

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Gender Equality in the US Judiciary System

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

If there is any instrument that can bring about significant changes in the status of women it is the legal system. Whether it is a developing country like Bangladesh or an advanced one like the US, laws that are geared to greater gender equality certainly make a difference. Yet implementation has always been a problem since most of these laws have been erected in patriarchal systems where equality of the sexes has not been quite appreciated, much less understood.

Progress, however, cannot be denied for a country where women did not gain voting rights until 1920. The American woman has come a long way. This is especially true of the judicial system which now employs more and more women lawyers, advocates and judges, a trend that is certainly a step forward in the gender-equality struggle.

Judge Margie Meacham, a county court judge of Rawlins, Wyoming is one of the earliest beneficiaries of this trend with almost 40 years experience in this profession. At a recent lecture held at the USIS (United States Information Service) centre in Dhaka, Meacham gave

an overview of the history of the American judicial system with regard to gender equality, highlighting the important developments that have led to greater awareness and lesser sex discriminations. Later, in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Meacham elaborated further on the subject and also gave some impression on her visit to this country.

Meacham points out that to understand where the US is in gender equality it is important to know that the judiciary has been developing for almost 400 years. One of the pioneers of gender equality is Wyoming, the first American territory to grant women the right to vote and serve on juries in 1870. In 1924, again in Wyoming, the first woman governor of any state was elected.

The rest of the country however was still far behind. In the 1960s, says Meacham, who held the offices of Justice of Peace and Municipal Judge consecutively at that time in Wyoming, the legal and judicial system was made up almost entirely of men. Only three per cent of the legal profession were women. In the 70s, says Meacham, thoughtful, progressive women in the legal profession realized that the existing laws, created by men, were actually detrimental to women. Some of the results were women could not obtain credit in their own name; contribution to the home and child-rearing were given no value in a divorce; often women were not believed if they claimed rape; and domestic violence and sexual harassment were terms that had not been invented. It may be mentioned that the same elements of inequality can be seen in countries like Bangladesh today.

One of the first steps towards removing these anomalies was the formation of the Na-

tional Association of Women Judges (NAWS) in the late '70s. Its goals included among others: to appoint or elect a greater number of women judges to all levels of the federal and state judiciary; to abolish discrimination against women in the courts and to oppose sex discrimination in society.

Among the major steps of making the judiciary more just, has been the appointing of task forces comprised of lawyers and judges to study every aspect of the judicial system and identify incidents of gender bias. In the last 15 years, mentions Meacham, judges and lawyers have found that the judiciary has not been fair to women. The findings and recommendations of the various task forces has had several positive results. "Incidents such as wife battering, that were not prosecuted as crimes, says Meacham, "are now being prosecuted as crimes." In the past, if a woman was forced to have sex by a man she knew it was not considered as rape, now such an incident can be charged as rape." Women also receive better alimony payments, Meacham adds, showing the court's recognition of women who have devoted many

years of their lives to the home and family.

There are also twice as many women judges as there were 10 years ago. For the first time two women have been appointed to the Supreme Court, something that will make a major difference for the equality of women, according to Meacham. "In my time I was the only woman in law school," she says, "now there are 40-50 per cent women; this is helping in making laws more just for women."

Meacham, admits however, that there are still some disparities in the system as regards to being a partner or advancing in one's career where women lawyers are still at a disadvantage. As far as attitudes of male colleagues are

concerned, Meacham says while some men are very supportive, there will always be those that still belong to the "old boys club."

On abortion Meacham's views are cautious but definite. "Women have a right to control their own bodies," she says. Her answer to the question whether being a woman judge it is difficult to be totally impartial if her personal views conflict with the court's decision, is a counter question: "Am I prejudiced because I am a woman? Are men judges prejudiced because they are men?"

Meacham's visit to Bangladesh has been an interesting experience. In Dhaka she witnessed a mock jury trial put forward by the students of the law department. She also met with advocates of Ain O Shalish Kendra discussing issues of gender equality and discrimination. Meacham also visited Chittagong and Rajshahi University. Meacham sat in an mediation between a husband and wife, where the husband had refused to take the wife to his home after their marriage. The mediator was very skilled and eventually the man agreed to take back his wife," she says.



Judge Margie Meacham



The Women's Development Forum brought out a procession from the city's Bangla Motor area yesterday protesting the illegal and immoral issuance of Fatwa against women. — Star photo

## Women hold rally against fatwabaj

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of women yesterday staged a rally in the city to register their protest against the activities of the "Fatwabaj". Organised by the Women Development Forum, the women carrying placards and chanting slogans demanded that the government should take immediate action against the Fatwabaj who they said were inflicting injustice upon women ignoring the normal law of the land.

The rally which was moving towards the Prime Minister's Secretariat was intercepted by police at the SAARC fountain crossing beside the Sonargaon Hotel.

Following the interception of the rally, a 7-member team proceeded to the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The team comprised Rokeya Kabir, Ruby Gaznabi, Ayesha Khanam, Mahfuza Shilu, Krishna Chandra, Shamsunnahar and Shaheeda Begum.

Mahbuba Lina read out the memorandum signed by Rokeya Kabir, in front of the gathering which requested the Prime Minister to take stern action against those creating hindrances in establishing equal rights of women.

## Discussion on food for edn

Speakers at a discussion yesterday underscored the need for making the Food for Education Programme of the government corruption free so that it helps expansion of education in the country, reports BSS.

They observed that the newly introduced programme would surely increase the enrolment and halt the dropout at primary level.

The speakers, however, felt that Food for Education programme alone cannot attain the goals of education and therefore strict measures have to be taken to maintain the standard of education to make the primary education useful for the nation.

The discussion, titled 'Food for Education: A significant step in primary education' was held at the British Council auditorium in the city under the auspices of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a coalition of country's leading NGOs dealing with literacy. Chaired by noted educationist Abu Rashed Matinuddin, CAMPE director Dr Abdullah Al Muti Sharifuddin, and Assistant Secretary of External Resources Division Mahmudur Rahman were, among others, who took part in the discussion.

## Justice Rahman to attend seminar in USA

Justice M H Rahman, the senior judge of the appellate division of the Supreme Court left Dhaka for Washington for attending a seminar on 'international human rights law, its application in national jurisprudence,' reports BSS.

The seminar is organized by the Aspen Institute's Justice and Society Program.

## Turkish envoy meets CU VC

CHITTAGONG, Apr 20: Kutlu Ozguven, Ambassador of Turkey in Bangladesh, called on the Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University, Prof. R I Choudhury, at the latter's office here today, reports BSS. The Ambassador was accompanied by his wife Madam Kutlu Ozguven and the honorary consul-general of Turkey in Bangladesh, Saladdin Kashem Khan.

They discussed matters of mutual interest. The Turkish Ambassador also visited the head office of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation here today.

## ROK envoy meets Matin

The Ambassador of Republic of Korea (ROK) in Bangladesh Jong Kyon Byun called on Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury at his Secretariat office yesterday, reports BSS. During the meeting they discussed the economic, social situation, monetary investment in Bangladesh by South Korea and other bilateral issues of cooperation in a cordial atmosphere.

The Korean Ambassador informed the minister that 19 investment companies of Korea are now working in Bangladesh and sought more cooperation from Bangladesh government.

## Weather

4-30 Opening announcement  
Al-Quran  
Programme summary  
4-45 Rumjhum  
5-10 News in Bangla  
5-25 National Television School Debate Competition  
6-30 Esho Para Shikhi  
7-00 Jiboner Alo  
7-25 Nazrul songs  
8-00 News in Bangla  
8-30 Drama of the week — Alo Adhar  
10-00 News in English  
10-30 Mini series: Act of Will  
11-30 Khabar/The News  
11-40 Tomorrow's programme summary  
11-45 Closing

## Thundershowers likely

By Staff Correspondent

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by the Kalbaishakhi squalls with hails is likely to occur at places over Barisal, Chittagong and Dhaka divisions during the next 12 hours commencing from 6 pm today (Thursday).

The Met Office forecasts these may also occur at one or two places over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions during the period.

The day temperature will remain nearly unchanged over the country, it adds.

Today's maximum temperature in Dhaka was 33.4 degrees Celsius and minimum 19.6 degrees while the country's highest temperature was recorded of 37.4 degrees Celsius in Iwardi and the lowest of 18 in Rangamati.

The sun sets today at 6.22 pm and rises tomorrow (Friday) at 5.31 am.

## Workshop on women held in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr 20: Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Razzake Ali said today that women are the inextricable part of the society. Their participation in the development activities is inevitable as they are playing a pioneering role in developing our socio-economic condition besides managing

the house-hold affairs, reports BSS.

He was addressing as chief guest at the inaugural session of the day-long workshop on "equality, development and peace for the advancement of women" held at a local hotel here.

Presided over by Muhammad Enamul Haq, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs the function, being organised under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and UNDP was also addressed, among others, by UNDP representative Md Iqbal Karim.

## Cyclone shelters to be opened tomorrow

Three cyclone shelters built at a cost of Tk 1.50 crore (2.2 million francs) in Sandwip will be inaugurated tomorrow, reports UNB.

Deputy Head of the Mission of French Embassy in Bangladesh will inaugurate the shelters which were completed in 1993.

French government and a French NGO "Foundation of France" provided the financial assistance while "Architects Sans Frontiers" gave technical assistances in constructing the shelters.

The shelters have already been handed over to two local NGOs — Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) and Bangladesh Samaj Uন্নয়ন Samity (BSUS).

The shelters, during the normal time, will be used either as schools, clinics or as meeting and function halls depending on the programmes implemented by BNPS and BSUS.



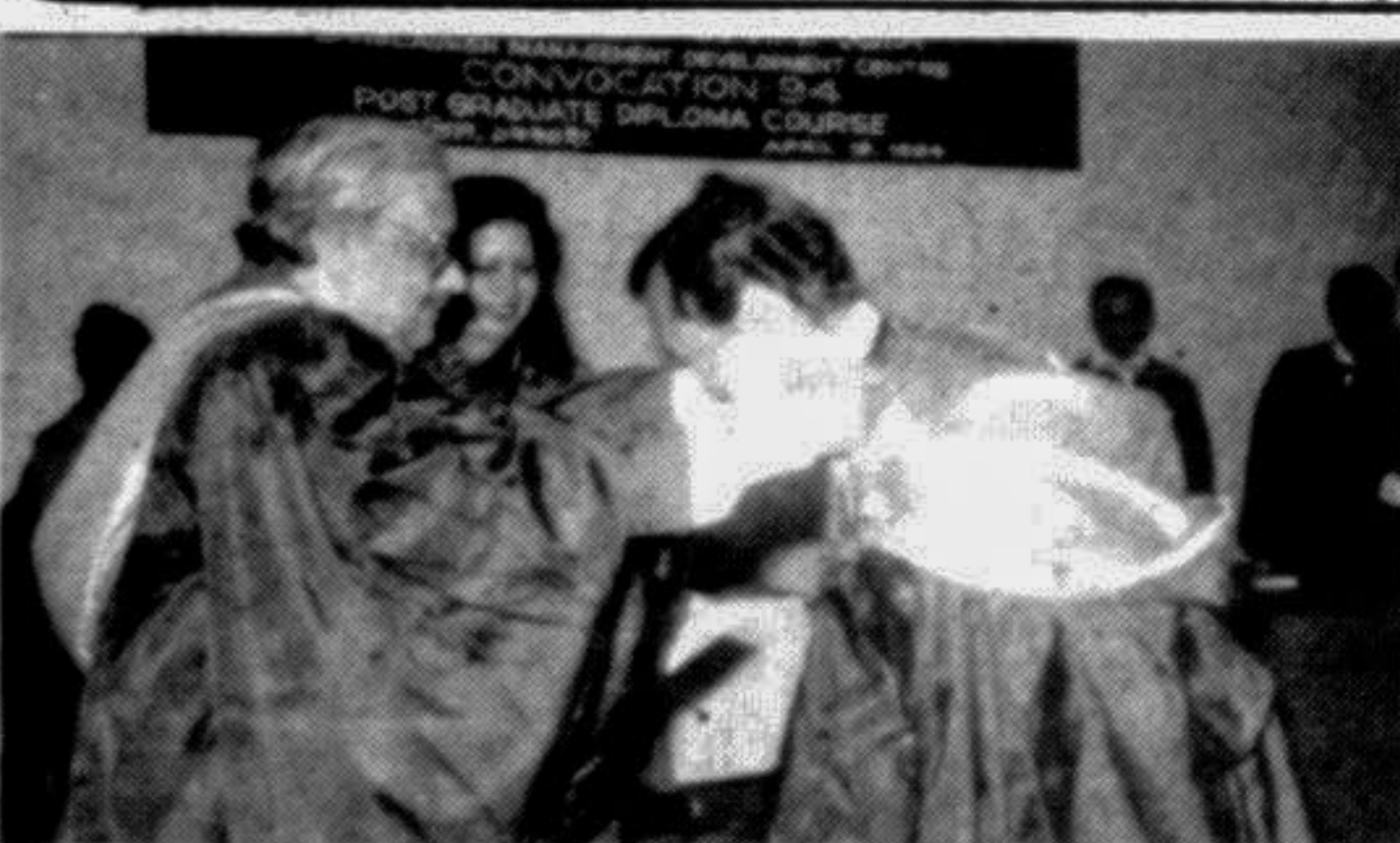
Bangladesh Armed Forces personnel alighting the special UN chartered aircraft which brought them back from Rwanda yesterday. — ISPR photo

## British MP due tomorrow

British parliament member Keith Vaz will arrive here tomorrow on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Vaz was re-elected to the House of Commons in 1992. Earlier, as a Labour Party nominee he was elected to the House of Commons from Leicester East constituency in 1987.

Vaz has been a member of Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons since 1987. He is also associated with a number of public and trade union organisations and social groups in UK.



Convocation '94 of the Bangladesh Management Development Centre (BMDC) was held yesterday. Industries Minister A K M Zahiruddin Khan attended the ceremony as chief guest.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Directorate of Technical Education

Office of the Director (Vocational)

&

Project Director

4 VTIs Project

19, Ispahani Park, Moghbazar, Dhaka 1217

## Re-Tender Notice

Sealed tender is hereby invited from the bonafide Contractors/Firms for the following supply as mentioned and details below for the Office of the Director.

Earnest Money noted against the name of works are to be submitted in favour of the Director (Vocational), Directorate of Technical Education, 19, Ispahani Park, Moghbazar, Dhaka-1217 in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh payable at Dhaka.

Without any Earnest Money the tender shall be treated as informal.

Sl. No.	Name of works	Estimated cost in Taka	Earnest money in Taka	Completion of Time	Cost of Tender schedule in Tk
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. a)	Supply of Toshiba plain paper copier machine Model-1710 or equivalent	2,12,000/-	5% of the quoted price	14 days	400/-
b)	Cannon plain paper copier machine, Model 1215 or equivalent	1,25,000/-			
c)	Supply of Back-UPS for Computer machine, Model BK 6001 or equivalent	60,000/-			

Bonafide Contractors/Firms may purchase the tender documents from the Office of the undersigned, Office of the Asst. Secretary, Education Division, Section-5, Room No 1612, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, on all working days during office hours at non-refundable price noted against the name of works from 20.4.94 to 24.4.94.

The tender will be received by the undersigned & also by the Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education, Building-6, Room No 1612 up to 12 Noon on 25.4.94 and opened by the authority of the respective offices at 12.05 pm on the same date in presence of the tenderers who wish to be present at the time of opening of the tender. The bonafide Contractors/Firms must furnish attested copy of the experience certificate and trade licence at the time of submitting tender.

The Director of Technical Education (Vocational) reserves the right not to accept the lowest tender or reject any or all tenders or to waive any irregularity if the waiver is in their interest without assigning any reason whatsoever.

A K Md Wahidul Hoque

Director (Vocational)

Directorate of Technical Education & Project Director, 4 VTIs Project

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## CORRIGENDUM

With reference to the Prospectus of the Company published in The Bangladesh Observer and The Daily Star on 28th March 1994 in Part VIII under Serial No.1,

**"Return on Equity (%) (net profit / equity)"**  
should be read as

**"Return on Share Capital (%) (net profit / share capital)"**

and the ratio should be 32.20 instead of 33.20 in 1993.

We sincerely regret the inadvertent error.

This corrigendum is issued as per directive of Securities and Exchange Commission.

## জাতীয় বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি জাদুঘর

শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা

## মুদ্রণালয় তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি জাদুঘরের বই, পত্রিকা ও অন্যান্য বাবতীয় ছাপা এবং বাইরে কাজের জন্য তালিকাভুক্তির উদ্দেশ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ছাপাখানার নিকট হইতে নিজস্ব প্যাডে দরখাস্ত আহবান করা যাইতেছে। দরখাস্ত আগামী ২৬শে এপ্রিল '৯৪ তারিখের মধ্যে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর নিকট পৌছাইতে হইবে। দরখাস্তের সহিত নিম্নবর্ণিত কাগজপত্রাদি অবশ্যই দাখিল করিতে হইবে। অসম্পূর্ণ দরখাস্ত বিবেচনায়োগ্য হইবে না।

- ১) ট্রেড লাইসেন্স যারা ১৯৯২-৯৩ সনের জন্য নবায়ন করা আছে, তাহার সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি সংযুক্ত করিতে হইবে।
- ২) ইনকামট্যাক্স জি, আই, আর, নম্বর এবং সর্বশেষ আয়কর পরিশোধের সার্টিফিকেট এর সত্যায়িত কপি (ক্রেডিটস্ট্যাট) সংযুক্ত করিতে হইবে।
- ৩) আবেদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রকৃত মালিক/পরিচালকের সাম্প্রতিককালের তোলা ৩ (তিন) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ১বি (ফটো) সংযুক্ত করিতে হইবে।
- ৪) যে কোন সরকারী কিংবা বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক হইতে সাম্প্রতিককালের ব্যাংক সঞ্চালতার সনদপত্রের মূলকপি সংযুক্ত করিতে হইবে।
- ৫) মুদ্রণ কাজে পূর্ব কোন অভিজ্ঞতা থাকিলে তাহার (অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র) সত্যায়িত কপি সংযুক্ত করিতে হইবে।
- ৬) এখানে উল্লেখ্য যে, নির্বাচিত প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে প্রয়োজনীয় জামানত দিতে হইবে।

কর্তৃক যে কোন আবেদনপত্র কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীতই গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিল করিবার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা রাখেন।

ডিক্রিপ (বি) ৭২১৫-১০/৪

জি-৬৮৫

ডঃ মোঃ শাহসুদ রহমান  
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## CAREER OPPORTUNITY IN RESEARCH

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2. **RESEARCH NUTRITIONIST:** Should have a basic degree in any field of social sciences with post-graduation in nutrition or allied field. Have a minimum of two years experience in research and willingness to travel extensively in the rural area. Computer skills preferred. Salary negotiable.
3. **SENIOR/JUNIOR RESEARCHERS IN ECONOMICS AND EDUCATION:** Must have post-graduate degree in related field securing at least 55 p.c. marks in both Honors and Masters. Preference will be given to those having MS/PhD degree with publications. The job demands extensive travel in the rural area. Salary negotiable.
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Please apply with complete bio-data and one recent passport size photograph to Personnel Department, BRAC, 66 Mohakhali C/A., Dhaka 1212 by 6 May 1994. Please print the position applied for on the envelope.



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