, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman will inaugurate the X-ray unit at 4-30 pm on the day while Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal ibne Yusuf will be present on the occasion as the guest of honour.

Awami League MP hospitalised

Awami League leader Advocate Asaduzzaman, MP, has been hospitalised, reports BSS.

He was admitted to PG Hospital and his cabin number is 242.

Medical university to be set up soon

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal ibne Yusuf Tuesday announced that the government would soon set up a Medical university in the country, reports UNB.

He was inaugurating the 3rd national conference and Ibrahim Memorial Lecture of the Association of Physicians of Bangladesh (APB) at a local hotel in the morning.

Chaired by APB President Prof Muniruddin Ahmed, it was also addressed by Health Secretary M Mokammel Huq, National Professor Dr Nurul Islam, Prof SQM Chowdhury and APB General Secretary Prof Dr Toqeil Ahmed.

A message of the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was read out at the function. She was to inaugurate the conference but could not attend due to her sickness.

In her message, the Prime Minister said a new health and medicine policy will be formulated soon in consultation with all concerned.

She said the government has allocated huge amount in the health sector in the current fiscal year despite resource constraints and urged

the doctors to render better services to the ailing masses. Inaugurating the conference, the Health Minister said the proposed medical university will meet the demands of the medical professionals.

Yusuf urged the doctors to help the government in its efforts to achieve health for all by the year 2000.

Referring to various demands of the doctors the Health Minister said an advisory council will be formed to look into their grievances.

Health Secretary Mukammel Huq urged the physicians to make maximum utilisation of the available funds adding that budgetary allocations in health sector would be increased gradually.

A contingency plan will soon be formulated to find out ways to remove anomalies in medical profession, he said and urged the doctors to supervise and administer the hospitals effectively.

Later, the Health Minister presented the Ibrahim Memorial Gold Medal to Prof Mattur Rahman for his outstanding contribution in the field of medicine.

Weather

Night temperature to fall

By Staff Correspondent

A moderate cold wave will start sweeping the country from tonight (Wednesday), says a Met office official.

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Tuesday, Meteorological office forecast.

Night temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius during the period. Khulna experienced the lowest temperature of 10.3 degree Celsius Tuesday.

Temperature and humidity recorded at important cities and towns on Tuesday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in Degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	21.2	12.0	100	73
Chittagong	24.3	15.3	97	79
Khulna	22.6	10.3	91	77
Rajshahi	-	12.8	91	-
Dinajpur	22.5	11.2	84	83
Rangpur	21.6	13.0	84	80
Srimangal	25.2	14.3	89	83
Cox's Bazar	24.5	16.8	89	77
Barisal	22.2	12.6	89	85
Bhola	22.8	13.5	100	96