

Dhaka Day by Day

Taking up the Gauntlet for Women's Cause

by Fayza Haq

Menie Gregoire, a well-known French writer, activist and radio commentator on women's issues, explains her introduction to women's activism. "When I was very young, a group of French feminists who were struggling for the right to vote and to change the status of women in society influenced me and I realised my own situation of which I was not aware of before. While working with this association, I developed a keen interest in women's movements and wrote my first book on women's conditions that prevailed. This book was well accepted as it was one of the best sellers in the country. It was called 'Le Metier de Femme'."

"Later on," Mme. Gregoire continues, "I was asked to speak on the radio and make the French women talk about every-day situations. Problems started when women began pouring in their questions about their lives. There were problems which they earlier hardly ever talked about. These included problems with men. The women either wrote or telephoned. I received about 1000 letters per day. They wrote about their difficulties with their family, husband, education, their right to work, cases of adultery — on the part of both the husband and the wife — and even about incest. These overt discussions on sex received instant opposition from the church and from different social groups."

The most important issue that Mme. Gregoire dealt with first was the equal right to share the custody of children. Earlier the father had all the rights over the children. She went as far as President Pompidou to make the claims for this right.

The second issue was the right to contraception for women which had not been allowed before.

The third one was the right to abortion, which, earlier, could get one into prison. The law had to be changed altogether to allow abortion in the necessary cases, and with Mme. Gregoire's influence of the talk on the radio, one could now discuss it openly.

Speaking about divorce laws in France she says they had changed and divorce is now by mutual consent. "Earlier it was necessary to find fault with the spouse. Divorce existed a hundred years back but it was relatively easy for men to get a divorce while it was not so for women. I personally do not approve entirely of divorce as it affects children badly," she comments.

As for jobs for women, Menie Gregoire believes that unless a woman has a job she cannot

be truly emancipated.

Discussing single parents, she says that it is a pity that such a situation should exist resulting from a divorce. "However, when a woman is beaten, the children are unhappy and confused, when the man is brutal and alcoholic, there is no other recourse," she comments.

As regards the custody over children she feels that when the children are young, they should better be with the mother but as they grow older they need the father too. "There is a law by which the children of the age of fourteen have to appear before the judge and tell of their choice of parents," she elaborates.

Mme. Gregoire smiles and remarks that perhaps she is not such a good Catholic as her views sometimes clash with that of the church. "This began when I began advocating for contraceptives which the Catholic church is against," she adds.

Talking about her visit to Bangladesh she comments, "My work in France dealt mainly with broadcasting on women's issues and I work with the press that deals with the same subjects. Although I have met social workers and female activists, it is a pity that my meetings with my actual counterparts could not have been longer. I had the opportunity to meet women garment workers and individuals of a family planning centre. I have exchanged views with the press but five days are not enough to study a country's situation." She plans to write about Bangladesh in "France Soir" on her return to her country.

She says that in the West and in France women had achieved lot of what they wished to achieve in women's spheres. She feels that the women in the East were not lagging behind. She believes that the French feminists are closer to the Eastern feminists than those of USA.

Are the French people reconciled to the idea of woman being the head of the state? To this she replies, "It is not so important to have a woman head of the state as to remove the evil laws that go against the interest of women. We had the experience of having a female prime minister who was not that successful."

"The development of women should be everywhere in the world and it should not be confined to the West. What I hope to gain by my visit is to give the people of Bangladesh a hope. Hopes and dreams are vital in the lives of the people," she concludes.

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Efforts to modernise naval force on : Biswas

CHITTAGONG, May 14: President Abdur Rahman Biswas said here today that Bangladesh had initiated efforts for the modernisation and expansion of her naval force to ensure security, reports BSS.

In the present world, the role of navy is undeniable and, as an independent sovereign country, we need a naval force for our self-defence even in peace, he added.

President Biswas was speaking as chief guest at the commissioning ceremony of the BNS Shaheed Ruhul Amin at the naval jetty. It was attended by Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen Nuruddin Khan, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Altaf Hussein Chowdhury, Chief of Naval Staff M. Muhtamul Islam, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Peter Fowler, some local MPs, senior officials of the Defence Ministry and local elite.

The President said being a riverine country Bangladesh has over seven hundred kilometres of coastal border line with more than 40 thousand square mile sea areas and vast sea resources and it is our naval forces which can ensure the security as well as the country's sovereignty.

With the addition of the offshore patrol vessel, Shaheed Ruhul Amin our naval forces would be able to effectively control the illegal exploration of our fish resources, smuggling and piracy in our territorial waters, he hoped.



President Abdur Rahman Biswas offering Munajat after commissioning a newly acquired offshore patrol craft of the Bangladesh Navy in Chittagong yesterday. — ISPR photo

'Ensure security of children'

President Abdur Rahman Biswas called for ensuring security of children, more care for the elders and handicapped and respect for each other in a family to strengthen its bonds, reports UNB.

In a message on the eve of the first International Family Day, Biswas stressed the need for consolidating the fundamental values and principles of family, including mutual respect and fellow feeling.

BSS adds: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in another message, yesterday said the present government had initiated different realistic and welfare-oriented policies and programmes to improve the socio-economic standard of every family in the country.

Weather

Temperature may rise

By Staff Correspondent

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely over the regions of Rangpur, Tangail, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Comilla during the next 24 hours till 6 pm today, according to Met office forecast.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere throughout the country.

Slight rise in day temperature is expected over the country.

Maximum temperature in Dhaka yesterday was 35.5 degree Celsius and the minimum 27 degrees.

Country's highest temperature yesterday was 39.2 degree Celsius recorded at Jessore and Rajshahi and the lowest 24 degrees at Khulna.

The sun sets today (Sunday) at 6:34 pm and rises tomorrow (Monday) at 5:16 am.

Computer training centre in every district soon

State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan said that the present government is planning to establish computer training centre in every district soon, reports UNB.

Mannan was addressing the certificate awarding ceremony of the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) second evening shift course titled "Introduction to Computer, Application Packages and Programming" yesterday.

Computer technology could play a vital role to make the nation developed in science, the State Minister said adding that the present government has stressed on computer training in the context of socio-economic condition of the country.

He said BCC could meet the demand of skilled manpower through giving specialised training in this regard.

Presided over by BCC Executive Director M A Salam, the meeting was also addressed by Mahmudur Rahman, a trainee.

What's on today...

BADC Engineers' Association: Sixth annual conference. Chief guest: Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Majid-ul-Haq. Venue: Engineers' Institution Auditorium. Time: 9:30 am.

Discussion on Health Care: Chief guest: DCC Mayor Md. Hanif. Special guest: Prof Md. Nuru-un-Nabi, DG, Directorate of Health. Venue: BIRDEM auditorium. Time: 9:30 am.

Rotary Club of Dhanmondi: Regular weekly meeting. Guest speaker: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman. Subject: Privatisation-prospects and problems in Bangladesh. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30 pm.

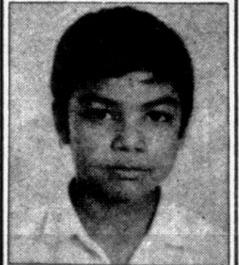
Rotary Club of Dhaka West: Regular weekly meeting. Venue: Gulshan Club. Time: 5:30 pm.

Cassette Releasing Ceremony: Of 'Bangabda 1400', a new cassette by Feedback. Chief guest: Music composer Khan Ataur Rahman. Venue: South Ballroom, Hotel Sheraton. Time: 5 pm.

Video Show: On cultural heritage of Rajbari district. Chief guest: State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum. Special guest: Md Mokhlesur Rahman, Secretary Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Venue: National Museum, Shahbagh. Time: 4 pm.

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The Diploma Nurses' Association brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting alleged administrative malpractices. — Star photo

'Ganges water withdrawal threatens environment'

The environment in Bangladesh is largely threatened by unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water which would also badly affect the mangrove forest of the Sunderbans, Environment and Forest Minister Akbar Hossain told an international delegation of physicians yesterday, reports UNB.

The delegation of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) called on him at his office.

Its members included national representatives from India, Pakistan and Nepal and the Project Director of South Asia Project, Dr Gururaj Muloik, from Boston, USA. BMA president Dr M A Majed and secretary general Dr Qari Abdul Haque were among those from Bangladesh.

Akbar Hossain stressed the need for enhanced understanding and cooperation among the states in the region for better water-management so that each can equitably share benefit of the water system.

Environment now is a global concern and, therefore,

improving environmental conditions need concerted efforts at national, regional and global levels, the minister said.

He gave a brief resume of government action in this sector and spoke about Bangladesh Environment Policy, environment law and draft of National Environment Management Action Plan. He stressed the need for massive awareness for promoting and protecting the cause of environment.

Citing poverty as one of the major causes of pollution the minister underscored the need for taking measures on regional, national and international planes in all development activities for alleviating poverty.

Biman ferries 9736 Hajj pilgrims

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has completed operation of its special hajj flights to Jeddah carrying a total of 6,156 ballottee hajj pilgrims under government arrangement this year, reports UNB.

The national flag-carrier began its Dhaka-Jeddah special ballottee hajj flights on April 27 and completed 21 special flights on May 12.

The ballottee hajjis would be flown back home on special return flights after the holy hajj is over, a Biman press release said yesterday.

Biman also ferried 3,580 non-ballottee hajj pilgrims to Jeddah by 13 scheduled flights.



BTV Sunday

4:30 Opening announcement
Al-Quran Programme summary

4:45 Children's programme on Tagore birth anniversary

5:10 News in Bangla

5:20 Sports programme: World Cup '94

6:10 Open University Programme on Red Crescent Day

6:45 Tagore songs

8:00 News in Bangla

8:30 Science Programme

9:05 Film show: The Sword of Tipu Sultan

10:00 News in English

10:30 Special programme: Khabar/The News

11:30 Closing

Tender Notice

No 217(11)Engg Dated: 14/5/1994
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Sealed tender in Dhaka University form "Tender for works" are hereby invited from the enlisted contractors (Bldg/Fur) of Dhaka University for the undermentioned works and will be received by the undersigned up to 12 Noon on the dates mentioned against each work and opened on the same day at 12.15 pm in presence of the contractors who may remain present. Contractors will have to deposit as earnest money a sum of taka as stated below in Demand Draft or Pay Order from any scheduled Bank of Bangladesh. Specification and other particulars may be had from office of the undersigned on all working days except on the date fixed for submitting the tender after depositing the cost of tender forms and schedule as stated below against each work to the Janata Bank, TSC Branch (non-refundable) after showing the necessary enlistment papers endorsed by the undersigned.

Sl No	Name of works	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Price of tender form	Time allowed for completion of the work	Opening date
1.	Repairing the Furniture of Arts Building different dept, Dean Office & Examination Hall, DU.	Tk 1,12,846/71	Tk 2260/-	Tk 100/-	30 days	5th June '94
2.	Repairing the furniture of Dhaka University Club, DU	Tk 46,689/-	Tk 935/-	Tk 30/-	15 days	5th June '94
3.	Repairs to a Room of old Canteen (for converting into room) of JN Hall, DU	Tk 24,939/41	Tk 500/-	Tk 20/-	15 days	5th June '94

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